

Rejiggered Ghirardelli goes local

JMA has banished the touristy outlets

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San Franciscans are about to get back a landmark.

After four years, JMA Ventures is ready to unveil a Ghirardelli Square for the 21st century.

Crazy Shirts has been replaced by a cupcake café. Sharper Image has left, too. In its place are gourmet food and wine shops, dog accessory stores and Gary Danko. And of course, Ghirardelli Chocolates.

Residents will start moving into Fairmont's 53 fractional ownership units in late July.

Those condos are only 40 percent pre-sold, but JMA principals Todd Chapman and Joe Nootbaar expect sales to accelerate now that demo units are furnished and the new Ghirardelli Square has gone from rendering to reality.

Chapman also believes that this might prove a good market for fractionals since people still have money, but are more conservative in how they spend it, making the Fairmont homes more attractive than a \$3 million Bay-view pied-à-terre. Owners will have access to private terraces, a conference room, an owners' wine vault and lounge.

Originally, JMA thought the residences would be occupied by October 2007, but the nature of rehabbing a historic project slowed things down.

JMA bought Ghirardelli Square for \$38 million in 2004. Construction, originally pencilled to be \$50 million, has stretched to more than \$70 million.

That has covered seismic upgrades, converting 100,000 square feet of office space into 53 condos, reconfiguring and renovating retail space, redoing the streetscape, including planting new



NAJIB JOE HAKIM

JMA resuscitated Ghirardelli's history, says Nootbaar.

trees and repaving the plaza.

Almost every tenant in the 100,000 square feet of retail space is new, and the site is 92 percent leased. Only one 6,000-square-foot space is unspoken for, and Chapman said several parties are in talks for it. And while the amount of retail space has remained the same, JMA has reduced the number of tenants by 30 percent.

Many of the new retail tenants are already open. *Marché on the Square*, a European-style food hall and cafe, opened this week. Other major tenants, including a 7,000-square-foot

restaurant from Gary Danko and a 10,000-square-foot spa operated by Fairmont, will open by year's end.

"To us, these all ooze that authenticity and local community spirit we really tried to capture at Ghirardelli Square," Chapman said.

JMA's vision was to create a haven for locals, wresting the square from tourists. That's not yet happened. For one thing, it is tourist season in San Francisco. Too, many locals don't know that this is not their parents' Ghirardelli Square.

"We've taken an iconic piece of San Francisco history, Ghirardelli Square, and brought new life to that history. And it's a rebirth with one of the other phenomenal icons of San

Francisco, the Fairmont Hotel," Nootbaar said. "Ghirardelli Square had been taken away from locals for many years by the tourist industry, and we've been fortunate to be in a position to bring validity to this great place again so locals can have it back."

A party next week is a first step in reintroducing Ghirardelli Square to the city's tastemakers.

The test will be if the Square is bustling and its retailers busy from November to April, when it has traditionally been slow.

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