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# Big Builder '09 Virtual Update: Spotlight on Sarah Yaussi

Last week, I blogged about one of the really special programming elements we've got planned for Big Builder Nov. 16-20--a **series of five live Webinars**. This week, we took some very big first steps toward doing one-of-a-kind programming.

Just to recap on the live Webinars ... Basically what we've done is assembled five cross-disciplinary teams in five markets and assigned each of them a tract of land in their respective markets. The challenge is for each of the teams to put together--in just four short weeks--the best business and development plan for their specific parcel. (You can check out the accompanying graphic to get more detail on how the live program will come together.)

Yesterday, the Southern California team had its kickoff meeting. And let me tell you it was totally exciting because this star-studded team really hit the ground running. Team members include:

- Tim Kane, MBK Homes
- Randy Jackson, The Planning Center
- Jason Perrin, Greencrossing Real Estate Cos.
- Mike Disler, ex-Pulte Homes
- Manny Gonzalez, KTGy
- John Martin, Martin & Associates

Most of the team was able to meet in person, gathering in one of MBK's conference rooms in Irvine. In addition to the core team members, Tim Kane had invited the whole of his senior management team to join the discussion, which was awesome.

We started off just talking about the land parcel that had been assigned to them. Ironically, the MBK team had looked at purchasing the roughly seven-acre parcel located next to a Metrolink

## BB09 Virtual: Five for Five



Montclair, Calif., several years ago. The site has a number of good things going for it, not the least of which is that it's located very near public transit. But it's also got a number of drawbacks; it was called "a pioneer site."



But what amazed me was how quickly this group moved from outlining all the site's pros and cons to actually talking about what could go on the site. They touched on everything from community design to financing with low-income housing tax credits. They talked about the kinds of buyers they were targeting--commuters, young singles, Asians, college professors--to special design considerations such as natural ventilation and noise-reduction technologies and products to offset some of the racket coming from nearby train tracks and freeway.

Because I am interested in all things design-oriented, I particularly enjoyed listening to the group talk about what kind of product could possibly go on this site. Given the number of units they could fit on the site, they estimated they could maybe get to 500 units--the group appeared especially concerned about the diversity or, as one executive called it, "segregation" of product. Doing some back of the envelope math, John Martin figured they could get an optimum average density of roughly 31 units per acre, which would mean they could do some less dense stuff in one area of the parcel and some higher-density stuff in other areas. They talked two-plexes, four-plexes, density single-family detached; they even considered the possibility of using a two-over-two townhome product, most often found in the East.

The other really cool thing to see is how excited they were to walk the site. At least three of the group's plans to walk the site over the weekend, take pictures, and share them with the group. As soon as I get my hands on them, I'll give you a look at what they're working with, and you can share your thoughts on what kind of community they should be looking to develop.

So, considering how great yesterday's meeting went with the Southern California team, I'm excited to get on the phone with the Dallas team later this afternoon. Stay tuned!

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