

Meet the mega-project maestro behind Lennar Urban's plans to transform Bay Area landmarks

Lennar Urban's plans will transform Bay Area landmarks

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Instead of a dynamite-heavy, explosive spectacle at Candlestick Park, the former Giants and 49ers stadium is getting the wrecking ball treatment. It's a slower, more mechanical and more environmentally friendly way to kill the stadium – and it's fitting. **Lennar** Urban has also been methodically advancing the plans and vision for the massive Candlestick and nearby Hunters Point Shipyard redevelopment areas. At the Shipyard, 250 homes will be completed by the end of 2015, and another 159 by 2016. Lennar Urban will begin construction on about 400 homes this year, and another 500 next year. Now that years of planning and approvals – and lawsuits – are done, the company has moved into "execution mode," said Lennar Urban Regional Vice President **Kofi Bonner**. "It gets fairly complicated. Every day, literally, a new wall goes up. Every day, a potential homeowner comes through. Every day, you're thinking about the community that will be created." On top of that, Bonner is also steering the development of 8,000 homes on Treasure Island. Lennar will start infrastructure work on Treasure Island next year.



SPENCER A BROWN

Biggest challenge for your business? Coordinating all the complicated components that comprise this public-private partnership [for the Hunters Point Shipyard and Treasure Island projects].

What's going to change at your company in the next year? We are excited to be on the short list of developers selected to compete to win the development rights to the Concord Naval Weapons Station, a truly wonderful opportunity to create an innovative, transit-oriented master planned community.

Company goal yet to be achieved? The successful completion of these incredible opportunities. We are well on our way.

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

Guiding principles for good management? Listen, hear, distill – then speak. Don't be afraid to try a new approach. And never take yourself too seriously.

Best way to keep competitive edge? Learn from as many different, disparate and similar situations as possible.

Most inspiring entrepreneur? [Al Ratner](#), chairman and CEO of Forest City. He is smart, visionary and driven, but more important than all of that is his humanity. Al is first and foremost a terrific person.

JUDGMENT CALLS

Best business decision? Becoming the chief administrative officer of the Cleveland Browns. It was wonderful to work and succeed in a totally different industry while learning every day.

Toughest business decision? As the interim city manager of the city of Oakland, I loved the work but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't make any headway on my to do-list. My inability to align business, staff, the mayor and the council on my key initiatives was personally troubling.

Biggest missed opportunity? I had a great conversation with a fellow in Cleveland at a function who was trying to convince me that his stepson was a fantastic athlete, and that I should pay close attention to him. He was convinced the boy would play for the Cleveland Browns one day and I would do well to provide a level of guidance to his family. I politely let him know that given that the boy was a sophomore in high school he should really allow the boy to enjoy his youth and that NFL execs really could have nothing to do with high school athletes. The youth is now known as "The Chosen One," otherwise known as [Lebron James](#).

TRUE CONFESSIONS

Like best about job? Walking the Shipyard construction site and experiencing the birth of the new community.

Like least about job? Politics.

Most respected competitor? Forest City.

First choice for a new career? Soccer player.

PREDILECTIONS

Most influential book? I love Victorian mystery novels.

Favorite cause? Anything that provides new opportunities for underprivileged kids anywhere.

Favorite restaurant? Too many to list. Boulevard and Kokkari are way up there.

Favorite way to spend free time? Traveling to foreign lands with my family. Heck, traveling anywhere with my family.

Favorite music? Soukous music. It is the happiest sound I know.

Kofi Bonner

Title/Company: Regional Vice President, **Lennar** Urban

HQ: San Francisco

First job: Assistant Lecturer of Design and Architecture in Ghana

Education: Masters of Architecture and Masters in City Planning from University of California, Berkeley

Residence: Walnut Creek

Cory covers real estate and economic development.