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# SV Chat: Alex Mehran Jr. leads major transformation at Bishop Ranch

### Office park has new mission: full-fledged San Ramon neighborhood



Alex Mehran Jr. the president of Sunset Development Company at Bishop Ranch on Thursday, April 10, 2025, in San Ramon, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

By **GEORGE AVALOS** | gavalos@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group  
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SAN RAMON — Decades ago, Bishop Ranch became a premier business park, offering modern and sleek office buildings that put it on the map as one of the Bay Area's most successful corporate hubs.

The vision for the site, whose developer and owner is Sunset Development, helped entice major corporations such as Chevron, Toyota, PG&E and Pacific Bell, which later became AT&T.

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Now, Alex Mehran Jr., president of Sunset Development, is continuing to build on the foundation that his father, Alex Mehran Sr., and grandfather, Masud Mehran, established.

Mehran Jr. launched a wide-ranging gambit to transform Bishop Ranch into a true full-fledged mixed-use neighborhood. The complex's ongoing evolution includes City Center Bishop Ranch, a retail and dining center.

The great leap for Bishop Ranch is housing. Mehran Jr. and Sunset Development envision 8,000 housing units, many of which will sprout on office building sites and even atop the former Chevron Park that for decades served as the headquarters

for the energy company.

This news organization recently interviewed Mehran Jr. about the current transformation of Bishop Ranch.

**Q:** How did the idea emerge to transform Bishop Ranch into more of a neighborhood?

**A:** In 2007, we completed an entitlement for 37 acres of land. The site would have a city hall, three new office buildings, apartments, condos, a hotel and a bunch of retail. All of this was going to be downtown San Ramon.

**Q:** Why was this not delivered prior to now?

**A:** It didn't happen before because our expertise is in delivering office space. In the 1980s, it was easy to deliver office space because there was so much demand for that. Building a downtown is a lot different than building offices. The downtown San Ramon concept is a long-term idea.

**Q:** At one point, were you looking at a traditional shopping mall with big anchor stores?

**A:** We received an entitlement for a big mixed-use traditional center. But department stores vanished. We saw the collapse of the department store business. Neiman Marcus went to Broadway Plaza in Walnut Creek, but they didn't make it there either and closed that store.

**Q:** Was it really a timing issue more than anything?

**A:** You know how it works with real estate. You get approval for a project, and as soon as that happens, the whole world changes. You had the recession of 2010. You had that whole craze of companies wanting to be in San Francisco because it was a cool place. All of a sudden you didn't have to be in Bishop Ranch. You could be in Texas, or Omaha, or Phoenix. You didn't have to be in the Bay Area.

**Q:** Did all of these changes cause you to look at a new approach for the retail component?

**A:** We rethought things and built City Center. There is no downtown in San Ramon, and City Center is that downtown.

**Q:** How does the City Center approach differ from the traditional shopping mall with big department stores as the anchors at each end?

**A:** The spirit of the place is what's important. The idea is that we have great brands, and that's better than a place that's dominated by one or two department stores. We thought that was a great strategy, we delivered that, and it's working well.

**Q:** How did the coronavirus outbreak affect your plans to create a housing neighborhood?

**A:** COVID was the last shoe to drop. The Bay Area has a housing crisis. We thought it would be a great idea to have residents in our Bishop Ranch core area 24/7. We rethought our whole land plan and started to get entitlements for all of these new neighborhoods at Bishop Ranch. We were sitting there controlling 8 million square feet of office space. The question was, how much do you really need?

**Q:** Was there also a shift in thinking about the best place to work and live?

**A:** In the 80s, 90s, 2000s, and up to 2020, people said San Francisco was the best place to live and work. After COVID, people decided that being in San Francisco wasn't so great. We leveraged the benefits of our suburban setting. We took a best-in-class approach. Now we have modern office buildings with great amenities at City Center very close by.

**Q:** Did the concept of downtown San Ramon also evolve?

**A:** The downtown was originally that 40-acre project. Now the downtown is the whole place. It's all of Bishop Ranch.

**Q:** How important are the open spaces at Bishop Ranch for the creation of a mixed-use neighborhood?

**A:** We have 100,000 trees here. You can't just replicate that. It's unique. Those trees are from the 1980s and 1990s. Now, thousands and thousands of these trees are here. They have been cared for over many years. This makes the place more enjoyable.

**Q:** Some housing has already been built. Do you have a sense that the strategy is working to create new neighborhoods at Bishop Ranch?

**A:** I hear more and more stories about people who work in one of our office buildings and that they bought a home in one of our villages. When you come to Bishop Ranch, there are lots of different brands, there are all kinds of different places and experiences. There is a real sense of place here.

**ALEX MEHRAN JR.**  
Organization: Sunset Development Co.  
Title: President and CEO  
Age: 43  
Education: Brown University, International and Public Affairs  
Residence: Resides in Danville with his family  
Prior roles: Goldman Sachs Infrastructure Private Equity Fund Group. Joined the Sunset Development team in 2009. Roles at Sunset Development included senior vice president and general manager in charge of the management of Bishop Ranch.

- FIVE THINGS ABOUT ALEX MEHRAN JR.**
  - Alex and his wife Maggie are the proud parents of four children.
  - Avid pilot, ski mountaineer, and open-ocean sailor.
  - Holder of the elapsed time record for the Solo Transpac race with his eight-day passage in 2012 from San Francisco to Hanalei Bay at Kauai island in the state of Hawaii.
  - A parent of two scouts. Alex loves and supports scouting.
  - Vice chair of the board of governors at the Watson Institute, a Brown University institution and public affairs institute that recently was approved to become the fifth school at Brown.



Alex Mehran Jr. the president of Sunset Development Company removes a remote controlled sail boat from a lake at Bishop Ranch on Thursday, April 10, 2025, in San Ramon, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

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