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Brisbane quarry becomes advanced manufacturing battleground



An advanced manufacturing building, the Quarry Innovation Center, would rise in the historic Guadalupe Quarry in Brisbane if Orchard Partners' plan unfolds.
WARE MALCOMB

By Angela Swartz
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See Correction/Clarification at the end of this article.

Story Highlights

- Orchard Partners has proposed an 892,000-square-foot advanced manufacturing campus at Guadalupe Quarry in Brisbane.
- Environmentalists oppose development, citing endangered species and ecological damage to the mountain.
- The Bay Area Council supports the project for its potential to create over 1,500 jobs.

In the early 1990s, real estate developer Tyler W. Higgins discovered Guadalupe Quarry in Brisbane while working on a large industrial transaction in neighboring Crocker Industrial Park. The quarry has provided rock, sand, gravel and crushed stone for construction projects across the Bay Area since 1895.

Higgins immediately recognized the potential to turn the spot into an industrial infill development situated 3.2 miles from Highway 101 and minutes from San Francisco International Airport and downtown San Francisco.

In between then and now, the roughly 61-acre site at 1 Quarry Rd. in San Bruno Mountain State Park has been considered for several uses. In the early 2000s there was a proposal for housing. Then there was a plan for 1.3 million square feet of warehouse space. A data center was in the mix.

Along the way, environmentalists have pushed back against development of the quarry for decades, wanting to preserve the natural habitat and endangered species that live in it.



The Guadalupe Canyon Quarry could become a site for advanced manufacturing, but environmentalists have doubts about the project.

SAN BRUNO MOUNTAIN WATCH

By 2025, Orchard Partners, where Higgins is now a partner, revised its plan based on community feedback. A proposal for a two-level advanced manufacturing and research and development campus called Quarry Innovation Center is now on the table. Developers aspire to lure tenants who can use the 892,000-square-foot facility and combine robotics, automation, artificial intelligence and clean energy to produce goods more efficiently.

Over the last decade, the advanced manufacturing industry added more than 250,000 jobs in the United States, growing 7.4%, according to market researchers. It's expanding three times faster than overall manufacturing, as demand rises for products that rely on advanced technologies, a January 2026 report from Camion Associates states.

But JLL research shows that the industrial space is not there for advanced manufacturing tenants. Some 77% of Peninsula industrial inventory is aging,

having been built before 1980, while millions of square feet have been lost to redevelopment since 2000, according to JLL.

“The decision to pivot to advanced manufacturing was enabled by the availability of 49.9 megawatts of power – a key consideration for manufacturers running equipment with high electricity demand,” said Justin Salters, a spokesperson for the Quarry Innovation Center, in a statement.

Representatives from the real estate firm JLL, which is marketing the development, said they are already receiving inquiries from advanced manufacturing companies interested in occupying the center. The majority are looking for immediate move-ins though, according to Jason Ovadia, who heads JLL’s industrial leasing business in the U.S. If approved, construction could begin in 2027 and move-ins could begin in late 2029, according to Orchard.

“There is a definite need for speed for many of these companies,” said JLL Vice Chairman Greg Matter. “That’s why it’s important that the project is able to move quickly through the entitlement process.”

Environmentalists not keen

Although mostly idle since 2020, recent work on Highway 101 has increased activity at the quarry, and “people are remembering what they used to experience with the quarry in full production mode," according to Higgins.

Evans Brothers Inc. operates the quarry, through a surface mining permit, according to 2026 city documents. The owners of the quarry have permits that allow mining work for the next 30 years. Higgins said mining operations include frequent truck trips, blasting and materials processes that produce “a lot of noise and dust.” Representatives for Evans Brothers did not respond to a request for comment.

According to Orchard, it would protect 82 acres of the site as permanent open space.

But those at San Bruno Mountain Watch say that stopping mining now doesn't make up for the environmental impacts of development at the quarry.

"Our stance is that the mountains should be allowed to heal," said the nonprofit's executive director Ariel Cherbowsky. "We're thinking about the mountain over hundreds and thousands of years ... If it's a choice between mining for another 10 years and then closing the quarry, or stopping the mining now and then having decades and decades of a really inappropriate use for the mountain there, then we would prefer the first option."

Cherbowsky pointed to a 2022 reclamation plan adopted for the Clayton Quarry in Mount Diablo as an example of how a quarry can be protected. That plan ensures that once mining ceases in Clayton Quarry, the land cannot be used for future development.

"There is no need for industrial buildings and a three-story parking garage in the heart of an ecological reserve with endangered species and a state and county park," Cherbowsky said in an email. "This location is unsuitable and inappropriate for so many reasons: Is it smart to build a 49.9-megawatt electrical substation and switching station directly next to a vast acreage of highly flammable vegetation and steep terrain?"

Mine reclamation and ecological restoration would provide economic benefits and create meaningful jobs, from engineers to equipment operators, hydrologists, landscapers, restoration crews and biologists, Cherbowsky said.

There should be more information on the impacts of the project in the coming months. A draft environmental analysis is expected in January 2027. By mid-2027 the Brisbane City Council will likely review and vote on the proposal, according to Orchard.

The Bay Area Council has come out in support of the development. Adrian Covert, the council's senior vice president of public policy, said the innovation center would bring "good-paying jobs" – more than 1,500, according to Orchard – to the Bay Area and prevent the workforce from relocating to Texas or Nevada.

"California has one of the cleanest electrical grids in the United States, so building manufacturing here is in effect decarbonizing manufacturing for the United States," Covert said.

Cherbowsky maintained the quarry is a special place that should be preserved.



Orchard sought to clarify that the planned building is intended for advanced manufacturing, not use as a data center.

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The redevelopment plan would preserve much of the former quarry as open space.

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“Sometimes people think a quarry has no potential for life, that it's like an alien landscape,” he said. “That's certainly not the case for this quarry … The mountain is famous for having a lot of endangered species, including plants that are found nowhere else on Earth, like some types of manzanitas, and over 30 butterfly species.”

Angela Swartz is a Bay Area-based freelance writer.

Correction/Clarification
An earlier version of this story provided an overly specific timeline for public hearings about the Brisbane quarry redevelopments. Hearings are expected to follow the release of a draft environmental analysis in 2027, and Orchard could submit a permit application after that point.