

## SPECIAL REPORT

# Chula Vista Project Aims to Become High-Tech Research Hub

**CONSTRUCTION:** Retooled Millenia Smart Park Largest Development Site in County

■ By RAY HUARD

Lee Chesnut plans to break ground this summer on a retooled South County project that could have 1.5 million square feet of office space geared toward high tech companies working with automated vehicle research, drones and other automated projects.

His plan is to build the Chula Vista project in three stages, starting with a \$150 million campus that he's named THINK, but Chesnut said that he could move quickly to build it all and even build up to 3 million square feet of space if the demand warrants.

"It's possible that this is going to be the big event for South County because we finally discovered the amazing opportunity for South County related to incredibly important research and development, said Chesnut, owner of Chesnut Properties.

The commercial brokerage, JLL, just started marketing the project, renamed Millenia Smart Park, in mid-March.

## International Project

Chesnut originally proposed the project in 2018 as a general office park. He said financing issues, permitting and the pandemic delayed the project.

Chesnut said he plans to break ground later this year on a 168,000 square-foot building that is the first part of the THINK campus with a second 150,000 square-foot building on the same site to follow.

The total project would be divided into three campuses – the two-building THINK and two other campuses that he has named DISCOVER with a single 420,000 square foot building and INVENT, a more than 700,000 square-foot campus with four buildings.



Lee Chesnut  
Owner  
Chesnut Properties



Rendering courtesy of Chesnut Properties

Lee Chesnut plans to break ground later this year on Millenia Smart Park in Chula Vista.

The timing of construction would depend on how successful Chesnut is in attracting tenants to THINK and permitting.

"We have to be successful with the THINK campus in order to build the next phase," Chesnut said. "We will see how the market responds to this opportunity."

Chad Urie, senior managing director of JLL in San Diego, said the brokerage is marketing the project internationally.

"This is a monster deal for San Diego but this isn't a San Diego site. This is a national or international site, that's how we view this thing," Urie said, adding that space in Millenia Smart could go to several companies or to a single

company that wanted to establish a major presence.

"What's unique about Millenia is we have the largest development site in San Diego County," said Tony Russell, JLL managing director in San Diego.

Historically, high tech and life science companies have clustered around UTC, Sorrento Valley, Sorrento Mesa and the I-15 corridor, but Russell said space is running out in those submarkets.

"Basically, what you have is a lot of competition for a limited amount of supply," Russell said.

## Delay

So far, Chesnut has received permits for the two buildings in THINK, said

Eric Crockett, Chula Vista deputy city manager and economic development director.

Crockett said Millenia Smart Park would be "a game changer for the region."

When fully built-out, the project would create more than 1,000 jobs, according to Chesnut.

When Chesnut in 2018 first talked of creating what he had called Millenia Office, he said he expected to start construction in September 2018.

In a way, the delay worked to his advantage because it gave him time to

► Chula Vista page 13



Chad Urie  
Senior Managing  
Director  
JLL



Tony Russell  
Managing Director  
JLL



Mary Salas  
Mayor  
Chula Vista



# Chula Vista

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rethink the project and reimagine it at the suggestion of his marketing team to focus on high tech companies at a time when the general office market is faltering as a result of the pandemic.

Chesnut credited JLL with suggesting the change of focus.

"They saw we had something special," Chesnut said.

## City Support

Chula Vista is the perfect location for what he envisions because it is the only city in the country with federal recognition for autonomous vehicle and unmanned aircraft systems testing and validation, Chesnut said.

The U.S. Department of Transportation also has designated Chula Vista and the broader San Diego region as one of 10 autonomous proving grounds in the nation.

Millenia Smart Park also is near FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) airspace for drone testing and the nearby Brown Field has been designated by the FAA for potential large drone testing.

Chula Vista Mayor **Mary Salas** said Chesnut's change in focus for the project "really reflects what we're trying to do out there."

Salas said the city has been working "on so many innovations" that would be mutually beneficial.

She said a number of small companies are already working in the area on projects with drones, autonomous vehicles and other autonomous technology.

Smart Park also would provide much needed jobs in South County.

"So many of our community members commute, or they did before COVID, to Sorrento Valley and other tech hubs," Salas said.

"I think there will be ways that we can partner with him as he attracts tenants," Crockett said. "We've always been willing to sit down and partner with him and figure out what his tenants need."

The initial THINK building "will be the first Class A office building built in the city for 25 years and will be bringing the jobs that we've been so desperately needing," Crockett said.

"What I love about Lee is he's innovative in his approach and he looks for different ways to differentiate himself and the city from other typical markets you see elsewhere in other parts of San Diego County," Crockett said.

The city already is on the forefront of drone research and use.

Chula Vista uses drones as first responders for police and fire departments, Crockett said.

"If we want to get eyes on the scene quickly, we launch a drone," Crockett said. He said the city has two existing FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) drone sites and recently received approval for two more in the eastern section of Chula Vista.

## The Market

**James O'Callaghan**, president and CEO of the **South County Economic**



Rendering courtesy of Chesnut Properties

**THINK** would be the first building in a 1.5 million square-foot high-tech campus planned by Chesnut Properties.

**Development Council**, said the area should appeal to the high tech companies Chesnut wants to attract to Millenia Smart Park because it has a ready pool of skilled workers to draw from and because of its proximity to Mexico.

"We have so many companies that are working both sides of the border. We really have a unique opportunity to work with a diverse sector of businesses," O'Callaghan said. "We're eager to see a project of this scope get off the ground."

**Mel Anunciado**, program developer for **Action Drone USA** based in Chula Vista, said Chesnut is right on the mark in appealing to companies that work with drones and autonomous vehicles and other autonomous products.

"It's been proven that a lot of companies already come down here for drone testing," Anunciado said. "You could have different companies that work in similar fields work together in this ecosystem."

Construction of Millenia Smart Park would come at a time when the high tech market is booming in San Diego County, according to JLL and the commercial brokerage **CBRE**.

**CBRE** in its market report for 2020, wrote that 2020 was "a banner year for the tech sector in San Diego." San Diego ranked seventh out of the top 30 tech markets in North America for tech markets "that are most resilient and poised for growth," according to **CBRE**.

"The region had the eighth highest growth rate for high tech software/services job growth during the 2018-2019 period at 15.4%," **CBRE** reported. "Despite the economic slowdown in 2020, the tech sector was a glaring bright spot for the local economy in San Diego. Venture capital

continues to flow as startups and giants alike announced expansions in the region. Combined with the region's progress as a life science cluster, the outlook is bright for San Diego as a major innovation hub on the global stage."

**Eduardo Velasquez**, director of research for the **San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp.**, said high-tech, bio-tech and life science industries "are drivers of economic growth in San Diego County."

"All of that is strong in San Diego County and has bounced back from the initial months of the pandemic where

job losses were widespread and affecting everyone," Velasquez said. "They've recovered, more than recovered."

Velasquez said what he termed the "innovative industry" indirectly or directly accounts for about 30% of employment in San Diego County.

Drone related, autonomous vehicle and other autonomous products are a small but growing part of that, Velasquez said.

"We don't have any real reason to believe that will slow down," Velasquez said. "The larger megatrend points toward increased demand for autonomous solutions, whether that's individuals getting from point A to point B or delivery of goods and services." ■



**James O'Callaghan**  
President and CEO  
South County  
Economic  
Development Council



**Eric Crockett**  
Deputy City  
Manager/Economic  
Development Director  
Chula Vista



**Eduardo Velasquez**  
Director of Research  
San Diego  
Regional Economic  
Development Corp.

## Chesnut Properties

CHESNUT

**FOUNDED:** 1990

**OWNER:** Lee Chesnut

**HEADQUARTERS:** San Diego

**BUSINESS:** Developer

**EMPLOYEES:** 4

**NOTABLE:** Chesnut said he considers his projects personal investments and not part of a business plan.

**WEBSITE:** [www.chesnutproperties.com](http://www.chesnutproperties.com)

**CONTACT:** [hello@chesnutproperties.com](mailto:hello@chesnutproperties.com)

THE LIST

LARGEST CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

► Ranked by project contract amount

Rank	Project name Address	General contractor(s)	Contract amount	Square footage of project Date of (planned) completion	Developer/Owner Architect/architectural firm
1	SDIA Terminal 1 Replacement 3225 N. Harbor Drive, San Diego 92101	Turner Construction Company/Flatiron	\$2.27B	1.21M 2027	San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Gensler
2	UCSD North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood North Torrey Pines Road, La Jolla 92037	Clark Group	\$510M	1.5M 2021	UC San Diego HKS & Safdie Rabines
3	UCSD Theatre District Living Learning Neighborhood 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla 92161	Kitchell	\$495M	1.4M November 2023	n/a HKS/EYRC
4	Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla Tower 2 9888 Genesee Ave., La Jolla 92037	McCarthy Building Cos. Inc.	\$420M	415,000 October 31, 2024	Scripps Memorial Hospital HGA Architects & Engineers
5	UCSD I Hillcrest Medical Campus Redevelopment Phase 1 200 W. Arbor Drive, San Diego 92103-1911	DPR Construction	\$355M	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
6	San Diego State University - Aztec Stadium Friars Road, San Diego 92108	Clark Group	\$267M	1.74M 2022	San Diego State University Gensler
7	The Campus at Horton 801 Fourth Ave. , San Diego 92101	Turner Construction Company	\$220M	850,000 2022	Stockdale Partners RDC
8	Diega 702 Broadway, San Diego 92101	Bosa Development Corp.	\$200M	546,701 Spring 2021	Bosa Development Joseph Wong Design Associates
9	Oceanside Beach Resort North Pacific and Myers St., Oceanside 92054	DPR Construction	\$200M	n/a Mid-2021	n/a n/a
10	Logan Memorial Education Complex 2875 Ocean View Blvd, San Diego 92113	Balfour Beatty US	\$180.25M	200,000 2022	San Diego Unified School District Baker Nowicki Design Studio
11	San Diego State University - Mission Valley Site Development Friars Road, San Diego 92108	Clark Group	\$180M	n/a 2023	San Diego State University Project Design Consultants
12	San Diego International Airport Support Facilities 3225 N. Harbor Drive, San Diego 92101	Sundt Construction Inc.	\$156.67M	n/a July 2021	San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Hellmuth Obata & Kassabaum Inc.
13	Simone Little Italy 232 W. Ash, San Diego 92101	Swinerton	\$143.45M	612,579 July 5, 2023	Trammell Crow Residential Joseph Wong Design Associates
14	UCSD Franklin Antonio Hall 9700 Gilman Drive, La Jolla 92093	McCarthy Building Cos. Inc.	\$130.7M	186,000 April 20, 2022	University of California, San Diego Perkins + Will
15	Hotel Del South Beach Development 1500 Orange Ave, Coronado 92118	Swinerton	\$128.1M	324,059 June 11, 2021	BRE Hotels & Resorts Leo A Daly
16	Hotel Del Coronado Shore House 1500 Orange Avenue, Coronado 92118	Swinerton	\$125M	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
17	Otay Mesa Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization & Expansion Via De La Amistad, San Diego 92154	Clark Group	\$125M	n/a 2023	U.S. General Services Administration Gruen Associates; Jones Studio
18	County of San Diego Juvenile Justice Campus Phase 1 2840 Meadow Lark Drive, San Diego 92123	Balfour Beatty US	\$112.45M	131,000 May 2022	County of San Diego DLR Group

**n/a** Not applicable/available

**Source:** The companies.

Eligible projects must be currently under construction. Under construction is defined as having broken ground. Projects must be located within San Diego County.

To the best of our knowledge, this information is accurate as of press time. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of

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# Balfour Beatty










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19	Alila Marea Beach Resort Encinitas 2100 N Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas 92024	Suffolk	\$110M	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
20	14th & Commercial 1402 Commercial Street, San Diego 92102	Level 10 Construction	\$103M <sup>(1)</sup>	370,655 February 2021	Chelsea Investment Corporation Joseph Wong Design Associates
21	Apex - Science & Research Building 9775 Towne Centre Drive, San Diego 92121	Rudolph and Sletten Inc.	\$78M	165,000 August 2021	BioMed Realty Perkins + Will
22	Southwestern College Student Union Complex 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista 91910	Balfour Beatty US	\$70M	100,700 2025	Southwestern College Gensler
23	Southwestern College University Center 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista 91910	Balfour Beatty US	\$70M	80,000 2025	Southwestern College Gensler
24	USD, Camino and Founders Halls Renovation 5998 Alcala Park, San Diego 92110	Rudolph and Sletten Inc.	\$69M	n/a August 2021	University of San Diego SGPA Architecture and Planning
25	Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic 8875 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123	Lusardi Construction Co.	\$67.5M	129,857 August 2021	Protea Properties Ware Malcomb
26	NAVY V-22 Hangar Naval Base Coronado, San Diego 92135	Harper Construction Co. Inc.	\$65.95M	132,000 March 2023	US Navy Cass/Sowatsky Consulting Architects
27	Point Loma High School Modernization Phase 1 2335 Chatsworth Blvd, San Deigo 92106	Balfour Beatty US	\$65.9M	75,000 2021	San Diego Unified School District AVRP

n/a Not applicable/available

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<sup>(1)</sup> Estimate.

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**Our business philosophy employs the following principles:**

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• Making decisions based upon business ethics

• Customer focus & satisfaction

• Delivering as promised on time and on budget

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**LCC's team will work hand in hand with the owner and its consultants during the preconstruction phase to:**

• Ensure complete and coordinated plans & specifications

• Provide logistics, constructability support

• Provide updated and accurate estimating and scheduling

• Identify value engineering opportunities

• Coordinate bid and construction documents with subcontractors

• Contract with selected subcontractors

• Ensure timely procurement of materials

• Provide coordination with local jurisdictions and attend regularly scheduled team meetings

• Ensure local and state code compliance, obtain necessary permits

• Produce a preconstruction services schedule to ensure tracking and timely completion of deliverables.

• Involve and maintain key management personnel through the life cycle of the project to ensure consistency.

During the construction phase, LCC will keep the project on track, contracting with only the most qualified subcontractors. Weekly meetings with the owner, its consultants and subcontractors will maintain an open line of communication and keep all relative issues in focus.





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THE LIST

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28	SD Knauss / Olin Business School Expansion and Renovation 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego 92110U	Level 10 Construction	\$65M	72,000 March, 2022	University of San Diego Perkins + Will / Delawie JV
29	2100 Kettner 2100 Kettner, San Diego 92101	Swinerton	\$61.73M	150,000 June 15,2021	Kilroy Realty Corporation Gensler
30	Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego - La Jolla Expansion 700 Prospect St., La Jolla 92037	Level 10 Construction	\$59.5M	105,000 October 2021	MCASD Selldorf Architects   LPA Inc
31	The Boardwalk Science Center Drive, San Diego 92121	Swinerton	\$58.25M	250,000 July 20, 2021	HealthPeak Properties FPBA
32	4469 Ohio Street 4469 Ohio Street, San Diego 92116	Suffolk	\$58M	222,690 January 2022	Floit Properties, Inc. Joseph Wong Design Associates
33	New Elementary School Village 2 Otay Ranch - Village2, Chula Vista 91910	Balfour Beatty US	\$55.85M	65,000 2022	Chula Vista Elementary School District Ruhna Clark
34	San Diego USD Emerson-Bandini Elementary School Site Modernization 3510 Newton Avenue, San Diego 92114	Sundt Construction Inc.	\$55.71M	27,200 February, 2022	San Diego Unified School District Davy Architecture
35	Mingei International Museum 1439 El Prado, San Diego 92101	Layton	\$55M	50,000 August 2021	Mingei International Museum Luce et studio
36	Mary Fay Pendleton Elementary 110 Marine Drive, Oceanside 92058	Balfour Beatty US	\$53.05M	90,000 2021	Fallbrook Union Elementary School District RNT

**n/a** Not applicable/available

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# A new neighborhood comes to life.

Clark Construction is proud to partner with UC San Diego to build the North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood. Thank you to HKS, Safdie Rabines Architects, our talented trade contractors, and the thousands of craft workers for helping bring this vibrant new community to campus.

Photo by @Darren Bradley





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THE LIST

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37	SWCCD, Performing Arts, Cultural Center & Parking Structure 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista 91910	Rudolph and Sletten Inc.	\$53M	72,529 April 2021	Southwestern College Tucker Sadler Architects
38	UC San Diego Pepper Canyon Amphitheater and Public Realm Improvements 9500 Gilman Dr., La Jolla 92161	BNBuilders, Inc.	\$52M	10,000 Spring 2022	n/a Safdie Rabines Architects
39	Bayside Performance Park 222 Embarcadero Marina Park South, San Diego 92101	Rudolph and Sletten Inc.	\$50M	13,000 May 2021	San Diego Symphony Tucker Sadler Architects
40	Spreckels Elementary Modernization 6033 Stadium St, San Diego 92122	Balfour Beatty US	\$49.88M	n/a 2021	San Diego Unified School District Marcatects
41	Del Mar Heights Elementary School 13555 Boguita Drive, Del Mar 92-14	Balfour Beatty US	\$49.38M	67,000 2022	Del Mar Union School District BakerNowicki Design Studio
42	Richland Elementary School Reconstruction 910 Borden Road, San Marcos 92069	Balfour Beatty US	\$47.8M	91,000 2022	San Marcos Unified School District BakerNowicki Design Studio
43	UC San Diego Design and Innovation Building 9500 Gilman Dr., La Jolla 92161	BNBuilders, Inc.	\$45M	74,000 Spring 2021	n/a EHDD Architecture
44	La Jolla High School Modernization 750 Nautilus Street, La Jolla 92037	Balfour Beatty US	\$43.71M	70,000 2021	San Diego Unified School District Baker Nowicki Design Studio
45	Pacific Beach Middle School Modernization 4676 Ingraham Street, San Diego 92109	Balfour Beatty US	\$43.33M	75,000 2022	San Diego Unified School District Westberg + White, Inc. Architects and Planners
46	Costa Vista RV Resort 460 Sandpiper Way, Chula Vista 91910	Swinerton	\$42.66M	827,640 April 27, 2021	Sun Communities, Inc. Tucker Sadler
47	Amphibious Assault Vehicle & Combat Vehicle Facility Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton 92055	Harper Construction Co. Inc.	\$41.78M	154,226 June 2022	US Navy Cass/Sowatsky Consulting Architects
48	Ammunition Supply Point Upgrade Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton 92055	Harper Construction Co. Inc.	\$41.39M	56,280 August 2021	US Navy NAVFAC - UCMS IPT
49	Solana Vista Elementary School 780 Santa Victoria, Solana Beach 92075	Erickson-Hall Construction Co.	\$32.98M	65,000 August 2021	Solana Beach School District Alpha Design Group
50	Hotel Del Coronado Ocean Towers 1500 Orange Avenue, Coronado 92118	Swinerton	\$32.76M	140,000 June 9, 2021	BRE Hotels & Resorts Gonzalez Architects
51	UCSD, Humanities and Social Science Building Repair 9500 Gilman Dr., La Jolla 92093	Rudolph and Sletten Inc.	\$32M	n/a February 2022	University of California, San Diego Moore Ruble Yudell
52	Southwestern College Maintenance and Operations 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista 91910	Balfour Beatty US	\$30.47M	20,000 2023	Southwestern College Sillman Wright Architects
53	PROTEA National City Apartments 130 E Eighth Street, National City 91950	Cannon Constructors South Inc.	\$25.17M	136,004 August 2021	PROTEA & Malick Infill Development Miller Hull Partnership

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## Trovata Names Harrington Chief Financial Officer

**FINTECH:** Open Banking Platform Hires The Former Controller of Highspot

■ BY FRED GRIER

**Trovata**, a financial technology startup that specializes in helping small and medium businesses with cash flow analyses, has added **Scott Harrington** as its chief financial officer.

Harrington brings more than 20 years of finance and accounting experience and has held leadership positions in growing startups in tech. Harrington was most recently the controller of Highspot, which closed a \$200 million Series E funding round last month.

“Scott’s depth of knowledge and background as a financial builder-operator is exactly what we need at our stage given our rapid growth,” said **Brett Turner**, founder and CEO at Trovata. “I’m thrilled to have Scott join Trovata as a key member of our senior leadership team to help us grow and scale the business.”

Harrington is joining the team at a period of massive growth. His financial expertise will help scale the business,

according to the firm. In January, Trovata announced it raised a \$20 million Series A funding round and the launch of its Enterprise Treasury Cloud solution.

Founded in 2016, Trovata is an open banking platform. It lets companies instantly know and manage cash flow with precision while forecasting more quickly. A massive data platform, it uses direct APIs to deliver automated user experience in real-time and with bank-grade security.

“I am excited to join Trovata at a great time in its lifecycle as a fast-growing enterprise startup. As a fintech, its platform is exactly what nearly every finance and treasury professional needs for managing cash,” said Harrington. “I can certainly identify with Trovata’s customers having managed

cash forecasting myself in Excel for many years. Automating cash reporting, analysis and forecasting in working closely with banks is truly transformational and I’m inspired to be a part of the journey.” ■



**Scott Harrington**  
Chief Financial Officer  
Trovata

## Alaska Airlines to Offer Summer Service to Montana

**TRANSPORTATION:** Flights to Glacier Park, Yellowstone Available from May to September

■ BY MARIEL CONCEPCION

**Alaska Airlines** will begin seasonal nonstop service from two Montana cities to San Diego International Airport beginning May 20.

Alaska Airlines will offer flights between SAN and Kalispell, Montana via Glacier Park International Airport (FCA) and Bozeman, Montana via Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (BZN) until Sept. 7. With the two new additions this summer, Alaska Airlines will offer nonstop service to 28 destinations from San Diego, more than any other carrier at San Diego International Airport.

“Both Montana and California are beautiful states with access to lots of recreational activities and open spaces,” said **Kimberly Becker**, San Diego County Regional Airport Authority president and CEO. “Alaska Airlines has been expanding its presence in San Diego, having added seven routes since March 2020. We appreciate the new routes to Montana and Alaska Airlines’ continued commitment to providing nonstop options from SAN.”

San Diego International Airport is the third busiest airport in California. In 2019, it welcomed 25 million passengers and contributed nearly \$12 billion in economic activity.

In other news, **Japan Airlines** (JL) resumed nonstop flights between Tokyo via Narita International Airport (NRT) and San Diego International Airport. Plans to resume service were announced in January. **American Airlines** (AA) will codeshare on this service resumption. The service will initially operate three times a week with departures on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

“The resumption of service to Tokyo is an important step in our recovery process,” said Becker. “With many economic and defense ties between our two cities, this route will foster continued business interactions. We welcome Japan Airlines back to San Diego International Airport.”

The resumption comes after Japan Airlines suspended service in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-COVID-19, the airline offered daily nonstop flights which were immensely popular. ■

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