

September 13, 2011

Voices to Vision 2 Update

Golden Gate Fields Site and Proposed Development

Goals of Voices to Vision 2 (June - October 2011)

- Keep broad Albany community educated and updated about proposed plans for Golden Gate Fields, through factual, current, accessible information
- Engage Albany community to understand and express views on possible plans for GGF site
- Support city staff and Council in their efforts to assess impacts of developer's proposal on Albany community
- Respond to community, Council, and staff questions
- Revive Voices to Vision process as mechanism to inform developer of community concerns, priorities, values, and vision for the Albany waterfront and to encourage the developer to use that information to shape and alter its proposal over the course of the process

Overview of Activities (June through early September)

- Initial presentations to city commissions/committees
- Meetings with developer to gather information (interview)
- Presentations of Voices to Vision process and outcomes to developer (and full developer team) to prompt understanding of community desires and concerns
- Meetings with LBNL to understand project parameters
- Citywide mailing (letter, FAQs, Interview)
- Ongoing consultation with city to determine information needed (economic, legal, other) in order to fully assess project impacts
- Build website and populate with information (ongoing), including responses to more than 112 questions posted to date
- Set of 5 participatory sessions (July 30-August 2); tasks included determining available information (and designing session based on that information) and determining information that would be needed to continue community dialogue, outreach, design, facilitation of sessions, handouts, RSVP process, logistics, analysis of information (350 participants)
- August 29th Q&A with Developers and City - logistics, outreach, design of session, facilitation, handouts, follow up (250 attendees)
- Daily responses to questions from city, community, officials, LBNL, developers, consultants, others

Community Views regarding positive and negative impacts that could result from proposed project (based on information provided by developer (TSG) to date)

Since July when information began to be available and disseminated in numerous ways to the Albany community, residents and others have had the opportunity to ask questions, request clarifications, and provide input to the developers and the city through V2V2. From the onset, there were many concerns – not the least of which was the compressed timeline demanded by the

developer to meet the requirements of LBNL, especially in light of the complications specific to this site (two cities, non-taxable institution, Measure C, site conditions, entitlement processes). Beyond this, some worried about UC's and LBNL's history of lack of transparency and the pressures and timing of a "competition" among six sites.

Still, some residents saw initial possibilities from the idea of siting LBNL's Second Campus in Albany. It had the potential to support AUSD with science expertise and internships. With LBNL as a catalyst, some saw the opportunity to attract private development to the site (which would bring tax revenues to the city). Others felt this was a chance to get new public open space at the site and to "finally" create a waterfront they could take pride in (and that would generate necessary revenue for the city and the schools).

On the other hand, other residents have been intense in their criticism of the proposal as it has been presented thus far. Their concerns focus on the scale of the development at full build-out; proposed building heights in all phases of development; number of cars, traffic, and parking; lack of certainty about tax revenues for the city and schools at the onset and over time; and the developer's assertion about the minimum amount of private development needed to support the project's infrastructure and to make the proposal to LBNL competitive with other sites offering free land. And some residents critique the site plan, as currently presented.

While some support LBNL as the anchor of the development, others question the value of LBNL's presence at the site at the expense of either open space or revenue-generating private tenants. Some see the site plan as creating the "lab in the park" and others see unnecessarily large plazas and a suburban office park plan.

Over the course of the past two months, some have become increasingly frustrated that the concerns and suggestions presented by the community have not appeared to generate the expected changes in the developer's site plan. Likewise, instead of an increasing amount of certainty, there is a growing awareness of how much more information will be needed to understand the project's real impact on the community. Moreover, it is important to remember that the Albany community spent nearly two years (very recently) discussing its desires for the waterfront – just months prior to the property owner's decision to submit qualifications to LBNL in February. Four months later, the Stronach Group approached the city about its interest in financially supporting an independent public process that would advance the Voices to Vision style of engagement.

Recommended Next Steps

Given the complexity of the project, the diversity of opinions, the missing information, the lack of substantive changes based on community input, the apparent and very recent new information from LBNL to the developers, and the unfortunate potential that this project – if pushed without adequate community dialogue – could become a very divisive issue, Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) strongly recommends that the Council:

- support the City Manager's request to LBNL to establish a logical timeline for a well-thought-out, comprehensive process that meets the community's need for complete and accurate information, discussion, and action
- establish a professionally-facilitated task force comprised of 20-25 Albany residents who are willing to commit to participate fully in a series of 5-6 sessions (to sunset in five to six months) to focus specifically on the developer's proposal for the waterfront; to monitor and assess

changes; to request and understand/analyze information related to the project's impact on the community; to understand tradeoff, options, and alternatives; and to help determine both the strengths and challenges of the proposal as it adapts to address community concerns and needs.

- *suggested* composition for task force: each council member to appoint three residents (total = 12); school board to collectively appoint three residents (+3); chairs of each of four committees/commissions – Waterfront, Planning and Zoning, Sustainability, Parks and Rec (+4), possible appointments of 2 selected by EBRPD
- focused agendas prepared and disseminated in advance of meetings with appropriate briefing packets to enable strong, informed dialogue by the Task Force members
- follow up information on V2V2 website to ensure full community education and information dissemination prior to and following each meeting
- capacity of the Task Force to request (through the facilitator) information from developer, LBNL, and professional consultants
- possible full citywide meeting following first three task force sessions
- support one more complete series of V2V2 participatory sessions at the appropriate point in the process (e.g. January 2012), two citywide mailings with project updates and documented core facts, as well as ongoing updating of the website

It is important for the Council (and the developer) to understand that this recommendation is viewed as a logical evolution and next step for the community education process begun with Voices to Vision – providing a deepening platform for continued engagement. Further, both the Council and the developer need to recognize that this process may or may not result in support for the developer's proposal. It is – we believe – the best approach to ensuring the collection, discussion, and dissemination of accurate and current information and data to the Albany community so that residents can make informed decisions about the future of the waterfront.