



City of Albany

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September 14, 2011

Ari Huber, The Stronach Group
Golden Gate Fields
1100 Eastshore Highway
Berkeley, CA 94706

Dear Ari:

In May 2011, when the Stronach Group (TSG) first approached the city of Albany about its selection as a finalist for the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) Second Campus, you conveyed a desire to work collaboratively with Albany to create a world-class model for shoreline development and open space that incorporates the shared sustainability goals of the Lab, the city, and your company. The vision that was communicated to us was one of respect for the interests of the community, the uniqueness of the property's prominence in the San Francisco Bay Area, and for tying the proposed redevelopment with the context of the site, the region's history, and local perspectives.

The City of Albany was prepared to be approached by the property owner about the future of the property, having just spent two years investing in a comprehensive community education and engagement process to reveal possibilities and community desires. Many city officials and community members were curious -- some even excited -- about how the desires of the community as expressed in the recommended guidelines that emerged from this process, called *Voices to Vision*, could blend with the potential for creating the Lab on the Golden Gate Fields property.

TSG appeared to demonstrate an understanding of the process and outcome of *Voices to Vision* when it agreed to reimburse the City for costs associated with hiring Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to inform and engage the community about the proposal for the Lab's second campus. As the highly regarded firm that created and implemented *Voices to Vision* (V2V), City officials believed that FTA would serve as a critical resource in helping the affected parties fully understand the underpinnings of the guidelines and the context for shaping potential development and open space scenarios.

Indeed, FTA hit the ground running at an extremely quick pace to learn about what was being proposed and present that information to the community against the backdrop of the V2V guidelines. It has been challenging all the way around -- for FTA, the city, and the community -- and, I recognize, also for TSG -- to move so rapidly to absorb, analyze, and evaluate potential outcomes that incorporate the Lab and its needs.

The City of Albany is dedicated to maintaining its small town ambience, responding to the needs of a diverse community, and providing a safe, healthy and sustainable environment.



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What I envisioned after we initially met and after the City hired FTA was that as the community weighed in with its perspectives about the proposal and its uses, layout, and design – most particularly with respect to open space, city/school revenues, scale of development, bulk/height, and site massing, and types of commercial activity –that TSG would modify its plans and present logical options along the way. Or, in the alternative, TSG would determine that the project (LBNL) was not feasible if information from the Lab, the community or TSG’s own analysis showed insurmountable physical, financial or other obstacles.

FTA has worked as best it can with very limited information and an extraordinarily compressed timeline. The community has made its best effort to understand what is being proposed and has expressed its concerns on a range of fronts with respect to building location, height, and scale of development, as well as open space, access, and connection to the city as a whole. It has asked a variety of questions about fiscal impacts on the city and schools, and the real development costs. The community has recognized that it cannot necessarily rely on the promise of revenue sharing with Berkeley. Moreover, the amount of private development in Albany, described by the developers as needed to make the city and school coffers whole, adds to the scale and site planning challenges.

However, no meaningful changes have yet to emerge from TSG in response to community comments, and many questions remain unanswered. Meanwhile, I understand that the deadline for TSG to submit its final proposal to the Lab grows nearer. I am growing increasingly concerned that the process to develop a proposal for the Lab is moving too quickly and without enough flexibility for working with the community in an iterative manner on whether and/or how it could be successful.

Albany is a community that values having the necessary information to make decisions and working together to craft solutions to problems. If TSG sincerely considers, as its representatives have said, the community as one of the three necessary “legs of the stool” in the planning and decision making process, I believe that TSG needs to:

- 1) Modify the site plan and design to reflect community comments, with further refinements as the community conversation continues;
- 2) Show the views from public locations such as Albany Hill, the beach, the Freeway, and other Albany locations at the final buildout and also at the end of Phase One;
- 3) Commit to locate and construct the hotel/conference center and related retail uses in Albany prior to, or in conjunction with the opening of Phase One of LBNL, as one of the recommended uses from V2V that will provide revenue to Albany agencies;
- 4) Release to the public your submittals to LBNL;
- 5) Submit to the city for independent civil engineering review the costs included in your infrastructure estimates
- 6) Demonstrate how the proposal will reflect the other recommended guidelines and site standards from Voices to Vision for open space, development, revenue, and access;
- 7) Not pursue or support pursuit of a Measure C vote in Albany until the community has a full picture of the implications of its decision.
- 8) Financially support, through reimbursement to the City, a continued community information and engagement process conducted by FTA over the next six months (October 2011 through March 2012) about what is being proposed and what is possible.

The magnitude of the proposed projects warrants careful consideration by the Albany community. We need to continue the process of Voices to Vision 2 to allow for the exchange of information, ideas, and perspectives so that what is best for this property can emerge. The City Council will receive a brief report from FTA at its next meeting on September 19, along with recommendations about next steps. I look forward to meeting with you, with FTA, to discuss the issues raised in this letter.

Sincerely,



Beth Pollard
City Manager

cc: Albany City Council
Fern Tiger Associates