

THE CITY OF ALBANY

Historical Overview of the City of Albany

Albany's heritage is intertwined with its location along the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay, its temperate climate and its unique natural features. This environment supported the City's first known residents, a tribe of native Americans known as the Costanoans (coast dwellers) or Ohlone, who lived at the base of Albany Hill along Cerrito Creek. Shell fragments and grinding rocks found at Creekside Park serve as a reminder of these people, who lived in the Albany area until the early 19th Century, when the Spanish land barons arrived in California.

In 1820, the King of Spain granted a large portion of the East Bay to Don Luis Maria Peralta, who then divided the land among his three sons. Jose Domingo received the northern portion, which included the area of Berkeley and Albany, and used the land for cattle farming. The discovery of gold and the entry of California into the United States brought many settlers to the west, ultimately ending the land grant economy. The Peralta land was divided into small parcels and sold as farms or homesteads.

Gold mining created a demand for dynamite, and Albany became home to a number of powder plants at Fleming Point, which is the present site of Golden Gate Fields. This industry died out in 1905 after a series of explosions and fires. In 1906, the great San Francisco earthquake and fire occurred, which resulted in a large migration of families from San Francisco to the East Bay. This significantly impacted development in Albany and other nearby jurisdictions.

In 1908, area residents protested the dumping of Berkeley garbage in their community by incorporating. As the City of Ocean View, residents forbid the dumping of garbage from outside of the city. One year later, the voters changed the name of the city, primarily to distinguish the City from many other communities in the area with the name of Ocean View. In a vote of 38-6, Albany was chosen as the City's new name, in honor of the birthplace of the City's first mayor, Mayor Frank Roberts. In 1927, Albany voters adopted the City's first Charter, giving the City full control over its own affairs as long as there is no conflict with State or Federal laws.

The City of Albany Today

With a population of about 17,000 and more than 350,000 people living within a fifteen mile radius, Albany today combines a small-town ambience with its central location in a major metropolitan area. Albany prides itself on being a safe, community-oriented city, with strong services and programs for youth, families and the elderly. It is a city made up primarily of single family homes and small businesses, its small town character exemplified by its "Main Street", Solano Avenue. Albany's public schools have an outstanding reputation with student test scores at the middle and high school levels among the highest in the state.

City services include a Library/Community Center, the first Senior Center in Alameda County, a Teen Center and a Childcare Center. The City also has eight local parks, playgrounds and open space areas. Albany's population is highly educated and diverse, includes the U.C. Berkeley Family Housing community of University Village. The average age of Albany residents in 2000 was 34.5 years, reflecting the City's attraction as a location for young families seeking a family friendly environment.

Mission of the City of Albany

The City has adopted the following Mission Statement to express the purpose of its municipal government:

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