



A Community Vision for Albany's Waterfront

April 5, 2010

Fern Tiger Associates



April 5, 2010

Mayor Joanne Wile
Vice Mayor Farid Javandel
Councilmembers Marge Atkinson, Robert Lieber, Peggy Thomsen
City of Albany
1000 San Pablo Avenue
Albany, CA 94706

Dear Mayor Wile and Members of the Albany City Council,

Enclosed find a copy of our final report and recommendations related to *Voices to Vision* - a unique community visioning process that brought together about one in every ten Albany adults to discuss the future of the waterfront.

In dozens of participatory group sessions, people shared their concerns and priorities, and learned about those of their neighbors. They considered their personal dreams and goals for the site, along with a host of environmental, land use, economic, and other considerations. Out of these spirited discussions, a vision for the Albany waterfront emerged -- a vision that does not belong to any one person. Rather, it's a composite vision created from a range of community voices that we believe captures the most critical elements of this two-year conversation.

Fern Tiger Associates' (FTA) goal, in this report, is to present both the story of *Voices to Vision* (as the process came to be called) and the data and findings that led to the recommendations. The "story" is intended to provide a chronicle of the thinking that led to the design of the community process and to capture the challenges, frustrations, excitement, and successes of the last two years. The report is intended to document *Voices to Vision*, with sources and materials, so that current (and future) Albany residents will know what transpired from start to finish in this process. The "story" is important because it lays the groundwork for the relevance of the data gathered during nearly 50 community sessions -- each with unique opinions, ideas, and biases; each attended by people with varying degrees of history related to the waterfront; and each with a variety of people who make up the city of Albany.

Two years ago, FTA – together with the Albany community – embarked on the *Voices to Vision* process. From the start, FTA hoped to take an open-minded approach, free of preconceived ideas and expectations. To design the community process, FTA conducted intensive research and interviewed more than 80 stakeholders in order to understand everything from what residents

knew about the site to where they got their news and information; from their experiences with previous efforts to get community input on the waterfront to their sense of the key city players.

Even during the first round of community sessions (May and June 2009), it wasn't entirely clear how the process would unfold: How many residents would participate? How would they perceive *Voices to Vision*? In what direction would the process take the community?

In the end, nearly 1,200 Albany residents participated in *Voices to Vision*. And, despite the contentious nature of previous discussions about the waterfront, the *Voices to Vision* sessions were inclusive, civil, creative, and, above all, productive. The spirit with which Albany residents approached *Voices to Vision* reflects their tremendous pride in this city, as well as their commitment to ensuring a sustainable future.

Thank you for the opportunity to work on this process with the city and the community. We hope this final report, and community vision for the waterfront, will help guide decisionmaking in meaningful ways.

Sincerely,

Fern Tiger
President, Fern Tiger Associates

enc. *Voices to Vision* Final Report - April 5, 2010, with full appendices

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

For four decades, the 190-acre Albany waterfront has been perceived as the focus of a bitter tug-of-war between those who hope to see commercial development at the 102-acre, privately-owned portion that is currently Golden Gate Fields Racetrack (to maintain and/or increase tax revenues to the city) and those who favor transforming that parcel into a public park (open space). Over the years, numerous proposals have been put forward by private developers and by the landowners -- seeking to "maximize" the use of the land, for what is sometimes defined as "highest and best use." Citywide discussions of these proposals, held over the years, neither eased tensions nor clarified what residents want for the site. Rather, they deepened the divide between the two "sides."

**"One generation plants
the trees; another gets the
shade"** - Chinese Proverb

The discord over the waterfront was intensified in 2005-06 when, in the wake of the most recent developer-driven proposal for the site, a slate of "pro-park/anti-commercial development" candidates was elected to the Albany City Council. To complicate the situation, the racetrack had experienced a significant decline in attendance over the years, as a result of off-track and Internet betting, which impacted its tax commitment to the city. Once widely considered the most important local business, the racetrack was beginning to be seen by many in a new light. Its potential closure appeared to some residents an opportunity to turn the property into a large public park; others felt the lack of public funds to purchase, transform, and maintain the land, and the need for replacement tax revenue, should guide decisions about the waterfront.

With the future of the site in question, and the contentious nature of the issue at a fever pitch, the newly-installed city council decided to take a proactive stance. Rather than wait to react to a proposal from yet another developer, the city would find out what Albany residents really wanted at the waterfront. After all, a vote of residents was required in order to make any use changes to the site, as a result of a ballot initiative passed in 1990 that froze the restrictive zoning.

In March of 2008, the city of Albany hired Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to conceive, design, and facilitate an appropriate process to educate and engage residents in a process to develop a shared vision for the future of the waterfront. By selecting a firm that specialized in public engagement work (rather than land use planning), the city signaled its commitment to community participation. This was to be a process in which people would provide their perspectives, ideas, and goals, rather than react to a fully-formed plan or proposal.

In response, FTA set out to design a process that responded to the concerns, issues, and perceptions of the community, and that offered opportunities for residents to provide meaningful input. Based on the complex history of waterfront

planning in Albany, FTA knew it needed to convince residents of the objectivity and neutrality of a new process; to build trust in the open and inclusive nature of *Voices to Vision* (as the process came to be named); to educate the broad community with facts related to the waterfront; and to establish the reliability of the information presented.

Thus, after nine months of research and strategizing, FTA began the outreach process in earnest. Several weeks before the launch of the first round of community sessions, FTA mailed, first class, a 20-page tabloid-sized publication to every Albany address. Filled with rich text, photographs, maps, and graphics, the newsletter covered the environmental, land use, economic, historic, and regulatory issues relevant to waterfront development. A comprehensive list of frequently asked questions was organized by topic area to allow easy access to specific facts, and a glossary of commonly used ‘planning terms’ was also included.

In May and June of 2009, FTA facilitated nearly 40 identical sessions, which ranged in size from 10 to 50 participants. The centerpiece of the sessions was the Albany Waterfront Game. Small groups of up to five residents sat together at

tables to discuss their desires for, and concerns about, the site. They had a site map (scaled at 1”:200’), and plastic chips color-coded by land use, (e.g. hotel, museum, retail, open space, etc.), tax revenue information based on “use,” and data about the height of any potential building. Working together, each table group determined which uses to include, and where to place the chips

(commercial and/or open space and/or public benefit) on the site, by considering and discussing the desired amount of open space, tax revenue generated, community benefits, and site concerns.

FTA organized the sessions by neighborhood, and held them in public spaces like the library/community center and senior center, in order to make the process feel open and inviting. By limiting participation at these sessions to Albany residents, and allowing individuals to attend just one session, FTA sought to address two common complaints about earlier citywide processes – that people who lived outside of Albany dominated the discussion and that sequential meetings attract a small core of repeat attendees who are fixated on the waterfront rather than “everyday residents” who care about the waterfront as well as other local issues, and do not have the time to invest in multiple meetings.

To gather as wide a range of participants as possible, additional sessions were offered for non-English speakers (Spanish and Chinese) and those needing child

“The whole waterfront thing is so needlessly contentious. People who agree 90% of the time are at each other’s throats when it comes to the waterfront issue.”

BY THE NUMBERS

- more than **5,000 pages** of documents reviewed
- more than **80 interviews**
- **10 people** researching and fact checking publication
- 20-page tabloid size publication sent to **9,356 Albany addresses**
- more than **1,000 Albany adults** participated, at least once
- **1,257 adults** RSVPed
- **114 Albany adults** participated at all three opportunities (community session one, online survey, community session two)
- about **100 Albany youth** participated in phase one workshops
- sessions took place at **6 locations**
- **26 presentations** made to Albany commissions and city council
- process took almost **two years**
- phase one included **38 community sessions** over six weeks; phase two included **11 sessions** in one week
- sessions offered in **three languages**
- **1,276 game pieces** created for phase one “waterfront game”
- over **45,000 pieces of data** analyzed
- **21,114 attribute** cards collected in phase two sessions
- **9,094 postcards** with individual pass codes mailed for survey; **9,094 postcards** delivered as reminders for phase one; **9,094 postcards** mailed prior to phase two.
- **143 questions** answered in the publication and on the website

care. Separate sessions were held for regional stakeholders who lived outside of Albany, and for students at Albany High School.

At the conclusion of the first round of sessions, FTA had 199 detailed, annotated site maps. To clarify some terms (for example, the definition of “open space”), and to reach an even wider audience, FTA created a questionnaire that was available online in November. Then, over one weekend in January 2010, FTA held ten newly-designed, phase two community sessions for Albany residents (and one identical session for non-residents). The focal point for these final sessions was a series of six “conceptual” site plans (specifically related to the 102-acre portion of the property), which were developed out of the ideas and thinking generated by the community in the first round of 38 sessions, combined with additional information from the questionnaire. The scenarios were vetted by experts (economists, planners, architects, geotechnical engineers, transportation planners, environmentalists, public safety officials, cost estimators, etc.) and represented a range of options – from a 98-acre park to a mix of open space and development to a concept that included a good deal of commercial development to one that retained the racetrack. Residents were encouraged to discuss the conceptual site plans at their tables of six, and then to weigh in as individuals on the various attributes of the plans. Feedback gathered throughout *Voices to Vision* was used to inform the development of a set of guidelines for Albany’s waterfront (which are included in the full report - *A Community Vision for Albany’s Waterfront: April 5, 2010*).

About one in 10 adult residents participated in one or more ways to voice their ideas about the future of the waterfront. Residents appear to have a newfound sense of hope about the site, with more than half of those who participated saying they believe that *Voices to Vision* will lead to a coherent vision for the future of the waterfront; and an additional 35% reporting that they “hope it will.” Moreover, residents who were known to have had extremely different opinions about the future of the site worked together to establish shared concerns and desires. Out of these discussions, and out of the “common ground” that residents found with one another, a vision for the future of the Albany waterfront was articulated. It recognizes the importance of the entire site and of the extended impact the Albany waterfront has on the region. In summary, the Albany community envisions:

*a 190-acre waterfront that is a model
of environmental and economic sustainability;
that supports a multi-generational community,
small-scale, independently-owned businesses, and
local arts, culture, and cuisine.*

“It was fun to think like a planner and work with “building blocks” to best use this precious space. I thought it would be boring, but it was fun.”

“This was a creative take on the ‘town meeting.’ I think all ideas were expressed and considered. No one dominated and no one ‘zoned out.’ I spend a lot of time in meetings and this was a wonderful approach.”

“I liked the balanced approach, particularly in light of the absurd polarization that pro-environmental and pro-development camps adopted, when really, most people want to consider options on both sides.”

In addition to the detailed, recommended site design guidelines which are a major component of this report and which grew from *Voices to Vision*, “*A Community Vision for Albany’s Waterfront*” includes:

- **The Story of a Process** provides a brief history of the waterfront site, as well as insight into the city’s decision to engage the community in a discussion about the future of its waterfront. Along with a description of how the city selected Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to design and facilitate a community process, this section describes the research and interviews that informed the development of the process, and the decision to organize community participation with a “block-by-block” approach.
- **Voices to Vision Phase One** describes the first phase of engagement, including outreach efforts to encourage participation and the design of the two-hour interactive community sessions. The session tools and activities, including exercises to explore a vision for both the city and the waterfront, are described. This section concludes with an analysis of the findings from the nearly 40 community sessions and participation of 650 people.
- **Surveying Albany Residents** discusses the online questionnaire, which was created to provide residents with another means to participate in *Voices to Vision*, and as a way to gain clarity about key terms and concepts. This section includes results of the online questionnaire.
- **Voices to Vision: Phase Two** explores the second phase of engagement, including how 10 sessions held over one weekend in January 2010 were publicized, designed, and facilitated. The format and activities of the community sessions are described, along with an analysis of findings.
- **Reflections** offers observations about the Albany community, the process by which nearly one in every ten residents came together to participate in *Voices to Vision*, and the collective vision that those voices helped to create.
- **Appendix** is a comprehensive collection of tools and materials relevant to each of the above-listed sections. It includes the nearly 200 community-generated maps from the May/June 2009 sessions; comments from the community through e-mail and other communiques; a sampling of photographs taken to document the *Voices to Vision* process; presentations made over the two-year period to the city council and various city commissions; reduced versions of all publications, handouts, the *Voices to Vision* website - www.voicestovision.com; the original request for qualifications (RFQ) issues by the city of Albany to identify a firm to engage with the city; FTA’s proposal; and detailed quantitative data generated through the *Voices to Vision* process.

A Community Vision for the Albany Waterfront*

** Throughout the Voices to Vision process, the "waterfront" was described as the 190 acres, west of 180/580 from the Berkeley border to the Richmond border. This includes 88 acres of already-designated public open space and 102 acres of privately owned property, currently used for Golden Gate Fields Racetrack. Although the guidelines included in this section of the report focus on the 102-acre portion of the site, it was important to consider the broader context of Albany's waterfront when gathering community perspectives and making appropriate recommendations. The recommended guidelines include the addition of 75 acres (minimum) of new dedicated open space which combine with the existing adjacent 88 acres of Albany's waterfront to create a total of 163 acres of public green space.*

Given the desire of the vast majority of Albany residents to ensure that any change to the current use of the waterfront property (190 acres) preserve a significant amount of tax revenue for the city, every effort has been made to calculate and analyze the potential municipal income stream from the uses residents appear to support for the property. That said, and with information provided by numerous experts, the following should be understood when reviewing the guidelines:

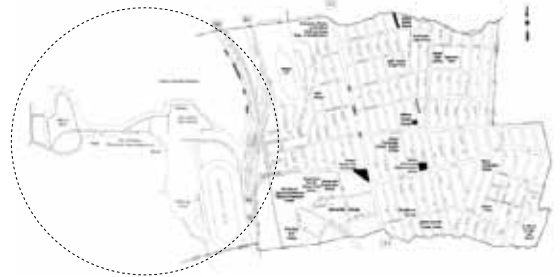
- the desires of many Albany residents with regard to "ideal uses" restrict options that might support the tax revenue they hope to generate;*
- Voices to Vision focused solely on the 190-acre waterfront and lacked the resources to analyze the potential for tax generation on non-waterfront property throughout the city of Albany;*
- the vision and site guidelines attempt to reconcile what the community hopes the waterfront can be, with the community's expressed desires for tax revenue, creating a difficult blend (As a result, several illustrations and descriptions of possible applications of the guidelines, to the 27-acres of potential built area, indicate scenarios that might be "ideal" with regard to the community vision, but not reflecting conventional wisdom about development synergies);*
- all economic data is estimated and preliminary; given the conceptual nature of the process (and the city's desire to understand the community's "vision"), market feasibility and development costs were not analyzed.*

A Community Vision for the Albany Waterfront

The city of Albany - home to nearly 17,000 residents - is situated on the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay. Its presence on the Bay is framed by 190 acres (88 of which are publicly owned and 102 of which are privately owned), much of which is landfill and borders the Interstate Highway (I-80/580). While this report "A Community Vision for the Albany Waterfront" focuses primarily on the potential for the 102-acre portion of the site, the community's vision recognizes the importance of the whole site and of the extended impact it has on the region.

The Albany community envisions:

A 190-acre waterfront that is a model of environmental and economic sustainability – that supports a multi-generational community, small-scale, independently-owned businesses; and local arts, culture, and cuisine



As the guidelines indicate, it is the desire of the vast majority of Albany residents to expand the current 88-acre public open space area at the waterfront, while simultaneously making every effort to retain (and possibly even increase) the tax revenue currently generated by activities at the site. It is also the desire of residents to ensure that any new open space at the site take into consideration the immediate and long-term municipal costs related to park development and operations.

With the goals of the community in mind, the recommendations included in this report focus heavily on balancing the desire for new dedicated open space with the concern for revenues, and have been developed to simultaneously create a major public park (about 163 acres, with a broad range of uses) -- an offering by a small community as its contribution to the East Bay shoreline park system -- and 27 acres of commercial and nonprofit development that will be consistent with Albany's values.



The following Site Planning and Design Guidelines are meant to be used as a tool for both the city of Albany and the current or future owner(s) of the privately-owned, 102-acre site in Albany (currently the home of Golden Gate Fields) to effectively develop the site as its use, or ownership, changes in the near- or long-term. It should be noted that while these guidelines are based on extensive input and participation by more than 1,200 Albany residents (as described in the findings section of this report), Albany's Measure C does not allow any development that requires changes to the current zoning (not reflected in the guidelines) without a majority vote of Albany residents. Thus, these guidelines do not override current zoning, but rather reflect a vision that it appears would be supported by a majority of residents.

The site planning and design guidelines reflect the community's desire to create a "place" that respects, protects, and enhances the waterfront while simultaneously acknowledging the importance of tax revenue to support the quality of life that Albany residents desire. It is well understood that the Albany waterfront has the potential to be a regional asset, but that as a part of Albany, it is the people of Albany who have the power to make decisions that they believe reflect the values, goals, and aspirations of their community.

The guidelines indicate the significance, potential, and challenges of the site, in relation to:

- its size (102 acres of currently private land adjacent to 88 acres of public open space)
- its location (at the edge of the San Francisco Bay, bordered by the cities of Berkeley and Richmond and the I-80/580 freeway)
- the site's physical condition and complex ownership

Underlying the guidelines, is Albany's strong commitment to create and enhance public open space at the waterfront; to acknowledge and support the broader regional plan to create a continuous shoreline park; to restore and improve the site's wetlands, marshlands, and other natural features; and to enable an appropriate type, scale, and quality of private development that reflects Albany's goals for economic and environmental sustainability, while simultaneously respecting the city's and the waterfront's uniqueness.

To most effectively achieve the intentions established by the community throughout the *Voices to Vision* process, Fern Tiger Associates invested a good deal of time to understand the desires of the community, the trade-offs they would consider, the values they shared, and what they hoped to see guide decisionmaking for the future of the waterfront site. These guidelines are divided into six discrete but interconnected parts:

- built area and dedicated new open space
- height limitations
- allowable uses for any structures
- site design and architectural quality
- financial implications

Additionally, a set of illustrative site plans are included to indicate some of the possible ways the site could be developed within the restrictions noted in the guidelines.

- **Built Area and Dedicated Open Space:** Delineates the minimum amount of new dedicated open space (including wetlands restoration, trails, restrooms, completion of the Bay Trail, and parking associated with the public park) recommended to be required for any development on the 102 acre site; describes the maximum amount of built footprint (including associated circulation, and parking) for any commercial development; suggests acreage intended to be dedicated for public purpose structures (e.g. museum, aquarium, amphitheater, interpretive center)
- **Height Limitations:** Describes maximum height limits for the site, and if necessary for particular sub-zones.
- **Allowable Uses (within "Built Area"):** Defines specific building types and amounts of recommended commercial uses and open space recommended to be allowed at the waterfront; notes restrictions related to uses and preferred characteristics
- **Site Design and Architectural Quality:** Articulates criteria and standards related to environmental sustainability, architectural design, site planning, and innovation
- **Financial Implications:** Includes expectations intended to be fulfilled by private and/or public developers

Recommended Guidelines

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES¹

1. Built Area and Dedicated Open Space

“Built” footprint (including associated circulation, roads, and parking) of any commercial or public structures (excluding amenities related directly to park activities) should not exceed a total of 27 acres (26% of the total land area of the site).

The minimum amount of new dedicated public open space shall be 75 acres (74% of the total land area of the site). Public open space includes:

- wetlands (minimum of 10 acres, intended to be restored)
- roads/parking to support public access to new/existing open space/park at the waterfront
- public restrooms
- Bay Trail sited near shoreline plus additional trails, bike paths, and related bike parking
- boardwalk at wetlands
- shuttle stop to downtown Albany
- areas for athletic activities (e.g., soccer, tennis, basketball, etc.)

It is recommended that all built structures conform to the following standards:

- minimum 300’ setback from shoreline at Fleming Point
- minimum 100’ setback from shoreline north and south of Fleming Point
- No buildings (or associated circulation, roads, parking) should extend beyond the “building area” limits (indicated on the diagram to the right of this page), with the exception of any necessary access roads as determined by public safety officials.
- No retail development on Fleming Point.

2. Height Limitations

- No structure shall exceed three stories (or 40’, whichever is smaller) in height.

3. Allowable Uses within Built Area

- Hotel (minimum 100 rooms; maximum 300 rooms, except as noted below)²
- Restaurants, Bars, and Cafes³
- Conference Center, Meeting Facilities, and Related Support Structures
- Retail (which could include non-hotel-related restaurants, bars, and cafes) (maximum of 250,000 net SF space⁴)

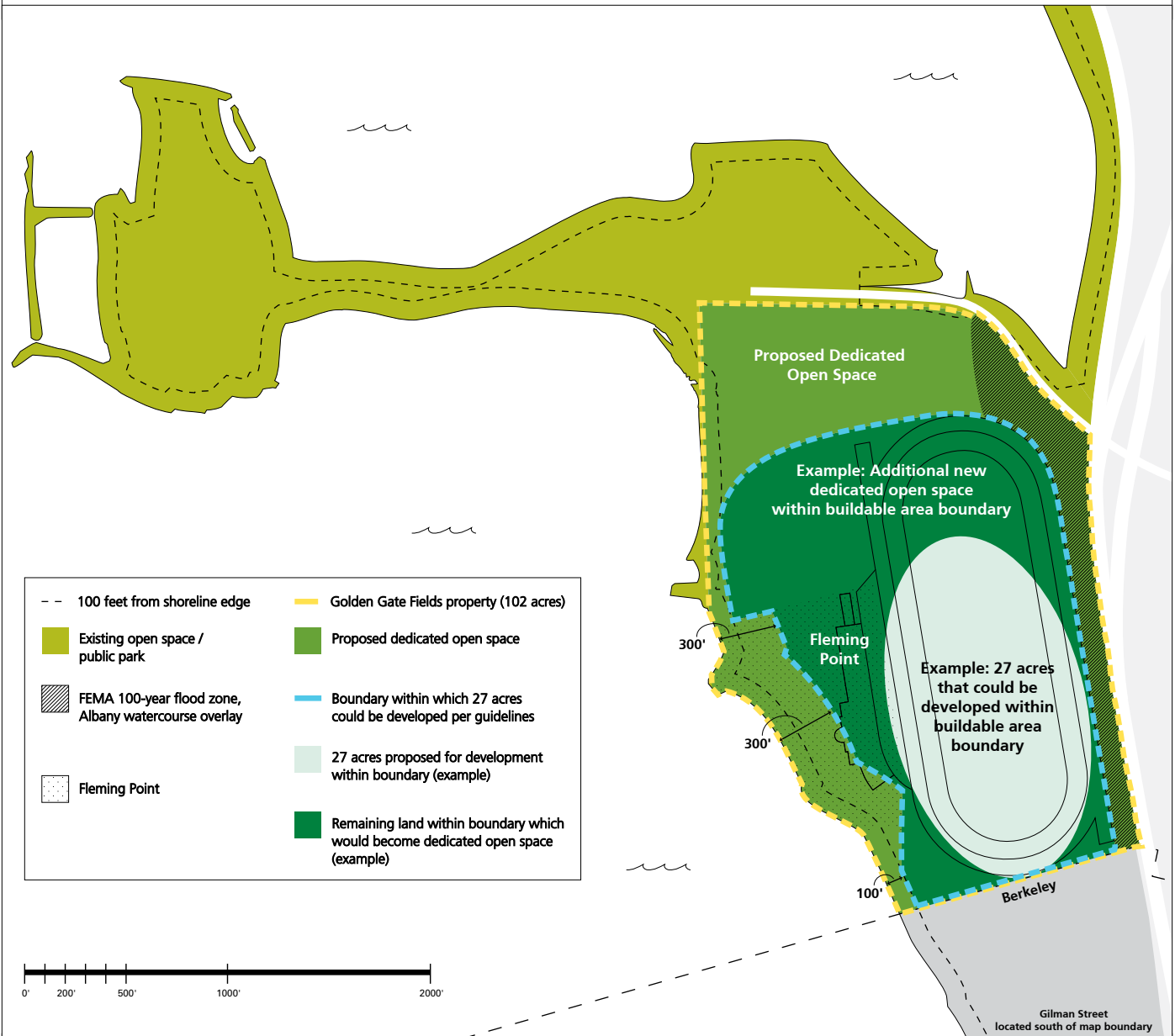
1. These guidelines focus on the 102 acres currently used by GGF. Beyond any guidelines set by the city of Albany, it is understood that numerous public agencies have regulatory responsibility for the site. These guidelines are not intended to override those regulations.

2. In order for a developer to be permitted to construct retail uses at the site, a hotel must be constructed; eco-hotel preferred. Hotel could increase to 400 rooms, but any increase beyond 300, triggers the reduction of the amount of allowable retail.

3. Albany desires restaurants/cafes featuring locally-grown, organic foods (ideally grown at on-site community gardens); mix of restaurant types encouraged (e.g., high end, casual, family focus, cafes, view, etc.)

4. Community preference to limit retail area to minimum required for economic viability; “big box” prohibited; locally-owned retail encouraged, especially those not adversely affecting other Albany retail; outdoor/water recreation retail/rentals desired

DIAGRAM: NEW OPEN SPACE AND BUILDABLE AREAS OF SITE



This diagram is intended to illustrate the proportion of potential built area (27 acres out of 190 acres) within the total waterfront property. As indicated, the guidelines restrict "development" from 163 acres (86%) of the current waterfront property (including 75 acres or 74% of the current GGF property); allowing "development" on only 27 acres (14% of the total waterfront zone or 26% of the current GGF property) within particular boundaries that exclude any buildings from areas adjacent to the shore, at the northern end of GGF property, or in the FEMA 100-year flood area. This diagram is for illustrative purposes only.

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES continued

Within the 27 acres where built development is permitted (per above), a minimum of three acres shall be dedicated to the community for the creation of one or more of the following public educational amenities:

- museum
- aquarium
- interpretive center
- amphitheater (or other performance/arts venues)
- other educational, cultural, environmental, or similar purpose uses

4. Site Design and Architectural Quality

- All buildings to be LEED-certified and/or GreenPoint Rated.
- All built structures to have photovoltaics and/or native plant landscaping on roofs.
- Potential for cogeneration and tri-generation to be developed.
- Development of open space and buildings to take into account potential rise in sea level.
- All parking areas and roads to be pervious pavement, draining toward Bay; runoff to be directed toward drainage swales for natural filtration.
- Gray water recovery systems to store and distribute reclaimed water for landscape irrigation where possible; native/other naturally drought-resistant plants in other areas.
- Transportation and access improvement to be addressed, including shuttle service to Solano and San Pablo avenues and BART, as appropriate.
- Existing fishing pier to be renovated.
- Creation of alternative energy (wind, solar, etc.) throughout site required, as appropriate.
- Water recreation to be supported through opportunities for equipment rentals, storage, restrooms, etc.
- Buildings to be designed to respect the site, with contextually-appropriate materials and colors; to preserve views; to restore and improve natural features; to respond to solar orientation; and prevailing winds for natural ventilation
- Site development should support the primary objective of open space, preservation, and outdoor recreation, while enhancing the unique qualities of the waterfront
- Award-winning architectural and landscape design

5. Financial Implications

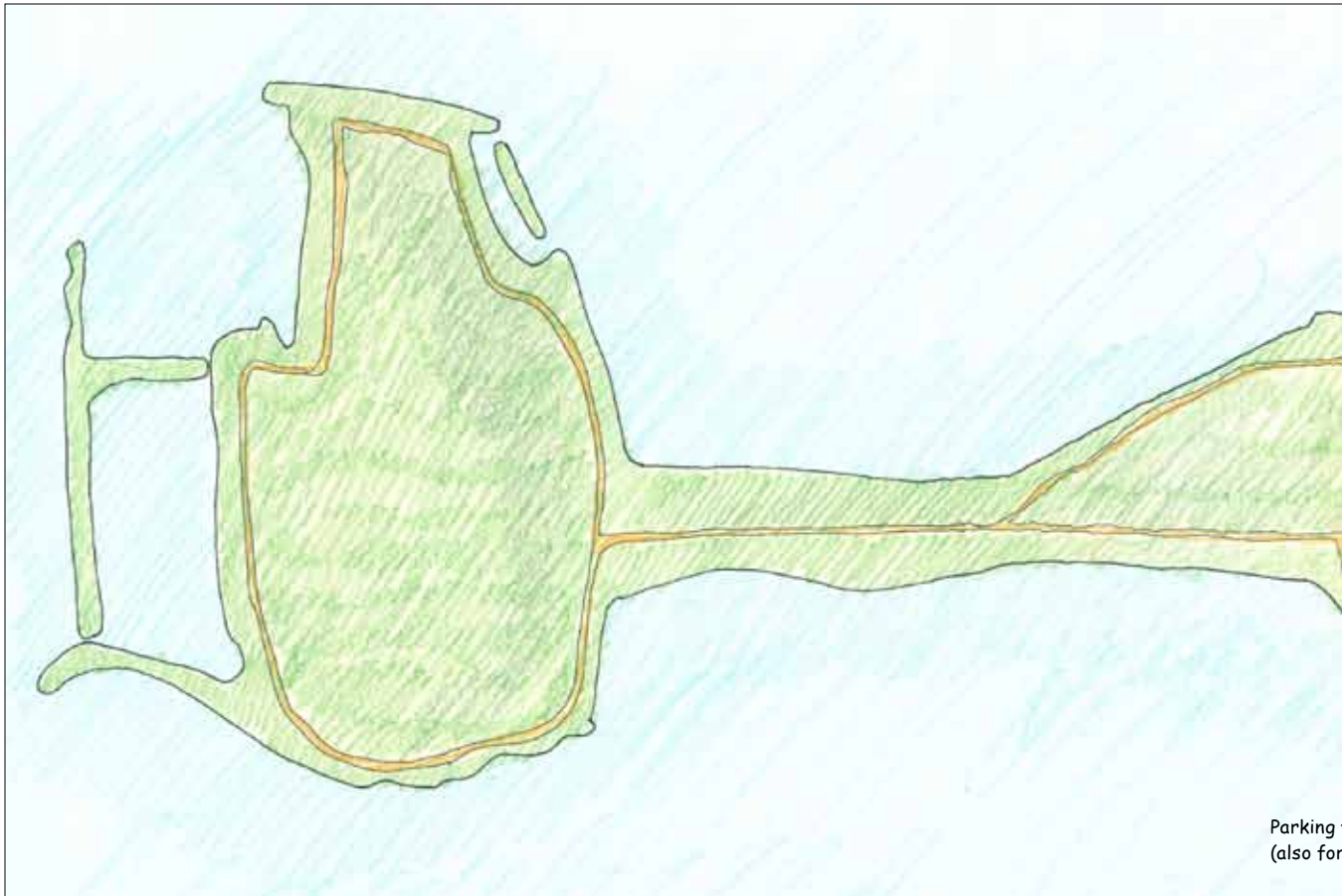
- Developer will be expected to provide funds for the acquisition, development, and ongoing maintenance of new dedicated public open space at the waterfront, in direct proportion to the amount of building (sq. ft) approved by the city
- Developer expected to provide funds dedicated to the creation of a public education amenity (described above), in addition to the set-aside of three acres for this purpose
- Every effort will be made by the developer to assist the city in replacing its temporary loss of tax revenues during demolition and construction of new uses at the site.

Illustrative Site Concept Maps

Eleven illustrative site concept maps were created and included in this report (see pages 22-43) to illustrate how the 190-acre Albany waterfront site might be organized and/or developed as a result of the constraints of the recommended guidelines. Each map, and corresponding text box, indicates the type, amount, and placement of a program (uses) that falls within the recommended guidelines, and which meets the criteria of the full set of guidelines (see pages 18 - 20); i.e. the guidelines include numerous standards that are not noted in each map, but which are critical to the intentions of the recommendations. The 11 maps differ in several ways:

- location of potential built development is shown in several different areas of the site; all within the buildable boundary line
- number of potential hotel rooms and potential amount of retail space
- amount of acreage required for different building types (e.g. three-story hotel in one structure vs. multiple structures scattered on site)
- amenities for public use (three acres of dedicated community use)
- projected tax revenues¹

1. Tax revenue information noted on these maps are estimates based on current knowledge and data; does not reflect land or development costs, nor market feasibility analysis.



Parking
(also for

Illustrative Site Concept #1

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This site concept includes a 2-story, 100-room boutique (eco-) hotel sitting atop Fleming Point, with four levels of terraced parking below, cascading down the eastern slope of the hill. The roofs of both the hotel and parking terraces are green. Just north of the hotel, a small structure houses water recreation rentals and a café, with adjacent parking that also serves the 163-acre public park.

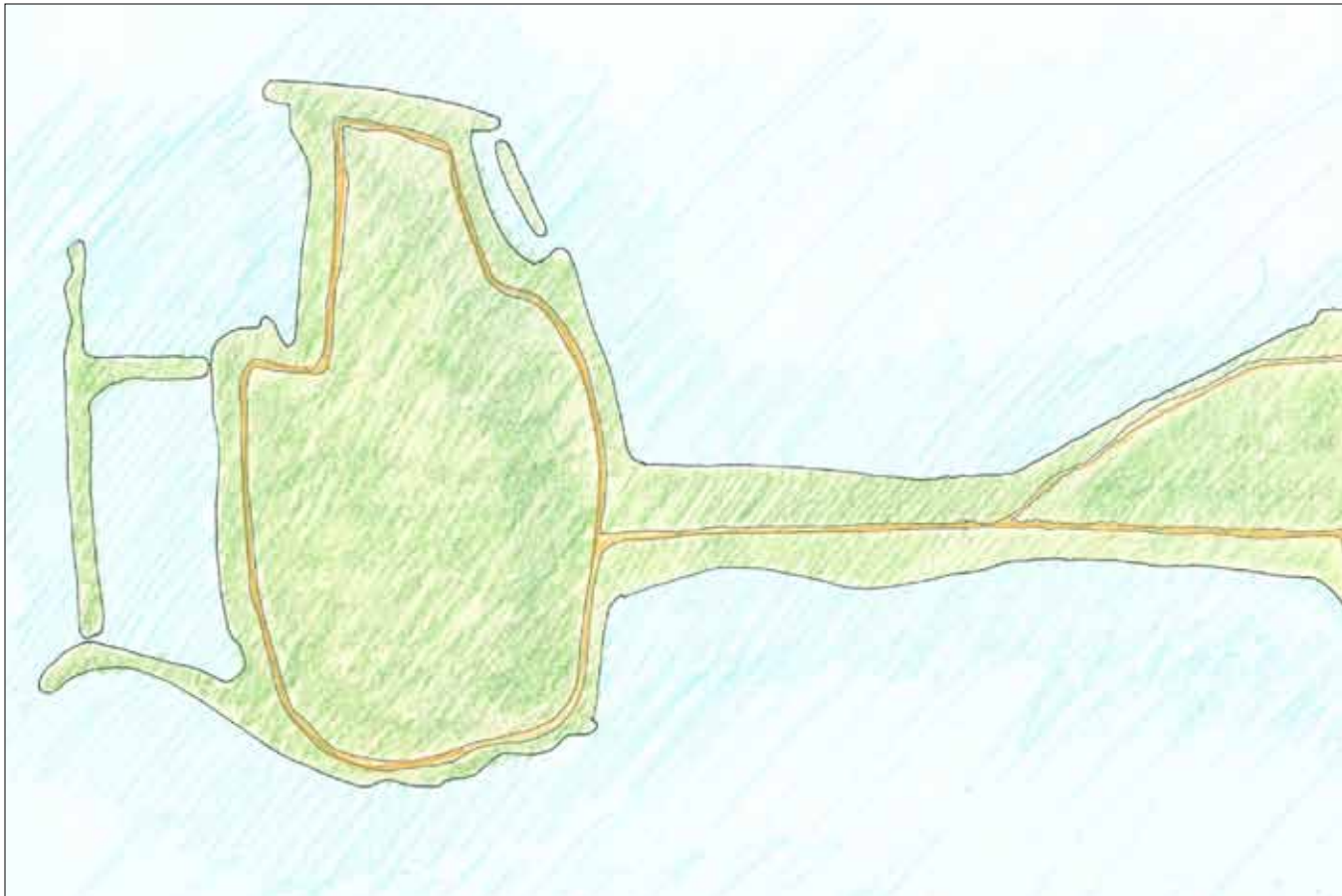
A "shopping village" (with 250,000 net sq. ft. of retail/restaurant space) is located southeast of the hotel (below Fleming Point), near the southern edge of the site. A one-story (two level) parking structure is at the eastern (freeway) edge of the site. An interpretative center; a series of stalls for small vendors; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and parking for the public park are situated at the northern portion of the "built area." In addition, this scheme features: a windmill 'farm;' completion of the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; and public restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan could generate annual gross tax revenues of approximately \$1,700,000. *(Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.)*



This diagram shows Concept #1 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).





Illustrative Site Concept #2

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

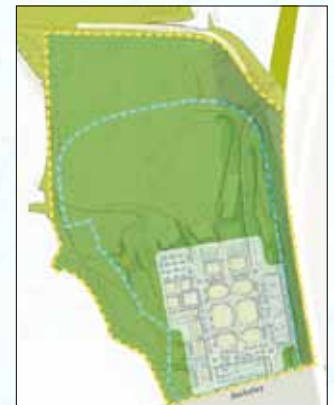
This site concept includes a 2-story, 200-room hotel/conference center above a ground floor retail/restaurant complex (250,000 net square feet) including vegetable gardens, at the northern edge of the "built area." Parking for the hotel and retail area is provided in two 3-story parking structures, adjacent to I-80/580, (near the east and south property lines). The top floors of each of the parking structures are shaded by photovoltaic panels.

To the west, at the northern edge of the developed area, is a museum. Water recreation rentals and a café are at the southwest part of the site.

Among other features, the plan includes: 163-acre public park, completion of the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; viewpoints atop a restored Fleming Point; a public plaza; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan could generate gross tax revenue of approximately \$2 million, annually.

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #2 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).

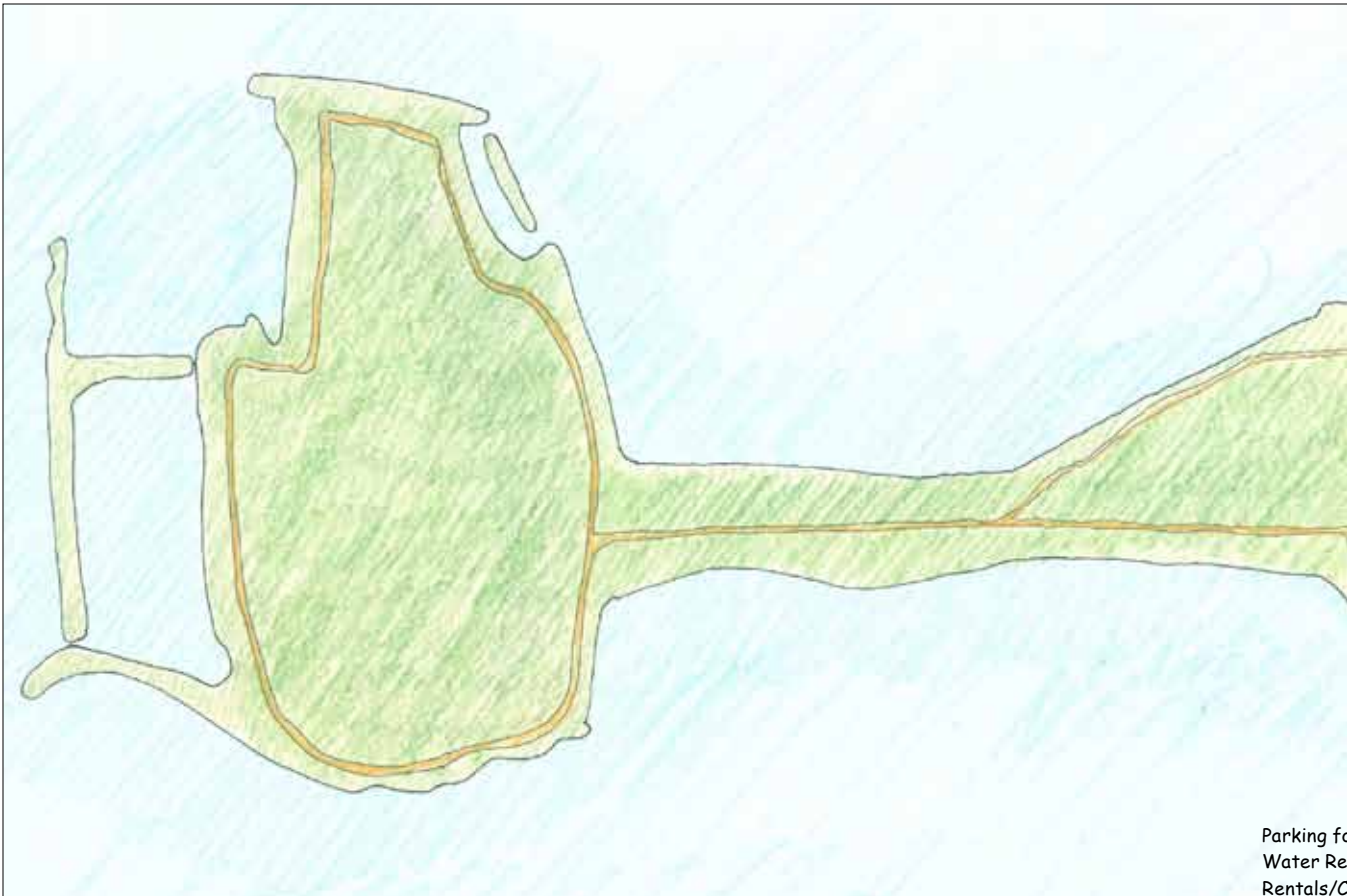
Parking f
Restaura
(150 Cars

L
F

Muse
Retai

2
C
F
C





Illustrative Site Concept #3

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This site concept includes a 3-story, 300-room hotel/conference center located on Fleming Point, with 5 levels of terraced parking below, cascading down the eastern slope of the hill. The roofs of both the hotel and parking terraces are covered with vegetation. Just to the north, a small building houses water recreation rentals and a café, with adjacent parking that also serves the 163-acre public park.

A "shopping village" (with 250,000 net square feet of retail and restaurant space) is located to the southeast of the hotel (below Fleming Point), near the southern edge of the site. To its east is located a 3-level parking garage. An interpretative center; stalls for small vendors; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and parking for the public park are located at the northern edge. In addition, the plan features: the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; and public restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan would generate annual gross tax revenues of approximately \$2.4 million.

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #3 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).

Parking for
Water Re
Rentals/C

Water Re
Rentals/C

Hotel

300 R
above



Restored Wetlands with Boardwalks

Drop-off

Drop-off

Drop-off

Room Hotel (2 and 3 Floors Conference Facilities)

Terraced Parking Garage Built into Hill with Green Roofs (550 Cars/5 Floors)

Shopping Village (250,000 net square feet)

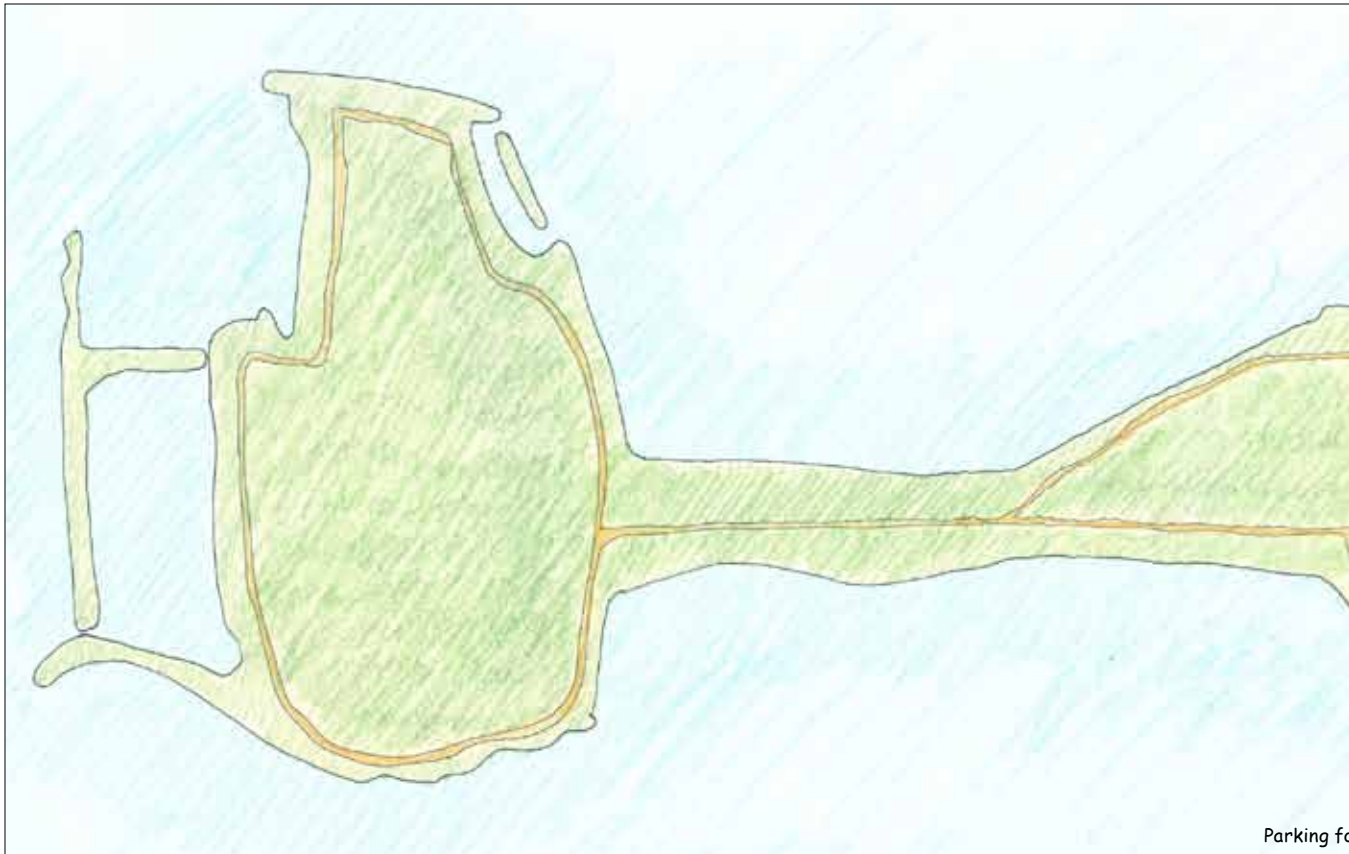
Parking for Park and Interpretive Center (90 Cars)

Shuttle Stop

Vendor Stalls

Plaza

Parking Garage (600 Cars/3 Floors) Top Floor Shaded by Photovoltaic Panels



Illustrative Site Concept #4

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan shows a 2-story, 200-room boutique hotel atop Fleming Point, with terraced parking underneath, on the eastern slope of the hill; roofs of the hotel and parking terraces are green. An aquarium, water recreation rentals, and a café, with adjacent parking that also serves the 163+-acre public park, are located north of the hotel.

A “shopping street” (170,000 net sq. ft. retail/restaurants) is southeast of the hotel (below Fleming Point). A parking area (for visitors to retail and sports fields) is adjacent to I-80/580. To the east of the parking lot are several sports fields. In addition, the plan shows: a windmill ‘farm,’ the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan would generate \$1 million in tax revenue from the hotel, and up to \$700,000 from retail sales. (Note: economists are skeptical about the viability of the small amount of retail shown on this concept, but it is included here because it physically meets both the standards set by the guidelines and reflects closely the desire of Albany residents to minimize retail, while retaining tax revenues.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #4 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).

Parking for
Water Re
Rentals/C

Water Re
Rentals/C

200 R
(2 Floo



Trails

Restored Wetlands with Boardwalks

Windmill Farm

Recreation Park and
Recreation
Cafe (250 Cars)

Recreation
Cafe

Aquarium

Drop-off and
Shuttle Stop

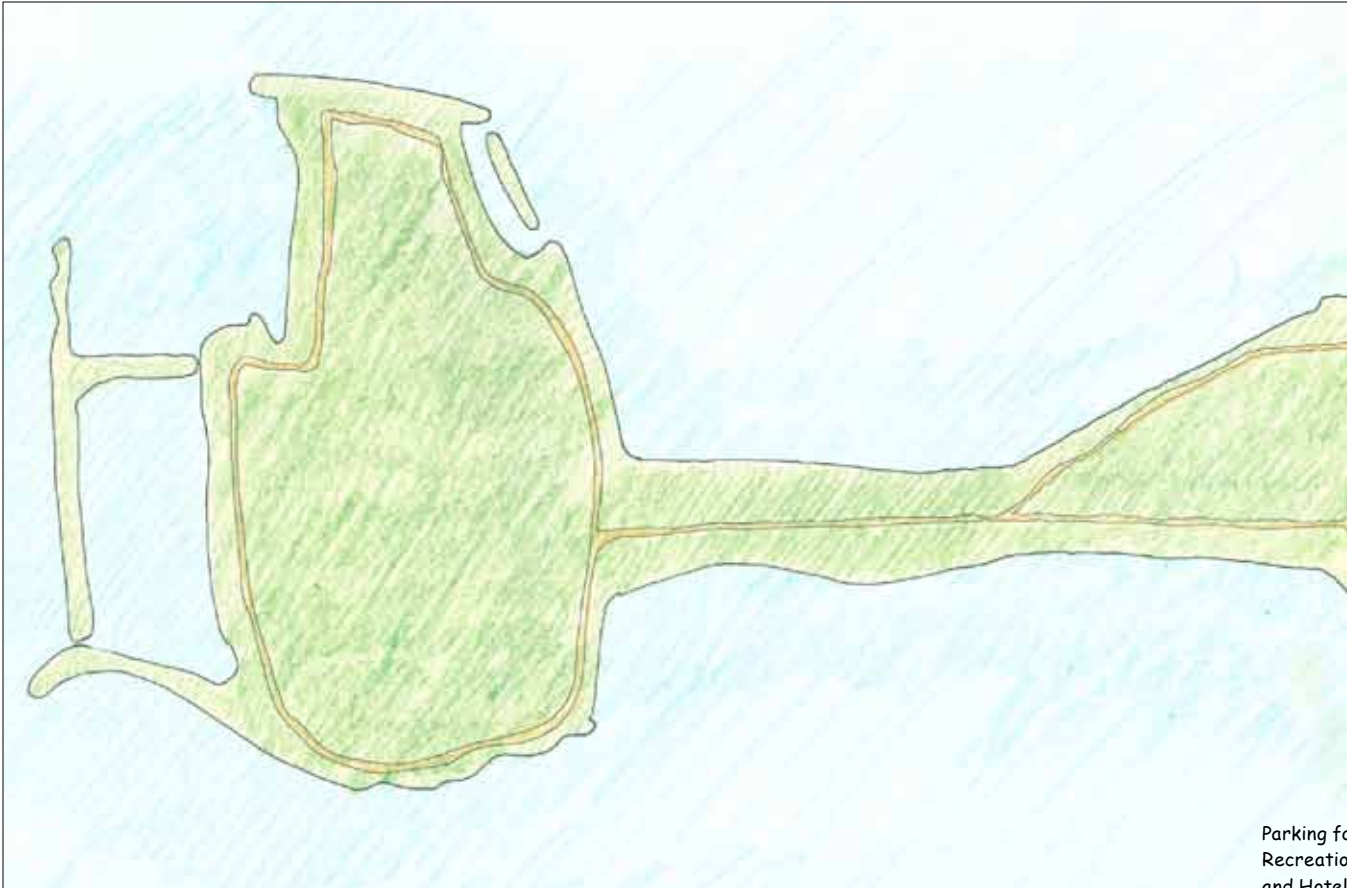
Sports Fields

Room Boutique Hotel
(Cars)

Open Parking Lot
(400 Cars)

Terraced Parking
Garage with Green
Roofs (550 Cars)

Shopping Street
(170,000 net square feet)



Illustrative Site Concept #5

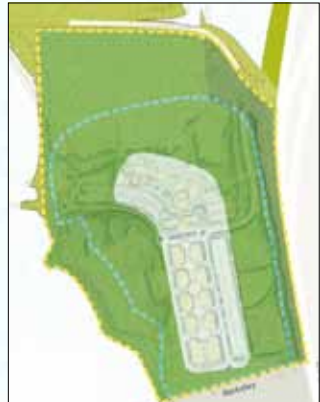
See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan includes a 200-room 'Asilomar style' boutique hotel, with 2-story buildings clustered northeast of Fleming Point. Surface lots north of the hill provide parking for both the hotel and water recreation rentals; additional hotel parking is at the east edge of the site.

A "shopping street" (170,000 net sq. ft. retail/restaurants) is south of the hotel (east of Fleming Point). A parking garage (adjacent to I-80/580) serves the shopping area and sports fields. The plan also features: the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; a viewpoint atop a restored Fleming Point; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park.

Like Illustrative Site Concept #4, this plan could generate \$1 million tax revenue from the hotel and up to \$700,000 from retail, but economists and planners remain skeptical about the viability of this small amount of retail because it might not create the regional draw necessary to generate the sales and related taxes. (The plan is included here to reflect the community's desire to minimize the scale of retail.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #1 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).

Parking for
Recreation
and Hotel

Water Rec
Rentals/C
Interpret



Restored Wetlands with Boardwalks

200 Room Asilomar Boutique Hotel

Parking for Hotel (90 Cars)

Drop-off for Hotel/ Shopping and Shuttle Stop

Shopping Street (170,000 net square feet)

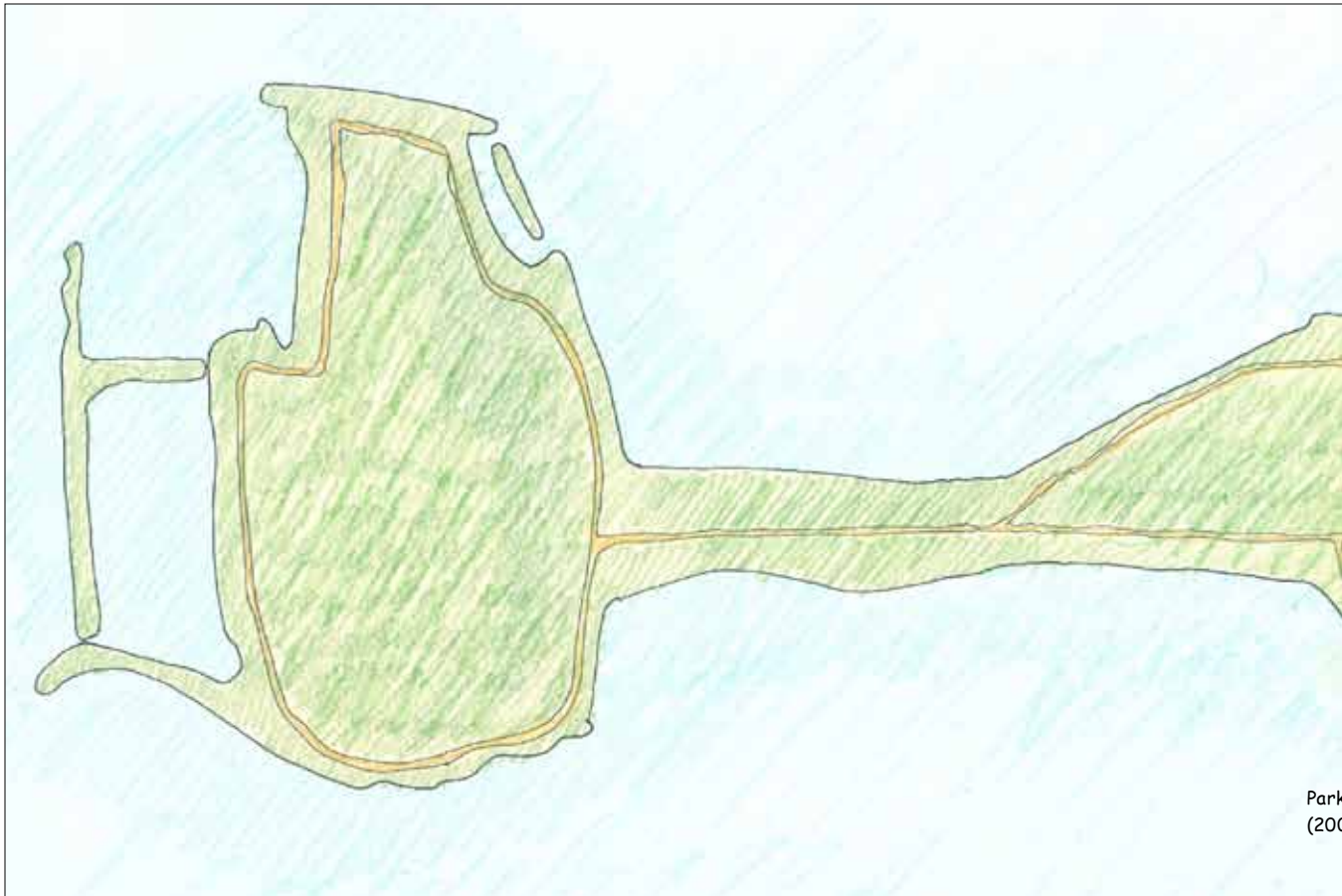
Sports Fields

Parking Garage (800 Cars/2 Floors) Top Floor Shaded by Photovoltaic Panels

for Water
on Rentals/Cafe
(250 Cars)

recreation
Cafe/
ive Center

Lookout Point



Illustrative Site Concept #6

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan includes a 3-story, 300-room hotel/conference center located on Fleming Point, with six levels of terraced parking built into the eastern slope of the hill. The hotel includes an interpretative center and entertainment venue. The roofs of both the hotel and parking terraces are vegetated. Just north of the hotel, a small building houses water recreation rentals and a café, with adjacent parking that also serves the park.

A “shopping street” (85,000 net sq. ft. retail/restaurants) is located southeast of the hotel. To its east is located surface parking for shoppers and the sports fields, located at the eastern edge of the built area. The plan also features: the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; and public restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan would generate \$1.4 million in tax revenue from the hotel/conference center and \$300,000 from retail, but economists and planners are skeptical about the viability of this scenario because of the limited retail space. (The plan is included here to reflect the community’s desire to minimize the scale of retail.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #6 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).

Park
(200

Water Re
Rentals/C
Interpret

Drop-o

Interpre
Entertain

Con

Terra
Green



Restored Wetlands with Boardwalks

Parking (200 Cars)

Recreation Center/Event Center

Office for Hotel

Recreation Center/Event Venue

300 Room Hotel (3 Floors)

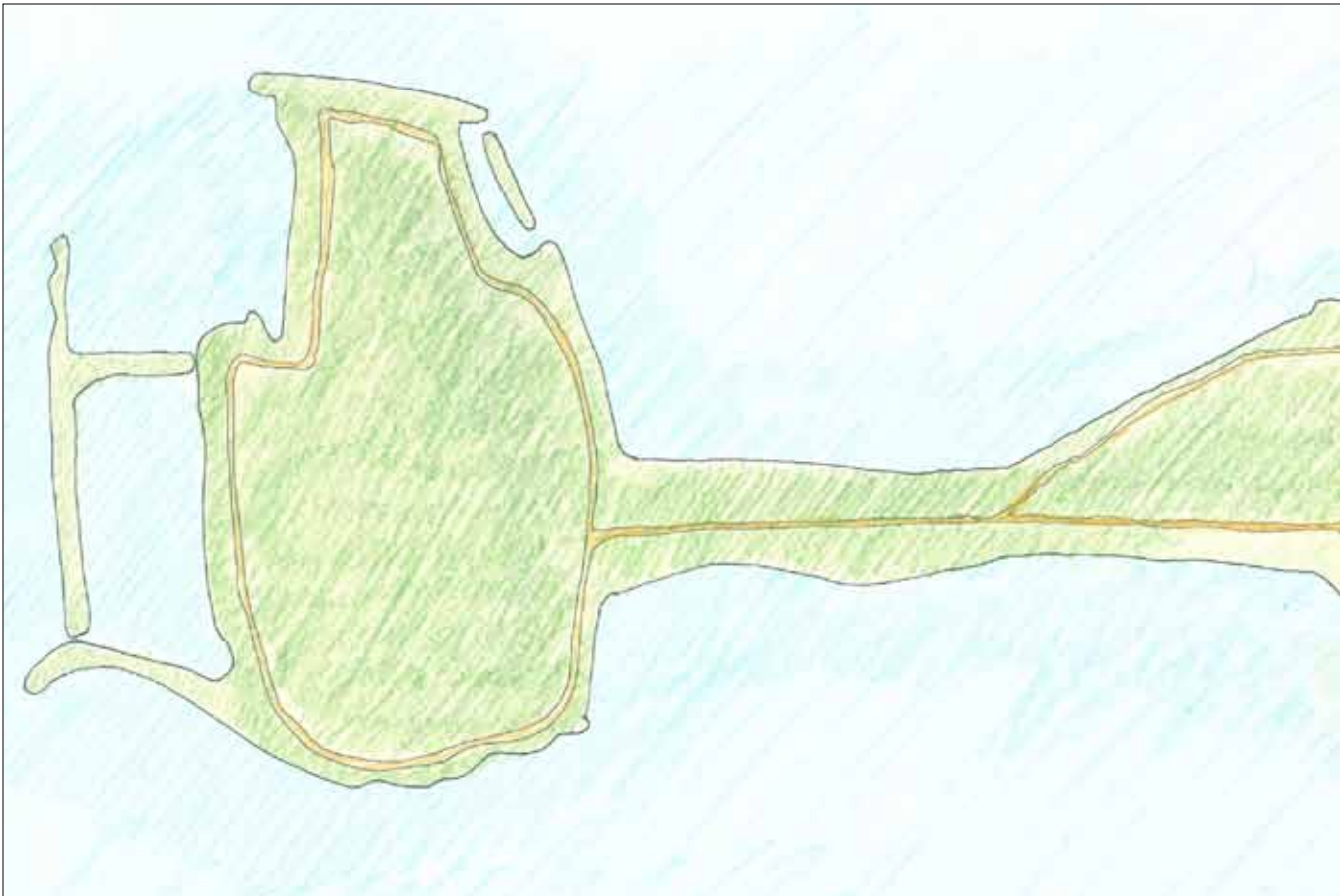
Conference Center

Covered Parking Garage with 6 Floors, 800 Cars

Shopping Street (85,000 net square feet)

Parking (200 Cars)

Sports Fields



Illustrative Site Concept #7

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This concept includes a 2-story, 300-room hotel/conference center, a “shopping street” (85,000 net sq. ft. retail/restaurants), water recreation rentals, café, and museum at the southern end of the site. A 3-level parking structure, shaded with photovoltaic panels is adjacent to I-80/580.

The plan includes the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; a viewpoint atop a restored Fleming Point; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park. It is estimated that this concept could generate \$1.4 million from the hotel/conference center and \$300,000 from retail as tax revenue, but economists and planners are concerned about the viability of this because of the small scale of the retail portion. (The plan is included here to reflect the community’s desire to minimize the scale of retail.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #7 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).



Restored Wetlands
with Boardwalks

Vista Point

Shopping Street
(85,000 net square feet)

Conference Center

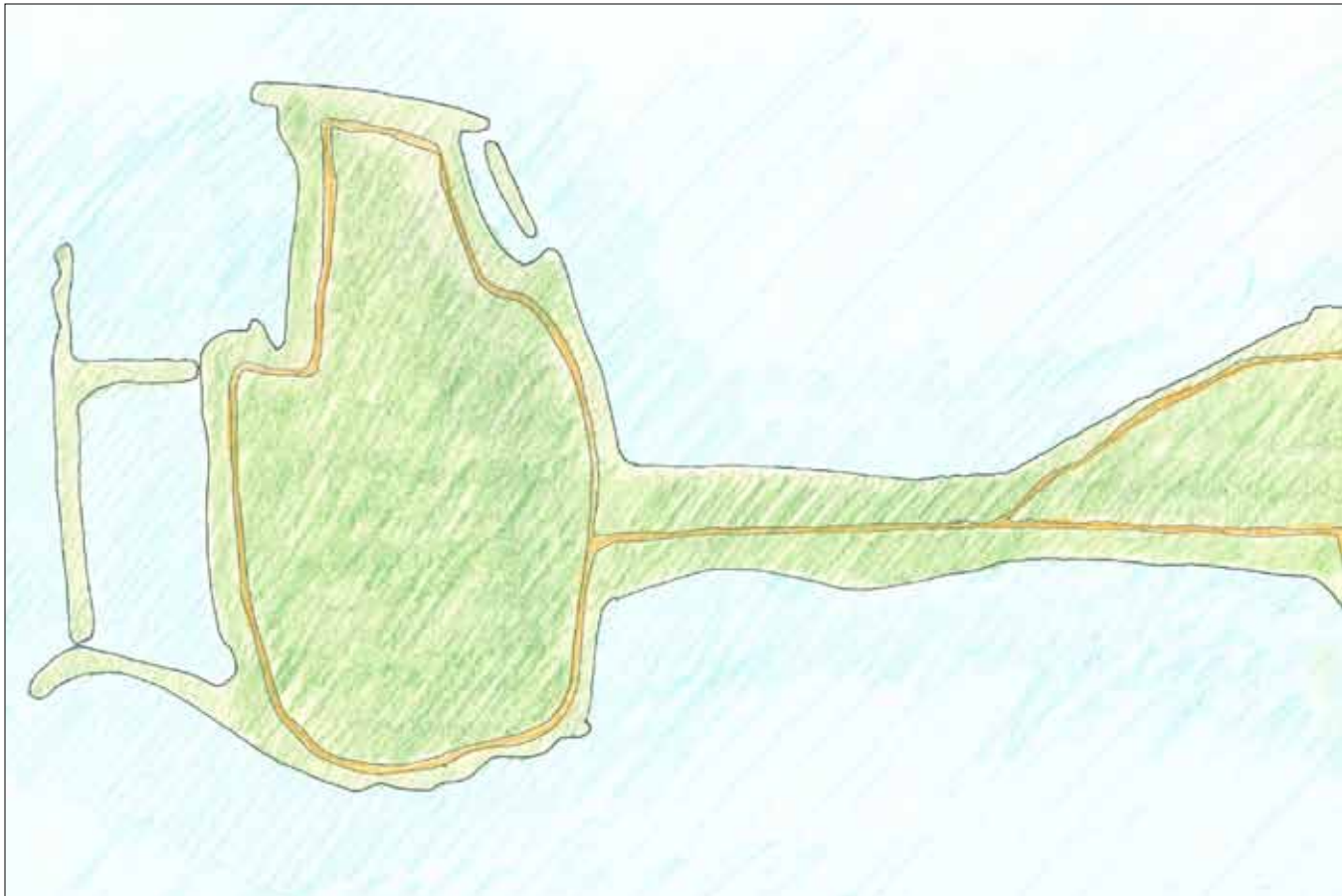
Parking Garage
(1050 Cars/3 Floors)
Top Floor Shaded by
Photovoltaic Panels

300 Room Hotel (2 Floors)

Green Roofs
Throughout

Courtyard with
Fruit Trees

Water Recreation Rentals/
Cafe on Ground Floor



Illustrative Site Concept #8

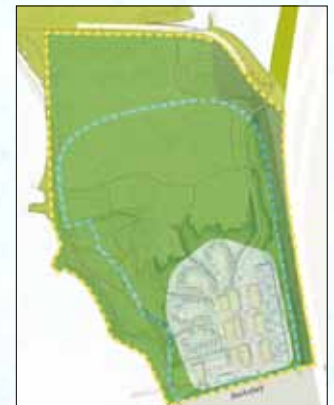
See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan includes a 300-room 'Asilomar style' boutique hotel, with 2-story buildings clustered southeast of Fleming Point. Hotel parking is in a three-story garage to the east (top floor shaded by photovoltaic panels), just beyond a "shopping street" (85,000 net sq. ft. retail/restaurants).

A building housing water recreation rentals and a café, as well as a museum is at the southern edge of the site. The Bay Trail is completed along the shoreline; a boardwalk meanders through restored wetlands; a viewpoint sits atop a restored Fleming Point; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues and public parking and restrooms for the park are all included.

It is estimated that this plan could generate tax revenues of \$1.4 million from the hotel and \$300,000 from the retail, but economists and planners are skeptical about the viability of this small scale retail, and whether it can create the regional draw necessary to be viable and to create the tax revenue desired. (The plan is included here to reflect the community's desire to minimize the scale of retail.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #8 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).



Restored Wetlands
with Boardwalks

kout Point

Shopping Street
(85,000 net square feet)

Parking Garage
(1050 Cars/3 Floors)
Top Floor Shaded by
Photovoltaic Panels

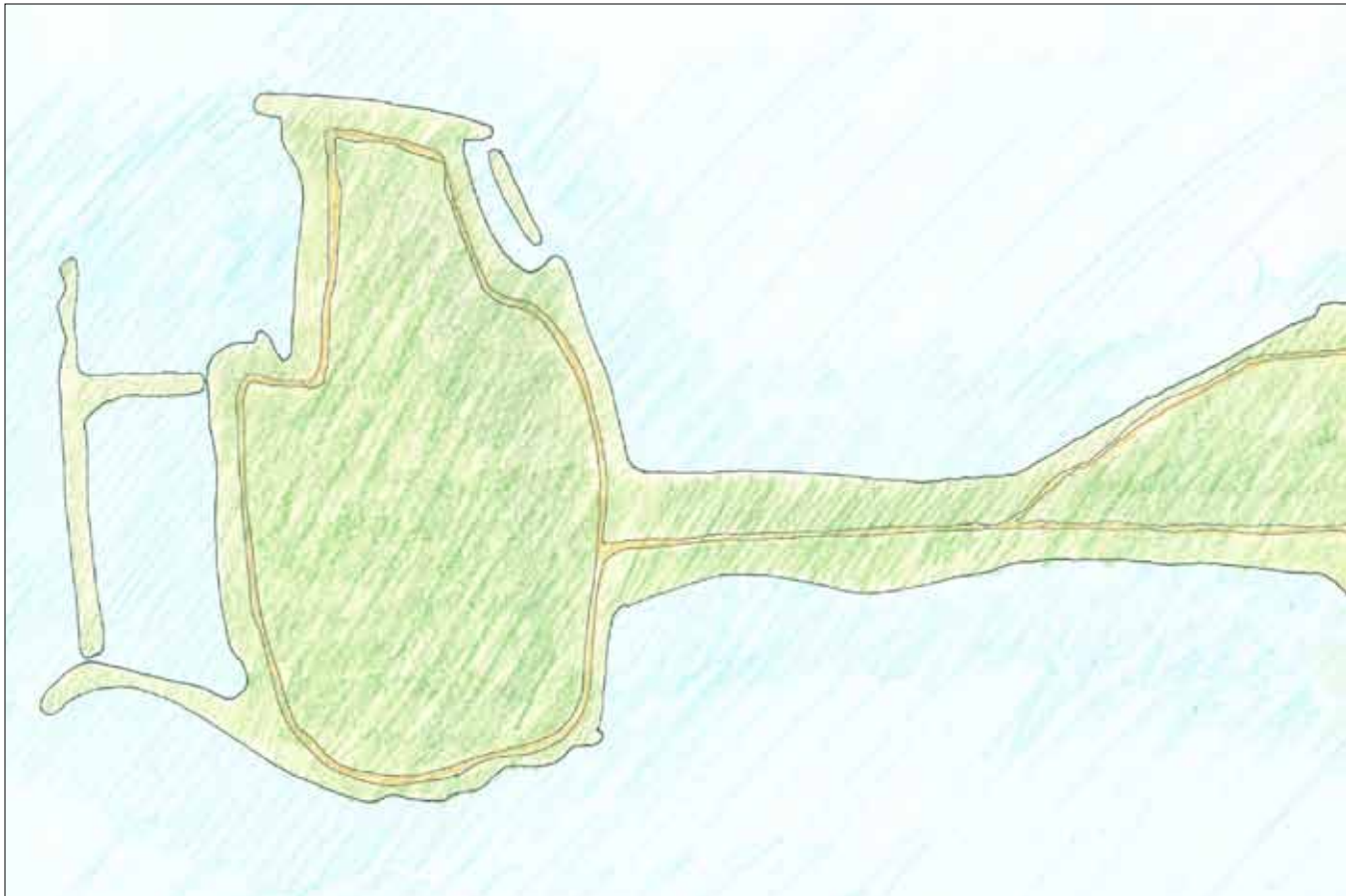
Green Roofs
Throughout

Conference Center

300 Room Asilomar Hotel
(2 Floors)

Museum/Gallery

Water Recreation
Rentals/Cafe on
Ground Floor



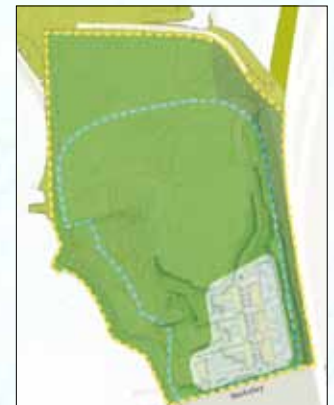
Illustrative Site Concept #9

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan includes a 300-room hotel above a “shopping street” (85,000 net sq. ft. retail/restaurants). To the south is a building with water recreation rentals and a café. To the east, adjacent to I-80/58, is a three-level parking structure (with photovoltaics on the roof). This plan features: the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; a viewpoint atop a restored Fleming Point; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan could generate tax revenues of \$1.4 million from the hotel and \$300,000 from the retail, but economists and planners are skeptical about the viability of the retail, due to its small scale and potential difficulty to become a regional draw which would impact tax sales and revenues. (The plan is included here to reflect the community’s desire to minimize the scale of retail.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #9 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line)..

Hotel
and C



Restored Wetlands
with Boardwalks

Conference Center
(2 Floors) above Retail

Shopping Street
(85,000 net square feet)

Parking Garage
(1050 Cars/3 Floors)
Top Floor Shaded by
Photovoltaic Panels

Water Recreation
Rentals/Cafe

Parking Lot
(90 Cars)



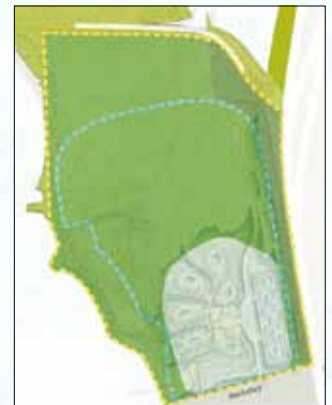
Illustrative Site Concept #10

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan includes a 400-room 'Asilomar style' hotel and conference center, with water recreation rentals and a café. Parking is in a one-level structure (adjacent to I-80/580) shaded by photovoltaics. The plan features: the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; a viewpoint on Fleming Point (restored); a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park.

While it is estimated that this plan might generate between \$1.4 and \$1.7 million in tax revenues, it should be noted that economists and planners are skeptical about the viability of this plan which is based on a single use at the site and a larger number of rooms for the hotel than recommended. (The plan is included here to reflect the community's desire to minimize the amount retail, in this case eliminating the retail use altogether.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #10 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).



Restored Wetlands
with Boardwalks

Lighthouse Point

400 Room Asilomar
Hotel (2 Floors)

Parking Lot (500 Cars) Shaded
by Photovoltaic Panels

Conference Center

Water Recreation
Rentals/Cafe



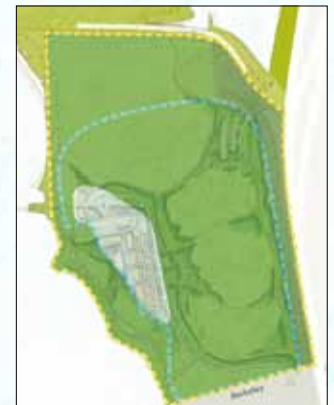
Illustrative Site Concept #11

See list of required site standards - pages 18 - 20

This plan includes a three-story, 400-room hotel and conference center atop Fleming Point, with terraced parking built underneath, cascading down the eastern part of the hill. The roofs of both the hotel and parking are covered with vegetation. Just north of the hotel, a small building houses water recreation rentals and a café. The adjacent parking also serves visitors to the park. The plan features: the Bay Trail along the shoreline; a boardwalk through restored wetlands; a shuttle stop for connections to Solano and San Pablo avenues; and public parking and restrooms for the park.

It is estimated that this plan might generate between \$1.4 and \$1.7 million from the hotel, but economists and planners are skeptical about the viability of this amount of hotel space, at this location. (The plan is included here to reflect the community's desire to minimize the amount retail, in this case eliminating the retail use altogether.)

Financial information related to tax revenues are preliminary estimates based on particular factors and currently available data. This data was generated for conceptual planning purposes and does not reflect land or development costs.



This diagram shows Concept #11 with not more than 27 acres of built area (including parking, circulation, roads, interior open spaces, etc.) within the allowable development boundary area (blue dotted line).

Water
Renta



Recreation
Is/Cafe

Restored Wetlands
with Boardwalks

Parking for Park
(150 Cars)

400 Room Hotel
(3 Floors) with
Conference Center
on Ground Floor

Terraced Parking
Garage with Green
Roofs (500 Cars)

Voices to Vision:
The Story of a Process

*A community comes together to
listen and learn; consider and contemplate;
dream and discuss; prioritize and propose;
analyze and articulate.*

“I want to take the waterfront back about 150 years, and return it to how it was when there were wetlands. I think they should just leave it alone and let it restore itself. I don’t want some nice green park there. I want to see native plants, animals, birds. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

“The waterfront should be a place that supports family and community life, and brings people to Albany.”

The Albany waterfront includes about 190 acres of dry land, along with tidelands within the Albany city limits, south of Richmond and north of Berkeley. There are five major parts of the property: Golden Gate Fields Racetrack¹; the Eastshore State Park²; the Albany Bulb³; the Albany Waterfront Trail⁴; the Bay Trail⁵; all connected to rest of Albany by Buchanan Street and its extension out to the Bulb.

With its breathtaking views of San Francisco and the Golden Gate and Bay bridges, the Albany waterfront has long been recognized as a site with tremendous potential. It has also been the source of deep tensions – characterized by many as a split between those who see the site as “the last chance for significant open space,” and those who see the site as “the last chance for Albany to increase its tax revenue.”

Over four decades, many ideas have been put forward to transform the site; some of these ideas, especially those requiring rezoning to build large-scale commercial developments, met with deep resistance from the community. But, as was revealed over the course of a two-year participatory process, community viewpoints about the waterfront often reflected deep-rooted values and interests shared by residents of Albany – offering new possibilities for respectful dialogue and acknowledgment of differences.

-
1. When *Voices to Vision* began, Golden Gate Fields (102 acres of Albany waterfront plus additional acreage in Berkeley, where horses are stabled) was owned by Magna Entertainment Corporation (MEC); during the course of the project, MEC went into bankruptcy and Magna International Development (MID) became the new owners.
 2. The Eastshore State Park is jointly owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) and the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). The property owned and maintained by EBRPD includes the Plateau, the beach, the shorelines of the Neck, the mudflats, and the shoreline to the north along I-580.
 3. The Bulb, a peninsula of land that extends more than a half a mile into the Bay from the end of Buchanan Street, is owned by the city of Albany. In 1985, an agreement was signed with the state to incorporate this parcel into the Eastshore State Park.
 4. The Albany Waterfront Trail parallels Buchanan Street west of I-80.
 5. The Bay Trail runs along the narrow strip of the shoreline parallel to I-580.

History

THE WATERFRONT TAKES SHAPE. The story of Albany’s waterfront begins with its first settlers, who were members of an Ohlone Indian tribe. At the start of the 19th century, the Huchiun were displaced by Mexican and Spanish settlers and, in 1820, Luís Maria Peralta was granted a good portion of the East Bay by the Spanish governor. At that time, the Albany waterfront consisted of a large salt marsh and an island called El Cerrito Del Sur. Peralta sold the island to John Fleming, who used it for cattle ranching; today, the remains of that parcel are referred to as Fleming

Point. From 1879 until the early years of the 20th century, dynamite factories of the Giant Powder Company dominated the waterfront. In 1905, they were replaced by chemical factories.

The new century brought thousands of displaced San Franciscans (due to the 1906 earthquake) to the East Bay; many of these newcomers joined their Berkeley neighbors in

dumping their garbage at the edge of the marsh at Fleming Point. This practice had significant consequences. To protect the waterfront, Albany,⁶ was incorporated as its own city in 1908. And, as a result of the dumping which did not stop until the 1980s, the area between the shore and the island fused, eliminating El Cerrito del Sur and creating the Albany waterfront as we know it today.

GOLDEN GATE FIELDS: HORSE RACING COMES TO ALBANY. In the early part of the 20th century, the Santa Fe Pacific Realty Corporation owned most of the land at the Albany waterfront. In 1939, the company leased about 130 acres to the Golden Gate Turf Club to create the Golden Gate Fields Racetrack (about 100 acres in Albany; 30 in Berkeley). Apart from three years during World War II when the U.S. Navy used the site to repair submarines and house 3,000 servicemen, Golden Gate Fields has been in continuous operation for the past 70 years.

Along with horse racing, another practice persisted at the site, well into the 20th century: the dumping of garbage and fill materials into the shallow edges of San Francisco Bay. In 1963, the city of Albany granted a license to a landfill operator to permit the dumping of construction debris and garden waste into the Bay at the end of Buchanan Street, north of the racetrack. A coalition of environmental groups, led by the newly-formed Save the Bay Association, spearheaded the effort to create a state agency – the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)

“We’re like a big neighborhood inside a city.”

GGF BANKRUPTCY

Over the past decade, racetracks around the country (including Golden Gate Fields) experienced a decline in attendance – resulting in a decrease in wagering tax revenues – prompting questions about the short- and long-term viability of the racetrack.

In December 2008 MEC (Magna Entertainment Corporation) informed its investors, and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), that it planned to either sell its racetrack assets, or enter into one or more joint ventures, in order to pay off a \$959 million debt.

Magna eventually filed for bankruptcy protection under Chapter 11. Using a “debtor-in-possession” financing arrangement with Magna International Development (MID) – its largest secured creditor and controlling shareholder – Magna continued to operate the racetrack. At the time, Frank Stronach, the majority shareholder of both MEC and MID told the San Francisco Chronicle the corporation had excessive debt and interest expense. “Magna Entertainment has previously pursued numerous out-of-court restructuring alternatives, but has been unable to complete a comprehensive restructuring to date,” he said. Stronach is the founder and chairman of Magna, as well as the chairman of MID.

Several auction dates came and went and finally, in February 2010; just weeks before the final announced auction date, the sought-after restructuring plan was finalized. Magna International Development agreed to purchase five of MEC’s racetracks, including Golden Gate Fields. Through this reorganization of finances, Magna’s unsecured creditors – owed as much as \$260 million – could collect \$96.5 million. In March 2010, a federal bankruptcy court gave Magna approval to put the plan before creditors. Thus, for the foreseeable future, horse racing will continue at Golden Gate Fields.

6. Known for one year as Ocean View, before changing its name to Albany (after the first mayor’s hometown).

GROUP PERSPECTIVES

Over the years, a number of groups have been interested in the future of Albany's waterfront:

- **Sierra Club** (*Bay Chapter*)
www.sfbay.sierraclub.org
- **Citizens for East Shore Parks (CESP)**
formed in 1985, to establish a shoreline state park from Oakland to Richmond; founded by members of Sierra Club, Save the Bay, and other groups www.eastshorepark.org
- **Citizens for the Albany Shoreline (CAS)** *formed in 1985; instrumental in introducing Measure C, the citizen mandate that requires a vote of Albany residents to make any changes to waterfront zoning in Albany* www.albanyshoreline.org
- **Albany Waterfront Coalition (AWC)** *formed during the Caruso Affiliated planning period, is generally described as being supportive of commercial development at the waterfront, as a way to generate tax revenue, but also supports the expansion of open space at the Albany waterfront* www.albanywaterfrontcoalition.org
- **Let it Be**, *as the name suggests, wants the Albany waterfront to stay as it is, especially the Bulb; tends to support off-leash dogs and the retention of home-made artwork at the shore*

– to regulate fill and development on the San Francisco Bay shoreline. BCDC was unsuccessful in suing the city of Albany in 1966, to stop the landfill operation. Thus, the fill continued until 1983. By that time, the landfill had created much of the 88 acres that make up the areas known today as the Plateau, the Neck, and the Bulb.

DEVELOPMENT VS. PRESERVATION: TUG-OF-WAR OVER THE WATERFRONT.

In 1985, the Santa Fe Pacific Realty Corporation took a step toward exploring development at the site by authorizing the preparation of a “program EIR” (Environmental Impact Report) with six different scenarios. Project alternatives included turning the site into a park and transforming it with the addition of 3.7 million sq. ft. of commercial development (hotel, office, residential), and 61 acres of parks and open space (including what we now call the Plateau and part of the Neck).

That same year, the Sierra Club, Save the Bay, and other environmental groups coalesced to form Citizens for the Eastshore State Park – later renamed Citizens for East Shore Parks (CESP) – to advocate for the preservation of waterfront land and the creation of a state park along the shore, from Oakland to Richmond.

The environmental coalition gained traction in its efforts to create a park in 1988 when bond measures were approved to acquire land along the shoreline. Sponsored by California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) and East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), these measures provided the potential for funding, and meant that the long-standing dream of a shoreline park could become possible.⁷

Meanwhile, the Santa Fe development plan made its way through a lengthy environmental review. However, after four years, the company withdrew its proposal having determined it lacked sufficient community support. In 1989, Santa Fe sold Golden Gate Fields to Ladbrooke Land Holdings, a British-based company.

In the wake of the failed Santa Fe plan, voters passed a critical initiative that significantly altered all future discussions and proposals for development of the waterfront. In 1990, Albany citizens approved Measure C, “the Citizens Waterfront Approval Initiative,” which mandated a majority vote of Albany residents to change the existing land use and zoning regulations for all land west of I-80/580, from the Richmond border to the Berkeley border in the waterfront district (see zoning map in Appendix). Measure C read, in part:

“The Waterfront is so important to the welfare of the City as a whole, that an additional step of voter approval should be added to the City's regular processes of Waterfront planning and approval.”

7. Despite the success of the bond measures, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) was not enthusiastic about an urban park on former landfill sites and made the park a low priority. In 1992, park advocates helped pass legislation designating the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) the lead agency for acquisition and planning for the Eastshore State Park. In 2008, Measure WW provided \$27 million for the Eastshore State Park over the next 20 years.

As a result of Measure C, the approval of Albany voters is required for any plan that differs from the area's zoning (park and recreation facilities; utilities; commercial recreation; restaurants and bars; marinas; boat-launching ramps; non-residential parking; and waterfront- and sports- related commercial sales and services). In addition, any amendments to the Waterfront Master Plan or any development agreement related to waterfront lands also require voter approval.

In 1999, Ladbroke sold Golden Gate Fields to Magna Entertainment Corporation

(MEC), a horse racing group founded by Canadian auto parts entrepreneur Frank Stronach. Two years later, Magna proposed Rancho San Antonio, a project that preserved the racetrack, but also included 650,000 sq. ft. of new retail, commercial, and entertainment development. During that time, Magna and the city of Albany held three community workshops that were attended by several hundred people.⁸

At the same time that Magna worked to advance its plan, advocates for the public park continued their efforts to create Eastshore State Park. In 2002, after almost 40 years of citizen activism, the park was formally established, extending 8.5 miles along the shoreline from Oakland to Richmond. The park designation served to protect most of the undeveloped shoreline land, including 260 acres of dry

land and 2,002 acres of tidelands. Energized by this success, and united by intense opposition to Magna's development plan, a coalition of pro-park groups – including the Citizens for Eastshore State Park (CESP), the Sierra Club, and Citizens for the Albany Shoreline – developed a joint waterfront plan in 2003. The CESP/Sierra Club plan called for modest development near the freeway, which would act as a noise buffer for a waterfront park, beach, and playing fields. Backers of the plan projected annual Albany tax revenues equal to those being generated by Golden Gate Fields.

Having failed to generate significant community support for commercial development at the waterfront, Magna withdrew the Rancho San Antonio plan in 2004. Within a year, Magna and southern California developer Caruso Affiliated put

“The waterfront property is among the most desirable in the entire Bay Area. As a community, we have a lot of power to decide what we want at that site.”

“I just don't understand how we as a city or community can be thinking of what should be on a piece of property that we don't own.”

AS VOICES TO VISION MOVED ALONG...

May 2008 - March 2010

During the two years of Voices to Vision, Albany...

- closed City Hall for renovations, including a seismic retrofit (May 2008); and reopened City Hall just as the Phase Two Voices to Vision sessions wrapped up in early 2010.
- put up a half mile fence at the Plateau to create a habitat for burrowing owls. (May 2008)
- celebrated its 100th birthday with a dinner party, on Solano Avenue, with the entire city as “guests.” (Sept. 2008)
- three different council members served as mayor: Robert Lieber, Marge Atkinson, and Joanne Wile.
- held its first annual triathlon, attracting about 70 residents, ranging in age from 10 to 68. (Sept. 2008)
- was recognized for spearheading the campaign to overturn state preemption of local pesticide regulations and to re-establish “the right of local governments to adopt pesticide regulations that are stricter than state laws” (as a result of the state’s proposed use of pesticides to control the light brown apple moth).
- bought the property adjacent to the Albany Senior Center to allow for expansion. (April 2009)
- released the final draft of the Climate Action Plan (Feb. 2010), setting a goal of reducing Albany’s greenhouse gas emissions by five percent every three years.
- supported two Solano Strolls attracting more than 100,000 people to the city
- convened 48 city council meetings

8. In *Voices to Vision* interviews, many residents, who had attended various meetings hosted by the city and/or developers, recalled that a number of participants were not Albany residents and also that many people came to numerous meetings.

“The waterfront has been a divisive issue for years. People have been vilified. My position: we have Measure C; if you educate people, they will do the right thing. But not everyone thinks this way.”

forward another proposal. Like the Rancho San Antonio proposal, this plan also preserved the racetrack and added new commercial development, including a mix of upscale retail establishments and related mixed-use development. Hoping to avoid the pitfalls of previous efforts, Caruso made efforts to gain community support. The developer opened a storefront office on Solano Avenue and held invitation-only meetings convened in the homes of Albany residents to showcase the plan. But the community remained divided and, at the conclusion of an extremely contentious year, Caruso withdrew the plan in 2006.

In the wake of what many residents described as an “ugly process,” there was widespread community bitterness and disappointment. Supporters and opponents of Caruso’s project accused one another of rigidity and misinformation; the deadlock

over the future of Albany’s waterfront seemed even more absolute. In 2006, the issue was a key feature in the election of city council members, with the victory of what was perceived to be a “pro park/anti-development” slate.

Albany Decides to Engage the Community

As a result of the Caruso debacle, the emergence of a new City Council, and the efforts of an active Waterfront Committee,⁹ the city realized that its reactive approach to the ideas of developers had not helped residents develop a common vision, and that recent events had divided the city, perhaps unnecessarily. Over the course of many years, developers had presented fully-formed proposals for the waterfront to the community; reacting to those plans had served primarily to divide the city.

Beyond this fracture, the future of Golden Gate Fields and its tax revenues for the city were becoming increasingly uncertain. Across the U.S., the trajectory for horse racing venues was one of stagnation, not growth: for several years, Magna Entertainment Corporation experienced notable annual losses. The

“Some people think they know everything there is to know about the waterfront. That intimidates others, and then they don’t want to participate.”

“Frankly, I didn’t support using funds for this process. But now I think it’s the only hope. I just hope it works. It can have incredible ramifications – not just for the waterfront, but for the residents of this community to value one another. So, I’m going to give it a try.”

popularity of off-track betting and online wagering made track attendance unnecessary, and the numbers of people betting on-site at Golden Gate Fields (which impacts tax revenues) had declined significantly.

The apparent decline of Golden Gate Fields highlighted a number of questions for both city staff and council (as well as for the community): if the racetrack were to close, what did Albany residents want to see at the waterfront? What combination of open space and revenue-generating development (if any) would be accepted by the community, in light of Measure C? Was the community ready to forego tax revenues to gain a large parcel of open space? If not, what particular uses (including those that fell outside current zoning) would the community want to see at the waterfront?

These questions fueled a growing momentum to support a true community planning process, not one initiated by – or because of – developer interest.

The need for a plan, and the desire of residents for factual information on which to evaluate proposals, had been well-established and discussed in Albany. As early as October 2005, the Waterfront Committee recommended that the city undertake a waterfront planning process. The expense of such a process, and its

perceived futility without the participation of the property owner, put the notion on hold until the following year. The City Council passed a resolution in May 2006 to undertake a city-directed waterfront planning process, with participation and funding from Caruso and Golden Gate Fields. The resolution stated that:

“The community would be best served if the City commenced its own planning process... without pressures created by having to process simultaneously a development application and the initiative.”

9. The Waterfront Committee is made up of seven members appointed by the City Council – one member appointed by each council member, plus two at-large appointed by the entire city council.

“I told my family and friends that people who don’t participate can’t complain later about the outcomes.”

Caruso Affiliated initially agreed to refrain from submitting its development application until after the community had considered a range of options, including its own proposal and one in which the racetrack did not exist, but later decided to abandon its plans in Albany and the process ceased.

In 2007, with a newly configured council in place, the idea of a citizen process to determine the future of the waterfront was resurrected. The proposed process would be driven by the community so that the city would have a clear, community-supported vision and set of guidelines in place for the future.

Reflecting on how the decision was made to implement the community process, one city leader said: *“There’s been a lot of grandstanding in Albany about this issue and not enough people being open and really listening to one another. We realized that we needed someone to hold a mirror up to the community and say, ‘Here’s what we’re seeing.’”*

The Waterfront Committee was given the task of selecting the consultant to handle the project.

Selecting the Consultant

In December 2007, the city issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a consultant to design and facilitate a “vigorous civic engagement and education process aimed at developing a shared vision for the future of Albany’s waterfront” (see appendix). Out of approximately 25 consulting firms who received the RFQ, the Waterfront Committee selected three firms to interview: Design, Community & Environment (DC&E), Fern Tiger Associates (FTA), and RRM Design Group.

Each of the finalists was given a 50-minute (public) interview with the Waterfront Committee, in February 2008. FTA offered an approach similar to other civic engagement efforts undertaken in its 30-year

history, beginning with a process to gain a deep understanding of the community. FTA proposed to begin with a period of intensive qualitative and quantitative research, conducted predominantly through interviews with community members; the findings that came out of this research would inform the design of subsequent outreach and engagement strategies and a model for participation, appropriate for Albany (see appendix). In a follow-up meeting on March 5, 2008, the committee devoted time to considering the purpose of the process and whether FTA had the appropriate skills and experience (see appendix). One committee member said he did not see FTA as the right firm for the job because he believed a site plan should be the primary outcome of the process and that FTA did not indicate that as the final product. *“FTA has strong people skills, but they don’t have experience in land use issues. They’re not planners – and this is a land use planning project so the firm is not a good fit.”*

“The most important thing, and also the hardest thing, is going to be to get people to trust the information. There has been so much misinformation and contradictory information.”

“I’m optimistic!”

But other committee members disagreed and argued that the firm’s “people skills” were precisely what made it the best choice for Albany. *“Albany isn’t looking for a site plan – we’re looking for a visioning process,”* said one member. *“This is a small but very divided community. We need a firm that has the skills to bring folks to the table.”*

The Waterfront Committee voted 5-2 to recommend FTA to the City Council as the consultant for the visioning process. The vote conformed to perceived political lines drawn in recent elections (with those who favored hiring FTA having been appointed by the council members who were pegged as “anti-development/pro-park.”) The fact that the committee was not unanimous in its decision to support FTA, and that the vote was again perceived as political, highlighted the split that had grown during the Caruso era.

At the City Council meeting on April 21, 2008, Fern Tiger Associates made a brief presentation about the firm’s history, focusing in particular on its skill and experience in reaching out to stakeholders with diverse perspectives and agendas, and its creative way of engaging communities to ensure broad participation, as well as results.

When members of the public were invited to provide comments, about a dozen Albany residents, and several regional stakeholders and members of the Waterfront Committee, stepped forward to share their thoughts. Some expressed concern about the cost of the process; some viewed the idea of a community

process as futile, especially without the guarantee of participation by the landowner; and others were relieved that the city was finally taking control of its own future by engaging its residents.

“If we had the funds, I’d say yes. But it’s too much money for me to support at this time,” said one council member. Another said the need for a comprehensive process justified the price tag. Still another said the job would be *“like being a shrink to the whole city.”* *“It’s a significant expense but we can find a way to make it work. We owe it to Albany to embark on a sound community planning process,”* said still another council member.

The City Council voted to hire FTA to design and facilitate a fair, transparent education and engagement process to bring together a broad cross-section of Albany residents to develop a shared vision. The 3-2 vote to hire FTA was again perceived by some as reflecting the political divide between the pro-development and pro-park factions. This perception of bias, as well as the deep mistrust about the information offered by opposing perspectives, were challenges FTA needed to confront early in its design of the process.

**“Previous processes were like...
A facilitator would come in
and ask people what they
like: ‘I like a dog park.’ ‘I like
a ferry terminal.’ ‘I like this;
I like that.’ Put it all together
and everyone likes and wants
everything. What good does
that do? Nothing’s real;
nothing’s grounded.”**

DEFINING THE SCOPE. In May 2008, FTA signed a contract with the city of Albany¹⁰ based on a detailed approach for public education and engagement. FTA envisioned a community process with distinct phases that would move seamlessly from one to the next.

During Phase One, the actual process for outreach, engagement, communication, and participation would be conceived and designed. The task of figuring out the right process would lay the groundwork for establishing a dialogue, building trust, understanding the issues, assessing perceptions and misperceptions, and creating a productive community process. The major parts of the scope (see appendix) included:

1. Gathering information and designing an appropriate and effective process
2. Developing tools and outreach to maximize community education and engagement
3. Facilitating an engagement process
4. Developing and disseminating a report and recommendations

10. A few months into the scope, FTA’s interviews and research revealed that most residents didn’t feel the city had a vision. City leadership recognized that a vision would be valuable for the General Plan, which was then under development. While focused on the waterfront, the scope was expanded to include the development of a broad vision for the city.

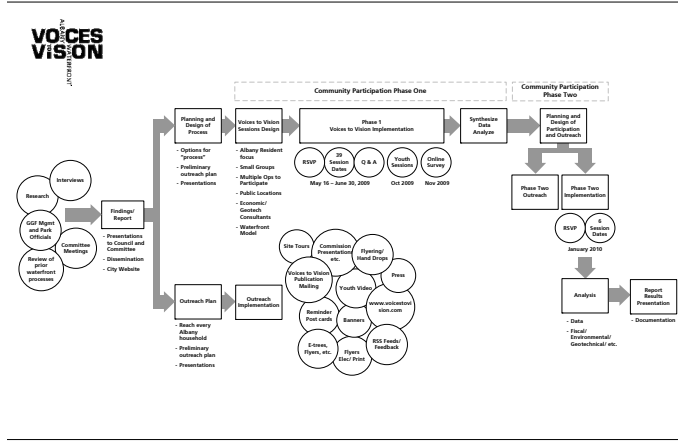
A Process Unfolds Based on History, Research, and Findings

Instead of a boiler-plate framework, which might work in other cities, FTA sought to create a process, tailor-made for the unique characteristics of Albany. To gain perspective to design a process in order to address the concerns of Albany residents, reflect their values, and acknowledge previous community processes, the first step was to conduct a comprehensive study of the city’s history and character, as well as the dynamics of earlier waterfront planning processes.

FTA staff reviewed a wide range of data and reports, books, press clippings, campaign materials, and presentations about the waterfront produced over the last 50 years – well over 5,000 pages of environmental, technical, and historical reports, as well as press and verbal anecdotes. This research, along with attendance at numerous local events and meetings (including City Council and Waterfront Committee meetings, and self Planning and Zoning Committee meetings), provided FTA with insight into how community attitudes

and perspectives impacted discussions about the waterfront over time.

A major focal point of this research was a series of in-depth, one-on-one, in-person interviews. Over the course of seven months, FTA interviewed about 80 Albany residents, including opinion leaders, community and business leaders, elected officials, city staff, and individuals with a history of involvement in the waterfront property, as well as regional waterfront stakeholders. In these interviews, FTA did not solicit individual ideas or opinions about the future of the waterfront – rather, the



goal was to gather perceptions about the city, the community, and issues relevant to how Albany residents get information and how the issue might be framed to ensure participation beyond the “small core of the already opinionated two sides of the issue.” FTA needed this information to inform both the design of the outreach strategy and the creation of an appropriate participatory process.

To develop an inclusive interview list, FTA sought suggestions from community leaders and asked every person who was interviewed for additional contacts. The list of potential interviewees grew to include more than 400 names; those who were mentioned frequently were given priority, but some people were selected based on their particular history of involvement with community affairs or their unique perspectives. In making decisions about who to interview, FTA strove to ensure that interviewees represented an even mix of perspectives – from open space advocates to advocates of tax-producing ventures; advocates for the status quo and those totally uninvolved with the waterfront; long-time Albany residents and newcomers; and from people representing a variety of generations and backgrounds.

While each interview was unique, several core issues were discussed with most interviewees:

- Key issues currently facing the city;

- Previous community efforts to plan for the waterfront and other city needs;
- Information level of community with regard to the waterfront;
- Potential for developing a shared vision;
- Sources for local news and information; and,
- Suggestions for a vision for the future of the city

Through these conversations, FTA also sought to understand how the waterfront figures into the lives of Albany residents, and the range of attitudes about its current character and future potential. The majority of people interviewed shared similar reasons for living in Albany. Again and again, FTA heard about the close-knit community, the small-town ambiance, and excellent schools. Residents expressed a sense of pride in the city's capacity to retain a certain quality: *"We have a wonderful cultural richness on tap. It's a 'best of all worlds' kind of place. It's walkable and it's a real community. It's also within easy access to urban centers."*

As for the waterfront, some envisioned the site as a regional park, while others were more concerned about the need for tax revenues and feared a large tract of open space would be costly to purchase and also expensive to maintain. *"We have an incredible opportunity to have a great park and a shoreline that's publicly used and available and open,"* said one resident. Another said, *"Albany needs development because we're the smallest and the weakest city in the region, and we need to look out for our own interests. If the racetrack closes, we're going to need to replace those revenues. We can't afford to have that land become 'just' open space."*

In contrast to the sharply divided viewpoints that many people expected would characterize the issue, a majority of interviewees expressed a more nuanced perspective. Many saw the opportunity for something between the "poles" of total open space and extensive development: *"It's a beautiful site that has the opportunity to offer many things to many people."*

A key goal of this preliminary phase was to determine elements of a process that were critical to success, in order to avoid past experiences which reinforced divisions within the community rather than finding common ground. FTA was seeking the best way to create a process that would result in both a better informed community and a set of guidelines for the future of the waterfront.

FTA wrapped up the research phase with a clear sense of the complex history of waterfront planning in Albany; a strong understanding of the mix of perspectives and roadblocks to effective communication and participation; and insight on the immense amount of misinformation that had spread over the past years. This background was invaluable in shaping the design of a process intended to produce a set of widely-shared principles and a vision for the future of the Albany waterfront. Four key issues emerged that FTA needed to address in order to ensure a respected and well-attended process:

1. History of conflict around the waterfront and other issues

FTA's solution was to design a process that heard, reflected, and respected diverse opinions

"It was good not to have a confrontational event."

"I've been so busy; I wasn't planning to attend a session, but I heard such good reports from neighbors that I decided to attend because it seemed like it would be fun and useful."

2. Lack of trust

FTA's solution was to publicly welcome and acknowledge all viewpoints, be open to input, to respond to questions quickly, and to work hard to be a neutral and respectful facilitator

3. Widespread misinformation about the facts

FTA's solution was to create comprehensive public education materials that were disseminated to every household and backed by research

4. Fear that the voices of "outsiders" would dominate the process

FTA's solution was to create a process that focused on the opinions of Albany residents

HISTORY OF CONFLICT; LACK OF TRUST. A significant consequence of earlier efforts to consider the future of the waterfront was polarization of the issue.

It seemed the only thing the two sides had in common was the conviction that the other side couldn't be counted on for facts or even to listen. *"The environmentalists can't compromise,"* said one resident. *"Anyone who*

"I'm happy that the city is working to develop a vision rather than waiting for another developer to come along."

"I expect to see a balanced outcome. There should be less bickering as a result of this process. Thank you."

"Overall, we've spent a lot of resources, time, and money planning for something we don't own and don't have control over. I enjoyed participating in the process, but I'm not sure it was worth the expense."

hosted a meeting to discuss the Caruso plan was labeled a 'mall-ie,' rather than somebody who wanted to get information to form an opinion." Those whose primary concern was open space felt equally stymied by what they saw as unfair tactics: *"The style of the people who were pro-development was to attack the people who were trying to protect the waterfront. Those of us who supported open space were focused on the issues and stayed above all that nastiness."*

Each "side" viewed the other as inflexible and unwilling to consider other perspectives; each side knew the waterfront issue had become politicized. Some felt that, because those candidates perceived to be "pro-park/anti-development" won the contentious 2006 city council elections, there was little hope for productive exchange. "We have a one issue council; and they were elected for one thing: to follow the Sierra Club's dictates on the waterfront."¹¹

From the outset, FTA stressed that a citywide, community visioning process – funded and driven by Albany rather than an outside interest – would be for and about the residents of Albany. Thus, the process was designed to include community sessions that would encourage focused

dialogue and decisionmaking, and to give residents an opportunity to conceive and consider creative, grounded ideas about the future of the Albany waterfront.

11. By 2006 the Sierra Club had developed a plan that was circulating during the council election. The plan indicated a small area for commercial development of a hotel and retail, close to the freeway, with the remainder of the site developed as open space for public park. The Sierra Club maintained that this development would retain the revenues historically provided by GGF.

REFLECTING REGIONAL

Voices to Vision was funded by the city of Albany and designed to gather the ideas and perspectives of Albany residents -- many of whom had often felt overwhelmed and exasperated by discussions and meetings about the waterfront that included non-residents.

Some Albany residents felt that a major problem with earlier discussions was that the most vocal, engaged participants didn't actually live in Albany. "At the contentious meetings, folks come from Berkeley, Oakland, and elsewhere," said one resident. "I consider that an imported contingent."

But, early in the process, residents of neighboring communities – some of whom had a long involvement in the waterfront – expressed a desire to be heard during this Voices to Vision process. They argued that the process wasn't fair and that the issue had regional significance – especially when there were individuals and organizations who had spent years thinking about solutions for the waterfront.

In light of the political power of Measure C and the required vote of Albany residents, it seemed critical to ensure a safe place for Albany voices to be amplified. Still, it was important to understand the broader viewpoints. So, FTA offered three sessions for regional stakeholders: two during Phase One and one during Phase Two.

Based on the interest expressed by vocal, non-Albany residents prior to the launch of Phase One, a significant turnout was expected, however, just 14 people attended. Twenty-six non-Albany residents participated in Phase Two.

While the total sample of non-residents is small, it's worth noting that the priorities that emerged in the regional sessions were somewhat different from those that came from residents. Non-residents consistently sought more open space than Albany residents.

WIDESPREAD MISINFORMATION. The waterfront had been a hot button issue in the community for several decades, during which time a range of "facts" had been disseminated. In part, the inconsistency of the "facts" stemmed from the informal ways that information about the waterfront had spread, as well as the politicized nature of the "facts."

From interviews, FTA knew that Albany residents lacked solid information about both the possibilities and the challenges of the site. Most significantly, people sensed that the "facts" had been manipulated to present biased political perspectives.

To create a solid grounding for the discussions and to further build trust, FTA needed to build a process based on a foundation of facts that could be referenced and documented (through multiple sources). Thus, before launching the community sessions that were central to the process, FTA produced a large format, 20-page publication that was mailed first class to every Albany address. Its purpose was to provide substantial information in easy-to-read, graphic formats, and to dispel myths and misinformation by providing every Albany resident with the same set of clear and documented facts (see appendix).

FEAR THAT THE VOICES OF "OUTSIDERS" WOULD DOMINATE THE PROCESS.

Another concern that surfaced repeatedly in the interviews was that many of the people in attendance at previous public sessions about the waterfront either did not live in Albany or attended more than one meeting. To ensure that outspoken residents and/or interest groups would not be able to monopolize any session (or the larger vision), the community sessions were restricted to Albany residents (see sidebar), and participants could attend only one session. This approach created significant logistical efforts (see sidebar), but was considered necessary to ensure trust in the process and yield a broad-based community-driven vision for the waterfront.

Community Participation: A “Block-by-Block” Approach

Four potential models for the process were outlined in a progress report presented to the city in September 2008, but the one dubbed the “block-by-block” approach was clearly the most appropriate for Albany in 2009. Connecting residents to the waterfront visioning process through neighborhoods offered a way to build community – and to address some of the issues that either kept people away from previous community meetings, or made them wary of participation in future discussions.

The block-by-block model organized residents by their street addresses, creating “micro-neighborhoods” of households within an area of approximately three square blocks. Each micro-neighborhood was assigned a particular date and time for their session.¹² The delineated neighborhoods were shown in a centerfold map in the publication mailed to every household. Flyers were broadly distributed and postcards reminding people to register for the sessions were mailed and hand-delivered to each address a few days prior to sessions.¹³

The neighborhood approach was a good fit with the small-town spirit of Albany, while other decisions about session logistics addressed issues with earlier citywide planning discussions, including the decision to hold all community meetings at public places (community center/library, schools, senior center). Though more complicated from a logistical standpoint, meetings in public spaces felt more open, in contrast to the Caruso-era discussions which were held in private homes.

Early in the design of the process, it became obvious to FTA that two distinct phases for resident participation were needed, in order for residents to arrive at a meaningful level of clarity (and to understand enough about options and trade-offs) about the future of the waterfront. A second phase (held six months after the first sessions) would enable a deeper level of discussion and an opportunity to respond to some of the results of earlier sessions.

THE LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE

In designing Voices to Vision, FTA paid attention to residents’ critiques of other meetings held over the years. The credibility of previous sessions were hampered by distrust and the merging of Albany residents (who believed they had special responsibilities for land in their city) with non-residents (many of whom felt they had a lot to offer a discussion on the East Bay shoreline).

The decision to limit participation in Voices to Vision to residents of Albany only, required a complex registration process. When a participant signed up for a session (online, by phone, or in person), FTA staff looked up the applicant’s address in a list that contained every Albany address. This list was also at the registration desk at the Voices to Vision sessions, so that the addresses of those who had not pre-registered could be checked. Non-Albany residents were encouraged to attend non-resident sessions.

The one-time participation rule (once in each phase) demanded special steps. FTA created a database to track every RSVP and participant. At the end of each session, FTA staff updated the database and prepared a new version – just in time for the next Voices to Vision session -- sometimes just hours apart. (The new list noted all participants who had just attended.)

Scheduling challenges posed other problems. For example, in January, there were six sessions in two venues in a single day. As soon as a session wrapped up at the Senior Center, FTA staff had to quickly pack up and dismantle the set up, drive to the Community Center/Library, and set up the rooms for the next sessions, only to have to take it all down again and set up all over again after that session. These extra efforts paid off: most participants said the community sessions felt fair and inclusive.

The careful methods of validating participant attendance (including nearly one in every 10 residents) has allowed for close parsing of data, disaggregated according to varying demographic criteria.

12. If residents were unable to attend the session in their “micro-neighborhood,” they could arrange to attend another session.

13. The RSVP process allowed FTA to ensure one-time participation by Albany residents, and to ensure sufficient space, facilitators, and supplies for each session.

Voices to Vision: Phase One Participation

Reaching Out to Albany Residents

The process to uncover the community's vision for the future of the waterfront needed a name to promote attention and visibility and to set a tone of professionalism that would ground the process. Out of a long list of potential names, FTA chose "Voices to Vision," which captured the goal to gather input from as many voices as possible and then move toward a shared vision. In its primary printed outreach vehicle, a publication described in detail below, FTA included the following tag line for Voices to Vision: *Listen, Learn. Consider, Contemplate. Dream, Discuss. Prioritize, Propose. Analyze, Articulate.*

To launch the newly named process, a 20-page tabloid-sized publication was mailed to every Albany address (approximately 9,500 copies). The *Voices to Vision* publication featured rich, easy-to-read, informative and fact-filled text; photographs; and graphics that covered the environmental, land use, economic, historical, and regulatory issues that might affect waterfront development in Albany. For community members, it offered several levels of learning – from articles dealing with the history of the site and the purpose of the *Voices to Vision* process to at-a-glance information presented in tables and maps (see appendix).

To allow residents easy access to specific facts, a glossary of important terms was included – as was a comprehensive list of "frequently asked questions." The level and type of detail included in the publication reflected the information needs of a highly-educated and engaged audience.¹⁴

Given that the Albany population is highly-literate and computer-savvy, and known to get a lot of their information online, FTA decided early on to develop a website dedicated to the process and related information. The site included ways for users to ask questions, to register for activities related to the process, and to comment. Most of the text included in the publication was included on the *Voices to Vision* website (www.voicestovision.com) which launched just prior to the start of the community process. An evolving list of questions submitted by the community (with answers) was posted on the website throughout the subsequent ten months.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION. The phrase "*Voices to Vision*" gained widespread recognition in the weeks leading up to the sessions: banners were hung at the Library/Community Center and at the intersection of Buchanan Street and San Pablo Avenue, and posters were visible on the windows of businesses on Solano and San Pablo avenues, at the Library/Community Center, Senior Center, and at schools. Tables were also set up outside Safeway on Solano Avenue.

A model of the Albany waterfront (scale of 1" : 200') was created and installed at the Library/Community Center. The model offered viewers a sense of the relative sizes of each section of the waterfront, as well as the site's terrain and configuration. During both phases of *Voices to Vision*, guided tours of the waterfront were available.

Albany residents also learned about *Voices to Vision* from local media; articles about the visioning process appeared in the *Albany Journal*, the *Contra Costa Times*, the *AHS Cougar* (Albany High School's newspaper), as well as in "Albany Today," a popular community blog (see appendix). Along with news articles, the *Albany Journal* published op-ed pieces by then-Mayor Marge Atkinson and members of the Albany City Council.

14. 64% of Albany residents have a B.A./B.S. or higher, as compared to the national average of 24%.

(see appendix). Three issues of the city's newsletter (in 2008 and 2009) publicized *Voices to Vision* and encouraged residents to attend a session. The city's website also featured a slide show of photographs of the waterfront, as well as a link to www.voicestovision.com. The result of this buzz of activity in the Albany community was a growing recognition of important issues at the waterfront, as well as a palpable sense of community interest about what the waterfront could become. Outreach was also done through schools, including a decision to facilitate sessions for Albany High School (see sidebar).

To participate in *Voices to Vision*, residents needed to RSVP for a session through the website or by calling the *Voices to Vision* phone line (available in English, Spanish,

“The whole waterfront thing is so needlessly contentious. People who agree 90% of the time are at each other’s throats when it comes to the waterfront issue.”

and Chinese). Albany residents were encouraged, but not required, to attend the session designated for their zone. Approximately six sessions were held each week (evenings and weekends) throughout a six-week period (38 sessions from May 15 - July 1, 2009). Child care was provided at three sessions to encourage the participation of parents

with young children. To take advantage of the city's size and small-town feeling, signs and flyers for *Voices to Vision* were posted throughout Albany at both public and commercial buildings. On the days prior to the sessions for each neighborhood, *Voices to Vision* flyers were hand-delivered to each address in the zone.

The publication and the website included a step-by-step registration guide. Residents referred to a large map in the centerfold that delineated the boundaries of each of 31 neighborhood “zones” to find the date, time, and location of each designated session.

MEDIA

Albany residents are highly educated and well-informed on a range of local, regional, national, and international issues. The San Francisco Chronicle has a significant readership in the city and, many residents subscribe, purchase, or read the national press online, especially the N. Y. Times and Wall Street Journal.

As part of its research, FTA asked Albany residents where they get local news and information; the city doesn't have a daily newspaper and it receives scant coverage in the regional press. Residents simultaneously describe The Albany Journal, a free weekly, as “widely read” (especially the letters to the editor) and “widely ignored.” Many people said the Journal features “spotty, simplistic, and inconsistent coverage.” Several people described seeing the paper lying neglected and yellowing on porches for days.

Popular sources of news about Albany include: local (and even block-level) blogs and e-trees connected to schools, neighborhood groups, issue-based alliances, and organizations ranging from churches to environmental associations to merchants. According to many of those interviewed for Voices to Vision, members of the Albany community tend to hear about things “over the backyard fence” (or around town at a coffee shop, the YMCA, etc.) One person recommended adopting a strategy familiar to those running a political campaign: “The best way to get information to people is to bring it to their homes – by mail or on doorsteps.”

Thus, Voices to Vision did just that:

- 20 page publication mailed first class to all 9,094 Albany addresses*
- 27,606 postcard reminders*
- 12,353 flyers distributed to schools, homes, shops, and in person on Solano and San Pablo avenues*
- 103 posters distributed to local businesses and public buildings*
- 1 announcement at block party*
- included in 6 AUSD e-trees distributed information*
- 2 banners*
- 46 yard signs*
- e-mail blasts to more than 1,400 people*

Designing the Voices to Vision Community Sessions

Using the information gathered during the previous nine months, and understanding that the final goal was to develop a set of guidelines based on the community's vision for the future of the Albany waterfront, FTA set out to design an appropriate and engaging participatory session (which would be repeated multiple times). Using two hours as the maximum time that people are usually willing to gather, the goal for the session was to prompt residents to "think big," while at the same time recognizing both site constraints and site opportunities. It was also important for participants to learn from the activities and from one another, to understand how their input would be used, to feel comfortable expressing their opinions, and to enjoy the time focused at the session. The session was designed to include activities that would:

- reveal thoughts about what makes Albany special
- prompt consideration of the future of Albany
- allow participants to review the physical and economic realities of the waterfront site and determine what kind of place they hoped it could be
- lead to an understanding of the common ground that exists in the community and provide vehicles for continued discussion

To accomplish these ends, a series of exercises were developed that FTA hoped would engage and interest residents, well beyond what typically happens at "community meetings." Each of the activities – from the icebreaker to the closing exercise – attempted to accomplish the session goals. But the major emphasis of the session was "The Albany Waterfront Game" – a specially designed process that incorporated a set of unique tools and information based on research and data.

FTA knew that it would be important for participants to work with a large scale "blank" map of the site so they could think about possibilities without any pre-conceived vision displayed on the map (which would have forced participants to become reactive rather than proactive players). It was also important that all participants be given a "level playing field" through concise but relevant information and data. FTA also knew from experience, the value of creating strong visual "tools" that participants could hold and place on the site map. In this case, the "tools" were 1/8" color plastic "chips" that represented different potential uses that could be created at the waterfront property.

While there was no site plan to react to (as there had been with Rancho San Antonio and other developer proposals), the "use" on any one of the chips reflected ideas that had been generated at prior waterfront planning processes over the years. Beyond the "use" information that came from previous community workshops, FTA added newly acquired information about the acreage each use would require, the potential for success of each use at this site, and the potential tax revenue the use could provide to the city. From this information a set of chips (or pieces) was created that would be used by participants to create their site concept for the waterfront at a 1":200' scale.

"I'm impressed with how the exercises really became concrete and it was great to work with others who have different points of view; I'm impressed with my fellow Albanians."

"It was nice to deal with a complex and contentious issue with my neighbors. It's a shame that everyone in Albany won't attend."

Voicing Visions: May and June 2009

Over the course of six weeks in May and June 2009, 38 community sessions,¹⁵ identical in format, were facilitated at schools, the Library/Community Center, and the Senior Center. The two-hour sessions ranged in size from less than 10 to more than 50 participants. In total, 640 individuals participated in these May/June sessions (see appendix). A few months later, additional sessions were facilitated for approximately 100 students at Albany High School (see sidebar). Special outreach was also done in the fall to facilitate sessions in Spanish and Chinese, but despite numerous efforts, no one registered for these non-English sessions.

The May/June community sessions were comprised of six parts:

- icebreaker (The Best Thing About Albany)
- visioning for the future of the city (Envisioning Albany 10 to 20 years into the future)
- reviewing the Albany Waterfront (The Facts)
- selecting the “driver” (The Factor that Most Drives your Thinking About the Waterfront)
- visioning for the future of the Albany Waterfront (The Albany Waterfront “Game”)
- presentations (Presentations by participants of their group’s ideas and thinking)

“The whole waterfront thing had gotten so needlessly contentious. People who agree 90% of the time are at each other’s throats when it comes to the waterfront issue.”

Facilitators used a “script” (see appendix) to ensure that all sessions were as close to identical as possible.¹⁶

THE BEST THING ABOUT ALBANY IS... To start each session, facilitators led an icebreaker exercise in which people were asked to complete the sentence: “The best thing about Albany (or about living in Albany) is _____.” Then, everyone introduced the person sitting to their right and read what he/she considered the best thing about Albany.

Many participants said they loved that Albany has a “small town feeling” and is a “safe and friendly place to live.” Many responses used terms like “community,” “neighbors,” and “engaged” to describe the city. Other popular comments centered on Albany’s public schools and “having the best of both worlds – living in a small city within a large urban metropolis.” Many residents mentioned that Albany is pedestrian- and bike-friendly, and that residents care about the environment.

In some sessions, as many as four or five people had nearly identical responses, which made participants feel there were commonalities among and within the group. Starting with an exercise that offered a scan of residents’ perspectives set the stage for the exercises that would follow. The shared values and interests surprised some people who recalled the recent contentious posturing about waterfront development. “I was struck by how everyone seemed to want similar things for the city, despite – or in contrast to – the vitriol that was expressed during the Caruso period,” said one resident.

15. Separate sessions were held for each of the 31 neighborhood zones; four were added to meet growing interest as the 31 sessions neared an end; two were facilitated for non-Albany residents; and one was held at Albany High School for students.

16. The two sessions held for non-Albany residents omitted the exercise that considered the vision for the future of the city of Albany.

A VISION FOR THE CITY OF ALBANY

During the one-on-one interviews that provided a scan of attitudes about city issues, one question seemed especially difficult for residents: “What’s the vision for Albany?” Some listed characteristics that define Albany today; others felt the city didn’t have a coherent vision. One city leader said: “We all want good schools and we like our small town feeling, but that’s not a vision and it can’t guide decisionmaking.”

From the outset, FTA felt Albany would benefit from thinking about a citywide vision, prior to thinking about the waterfront. Members of the Planning Commission agreed and recommended that the waterfront visioning process include a discussion that could lead to a vision for Albany. This piece of work was added to the FTA scope already underway.

FTA devoted the first 30 minutes of the May/June community sessions to a thoughtful discussion of priorities for Albany’s future. Each participant was given an identical deck of 21 cards – each with a single word or phrase – and asked to select the four that best described their ideal Albany. Individuals then paired up and reviewed their combined eight cards and narrowed them to four; then two sets of pairs teamed up and again narrowed their combined eight cards to four.

“Sustainable” and “small town” were selected again and again, as were “safe,” “family-friendly,” and “engaged community.” Based on findings from nearly 40 community sessions, FTA prepared a vision statement and set of core values, as well as strategies to chart a course for the city (see appendix).

Draft Vision for Albany (March 2010)

A city where decisions and actions consciously promote environmental sustainability; where commitment to an engaged, diverse, and multi-generational community is honored; where small-scale, independently-owned businesses are supported; and where there is a focus on local arts, culture, and cuisine.

Envisioning the City of Albany in 2030

The goal of the exercise, “Envisioning Albany” was to enable residents to think about what they hoped Albany would be like in 10 or 20 years.¹⁷ Each participant was given an identical deck of 21 cards that contained words and short phrases drawn from FTA’s research and interviews with community members. Through an iterative series of choices, small groups of participants were able to pick the words and phrases that best represented their vision for the future of Albany.

In selecting their cards, the small teams discussed their values and concerns, and considered how some words and concepts are inextricably tied to others. In working together to reduce the number of cards by half, team members chose the “visioning cards” they felt encompassed broad concepts that were most important to them.

The teams were then asked to affix their final four cards to large paper sheets on the wall. All participants gathered to group similar terms together, to see the frequency of the same choices, and to discuss the visions of Albany that emerged from the posted cards at that session. Participants noted words that appeared frequently and considered how some terms were related to others.¹⁸ The facilitator noted words that seemed linked – and asked whether anything was missing. As the group looked at the cards in relation to one another and considered why groups made particular choices, a collective vision about the city began to emerge... not at all sessions, but certainly at some.

“Too much time was spent on the vision for the city.”

“I’m glad we talked about the broader vision for the future of the city, before jumping into the waterfront. The two need to be tied together.”

17. This exercise was created primarily to help the city as it considered embarking on a new brand and a new general plan (see sidebar for Draft Vision).

18. For example, “sustainable” was often linked with the “green” and “fiscally solvent.” To others, it was tied to “small town feeling.” See Appendix for a more detailed analysis.

Creating a Vision for the Waterfront

The core of each community session was an exercise where participants created their vision for the Albany waterfront. Before launching into this, the facilitator referred to several large posters on the walls, including maps and a list of facts about the waterfront. The facilitator explained that the group would be splitting into small teams for a waterfront “game” to explore what they’d like to see at the waterfront, as well as the ways in which various uses could provide benefits to the city and community. Participants were not expected to agree completely with one another – but they were asked to be open to explore both their own ideas and those of other participants.

Then in order to form into “teams” to play the game, each person was given a set of five (“driver”) cards – each with a simple word or phrase (*open space; ideal place for families; economic development; regional asset; and racetrack stays*) and asked to select the card that he or she considered the most important factor to inform a vision for the future of Albany’s waterfront. Small teams of about 4-6 people formed based on who chose the same card. The facilitator then explained the “rules” of the game (see appendix).

“Teams” sat together at tables covered with a large map of the waterfront that outlined the entire 190-acre waterfront area (delineating ownership, noting some geotechnical aspects and some special features of the site, and setback requirements) The tables also had “game boxes” with 56 playing pieces. Each game piece was color coded and proportioned to the 1”:200’ scale of the map (pieces included information about acreage required for building, circulation, landscaping, parking, etc.). Pieces represented different land uses (including open space) and included information on site use or building type, acreage, height, and potential tax revenue.¹⁹ (See appendix for photographs, game rules, and other information pertinent to understanding the participatory process related to decisionmaking about the waterfront.) To ground the game in the realities of the site, FTA had consulted with economists, architects, and planners; information included in the “game” came from this research. The game pieces were all simple rectangular shapes, intended to be “abstractions” of actual site plans for any use.

19. For example, the yellow game piece was a boutique hotel. A sticker on that piece listed pertinent information: 3-story hotel includes meeting rooms, event space, parking; 8.5 acres; Tax revenue = \$700,000.

WHAT’S IN THE BOX?

(Pieces available at each table when creating “maps”)

How many?	Color	Use/type Height Acreage (inc. pkg/circulation) Tax Revenue
10	dark green	Pristine open space 10 acres
5	light green	Recreational open space 10 acres
5	brick red	Retail/restaurant (high end) 1 story 8 acres \$350,000 <i>3 piece minimum</i>
1	orange	Hotel/conference center 10 stories 5 acres \$1,400,000 <i>1 piece maximum</i>
1	yellow	Boutique hotel 3 stories 8.5 acres \$700,000 <i>1 piece maximum</i>
5	blue	Residential/townhouses (low- and medium-density) 2 and 3 stories 9 acres \$350,000
5	purple	Residential/condos 5 stories 5 acres \$350,000
1	white	Golden Gate Fields Racetrack 54 acres \$1,700,000 (2007-08)
5	white	Golden Gate Fields parking 5 acres
3	beige	Aquarium or Museum 3-4 acres
1	light brown	Outdoor theater (seating around 17,000) 20 acres
1	dark brown	Private high school campus 10 acres
5	light pink	Office/tower 5 stories 9 acres \$350,000
3	dark pink	Office/campus 3 stories 34 acres \$350,000
5	clear	“Bright idea”

P.S. TO THE COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR THE CITY

To give the community another chance to weigh in on Albany's vision, city staff organized a workshop in January 2010. Sitting at tables of ten, participants (including one City Council member at each of the five tables) discussed the ways in which the city of Albany was guided by a list of core values – and to identify the time they felt most proud to be a resident of Albany. A fair number of the approximately 50 residents in attendance said they thought the Voices to Vision process itself was both evidence of the city's values in action, and an example of a recent city event worthy of pride.

Heights above three stories were indicated with greater thickness on an appropriate portion of the piece.

As a team, participants discussed the opportunities and constraints of the site, including potential environmental and aesthetic impacts, community benefits, tax revenues, and challenges of different land use options. The facilitator encouraged the groups to consider permanent uses (e.g. parks and/or built structures), as well as temporary uses (e.g. farmer's markets, flea markets, performance spaces). If group members came up with a land use not covered by the colored game pieces, there were blank pieces they could use for "bright ideas" (which were recorded and noted). There were enough "open space" pieces to suggest that the entire site become a park.

Each game piece noted the land area needed for the particular use, as well as the estimated tax revenue that would be generated by the use at that scale (see sidebar)²⁰. If participants added uses they believed would generate tax income for the city, they were told to note this in the comment box; those revenues could not be authenticated without additional research. (Most of the new uses – bright ideas – for the site suggested by participants focused on education, environment, and research institutes; solar and wind power; cafes; and water recreation. Many of these ideas would not generate significant tax dollars for the city.) While the process did not calculate the tax impact on Albany's existing commercial areas, it was noted that some solutions might create a regional draw and thus increase patronage of local restaurants and shopping, which could in turn increase tax revenues.

After thinking about what uses each group thought best for the site, participants talked about where on the site any development and open space should be located and placed the appropriate game pieces on the site map. Halfway into the game, a "news flash" was distributed in a blank envelope to each table. The news flash stated: *Albany projects \$1 million loss in tax revenues. City committed to "green" thinks about future.*

The teams were given the opportunity to adjust their plans based on the news flash. The teams annotated their maps to explain other details about their thinking and ideas. Each group then "named" their idea, and listed community benefits and estimated total revenue generated – based on those listed on the game pieces. If participants felt any of their "bright ideas" might generate tax revenue for the city, they were encouraged to note that possibility on their calculations.

At the conclusion of the session, each group verbally presented their plan to all session participants with time for brief discussion. Careful notes were taken by facilitators and written directly on each map as participants presented solutions. A photograph was taken to document each map.²¹ At every one of the 38 sessions participants applauded the solutions presented on each map.

20. Neither development costs nor land acquisition costs were included in the information presented.

21. All maps were eventually recreated to provide color consistency and to address legibility. All notes were copiously reproduced onto final maps which are identical in content to the maps created by the groups. All final maps are included in the appendix.

Analysis of Phase One

At the conclusion of nearly 40 community sessions, there was a wealth of information to analyze, including vision cards, driver cards, and 199 rendered site maps showing concepts for the waterfront (produced by more than 600 Albany adult residents, about 100 Albany High School students, and a handful of non-residents, as well as demographics and session evaluations. Each of the site maps offered a unique perspective

“I worry about the attendees being more ‘only-open-space-who-cares-about-revenue’ types. More pragmatic Albanians seem to keep to themselves.”

and rationale for the Albany waterfront²² (see appendix).

The ideas that came from the community reflected a broad range of thinking – from a marina focused on water activities and sports complexes,

including relocating REI, to building a boutique container port to making the site a source of renewable energy capturing wind and/or waves. However, while the ideas reflected many differences, there were common themes that emerged and similarities expressed by the majority of participants related to:

- the amount of new dedicated park/ open space
- favored uses
- tax revenues
- acceptable locations for site development

New Dedicated Park/Open Space. Nearly all participants wanted to expand the amount of open space at the waterfront, although to varying degrees. About 62% of resident participants had maps with 72 acres or less of new dedicated park/ open space (not including the 38 acres of Albany-owned property or 50 acres of existing state park). Non-residents favored more open space, with close to 50% favoring more than 90 acres of new open space; while youth favored more built area, with more than 70% opting for less than 25 acres of new open space.

Included in their concept of open space, all participants wanted to see the Bay Trail completed, although there was some difference

ALBANY ADULTS, YOUTH, AND NON-RESIDENT PARTICIPANTS

A quick overview of the similarities and differences shown in maps generated during Phase One:

Favored Use (beyond “park”)	% Albany Adults	% Albany Youth	% Non-Albany
10-story hotel	24	44	50
Boutique hotel	60	38	50
Retail/restaurants	54	70	23
Housing	29	44	54
Office	23	4	8
GGF	10	12	0

Built Acreage (incl. parking, roads, etc.)	% Albany Adults	% Albany Youth	% Non-Albany
Less than 10 acres	16	0	46
10-40 acres	42	15	31
41-80 acres	32	55	15
More than 80 acres	10	30	8

Tax Revenue	% Albany Adults	% Albany Youth	% Non-Albany
None (\$0)	6	8	0
\$1 - \$1,000,000	19	4	46
\$1,000,001 - \$2,000,000	40	33	0
\$2,000,001 - \$3,000,000	22	17	31
More than \$3 million	13	38	23

22. 8.5 x 11” copies of each of the site maps created at the sessions are included in the appendix; full size maps were 30” x 40”.

in where people wanted to locate the trail (either near the shore, near the freeway, or both locations).

Shades of Green. The Phase One community sessions relied upon two different “chips” to represent green, open space on the game maps. A light green chip represented “recreational” open space and a dark green chip represented “pristine” open space. Participants created their own definitions of what “green” meant on their site plans.

The range of open space shown on the maps was broad – from low- to no-impact pristine space (no ball fields, no direct human contact, dense vegetation); to low- and medium-impact open space (which added open space for casual lawn games, kite flying, picnics, and rustic trails); to a focus on high impact outdoor uses such as sports fields, manicured lawns, playgrounds, and paved pathways for walking and biking. In general, it appeared that the majority of maps included a range of open space types, reflecting the scale of the site (especially when considering the public open space, as well as the privately-owned parcel).

The Bulb. Despite the fact that the Neck and Plateau are owned by the state and are part of the Eastshore State Park and the fact that the Bulb itself, while still owned by Albany, is also slated to become part of that park, many participants annotated their maps with ideas for what they would like to see in these areas. Nearly 30% of the groups wanted to leave the Bulb as is and have the city of Albany retain ownership.

Of those maps that indicated specific comments²³ about clean up of the Bulb, dogs at the waterfront, and ownership of the Bulb, participants appeared to be equally divided about whether or not dogs should be allowed without leashes. Trail improvement and accessibility were noted frequently as important considerations.

Preferred Uses. With regard to the uses people favored, more than 140 maps, reflecting the participation of more than 85% of total attendees, placed a hotel at the site, with the majority of these maps favoring a 3-story, boutique style hotel/conference center (described by many as “Asilomar-like”) on an 8-acre site (generating an estimated \$700,000 in gross tax revenue) over a 10-story hotel/conference center on a 5-acre site (generating an estimated \$1,400,000 in gross tax revenue). Non-residents and youth also indicated an inclination toward hotel development, although youth differed in their preference of a 10-story hotel over a boutique hotel.

High end retail/restaurant was the next most favored use and the only other use that a majority of adult residents placed on their maps. This use was shown to require a minimum of 250,000 square feet of retail space in order to generate enough of a regional draw, which would take a minimum of 24 acres and generate approximately \$1,050,000 in gross tax revenue. Retail was most favored by youth (70%) and least favored by non-residents (less than 25%).

TITLING THE MAPS

After the table teams completed their discussions and made decisions about the placement of chips on the map, they were asked to create a title for their solution. Many of the titles were quite creative; some were straightforward; some were humorous; some were completely descriptive. A sampling of the titles:

Less is More

Asilomar by the Bay

Ramblin’ + Gamblin’

Prudent Multi-Use

Lotta Space, Little Development

Food for the Soul

Return to Balance

Bay Cool View

Open Space + Hotel: Friendly Coexistence

Hybrid Pipe Dream

Golden Gate Family Fun Fields

Albaluscious

Wind, Sun, Fun, and Mon-[ey]

Tilden by the Bay

Golden Gate Vista

Our Community Backyard

Character +

Fish in a Barrel: Destination Albany

23. There were no specific questions related to dogs or clean up, so these comments were self-generated.

Other sought-after uses focused on museums, aquariums, interpretive centers and other education-oriented uses at the site – by adult residents, non-residents, and youth alike, although the nature of the use did vary somewhat. For example, about 30% of adult residents and more than 65% of youth participants favored a museum or aquarium, compared with none of the non-resident participants. However, more than 30% of non-resident adults placed an educational facility on their maps, compared with just over 10% of adult residents and no youth.

Housing as a use at the site generated a good deal of discussion at many sessions – with many residents having a difficult time envisioning how housing at this location could be integrated into the life of Albany. Still, some believed the

waterfront offered a great opportunity to provide additional housing (often for distinct subsets of the population such as seniors, artists, etc.) And there were many discussions about whether housing at the waterfront would make it seem less like public space and more like a private community. Thus, housing was not used as frequently on site maps. (In contrast, about 50% of non-resident

adults and nearly 44% of youth favored development of condominiums.) Residents were even less interested in developing offices at the site.

About 11% of the adult residents' maps chose to preserve Golden Gate Fields, long term – either for use as a racetrack or for a strategic rehabilitation of the structure for another use, such as an outdoor theater. Some of the solutions that retained Golden Gate Fields indicated a phased plan, maintaining the racetrack for a specified number of years. In contrast, none of the non-resident adults chose to retain Golden Gate Fields and nearly 25% of youth favored retaining the track.

Bright Ideas. About 80% of the game maps included at least one “bright idea,” some with as many as five. Nearly 20% of the maps showed some form of water recreation that would include non-motorized boat rentals, related retail development, instructional classes, and dock access. More than 15% included some type of restaurant (ranging from casual eateries to high-end dining), and many indicated an interest in incorporating locally grown, organic ingredients into the menu. Around 15% included some form of alternative energy production that would not only power development on the waterfront, but also other parts of Albany.

Other creative, but not often repeated, uses included a velodrome, ice rink, mini golf, marijuana farm, and regional campground.

**“True democracy in action,
even if no decisions are made.
I liked it... I’m glad I live in
a city that was willing to
commit to this...”**

WATERFRONT HOUSING

Of all the land uses that Albany residents considered during Voices to Vision, housing was the most debated. As teams of residents discussed whether to place residential land use pieces on their site maps, the discussions of the pros and cons of housing at the waterfront were thoughtful and, at times, heated.

On the one hand, some residents felt that housing was desperately needed. They saw the development of housing at the waterfront (for families, seniors, or artists) as a way to ensure safety at the waterfront and to create a 24/7 sense of place. “A family friendly environment requires an active area, day and evening,” noted a participant.

But other residents felt that housing at the waterfront could privatize the site and would also place additional demands on the schools. They saw the freeway as a barrier that would create “two Albanys:” one east of 580; one west of 580. Some felt waterfront housing would become either exclusively low-income or high-income and would fracture the city by geography.

The online questionnaire asked residents to rate a range of uses, for the waterfront including housing:

- 16% felt housing at the waterfront was an appropriate land use*
- 16% were neutral in their thinking about housing at the waterfront*
- 68% did not think the Albany waterfront was a logical place for housing*

This data was remarkably consistent with the site maps that were created during Phase One.

YOUTH SPEAK

Albany's identity is defined, in part, by its deep commitment to public education. In preparing Voices to Vision, FTA endeavored to include the visions of young people into the process to see if their perspective matched their parents, to understand how youth think about the waterfront, and to assess perceptions and misperceptions. Thus, a series of sessions were held for students at Albany High School (AHS).

Over the course of two lunch periods in May 2009, FTA facilitated the Phase One session and in October, returned to AHS to conduct the session during class time as part of a course in which the teacher was able to integrate the process into the curriculum. The sessions were identical to the ones attended by their parents. It should be noted that some AHS students do not live in Albany (but it was not possible to distinguish those students).

There were significant differences in how young people envisioned the city in the future as compared to older generations. Youth envision (desire) a city that is "exciting, vibrant, and diverse." They eschew terms like "family-friendly" and "safe" as ways to think about Albany in the future.

The desire for activity was reflected in both the vision statements and the maps created by youth who tended to favor commercial development (with a decidedly youth-oriented bent: music, skateboard parks, arcades, shopping). And, while students said they wanted more open space, when confronted with the site map, they often proclaimed: "There's already a lot of open space since the property includes the Bulb." Surprisingly, students talked about the importance of creating new tax revenues to benefit the schools.

Tax Revenue. Since the sessions provided information about current tax revenue from GGF, and potential tax revenue from other uses, it is interesting to note that about 60% of residents developed the site to provide between \$1 million and \$3 million in tax revenue for the city, but using far less acreage than what GGF currently uses to generate \$1.7 million in tax revenue.

Seventy percent of participants created maps with uses that generated at least \$1.4 million in tax revenue; nearly 50% generated maps with tax revenues of at least \$1.7 million; 30% selected uses that generated \$2.3 million. Twenty-five percent of participants created maps with up to \$700,000 in tax revenue; 6% of Albany adult participants created maps that did not generate any known tax revenue. It should be noted that many residents thought that some of the uses they created (for example marinas, cafes, recreational activities, etc.) would also add revenue, so the assumption is that many participants actually planned for higher revenue to the city than noted in their tallies.

It is interesting to note that regardless of the initial "vision" (as delineated in the selection of the "driver card") that participants embraced when they began the process, their solutions were often more similar than different. For example, groups that prioritized "economic development" often specified as much open space in their plan as those who said "open space" was the priority. Those groups who said "economic development" and those groups who said they wanted the area to be "family-friendly" tended to select uses that generated the most amount of aggregate revenue – and those solutions tended to provide more revenue than what currently comes from GGF, but still used fewer acres.

Building Location. The participants indicated preferred locations for development on each of their team maps. The favored location for the 3-story boutique hotel was on Fleming Point (38%); the current site of Golden Gate Fields was favored by approximately 35%; followed by the south end of the site and the north parking lot area at around 13% each. Similarly, of those who located a 10-story hotel/conference center on their map, more than 40% favored Fleming Point for the location; about 30% favored the current site of Golden Gate Fields; the southern portion of the site was favored by 23%; and the north parking lot was preferred by 7%.

Of those maps showing high end retail/ restaurant uses, more than 60% placed this use on the current site of Golden Gate Fields; 20% place it on Fleming Point; followed by the south end of the site and the north parking lot, at about 10% each.

About 30% of those maps with a museum or aquarium showed it on Fleming Point, and another 27% showed it at the location of the north parking lot.

Access. Access was also an important topic of discussion, with many good ideas emerging about ways for Albany residents and non-residents to get to the site and for the site to be connected to Albany's commercial districts.



See appendix for 8.5 x 11" versions of each of the 199 "maps" created during Phase One; recreated for color consistency and legibility; all notes from original maps included in reproductions.



See appendix for 8.5 x 11" versions of each of the 199 "maps" created during Phase One; recreated for color consistency and legibility; all notes from original maps included in reproductions.



See appendix for 8.5 x 11" versions of each of the 199 "maps" created during Phase One; recreated for color consistency and legibility; all notes from original maps included in reproductions.



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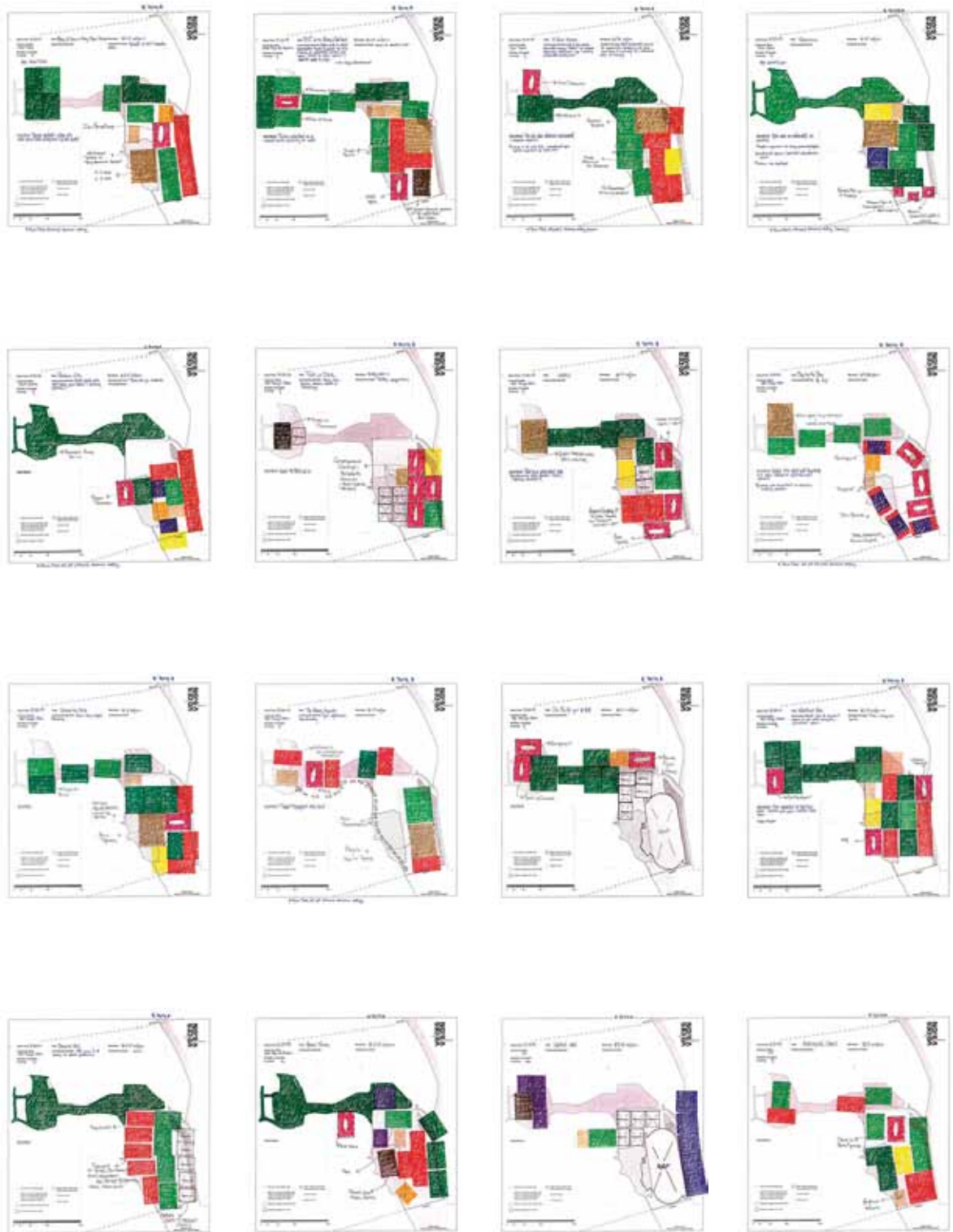
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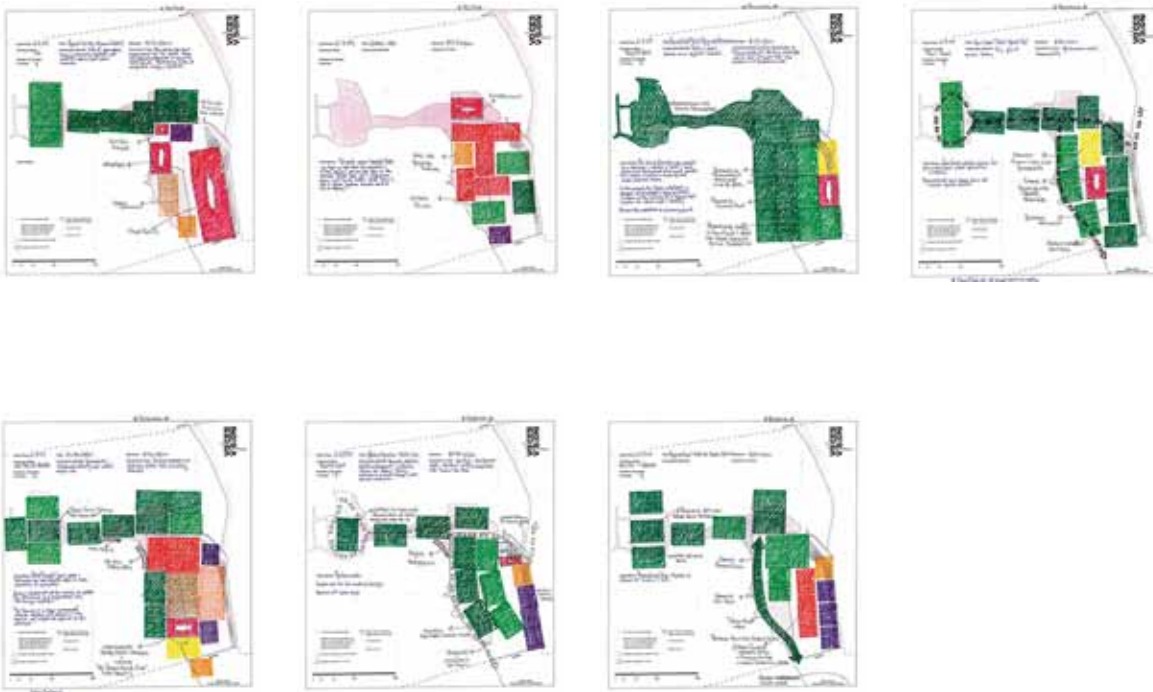
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Surveying Albany Residents

Surveying Albany Residents On-Line

In analyzing the results of the 38 community sessions, FTA decided to seek additional feedback from residents to clarify some of the information – and to help inform the design of the subsequent Phase Two sessions. Additionally, FTA hoped to attract involvement of younger participants, including parents with toddlers who might have had difficulty finding two hours to participate in the May/June sessions (despite the fact that there were three sessions with free child care). The questionnaire was also designed to reach those who might be more comfortable with an electronic format. With these goals in mind, an on-line questionnaire was developed that could elicit information and reveal, among other things, how residents define “open space,” and how they rank the issues that influence their thinking about the future of the Albany waterfront.

FTA mailed a postcard with details about the questionnaire, including a personal password, to every Albany household. Just as in Phase One, steps were taken to ensure that only residents of Albany responded to the questionnaire – and that they responded just once. (See appendix for questionnaire and detailed results.) The survey included 22 questions, and was posted for two weeks. The option to respond to many of the questions with “other” and to insert comments resulted in a very large amount of commentary about each question, as well as about the survey itself. Some respondents wrote lengthy passages throughout the survey, and at the conclusion.

“Thanks for adding an on-line part to Voices to Vision for people like me who like providing comments electronically; it’s difficult to find time to go to meetings.”

“I don’t know how much this outreach is costing me (and what part I might have otherwise wanted to go to the schools), but I do enjoy the opportunities and the processes provided. I feel listened to.”

Key Survey Results

For complete results of the on-line survey, see appendix.

The results of the survey were analyzed to gain a broader perspective of participant concerns and opinions. It was clear that while the information was valuable, often the responses (especially the lengthy text inserts by respondents) prompted more questions than answers. The 15-minute anonymous survey did not provide the rich information that was gained from the in-person sessions which were grounded with baseline facts and information and which sparked discussion and debate, during a two-hour sustained participation. Key information obtained from the on-line survey include:

- 27% prefer that the entire waterfront become public park, utilizing city and regional bond measures; about 26% want GGF property re-zoned (to allow for commercial development not currently included in zoning), but want to ensure that at least 50 acres of new open space would be added to the waterfront, including a large set-back from the shore. (Some written comments in this category noted the desire to rezone for new commercial uses, but stated that *more* than 50 acres of new public open space should be created); 21% prefer a phased development strategy, to ensure the city preserves current tax revenue throughout any development process created by zoning change(s); 9% believe Golden Gate Fields is an important business for Albany to retain.
- 63% state the city needs a waterfront development plan that provides tax revenues at least equal to those currently generated by horse racing (\$1.7 million), while at the same time increasing open space.
- Outdoor recreation was the use considered to most “enhance the good of the community”: by nearly 80% of respondents; nearly 50% of respondents support a museum, aquarium, environmental or educational center, or event space(s) at the waterfront, as a way to “enhance the good of the community;” performance spaces and/or community gardens were favored by about 40%
- Nearly 50% want to see the handmade structures (including the “art”) at the Bulb preserved; 85% want the waterfront clean and clear of construction debris.

THE ALBANY BULB

At the western most part of the Albany waterfront, lies the Bulb, a fascinating site that has simultaneously challenged and defined Albany’s waterfront for decades. Like most of the land referred to as the “waterfront,” the Bulb is made of landfill (construction and landscape debris). It’s “rough” and “wild” terrain has been configured by the vegetation growing over the fill.

The Bulb is passionately embraced by dog-walkers (including the many who applaud the acceptance of off-leash dogs), and by artists, educators, and hikers (who like the wildness and isolation in such close proximity to an urban area). But others describe the Bulb as chaotic, dangerous, abandoned public land that is overgrown, inaccessible, and “unsafe.” A small community of local artists has built large structures, “found-object art” pieces in an open-air “gallery” on the north side of the city-maintained property.

No significant progress has been made to officially incorporate the Bulb into the Eastshore State Park, which would require the removal of the “art” and the enforcement of leashed dogs, as well as the removal of any potentially dangerous objects (such as rebar).

As of the date of this report, the Bulb falls under the city of Albany’s jurisdiction. “Whatever happens, I just hope the Bulb is left alone,” said one resident. “I worry that changes to nearby land will ruin this unbelievable place.”

While many of the site maps created in the May/June sessions included ideas for changing the Bulb and/or opinions as to whether or not the Bulb should be incorporated into the Park, this report does not make recommendations about the future of the Bulb. The notes and comments related to the Bulb that emerged from the sessions are included in the Appendix.

Most Voices to Vision participants covered the Bulb with “green open space chips,” but some suggested installing wind turbines on the Bulb; other ideas included water recreation, a museum or interpretive center, a ferry terminal, and an official art/sculpture park.

DOGS AT THE WATERFRONT

Dogs were a topic of debate during the May/June community sessions of Voices to Vision. Albany residents were very opinionated about whether or not unsupervised, unleashed dogs should be allowed at the Bulb.

To gain some clarity on the issue, the Voices to Vision online questionnaire asked several questions related to the Bulb (see Appendix).

70% of survey respondents said they had visited the Bulb in the last year (making it the most frequented part of the waterfront site). 85% of all survey respondents believe: "The Albany waterfront should be kept clean and clear of trash, debris, construction materials, etc."

Just under half of respondents (49%) say: "The handmade structures (including the art) at the Bulb should be preserved."

But it is the dog question that stirs up the most passion. 40% support off-leash dogs in clearly-designated areas; 24% support creating a specified area at the waterfront for dogs, but only leashed dogs; 15% support having leashed dogs anywhere on the waterfront site; 9% support an off-leash option throughout the site and 8% of respondents would prefer a waterfront free of dogs altogether.

In the January sessions, the Voices to Vision facilitators explained that they had gathered information about the Bulb (and about dogs) during Phase One and in the survey; that information would be passed on to city officials.

- Uses/activities respondents think are appropriate for the waterfront:

	Combination Totals "Strongly agree; Agree; Neutral"	"Strongly agree; "Agree"
Enjoying Nature	100%	97%
Waterfront recreation	96%	86%
Exercise and sports	93%	74%
Educational centers	85%	52%
Generating alternative energy	83%	45%
Restaurants	74%*	50%*
Green, open space (park) only	69%	54%
Research institutes	76%	37%
Overnight visitors (hotel)	63%*	35%*
Racetrack, open space, + other	59%*	34%*
Entertainment venues	55%*	29%*
Racetrack and open space only	48%*	18%*
Shopping	46%*	24%*
Offices	39%*	15%*
Housing	32%*	16%*

*Generates tax revenue

- While the question asking about appropriate uses for the waterfront indicates a relatively high support for racing, in another question asking respondents to select a statement that best reflects their feelings, just 9% said GGF is an important business to retain.

- Forty percent or more respondents support the items listed below:

Expanding/ completing Bay Trail (for walking, biking, jogging)	91%
Bike/ pedestrian bridge from Buchanan Street to waterfront	70%
Bike and pedestrian zones	69%
Boardwalk-style paths linking various areas throughout waterfront	61%
Shuttle from various Albany locations to the waterfront	44%
Limited auto access to waterfront	40%

- 42% support off-leash dogs if they are in clearly-designated areas; 24% support dogs at the waterfront, only if on-leash and in specified areas; 15% support on-leash dogs throughout the site; fewer than 10% support having dogs off-leash throughout the site; about 8% would prefer that dogs be prohibited completely from the waterfront.
- When envisioning the future of the waterfront, the most frequently cited descriptions are: "quiet, peaceful place for contemplation, primarily natural and pristine" (58%); "expanded wetlands and model of bayfront sustainability" (52%); "a place for families to visit, play, eat, shop, and enjoy views" (45%); "a state park, public open space" (40%)

Voices to Vision: Phase Two

Reaching Out for the January 2010 Sessions

The approach to publicizing the Phase Two *Voices to Vision* sessions was less intensive than for the May/June sessions. By now, the process had attained broad name recognition so that even those who had not participated in Phase One knew something about *Voices to Vision* as a result of the focused outreach in the spring. Banners and the waterfront model at the Library/Community Center were still in place; the website remained; and many visual reminders, such as posters and flyers, were still available.

Brightly colored *Voices to Vision* lawn signs were distributed to members of the City Council and to various commissioners and others to display and provide grassroots visibility. (FTA had noted that lawn signs were a popular promotional tool used throughout Albany for a variety of outreach needs - from elections to fundraising.) A blast e-mail with information about the Phase Two sessions went to more than 800 residents who attended a community session in the spring or who had contacted *Voices to Vision* over the past months. The e-mail also offered the opportunity for people to display lawn signs. The community access television station ran information about the *Voices to Vision* sessions, and articles appeared in several local newspapers. Additionally, a postcard was mailed to every Albany household announcing the January sessions (see appendix).

Though there was less outreach to encourage residents to RSVP than in the first round of sessions, the response to the Phase Two sessions was overwhelming. Fairly quickly, the numbers of registrants grew so large that the number of sessions was increased from five to ten. When residents came to the January sessions, they were split into two groups – those who participated in Phase One and those who did not. This strategy ensured the greatest number of people could participate in a safe, comfortable environment, and allowed for a more thorough introduction of the *Voices to Vision* process and early findings to those residents who had not participated in Phase One. A total of 365 Albany residents (plus 30 non-residents) participated in Phase Two, 67% of whom had attended Phase One sessions.

“The information presented was not objective. It was geared toward development... Assumptions were that we needed to generate revenue from the waterfront.”

“I think the Voices to Vision process is skewed to the ‘anti-development/pro-park political faction. The kids got it right... Albany needs tax revenue to be sustainable.”

Designing the Phase Two Sessions

Armed with substantial information from Phase One, supplemented by the survey and input from a variety of experts, as well as the evaluations of the May/June sessions, FTA began the task of creating the content and activities for the Phase Two (January 2010) sessions. Evaluations which were submitted by more than 90% of participants in Phase One indicated that the May/June sessions were overwhelmingly viewed as engaging, informative, well-paced, objective, and enjoyable. Residents specifically noted that they liked working in small groups (fewer than six); they appreciated the specially-designed “tools” and the creative approach to participation; they felt their opinions were being heard and recorded. A few (less than 10%) noted on the evaluation comment section that despite working in very small table groups, they still felt their voice was not as strong as some others at their table. Based on these comments and the need to move from an extremely broad range of options to more specific parameters for the waterfront, FTA developed the format and tools for Phase Two.

One challenge for FTA was that some of the participants who would come to Phase Two might not have attended the Phase One sessions, and would be less versed in the site constraints and opportunities. Thus, the sessions required some kind of introduction that provided base information as well as a summary of what was learned in Phase One. A graphic PowerPoint was created to encapsulate the key information gleaned up to this point.

FTA’s analysis of the nearly 200 maps created in the May/June sessions provided the groundwork to develop a limited set of “conceptual site scenarios,” which reflected the range of community thinking and framed the activities of the Phase Two sessions. Six conceptual scenarios²⁵ were developed, along with a list of common parameters that could be expected to be included in any proposal for the waterfront. (see sidebar and appendix).

The design of the sessions enabled participants to discuss topics as a group (of six per table), but to provide input as individuals.

25. While the map activity at the May/June sessions looked at the entire waterfront (public and private lands), the January sessions focused on the 102 acres currently used by GGF, because it was felt that sufficient information about the community’s vision for the public land had been acquired.

HOW CAN SIX MAPS REFLECT NEARLY 200?

A quick overview of how the 199 maps generated during Phase One turned into (compared with) the six conceptual scenarios (maps) developed for Phase Two

	% of Phase One Participants	Applied to % of maps (# out of 6 total maps)
By Use, in conjunction w/ park + other uses		
Park only	6	17 (1 of 6)
10 story hotel/ conference center	24	17 (1)
boutique hotel	60	67 (4)
retail/ restaurant	54	33 (2)
housing	29	17 (1)
office	23	17 (1)
Golden Gate Fields	10	17 (1)
By Built Acreage, inc. parking, roads, etc.)		
Less than 10 acres	16	17 (1 of 6)
10 to 20 acres	11	33 (2)
21 - 30 acres	11	17 (1)
31 - 40	20	17 (1)
41 - 50	10	0
51 - 60	11	0
61 - 70	7	0
71 - 80	5	0
81 - 90	3	17 (1)
more than 90	7	0
By Tax Revenue		
None	6	17 (1)
\$1 - \$700,000	19	17 (1)
\$701,000 - \$1,400,000	28	17 (1)
\$1,400,001 - \$2,100,000	18	17 (1)
\$2,100,001 - \$2,800,000	16	33 (2)
More than \$2,800,000	13	0

**CONCEPTUAL SCENARIOS
PHASE TWO**

New Dedicated Park/ Open Space***; Built Area*; Building Footprints (+/-)	Conceptual Scenario Land Uses	Estimated Gross Tax Revenue**
Scenario #1 98 acres new park 4 acres built 1 acre footprint	public park, interpretative center	None
Scenario #2 87 acres new park 15 acres built 5 acre footprint	public park, 10-story hotel with 3-story conference center, museum	\$1,400,000
Scenario #3 83 acres new park 19 acres built 3 acre footprint	public park, aquarium, 2-story 'Asilomar-style' boutique hotel, food gardens, restaurant	\$700,000
Scenario #4 72 acres new park 30 acres built 12 acre footprint	public park, 3-story hotel with conference center, retail/ restaurants, museum, garage, water sports rental, etc.	\$2,600,000
Scenario #5 68 acres new park 34 acres built 14 acre footprint	public park, retail/ restaurants, 7-story office, 5-story condo building, amphitheater, interpretative center	\$2,100,000
Scenario #6 19 acres new park*** 83 acres built 9 acre footprint	Racetrack, 3-story boutique hotel, interpretive center, public park***	\$2,300,000

* includes circulation and parking

** tax revenue information prepared for planning purposes;
does not reflect market feasibility, development costs, etc.

*** including proposed botanical garden in center of track

**** does not include 38 acres of Albany-owned property or
50 acres of existing state park

**January 2010:
Phase Two Community Sessions**

Over one weekend in January 2010 (Saturday, January 9 and Sunday, January 10), ten sessions were held at the Senior Center and/or the Community Center/Library. As with the sessions in the spring, Albany residents could only participate in one of the 10 sessions. In total, 365 Albany residents participated in the January sessions (see appendix).

The format and activities of each session were identical, with the exception of the slightly longer introduction for those who had not participated in Phase One of *Voices to Vision* (see appendix for script and session tools).

Each session began with a presentation enhanced by PowerPoint graphic support. Then, the participation began.

Rather than making binding decisions related to a vote on one of the six scenarios, participants were asked to comment on elements of each of the scenarios. It was explained that the scenarios should be viewed as possible directions, not as specific plans or proposals. Further, each scenario reflected input from the community (rather than the idea of any one person or organization). The scenarios were actually aggregated concepts, created to allow residents a way to offer more refined feedback than was possible in Phase One. The facilitator noted that every one of the scenarios would include particular environmental features that had emerged throughout the process as important to the vast majority of Albany residents.

In addition to the specifics of each scenario, the facilitator showed several computer-generated "massing simulations" to give people a sense of how views would be impacted by the height of different types of development. Like the waterfront model installed at the library (which provided a way of seeing the site as a whole), these simulations gave people a frame of reference for how various building heights included in some scenarios might impact views from multiple vantage points.

After a very brief description of each of the six scenarios, the facilitator explained the process by which participants would consider each scenario. At each table of six residents, there were three coffee mugs representing different viewpoints: one

green (pro); one red (con); one yellow (neutral). Using the mugs, participants could weigh in on particular aspects of each of the six scenarios.

One at a time, facilitators handed out each of the six “conceptual scenarios.” These large-scale color maps (1”: approx 300’) also provided an “at-a-glance reference chart” – a bulleted list indicating the acreage of new public open space added in each scenario; the amount of built development (if any); as well as a description of features and related financing and tax revenue information.

Participants were asked to discuss and review each scenario as a table group. Then, participants were asked to weigh in as individuals; each person was given a deck of cards, each of which listed a specific attribute of that scenario (e.g. “Hotel fills need for locally-based visitor accommodations.”) There were also blank cards that could be used to note an attribute not mentioned. Working alone, participants dropped each card into one of the mugs to reflect whether they thought that attribute was positive, negative, or neutral for that scenario. Additionally, participants commented on each of the six scenarios by answering a list of questions. This process was repeated six times; once for each map (conceptual scenario).

After placing each of the attribute cards into one of the three mugs, participants then filled out

“individual scenario worksheets,” which allowed them to offer another layer of input about each scenario.

“It’s confusing whether or not we have the actual final say in all of this, or is this for ‘just in case’ ... if we, Albany, get ownership or the say in what happens at this space.”

To keep the process moving, while still ensuring sufficient time for participants to consider each scenario, each table had a kitchen timer and a designated time-keeper. Every eight minutes, the facilitator gave a brief introduction of the significant characteristics of that scenario and “attribute cards” were given to each participant. When the timers began ringing, the attribute cards and other materials were collected and the process was repeated with the next scenario map.

When the exercise for the sixth scenario was completed and the facilitators collected the materials, participants were asked to complete the “all scenarios worksheet” (see appendix). This worksheet gave participants a chance to provide additional feedback – after having reviewed all six scenarios. As individuals, participants responded to core questions indicating their favorite scenario, the one that best met the individual participant’s open space goals, and the one that best met their desired level of local tax revenue.

TO THE LANDOWNER(S)... FROM ALBANY RESIDENTS

(SEE APPENDIX FOR ALL MESSAGES)

- *Be mindful and respectful of the findings of the Voices to Vision community process and its recommendations; restore as much open space/wetlands as possible; keep any development to a small scale.*
- *Find a balance between development and park/open space that doesn't overwhelm the area with traffic and commercialism, but still generates significant tax revenue for Albany and its schools.*
- *Develop uses that take unique advantage of this site and balance economic benefit with environmental and community benefit. No generic, cookie cutter development.*
- *Preserve this unique piece of land; don't cover it with buildings, condos, and retail. It is a regional treasure and residents will never approve large-scale development.*
- *Development should be visually and environmentally compatible with the site; open space cannot be reclaimed once it's gone. Balance revenue generation with open space preservation.*
- *Provide a unique project that is sustainable, low carbon footprint, something for Albany to be proud of, that includes natural habitat (wetlands) and provides revenue to the city.*
- *Listen to the community. Keep open space wild, while creating a destination for Albany/region/world.*
- *Keep it tasteful, low profile, no big boxes or chain stores.*

Messages from the Albany Community to Waterfront Landowners

In the final exercise of Phase Two, all participants were asked to complete the sentence: *"When considering future uses for the waterfront, I hope you will _____"*

The messages crafted by Albany residents included or conatined themes common to the *Voices to Vision* process: interest in expanding open space; desire for tax revenues; consideration of the scale of buildings; views; the need to respect the location and the land; the importance of "world class design;" concern about traffic; disdain for big chain stores; finding "balance;" and the importance of listening to and engaging the community in any thinking about the site.

After individuals noted what future property owners should know, consider, or do with respect to the waterfront site, they shared their messages with those seated at their table and discussed whether any common themes emerged from these six individual messages conceived by each of their table-mates. Those tables that were able to formulate shared messages were then asked to read the table message to everyone at the session. All messages were collected, both individual and table messages (see appendix).

Most messages were hopeful – wanting future landowners to be bold and take a long-term view of the site, and consider Albany's values and unique character. Several urged that the community's wishes, as identified in *Voices to Vision*, be considered a priority. Among the recommendations that appeared repeatedly in the messages was the creation of a family friendly and accessible environment, including outdoor recreation and sports-related retail, and efforts to prevent negative impacts, especially with regard to traffic and to businesses on Solano and San Pablo avenues.

Messages also emphasized that open space, once lost, is gone forever. Again and again, residents noted the high value the Albany community places on the natural environment. And just as frequently, the messages encouraged the landowner to ensure that any development "fits" with Albany – is small-scale, aesthetically pleasing, and unique.

Voices to Vision Phase Two Analysis

The various activities and exercises in the ten Phase Two sessions provided an extraordinary amount of quantitative data, as well as qualitative commentary. The ideas that came from the participants reflected thoughtful directions for the Albany waterfront. While many differences emerged, it was possible to analyze the information such that it could generate a well-informed set of guidelines for the site. The following is a summary of key results; all data related to information gathered in Phase Two can be found in the appendix.

Open Space and Wetlands Restoration. The conceptual scenarios and corresponding exercises were designed, in part, to better understand the minimum amount of new public open space Albany residents would support. While a small number of participants (11%) are satisfied with the addition of 19 acres of dedicated new public open space at the waterfront, nearly 90% of participants would only support projects that provide considerably more open space. The majority of participants (62%) support projects that provide at least 72 acres of new dedicated open space. Five percent of participants²⁶ would only be satisfied if 98 acres or more (close to 100% of the site) were turned into dedicated open space.

Requirements for open space met with:

- 98 acres: 5%
- 87 acres: 5%
- 83 acres: 29%
- 72 acres: 27%
- 68 acres: 24%
- 19 acres: 11%

While about 33% of resident participants (and nearly 60% of non-residents) considered the development of the entire site (102 acres) as a park to be a positive statement, just 10% felt total park development would be an appropriate use of the site. When comparing all scenarios, 13% of participants determined that the “all-park” scenario was their “favorite” solution.

The majority (74%) of participants consider restoration of wetlands to be a positive approach; 6% consider wetlands restoration

26. Twenty-seven percent of non-Albany residents who participated in Phase Two required 98 acres of new dedicated open space; 40% of non-residents would only support projects that have a minimum of 87 acres of new dedicated open space.

ALBANY AND NON-RESIDENT PARTICIPANTS

A quick overview of the similarities and differences in opinions regarding open space, based on results of Phase Two sessions (see appendix):

Requirements for open space met with:	% Albany residents	% Non-residents
98 acres	5	27
87 acres	5	11
83 acres	29	36
72 acres	27	19
68 acres	24	0
19 acres	11	4

A quick overview of the similarities and differences in opinions regarding sufficient revenue to be generated from the site:

Requirements for revenue met with:	% Albany residents	% Non-residents
None	11	22
\$700,000	13	11
\$1,400,000	44	56
\$2,100,000	6	0
\$2,300,000	24	6
\$2,600,000	2	6

A quick overview of the similarities and differences in opinions regarding a sample of site attributes:

Site attribute	“Positive” for % Albany residents (+/-)	“Positive” for % Non-residents (+/-)
Developing site entirely as park	34%	60%
Large area of pedestrian-only open space	76%	93%
Keeping buildings to 3 stories or less	71%	50%
Hotel addresses need for visitor accommodations	61%	28%
Restaurant with organic food	66%	38%
Potential for racetrack to remain functional long term	24%	12%
Developer funds significant portion of open space	70%	50%

a negative factor; 20% are neutral on the topic. The majority (76%) of resident participants support a large area of pedestrian-only open space; just 7% consider this negative.

Traffic. The impact of automobile traffic on the waterfront and the city is a major concern for the vast majority of Albany residents.

Building Heights. The potential to see new built structures from Albany Hill and other locations was of concern to the majority of participants. Forty percent worried about a 10-story building on the southern portion of the site (visible from parts of Albany Hill); 67% expressed concern about 5- and 10-story buildings at the northern portion of the site.

“This has been a good education for me to learn how my views converge with, and diverge from, those of other Albany community members.”

Seventy-one percent of participants²⁷ support limiting building heights to a maximum of three stories, although a number of participants indicated a willingness to add additional height as a trade-off to gain additional open space (by minimizing building footprint).

Building Locations. The scenario (see appendix for Phase Two “tools” and all six scenarios) indicating building on the southern portion of the Albany waterfront (#2) and the one showing building on both the southern end of the site *and* on Fleming Point (#4) were selected most frequently as “best location(s) for development” (approximately 60% of participants favored one or the other). When specifically asked about building on Fleming Point, roughly 45% indicated this to be a logical decision. The vast majority of participants support restoring Fleming Point; just over 50% think that views from buildings on Fleming Point would be a positive attribute for the site. The third favorite location for development is on the northeast portion of the site (#3). While this is the favorite location for just 23% of participants, more than 50% feel this is a “logical” location for building.

These most favored locations for development of buildings on the site are reflected, to some degree, in the overall “favored scenarios.”

Use and Building Types. Fifty-eight percent of participants indicated support for a hotel, especially if it is a low-rise, one-to 2-story “boutique hotel and conference center.” When asked about combinations of uses, hotel plus park is the most desired pairing, but 50% recognized that hotels benefit from proximity to commercial uses; 36% think hotel and retail uses are an appropriate combination.

During Phase One, there appeared to be an interest in developing a “theme” for the site, with outdoor recreation showing the potential to interest both residents and non-residents. One scenario shown in Phase Two capitalized on this idea, but received mixed reviews.

Forty percent of participants view parking structures (garages) negatively; 28% are neutral. Presumably the 32% who support parking structures recognize it as a way to gain open space.

27. Non-residents appeared more willing to support tall buildings as a means to achieve more open space.

Restaurants are a favorite use for the site; roughly 66% think eating establishments highlighting locally-grown, organic food would be a positive addition to the waterfront. Other popular uses for the site include an amphitheater, with support by nearly 63% of participants.

Less popular uses for the site include mixed use (housing, office, retail); and any form of housing. Forty-four percent of participants were not supportive of having a functional racetrack, long term. Finally, fewer than 20% of participants think a racetrack and boutique hotel combination would be an appropriate use for the site.

Financing and Tax Revenue. Nearly 70% of participants believe developers should fund a significant portion of the creation of new dedicated open space, including the purchase, development, and maintenance of the open space. Despite a clear desire to move away from racing as the primary function of the waterfront site, 65% worry about a lack of tax revenue to the city during any new construction or development of the site.

Forty-four percent of participants indicate that tax revenue of \$1.4 million generated by the waterfront site is the minimum acceptable amount; 24%, want the site to generate a minimum of \$2.3 million; 13% are satisfied with tax generation of \$700,000. Eleven percent of participants are comfortable without having the site generate any revenue.

“I don’t think there will ever be a plan that satisfies everyone. The visions of the citizens are too different. However, I feel that a good compromise is possible. This process has helped reflect how many of the citizens feel.”

Overall Favorite Scenarios (see appendix for scenario diagrams 1-6).

Twenty-nine percent of participants favored the scenario that depicted a 3-story hotel/conference center, plus retail/restaurants, museum, garage, water-sports rental, and 72 acres of new open space (#4).

The scenario with the two-story “Asilomar-style” boutique hotel, plus aquarium, food gardens, restaurant, and 83 acres of new open space (#3) was the favorite of 25% of participants.

The scenario with the 10-story hotel and 3-story conference center, plus museum and 87 acres of new open space (#2) was the choice of 21% of participants.

Comments from those who favored Scenario #4, focused on:

- reducing the amount of development
- concern about income stream
- the nature of the retail (“...only if large box stores are excluded;” “...if retail is more varied;” “...if the retail supports recreational use of the water, Bay Trail, etc.;" “...if the retail is not water-sports related;” “...if the retail were intelligently laid out;” etc.)
- funding for the development and maintenance of public open space
- traffic management/public transportation
- potential for an entertainment venue
- “green industry and retail” as a theme

Those who favored Scenario #3 focused on:

- generating more tax revenue than the scenario currently shows (\$700,000) - 35% of comments highlighted this
- the importance of architecture and site planning and increasing the scale of the hotel/conference center
- the need for affordable hotel rates and restaurants, pedestrian accessibility
- inclusion of an amphitheater, environmental sustainability, community amenities, and the potential for on-leash dogs.
- the low-rise, low-density scale of development and the "Asilomar-like" design concept
- the large footprint created by the concept and placement of the buildings
- the eco-restaurant and significant amount of open space

Those who favored Scenario #2 focused on:

- ways to generate additional tax revenue, beyond what the scenario shows (\$1.4 million)
- the building height, which is shown as 10 stories, and the architecture and site planning.
- alternative energy
- inclusion of the arts and family friendly activities
- demolition of racetrack
- the track record of any developer that might be selected
- adding an amphitheater, performance venues, water sports amenities, farmers market, and recreational activities
- the fact that this scenario "created a lot of open space"
- liking development at the south end of the site, restoring the wetlands, and the location of the interpretive center.
- concerns that tax revenue generated by this option was too low

Comments about Scenario #1 (favored by 13%) focused on:

- financial viability
- impact on revenue stream and ability to generate tax revenue
- the potential to include the property in the Eastshore State Park
- capacity to generate alternative energy, to increase water sport recreation
- possibility of including an amphitheater, museum or aquarium
- using eminent domain over racetrack
- creation of maximum open space but concern that there was no tax revenue generated
- restored wetlands, trails, and the location of the interpretive center
- lack of activities to draw visitors to the site and need for public investment

Comments about Scenario #6 (favored by 6%) focused on

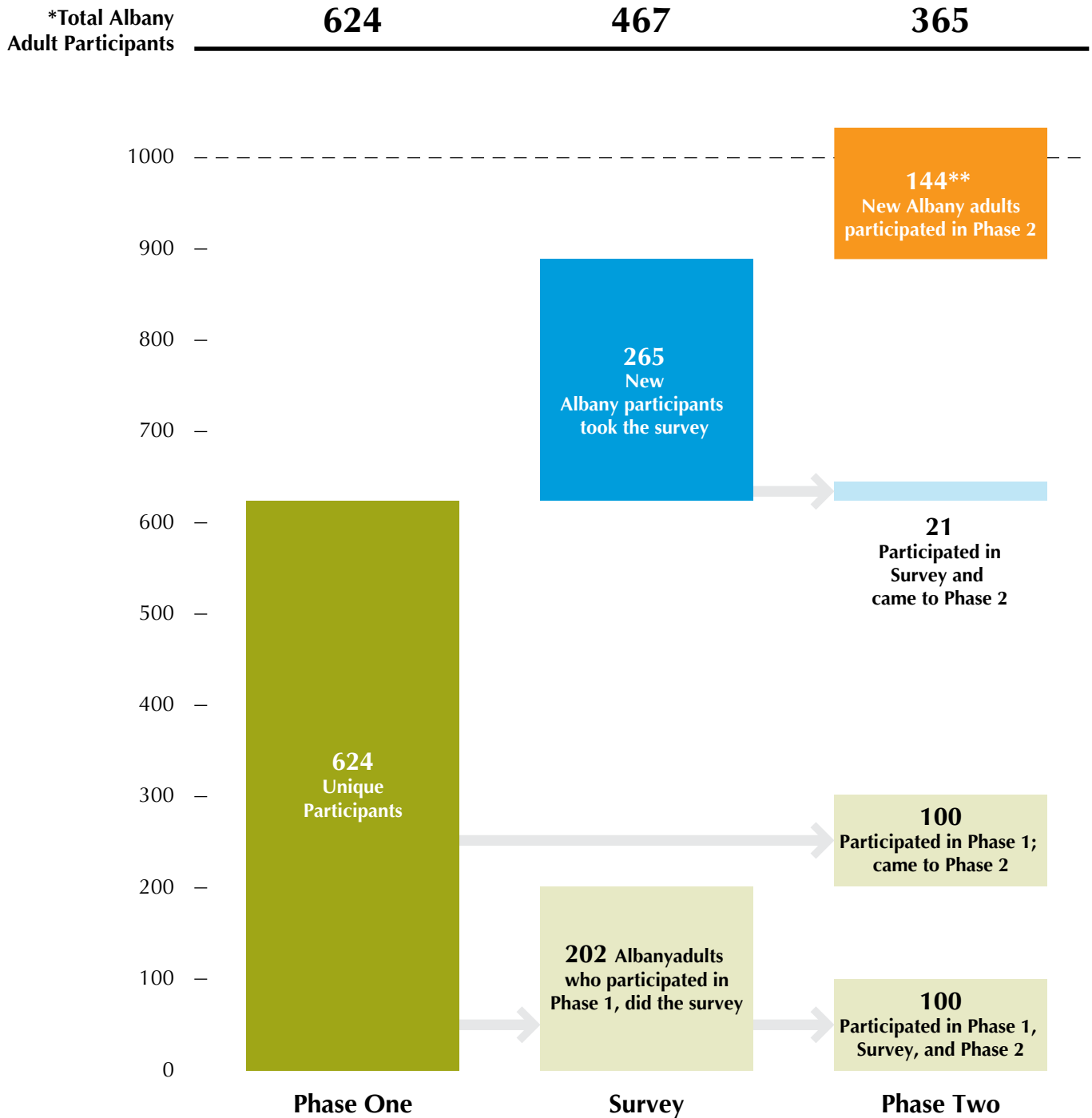
- the potential for the racetrack to continue operations
- using the track for performances
- retaining more open space

- reusing the track and grandstand for other uses, adding other uses such as retail or senior housing
- eliminating or relocating the hotel
- the potential for a golf course in middle of the racetrack
- reducing the amount of parking.
- the potential to maintain a revenue stream to the city throughout any demolition of GGF
- creative re-use of Golden Gate Fields' interior as a botanical garden
- lack of new open space

Comments about Scenario #5 (favored by 5% of participants) focused on:

- site planning
- amount and type of housing
- developer paying most of fees, adding water sports recreation, open space at shoreline, retail similar to Fourth Street.
- traffic management
- setting height limit (4 stories)
- the amount of tax revenue generated
- amphitheater and arts focus
- impact on traffic patterns in the area, the schools, and general city services
- scale of development

Participation in Voices to Vision



* About 100 youth and 14 non-residents participated in Phase One
26 non-residents participated in Phase Two

** Self reported as "Did not participate in Phase One or Survey" or "Unsure"

Reflections

V2V VIGNETTES

A Range of Experiences

Albany residents brought a wide range of backgrounds and experiences to Voices to Vision. For a small city, Albany has an unusually large number of residents who are architects, designers, or city planners – and at times it seemed the sessions were filled with people trained to think about and consider the repercussions of decisions that involve land use. But while the professionals spoke their minds, others with very different experiences and opinions debated freely. Rather than feeling intimidated or overwhelmed by the design professionals in their midst, residents seemed more interested in how the maps were informed by the different expertise in any one group. One note: the teams that included design professionals out-shined the others when it came to drawing and annotating their maps!

During one session, a woman was overheard telling someone at her table, “Wow, you know so much about these issues!” What that woman didn’t realize was that her teammate was a member of the Albany City Council.

At one session, people from the same neighborhood met for the first time; they exchanged e-mail addresses and made plans to stay in touch. At another session, a man was disappointed that there was such a small turnout from his block and wondered aloud about the civic engagement level on his street – and vowed to do something about it.

In early May, a young couple called with an unusual request: the session for their neighborhood fell on the due date of their first child; could they attend a later session...after the baby was born? Sure enough, at a June session they arrived with a newborn in tow; eight months later, they returned for Phase Two with an adorable, red-haired baby. That baby – the youngest attendee – represented the generations-yet-to-be, while at another session a 93-year-old who’d lived in Albany her entire life participated with vigor.

Reflections

Over the course of the last two years (May 2008 - March 2010), nearly one in every ten Albany residents participated in *Voices to Vision*. Achieving this level of civic engagement would be cause for most cities to celebrate. In Albany, where the future of its waterfront has been contentious for decades, this level of broad participation should be viewed as a true community accomplishment. Not only did an unprecedented number of Albany residents participate, they brought their deeply held values and thoughtful ideas “to the table.” The community should be proud of both the spirit that residents brought to this series of community sessions and the vision that their ideas and insights helped to create.

Prior to the launch of *Voices to Vision*, some residents wondered if the discussions would repeat or even expand the same bitter disagreements that had lingered for so long. What those pessimists failed to consider was the true character of the Albany community. That “character” became obvious (and was demonstrated) in all 48 sessions; Albany is engaged, neighborly, committed to creating a diverse and sustainable city, and proud to be the “best of both worlds” – a small town within a sophisticated urban region.

Whether they were long-time neighbors or newcomers to the city; whether they were advocates for open space or for commercial development, participants shared an interest in the future of Albany and its waterfront, and a sense of pride in this community.

Over and over again, FTA has been impressed with the Albany community and pleased at how the community responded to a process designed to elicit ideas, opinions, and strategies. In nearly all of the sessions, it became clear that people had read the public education materials created for *Voices to Vision*, and brought intelligent questions and creative and appropriate ideas for the site to the table. And, regardless of their perspective on what should happen at the waterfront in the future, residents engaged in thoughtful discussions, listened to one another, and considered points of view that were different from their own.

The vision that came from this process does not represent any one person’s idea. Rather, it is a collaborative vision created out of the views depicted by the largest number of Albany residents to have ever participated in a discussion about the future of the Albany waterfront.

The ideals articulated in the vision for the waterfront and encompassed in this report – the shared goal to maximize open space while recognizing the need to maintain Albany’s economic and environmental sustainability – can guide the city for any immediate need or for the long term.



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