

**CITY OF ALBANY
PLANNING AND ZONING AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: Feb. 10, 2009
Prepared by: JB

ITEM/ 6A

SUBJECT: **Recommendation to the City Council Regarding Expansion of the Waterfront Visioning Public Engagement Process to Include City-wide Values and Visions to support the upcoming General Plan.**

SITE: **City-wide**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend to the City Council that the Waterfront Visioning Process be Modified to Include City-wide Values and Visions to support the upcoming General Plan.

BACKGROUND

In April 2008, the City Council authorized Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to begin work on the waterfront visioning process. As part of the waterfront visioning process, FTA will be undertaking an extensive public outreach to engage the community on land use and related issues at the waterfront. This comprehensive outreach and participatory effort is an innovative and unique approach intended to inform and engage a broad spectrum of Albany residents on the possibilities of the waterfront. Every resident in the city will be mailed a publication containing extensive background information and an invitation to participate in a session where they will have the opportunity to better understand options and tradeoffs related to waterfront development and to express ideas about the future of the waterfront.

DISCUSSION

FTA anticipates that inevitably some of the neighborhood discussions will blend over into a broad-spectrum of city planning issues. The cost of replicating this effort for other land use planning initiatives, most particularly the 2010 General Plan effort, may be prohibitive. Thus, staff has discussed with FTA the feasibility of anticipating this broader discussion, incorporating information about the general plan into the publication; and expanding the facilitated sessions to purposefully include discussion about land use "values and visions" into these neighborhood meetings. Thus, the "Voices to Vision" process – while focusing heavily on the waterfront – will contain some components that look beyond the waterfront. The results could help form the foundation of the upcoming update to the 2010 General Plan.

The primary emphasis of the FTA work in general, as well as the neighborhood sessions themselves, will remain focused on the waterfront visioning (approximately 90 minutes). The meetings would be extended by approximately 30 minutes to allow for the broader discussion. The proposal would not have a major impact on the schedule of completion of the waterfront planning process.

If values and visions beyond the waterfront are incorporated into the FTA community outreach effort, there will be an additional cost to the City of approximately \$45,000. The additional funds would cover the cost of researching and preparing information to be distributed to all households in the City, before the start of the sessions and in conjunction with the publication related to the waterfront. The costs also include designing the appropriate process for the broader discussion and having it move seamlessly into the waterfront portion. The length of each neighborhood meeting would be extended, and the information from the sessions would be analyzed, requiring additional professional time for facilitators, for analysis, and for the creation of the final report and presentations. Some of this additional cost could be absorbed within the current waterfront visioning budget. For example, the budget included a \$40,000 community survey and allocated \$75,000 for consultants, some of which is currently not anticipated to be spent. .

In addition to Planning and Zoning Commission discussion, staff is presenting this concept for discussion at the Waterfront Committee meeting on February 9, and the City Council on February 17.

ATTACHMENT:

Excerpt from “A vision for the Future of Albany’s Waterfront Progress Report: Voices to Vision May 6 to September 15, 2008” describing Block-by-Block meetings

Publication Contents
Voices to Vision - Issue #1
February/March 2009

D R A F T (subject to change)

Cover (page 1)

- Images of Albany and the Waterfront
- Basic Table of Contents
- Blurb on purpose of publication
- For information in Spanish —
- For information in Chinese —

Spread Pages 2 and 3/ 4 and 5

- History of the Waterfront
- Sidebar stories: The Eastshore State Park
Measure C
- Sidebar maps: Historical series showing 1850 original shoreline and sequence to current shoreline (first fill, freeway development, GGF, etc.);
History of the creeks then and now
- Sidebar graphics: Comparative acreage chart - Albany waterfront size matched to other park and non-park lands (to provide sense of scale) in Albany and known state and national locations

Spread Pages 6 and 7

- Map and Photo Essay providing “sense of place” and cultural and aesthetic considerations

Spread Pages 8 and 9 (centerfold)

- “Block by Block” map of city of Albany noting dates, times, locations for participatory sessions (can be taken out of document and used as “poster”)
- Article about the Voices to Vision process

Spread Pages 10 and 11

- Maps and diagrams (some to be combined)
 - Context (shoreline from Oakland to Richmond indicating designated uses and size of areas)

Current ownership of Albany waterfront parcels and sizes
Land Use Designations (recreation, conservation, preservation, etc.)
Zoning
Albany parks map
Economic distribution map
Access
Geological Characteristics (buildable/ non-buildable land - soils study)
Noise Levels (decibel levels)
Creeks, wetlands, mudflats
Cultural/Aesthetic “landmarks”

Spread Pages 12 and 13

Frequently Asked Questions (ranging from economics to natural habitat to Bay Trail to ownership to the process to financial impacts, etc.)

Spread Pages 14 and 15

Glossary of Terms

Definitions of useful terms such as parkland; regional park; state park; city park; special use area; open space; Albany Bulb, Plateau, Neck, Beach; CEQA; city-maintained land; Use Permit; Conditional Use Permit; EIR; General Plan; Golden Gate Fields; Measure C; mitigation; mixed use; regulatory taking/inverse condemnation; state-owned land; sustainable development; ad valorem tax; pari-mutuel tax; parcel tax; property tax; sales tax; transfer tax; zoning; waterfront; shoreline; wetland; watershed; natural habitat; aesthetic zoning; gross area; net area; building envelope; channel; development agreement; easement; impact; lot coverage ration; significant natural feature; etc.

Agencies with jurisdiction over Albany waterfront (alphabet soup of agencies and their roles)

Timeline, “factoids,” photos, and quotes throughout the document

This section of the Fern Tiger Associates status report reflects current thinking and options related to outreach and engagement, and is not meant to imply a final decision regarding process, design, nor a full description of the participatory effort that will be developed over subsequent months. The information discussed in this section of the report is part of Phase One of the work scope. Phase One is to be completed January 2009, with actual implementation of the participatory engagement process anticipated to begin March 2009.

ENGAGING THE ALBANY COMMUNITY IN THE FUTURE OF ITS WATERFRONT

In order to ensure that the future of the Albany waterfront is based on a set of widely-shared and mutually-agreed-upon core principles, it is critical to bring the community together in what must be viewed as a spirit of collaboration for a greater good.

Ideally, hundreds of (and hopefully more) Albany residents from every walk of life will consider and articulate – in facilitated, small group settings – their perspectives on a variety of issues – providing substantive insight into a collective vision for the future of the waterfront. While the “meat” of the meeting sessions is not the subject of this report, how the community will be engaged and approached is a core part of this status report.

The range of “gathering” options includes, but is not limited to:

- a series of numerous sequential convenings (at public places, churches, homes, schools, work sites, parks, etc.) where hosts (about 75) are responsible for identifying and inviting between 10 and 15 participants for each of the sessions
- series of closely-timed or simultaneous convenings at large venues (schools, churches, library, community centers, etc.) where small groups meet simultaneously in facilitated sessions (e.g. five groups of 20 each meet in facilitated sessions at the same time in a public location);
- “train-the-trainer” model where directors of organizations learn to facilitate the process with their own constituents;
- two-tiered set of focus groups – one comprised of leaders from community-based organizations; one of randomly selected residents (e.g. invitations to every fifth house on block)

Woven throughout any process would be a public education effort that provides clear, concise, understandable, and neutral information to inform the public discussion. This public education effort will begin several weeks before the participatory process begins and will continue throughout the process.

These are just a few of the possibilities designed to get everyday residents to think about, discuss, prioritize, and ultimately try to come to consensus around values and core principles to inform options for the waterfront. The sessions themselves will engage participants to make tough choices among goals that might sometimes appear in conflict, and to understand trade-offs that move from the personal to the public’s benefit.

A carefully constructed public outreach campaign will launch the community participation process and later will announce and present its findings and subsequent steps explaining how participation will lead to realistic options for the waterfront. Documentation of participation as well as results will portray how all voices were represented.

The overarching goal of the process is to yield information and also to provide the underpinnings for ongoing communication and valued discussion to inspire residents to participate in the civic life of the city of Albany. By engaging residents and calling for public accountability, the waterfront’s future will rest on a foundation of shared values.

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- * **Critical Assumptions for all options:** Special effort will be made to reach out and engage the participation of all residents of Albany: renters, condo owners and renters at Bayside, Bridgewater, and Gateview, and those who live in University Village, those who do not typically participate in civic discussions, youth, seniors, etc.
- The process will be in two parts. Participants can only attend one session of each part. All sessions will be identical. Participants will be Albany residents.
- All households will be approached in the same manner through some door to door or mailing announcing and explaining the process with information about time, place, and process to get involved. RSVPs will be explained and followed up with confirmation regarding, date, time, place.
- Sessions will be documented to collect information that is discussed at every session (Sessions will be designed to accumulate quantitative and qualitative information.)
- A simple questionnaire will be used to evaluate participant reaction to the process and to gather demographic data.
- All sessions to be professionally facilitated.
- Goal to reach more than 600 adults - approximately 6% of total adult population (youth groups additional)
- “Blitz” creates excitement and short time frame keeps the issue and the process in the eyes of residents.
- All models require RSVP to plan appropriately regarding number of facilitators and to keep small groups within 15 person range
- All workshops will have appropriate translators for non-English speaking participants, as needed and identified in RSVP.
- Local businesses could be asked to provide incentives for participation (e.g. gift certificates, for which there could be a “drawing;” donors will be recognized.

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The Sessions⁸

Regardless of the gathering format/model, the actual sessions would all look very similar. They will:

- be informal
- include presentation of information
- solicit opinions; respect and respond to questions and new ideas
- include an iterative process of building information, ideas, options, understanding tradeoffs, beginning to analyze suggestions
- be designed to enable participants to leave feeling they learned something new while simultaneously capable of engaging in dialogue to impact the future of the Albany waterfront
- be approximately two hours
- require RSVPs to ensure appropriate number of participants and facilitators
- require set up time and dismantling time
- include graphic tools and “take-aways”
- be documented, with information – qualitative and quantitative – recorded for later cumulative analysis and presentation

Sessions will likely include:

- Brief introduction to the process and intended outcomes (how the information will be used). Introduction of participants (name, how long in Albany, frequency of visits to Albany waterfront and other local waterfronts, etc.)
- Presentation (in graphic format) of key information (environmental, land use, financial, etc.)
- Exercises:
 - to solicit opinions about waterfront usage in light of priorities and values based on information provided and scenarios
 - to hone in on key areas of concern (e.g. finances, uses, accessibility, environmental, etc.)
 - to understand and respond to tradeoffs
 - to conceive vision(s) and guidelines
 - to create concise “message” or other summary of decisions made by group (including, if necessary – majority and minority “statement”)
- Short survey to collect demographic data about participants

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Note: the design of the session – process and content – would be similar in all models; the difference would be in the number of small groups (10-15 people) at a given venue at a given time. In other words, in some models, there would be more than one small groups meeting simultaneously; in others, a single small group would be convened at the specified location.

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Model Four: Block By Block

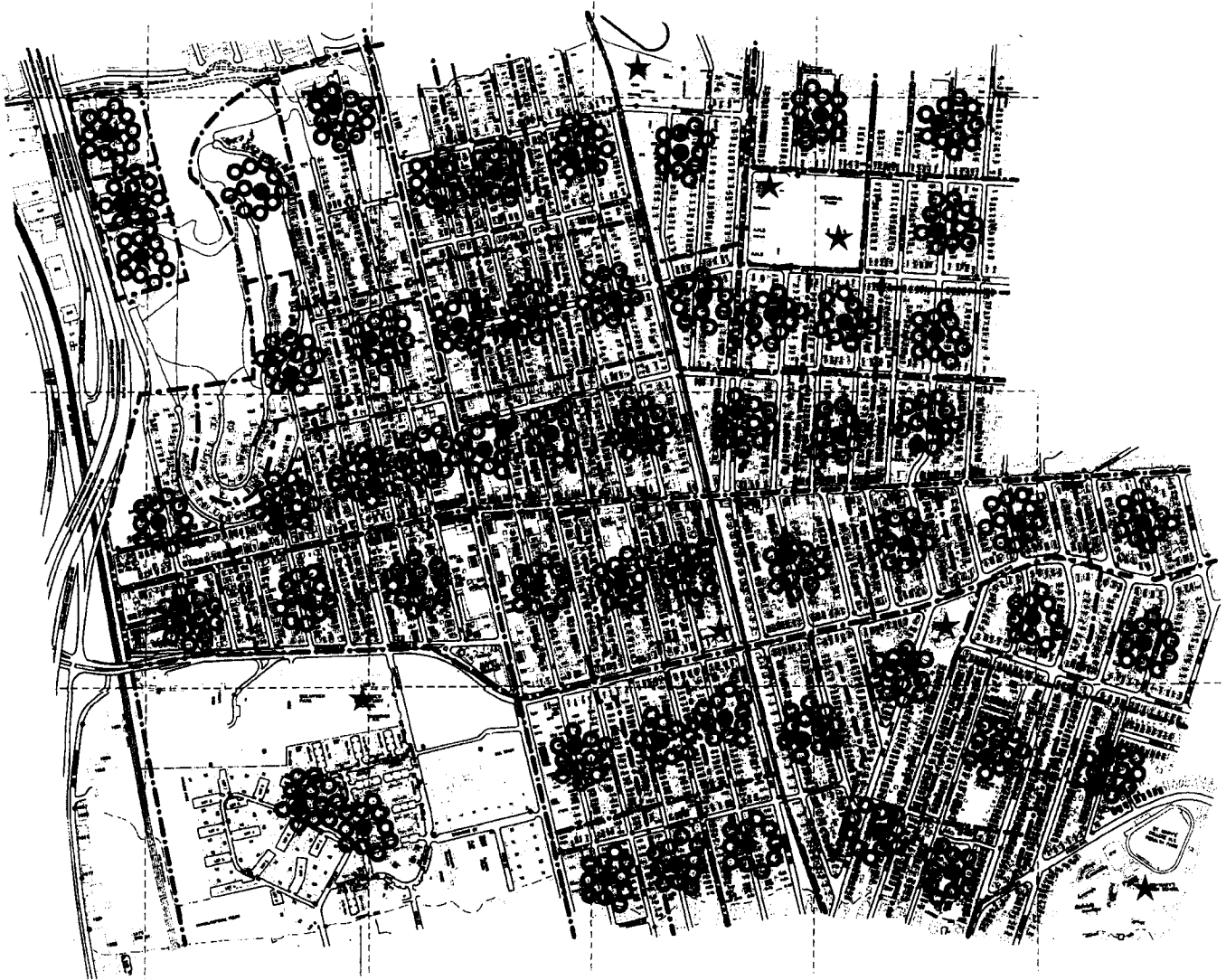
- residents organized by address – approximately three-block geographic areas
- meetings held at designated sites, close to mini-neighborhood at public venues (poss. schools)
- sessions convened on certain day/time for each mini-neighborhood
- focus on engaging residents among neighbors (and others living within a few-block range)
- individual letters mailed or hand delivered inviting residents to attend *their* block's session

Advantages

- creates sense of total city involvement and having every resident participate
- individual invitations may generate higher attendance
- feeling of neighborhood connection may encourage participation
- easy to guide 'one time/resident attendance only'
- builds community - could have long term impact
- neighborhood connection in public venue
- comfortable setting for participants who do not know neighbors
- clearly public meeting at public venue, but at small scale

Challenges

- logistics of outreach and meeting invitations (requires different logistic information in each letter)
- fewer date/time options



Model 4: Block By Block

- Approximately 60 gatherings of 10-15 residents at each gathering (during 10-12 week period)
- Residents of designated blocks invited to attend specific single small gathering at designated site
- Gathering locations: public spaces

★ Possible meeting location (public)