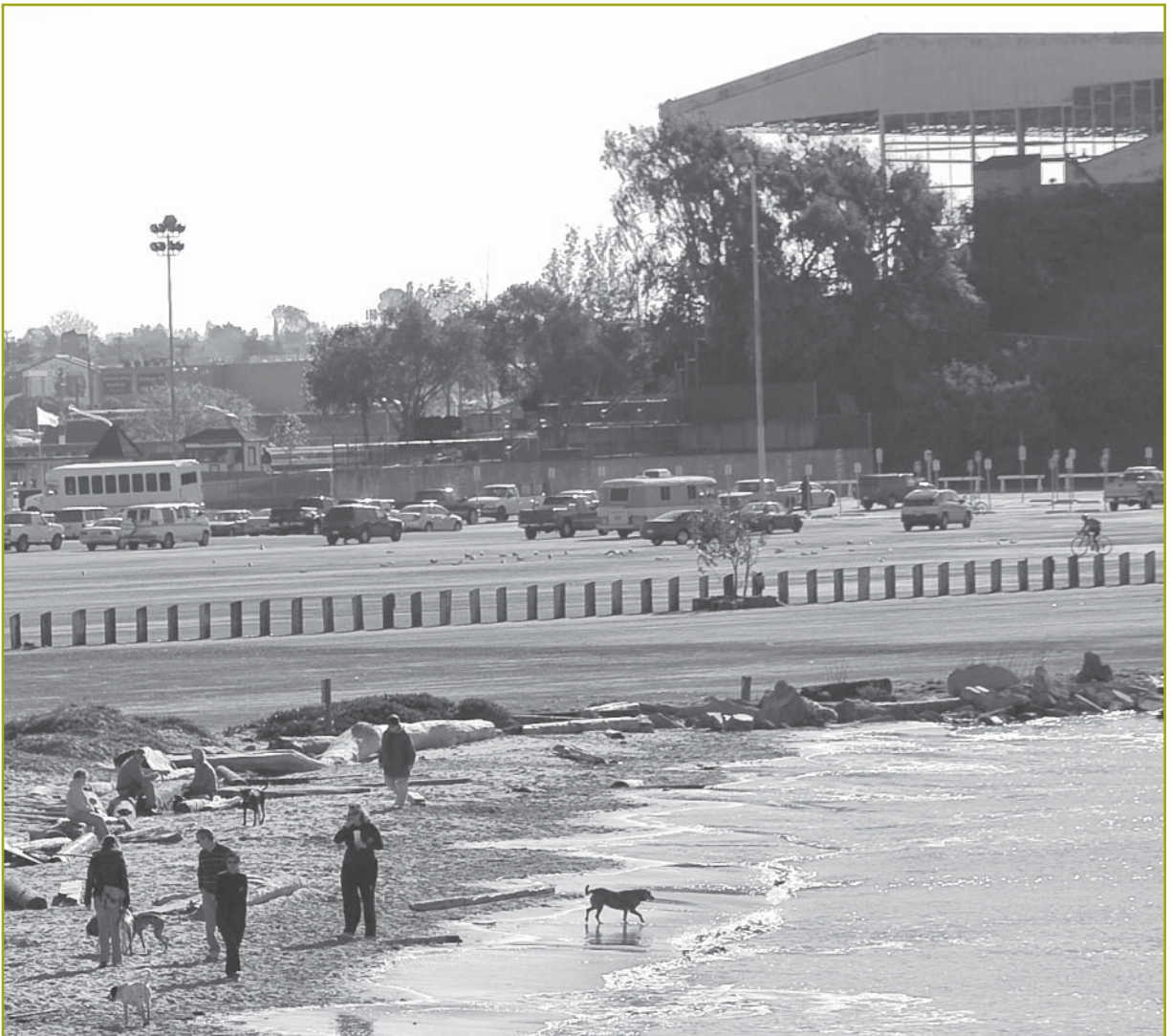


Innovative Urban Design through Inclusion: *Voices to Vision*



Fern Tiger, Professor, University of Washington Tacoma

Liz Newman, Fern Tiger Associates

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201 Clay Street, Suite 290 Oakland, CA 510.208.7700 www.ferntiger.com

Abstract

For decades, the city of Albany, California struggled with deeply divided opinions regarding its waterfront (which includes 107 acres of privately-owned, under-developed land adjacent to 88 acres of public land). Private developments, public funding, special elections, and zoning changes were just a few of the factors that swirled around these nearly 200 acres that face the San Francisco Bay—which also included the last parcels of land necessary to complete a planned hiking trail and a hoped-for Eastshore State Park.

Following a contentious local election that had pitted “park devotees” against those intent on economic development for the city, the Albany City Council decided in 2008 to address this issue with a comprehensive and inclusive process intended to confront tensions, find consensus for long-term solutions, and build a framework and tradition for community education and shared decisionmaking. A critical component of the process would be the collection and analysis of valid data as well as qualitative information.

The process, *Voices to Vision*, included a multi-faceted approach to intensive community engagement that ultimately brought one out of every ten Albany adults to the table. Along with standard public education methods such as a widely-publicized website, on-line surveys, and FAQs, the process also included one-on-one interviews with more than 80 stakeholders and residents, and nearly 50 highly-interactive community sessions (with one skilled facilitator for every 20 participants and the design of activities to enable the collection of quantitative data) offered in three languages, workshops with 100 Albany youth, and a 20-page, fact-filled magazine devoted to this issue that was mailed first class to every residence in the city — ensuring solid background information prior to participation in the process.

Less than two years after this process concluded, a new and even more complex proposal for the Albany waterfront was introduced — one that significantly stretched the boundaries of previous proposals and which required a re-examination of the community vision in relation to potential partners that included UC Berkeley, Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, and private developers.

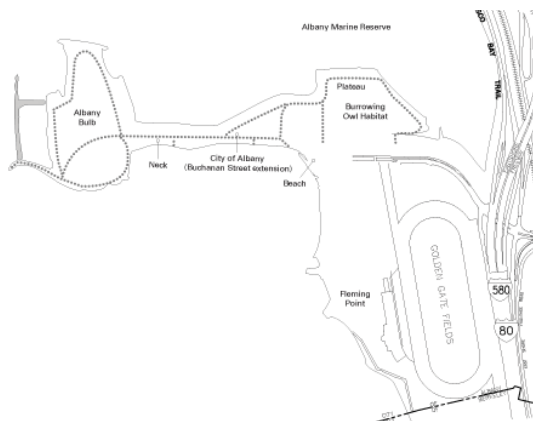
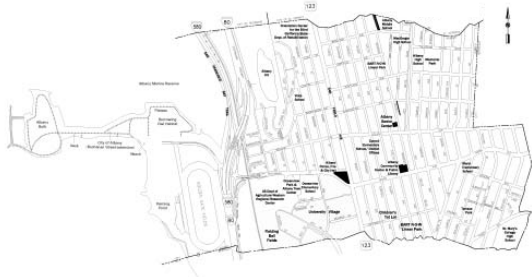
This paper will show how *Voices to Vision* not only prepared the community for this new challenge, but also guided the city through an incremental education process. Having ultimately embraced this process, residents of Albany demanded an innovative, inclusive, and informed process in order to consider the new waterfront development proposal. This new decisionmaking process included structuring and facilitating a city-wide conversation that included specific and detailed information on transportation, parking, public health, and sustainability – as well as clear choices on percentages of land available for either income-generation for the city and land devoted to public spaces. Moving this public discourse from a framework of “parks vs. profits” to one of necessary trade-offs for the common good was a process that continued the collective visioning that had become so vital to this community.

THE ISSUE:

Albany, CA – Desires community-driven plan for 190-acre waterfront in northern California; to accomplish this goal, city needs community to understand issues. Following completion of plan, a unique development opportunity needed to be reviewed by the now well-informed and engaged community.

Background

The city of Albany, California — 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 publicly owned and 107 privately owned), much of which is landfill and borders the Interstate Highway (I-80/580). 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.



For four decades, the Albany waterfront had been perceived as the focus of a bitter tug-of-war between those who hope to see commercial development at the privately-owned portion (107 acres), currently used as a 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 these years, numerous proposals were put forward by private developers and by the landowners -- who sought to maximize the use of the property and its breath-taking views of Angel Island, San Francisco's skyline, and the Golden Gate and Bay bridges. Citywide discussions of these proposals, held over the years, deepened the divide between those on either side of the discussion.

The discord over the waterfront was intensified in 2005-06 when, in the wake of yet another 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 - Golden Gate Fields - had been experiencing a significant decline in attendance, as a result of off-track and Internet betting, which decreased its tax commitment to the city. Once widely considered the most important local business, the racetrack was now seen by many in a new light and as an impediment to the potential for the property (for either park or commercial development). The possible closure of the track and subsequent bankruptcy in 2009 appeared to some residents to be an opportunity to take actions 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 be at the forefront of waterfront decisionmaking.

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1. When *Voices to Vision* began, Golden Gate Fields (107 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 area known as "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.

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 be proactive. After all, as a result of a ballot measure (Measure C) passed in 1990 – the approval of Albany voters would be required for any plan that differed from the area’s zoning at that time (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 zoning or any development agreement related to waterfront lands would also require voter approval.

“There’s been a lot of grand-standing 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.’”

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 order to develop a shared vision for the future of the waterfront and possible next steps. By selecting a firm that specialized in public engagement work (rather than land use planning), the city signaled its commitment to community participation – a process in which people would provide their perspectives, ideas, and goals, rather than react to a fully-formed plan or proposal.

Albany Decides to Engage the Community

Instead of a boiler-plate framework, which might work in other cities, FTA sought to create a tailor-made process for the unique characteristics of Albany. 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 including 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 select 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 those already opinionated about 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;
- Level of knowledge within the community regarding 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 expected, 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 finding common ground, in order to avoid past experiences which reinforced divisions within the community. 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.

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

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. 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

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

“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.”

HISTORY OF CONFLICT; LACK OF TRUST. Previous efforts to consider the future of the waterfront resulted in significant polarization around 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.

Each side viewed the other as inflexible and unwilling to consider other perspectives and each side viewed the waterfront issue as overly 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.

From the outset, FTA stressed that a citywide, community visioning process – funded and driven by Albany rather than an outside interest – should be for and about the residents of Albany. Thus, the process was designed to include community sessions that would encourage focused dialogue and facilitated decisionmaking, and to give residents an opportunity to conceive and consider creative, grounded ideas about the future of the Albany waterfront.

WIDESPREAD MISINFORMATION. The waterfront had been a hot button issue in the community for several decades, during which time a range of supposed and widely disputed “facts” had been disseminated. In part, the inconsistency of these disputed 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 a substantial foundation of 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.

FEAR THAT THE VOICES OF “OUTSIDERS” WOULD DOMINATE THE PROCESS.

The undue past influence of non-Albany residents was another concern that surfaced repeatedly during the information gathering phase. Community sessions were therefore restricted to Albany residents only. There was also a concern that especially-outspoken residents and special interests groups would monopolize one or multiple sessions and thus inordinately sway the ultimate direction of the process. So community participants were also restricted to attending only one session each, with each session being identical to all of the others, *except for the comments of the participants*. This approach created significant logistical efforts, but was considered necessary to ensure trust in the process and yield a broad-based community-driven vision for the waterfront.

“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.”

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. This process connected residents to the waterfront visioning process through neighborhood and 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” within an area of approximately three square blocks. Each micro-neighborhood was assigned a particular date and time for their session.⁶ 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.⁷



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, schools, senior center). Though more complicated from a logistical standpoint, meetings in public spaces felt more open, in contrast to the discussions hosted by the most recent private developer 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 about the future of the waterfront (and to understand enough about options and trade-offs). 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.

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

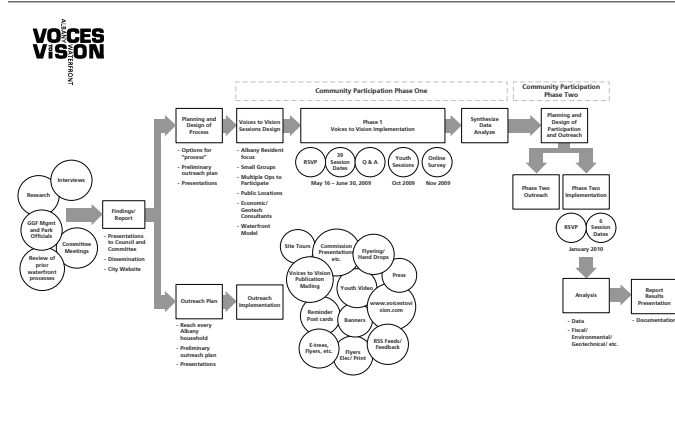
7. The RSVP process allowed FTA to ensure one-time participation by Albany residents, and to ensure sufficient space, facilitators, and supplies for each session.

Reaching Out to Albany Residents

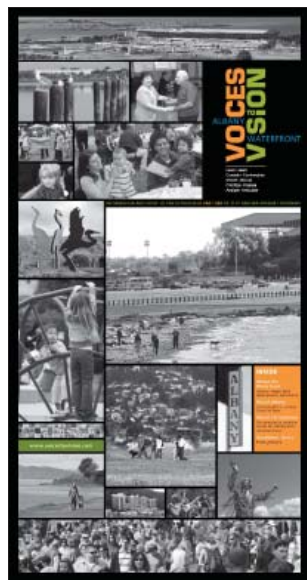
The process to uncover the community’s vision for the future of the waterfront needed a name to promote attention and visibility and to set a tone of professionalism that would ground the process. Out of a long list of potential names, FTA chose “Voices to Vision,” which captured the goal to gather input 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.



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.⁸

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 share comments. 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.

8. 64% of Albany residents have a B.A./B.S. or higher, as compared to the national average of 24%.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION. The phrase “*Voices to Vision*” gained widespread recognition in the weeks leading up to the sessions: banners were hung at the Community Center and at a major intersection, and posters were visible on the windows of businesses and schools. Tables were also set up outside supermarkets.

A model of the Albany waterfront (scale of 1" : 200') was created and installed at the 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 made available.

Albany residents also learned about *Voices to Vision* from local media. Three issues of the city's e-newsletter 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.

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, and Chinese). 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 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.

**“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.”**

**“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.”**

Designing the Voices to Vision Community Sessions

Using two hours as the maximum time that people are usually willing to gather, FTA designed the sessions to encourage 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 two-hour 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.

Participants worked with a large-scale blank map of the site so they could think about possibilities without any preconceived vision (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 previous developer-led processes), the “use” on any one of the chips reflected ideas that had been generated at prior waterfront planning processes over the years (such as hotels, museums, office buildings, retail, and more). Beyond the “use” information that came from previous community workshops, FTA added newly acquired information about the acreage each use would actually require and the potential tax revenue the use could provide to the city. From this information a set of chips was created that would be used by participants to create their site concept for the waterfront at a 1”:200’ scale.

Voicing Visions: May and June 2009

Over the course of six weeks in May and June 2009, 38 community sessions,⁹ identical in format, were facilitated at schools, the 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. A few months later, additional sessions were facilitated for approximately 100 students at Albany High School.

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 (Group presentations by participants)

Facilitators used a script to ensure that all sessions were as close to identical as possible.¹⁰

THE BEST THING ABOUT ALBANY IS...

At the start of each session, facilitators led an exercise in which people were asked to complete the sentence: “The best thing about 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 (previously)*.”

9. 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.

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

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.¹¹ 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.

As the full 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.

11. 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).

Creating a Vision for the Waterfront

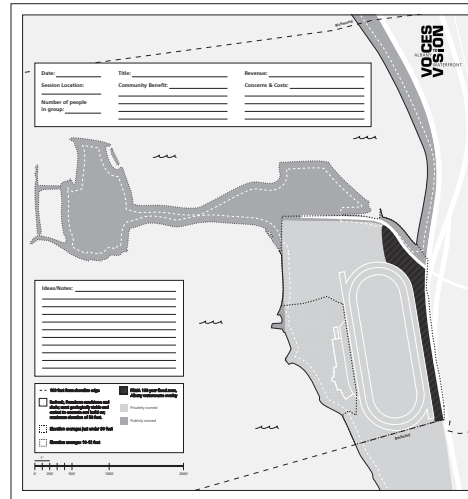
The core of each community session was an exercise where participants created their vision for the Albany waterfront. Before launching into this, the facilitator referred to several large posters on the walls, including maps and a list of facts about the waterfront. The facilitator explained that the 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 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 driving their 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.

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 such as 3-story eco-hotel, 5-story condominium, 10-story hotel, etc. (including open space) and included information on site use or building type, acreage, height, and potential tax revenue.

For example, the yellow game piece was an eco-hotel; a sticker on that piece listed pertinent information: 3-story eco hotel includes meeting rooms, event space, parking; 8.5 acres; tax revenue = \$700,000. To ground the game in the realities of the site, FTA had consulted with economists, architects, and planners. The game pieces were all simple rectangular shapes, intended to be “abstractions” of actual site plans for any use. 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 scale¹². 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. Most 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.

Each group then named their idea (how might they “market” it), 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.¹³ At every one of the 38 sessions participants applauded the solutions presented on each map.

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

13. 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 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-Albany residents (people from neighboring cities), as well as demographics and session evaluations. Each of the site maps offered a unique perspective and rationale for the Albany waterfront. 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 (beyond 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 in where people wanted to locate the trail (either near the shore, near the freeway, or both locations).

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. The majority of these maps favored a 3-story, eco-boutique-style hotel/conference center on an 8-acre site (generating an estimated \$700,000 in gross tax revenue) rather than 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 preferred 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%).

Other sought-after uses focused on museums, aquariums, interpretive centers, and other education-oriented uses. 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 (GGF), 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.

Tax Revenue. Since the sessions provided information about current tax revenue from GGF (\$1.7M), 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.

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” that participants embraced when they began the process, their solutions were often more similar than different.

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.

To reach an even wider audience, at the conclusion of 38 sessions conducted over a short 6-week period, FTA created and analyzed an online survey a few months later. About 470 people participated, adding 265 new, unduplicated participants.



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 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 one of the original 38 community sessions 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.



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.

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 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 the 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.

For participants who had not attended the Phase One sessions, an introduction that provided base information as well as a summary of what was learned in Phase One was required. Therefore, 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 illustrative conceptual scenarios¹⁴ were developed, along with a list of common parameters that could be expected to be included in any proposal for the waterfront.

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

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

14. While the map activity at the May/June sessions looked at the entire waterfront (public and private lands), the January sessions focused on the 107 acres currently used by GGF, because it was felt that sufficient information about the community’s vision for the public land had been acquired.

**SIX 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, ten sessions were held at the Senior Center and/or the Community Center. 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.

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*.

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.

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.

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” which 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.



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%

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 to 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%) were 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%) supported projects that provide at least 72 acres of new dedicated open space. Five percent of participants¹⁵ would only be satisfied if 98 acres or more (close to 100% of the site) were turned into dedicated open space.

While about 33% of resident participants (and nearly 60% of non-residents) considered the development of the entire site (107 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 considered restoration of wetlands to be a positive approach; 6% considered wetlands restoration a negative factor; 20% were neutral on the topic. The majority (76%) of resident participants supported a large area of pedestrian-only open space; 7% considered this negative.

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

15. 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.

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.

Seventy-one percent of participants¹⁶ supported 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 indicating building on the southern portion of the Albany waterfront and the one showing building on both the southern end of the site *and* on Fleming Point 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% thought that views from buildings on Fleming Point would be a positive attribute for the site. The third favorite location for development was on the northeast portion of the site. While this was 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 were 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 was 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. It appeared that the 32% who support parking structures recognize it as a way to gain open space.

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

Less popular uses for the site included 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 thought a racetrack and boutique hotel combination would be an appropriate use for the site.

Financing and Tax Revenue. Nearly 70% of participants believed developers should fund a significant portion of the creation of new dedicated open space, including the purchase, development, and

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

maintenance of the open space. Despite a clear desire to move away from racing as the primary function of the waterfront site, 65% worried about a lack of tax revenue to the city during any new construction or development of the site.

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

Overall Favorite Scenarios.

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.

The scenario with the two-story boutique hotel, plus aquarium, food gardens, restaurant, and 83 acres of new open space 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 was the choice of 21% of participants.

About 365 residents participated in this phase, bringing the number of unduplicated *adult* residents to 1,033.

A Community Vision Emerges

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 100-page report - *A Community Vision for Albany's Waterfront: April 5, 2010*), backed with 850 pages of data, findings, and other information gathered throughout the process, including copies of the nearly 200 community-developed "maps" for the site. While the report focused primarily on the potential for the 107-acre portion of the site, the community's vision recognized the importance of the whole site and of the extended impact it has on the region.

With about one in 10 adult residents voicing their ideas about the future of the waterfront in one or more ways, throughout the *Voices to Vision* process, residents appeared to have garnered a newfound sense of hope about the site. In evaluation forms, more than half of those who participated said they believed that *Voices to Vision* would lead to a coherent sense of the future of the waterfront; and an additional 35% stated that they "hoped it would." 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 (and a physical framework) for the future of the Albany waterfront was articulated. It recognized the importance of the entire site (public land and private land) and of the extended impact the Albany waterfront has on the region.

In summary, the Albany community envisioned:

*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.*

"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."

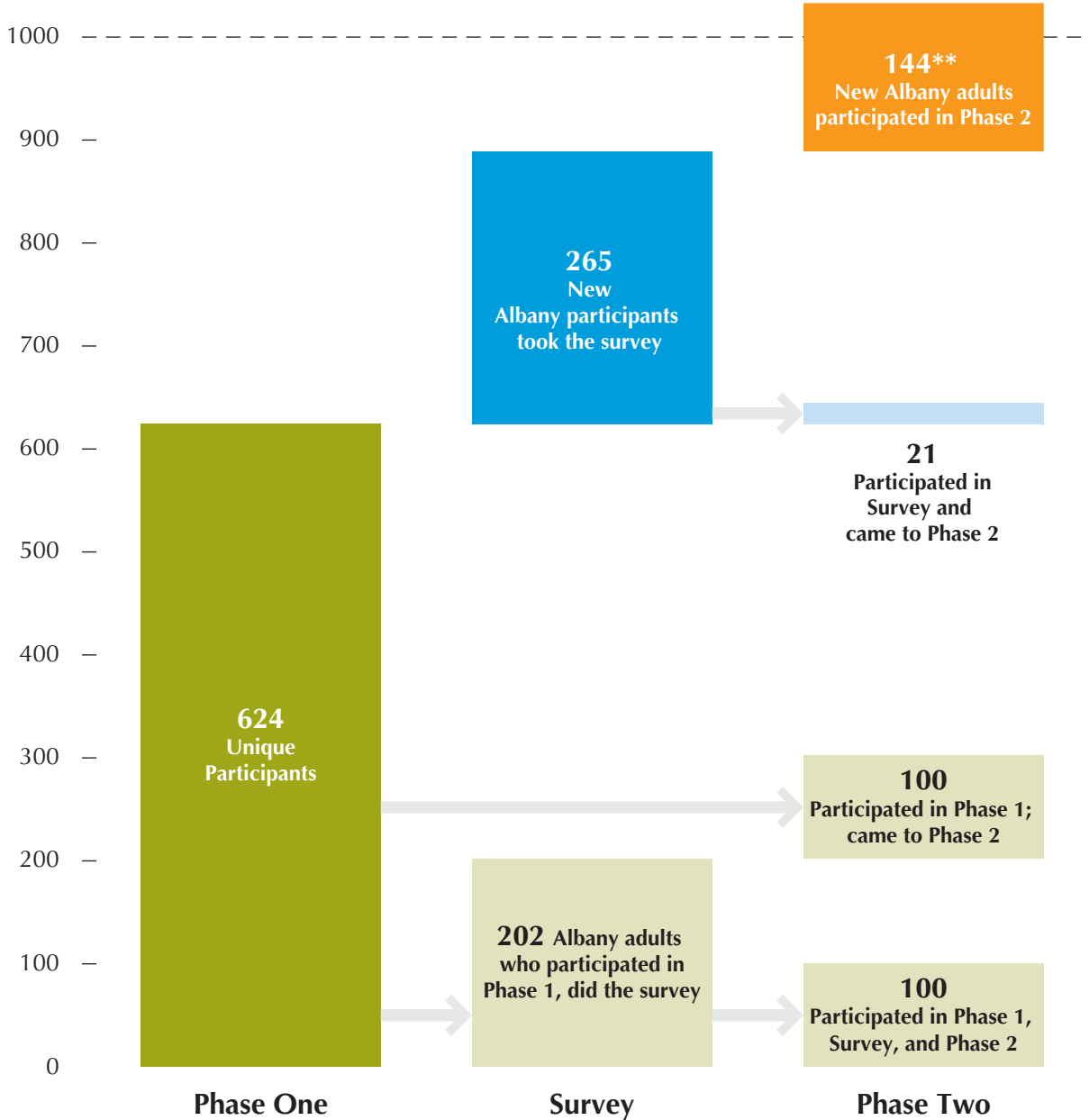
Participation in Voices to Vision

*Total Albany Adult Participants

624

467

365



* 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"

Site Guidelines

The report included recommended site standards and design guidelines, and illustrative conceptual scenarios that indicated possible development opportunities that matched the desires of the community. These guidelines added two new uses (hotel and retail) to the existing zoning, with square footage and acreage restrictions — and the creation of at least 163-acre public park (including more than 75 acres within the now-privately-owned area).

With the goals of the community in mind, the recommendations included in the report focus heavily on balancing the desire for new dedicated open space with the concern for revenues, and were 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 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 (107 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. The 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

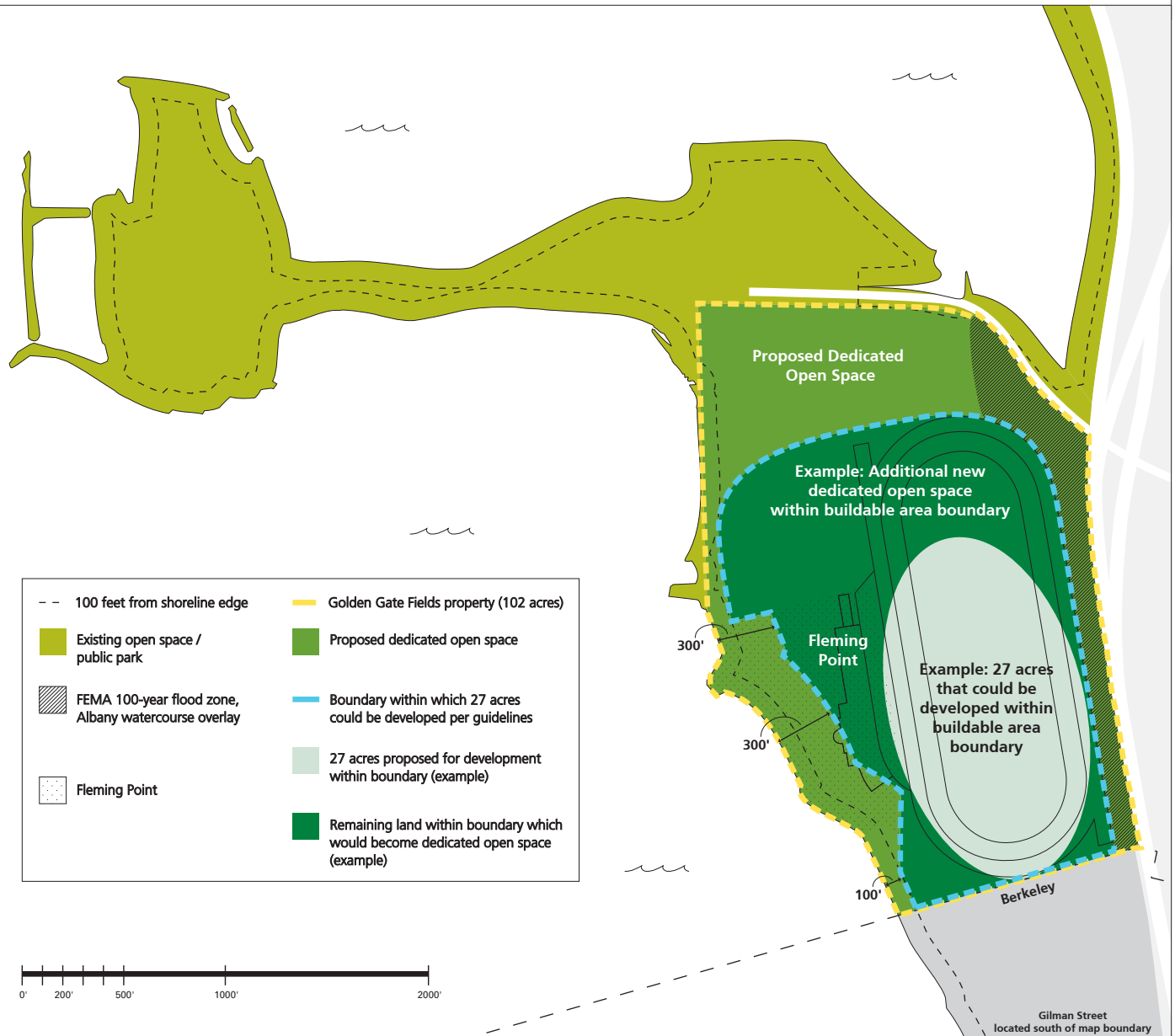
BY THE NUMBERS

- 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

Additionally, a set of illustrative site plans were 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 107-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

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.

Voices to Vision Revisited: 2011

In February of 2011, less than one year after the culmination of the community engagement process and publication of the report, “*A Community Vision for Albany’s Waterfront*,” the owners of Golden Gate Fields (GGF) – along with 20 other property owners and developers – responded to a Request for Qualifications from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories (LBNL) for the development of its second campus (up to 2 million square feet, built over time, plus parking). In May, the Golden Gate Fields site was selected as one of six finalists. In response to their selection as a finalist, the owners of Golden Gate Fields (The Stronach Group) put together a development team and brought in a broad array of consultants to assist them in thinking about the constraints, not the least of which was the community-based recommendations in the report and the need for a citywide vote; siting for LBNL’s needs; and other issues such as geotechnical conditions, sea level rise, demolition and construction costs and timing, energy usage, and more. Beyond LBNL’s needs, the GGF team considered and desired to develop additional private land uses that could be co-located on the site and which they believed would:

- be compatible with the Lab’s operations
- provide resources to fund (a portion of) necessary infrastructure
- replace revenue for the city of Albany (to offset GGF tax revenue) given that LBNL would not pay taxes to the city
- allow for publicly accessible open space at the waterfront be profitable for the developers to be profitable for the developers

The Golden Gate Fields team had reviewed the *Voices to Vision* report and had asked Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to provide them with insights that might allow them to better understand the desires and concerns of the community. Separately, representatives from the city of Albany contacted FTA because they felt that it would be important to ensure a meaningful community process (rather than a developer-driven process) and a process that reflected and respected *Voices to Vision* to allow for careful consideration of both the opportunities and challenges associated with the proposal. Given the very recent completion of *Voices to Vision*, the GGF team agreed to reimburse the city for such a process and for the city to take the lead on a public information, outreach, and engagement process. The city in turn engaged FTA to conceive, design, facilitate, and lead all aspects of this effort.

It is important to note that LBNL’s process involved a competition-style effort to select one site out of the six finalist locations.

It is also important to remember that the GGF site spans two jurisdictions, with about 107 acres in Albany and 29 in Berkeley. Except for these 29 acres, where the horse stables currently stand, Berkeley’s large adjacent public waterfront includes a marina and related amenities. *Voices to Vision* had focused *only* on Albany (funded by the city of Albany), so in reality the new development proposal necessitated considering issues not tackled previously, and a different site configuration. Indeed, during *Voices to Vision*, it had been noted that one of the gnawing problems with the process was that it did not have the means to consider the adjacent portion of the site (located in Berkeley).

From early on, it was made clear to LBNL, that Albany's outreach and engagement process would need to reflect the transparency, broad thinking, and well-informed activities and engagement of *Voices to Vision*. Now, however, the community's vision would need to address the opportunities of a real project, with specific and articulated requirements, many of which had never been contemplated during *Voices to Vision*. By engaging the community in an open process, decisions about GGF's proposed development for LBNL's second campus would be informed by community values. FTA would design a process (*Voices to Vision Two - V2V2*) intended to build on the trust, interest, information, community knowledge, and awareness of the first phase of the process.

Like *Voices to Vision*, *V2V2* reflected a commitment to fact-based, neutral, and clear information that would be available to all residents. The process was kicked off with a letter from the City Council to each Albany resident and business owner, along with a comprehensive set of Frequently Asked Questions and the transcript of an FTA-conducted interview with representatives of the GGF ownership group. The *Voices to Vision* phone number and website were re-established offering information related to the new LBNL proposal, as well as an opportunity for people to ask relevant questions.

The original intention was to host a sequential set of monthly FTA-facilitated sessions, (using the same small group format as *Voices to Vision*) – designed to support the aggregation of quantitative and qualitative information. These 2-hour sessions would be repeated about 3-5 times (identical each time), one weekend per month, and would provide opportunities for local residents to participate and to understand the evolution of the project and to see the results of community input. The sessions would be designed to:

- educate participants about *Voices to Vision* results, LBNL's project needs, site opportunities, and challenges
- solicit informed commentary
- respect all input and be responsive to questions and new ideas
- create an iterative process to build information, ideas, and options and to understand trade-offs
- provide analysis of suggestions and enable participants to learn, while simultaneously engaging in dialog on the future of the waterfront.

Key to these community sessions was the need to understand the impact of a two to three million square foot development on the Albany community. This included issues related to taxation, land ownership, land usage, environment, safety, traffic, city services, open space, and relationship to the Berkeley portion of the site. The city's complicated Measure C, which required any zoning changes at the site to be approved by a citywide vote, was also a consideration.

Due to the rapidly-evolving nature of the project, the multi-tiered information flow, and the exceedingly fast timing (set by LBNL's deadlines), *V2V2* evolved somewhat differently than initially planned. A single series of participatory community sessions provided the community with a great deal of information about the proposed project (site plan, building heights, massing, and preliminary economic impact data indicating projected revenues to the city and the schools) and solicited community responses.

A month later, LBNL hosted presentations regarding each site that included speakers from the Lab as well as from the developers. LBNL's presentations were not interactive and did not provide answers to questions posed by the audience, but they did offer venues for the public to hear from LBNL about their plans, and vice versa.

Because of LBNL's timeline, Albany created a 22-member Albany Waterfront Task Force – appointed by members of the City Council and the School Board (plus the chairs of key city committees). FTA facilitated this task force (six two and a half hour sessions over a fast paced 11 weeks), followed by a citywide workshop with the city council at which time the task force presented its individual and collective findings.

The mission of the Task Force – as set by the Council – was *“to ensure the collection, review, and dissemination (to the Albany community) of adequate, factual information and data related to potential development by The Stronach Group - owners of GGF site - at the Albany Waterfront (GGF site).”* The Task Force structure provided the developer an opportunity to present the project and intentions in a public setting – enabling the city and the community to see and hear changes to their thinking and direction, over the course of the 11-week period. With this in mind, the developers were asked each week about new information; experts were invited as needed, (City Attorney, City Manager, Superintendent of schools, consulting economists, land use attorneys, etc.). Each Task Force session focused on a single topic: site plan (including parking, heights, land uses, etc.); ownership; legal issues; California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); entitlement processes; initiative process; environmental impacts; and economic and fiscal impacts for Albany City and Schools. Additionally FTA hosted an architectural peer review of the proposal that resulted in some important feedback, and modifications to the site plan.

The Task Force process included the preparation of extensive and informative session packets related to the discussion topic – prior to each meeting and notes were prepared and disseminated following each session. All information was also posted on the *Voices to Vision* website; meetings were open to the public and televised.

Based on the vast amount of information presented, as well as that which was requested of the developer and LBNL but not provided, at the conclusion of five Task Force sessions, FTA prepared a document summarizing *“what was known, what was thought, and what was still important to find out.”* Armed with this data, Task Force members weighed in on their individual sense of “pros, cons, and opportunities” related to nine distinct (but interrelated topic areas) prior to a the sixth Task Force meeting.

The culmination of the Task Force's work was a meeting with and presentation to the Albany City Council, which focused on the pros/cons/opportunities identified by the Task Force – supported by the document describing *“what we know, what we think, and what we don't know”* and a summary of open questions and missing information requested of LBNL and the landowners. It was clear that the Task Force's work was deliberate and thoughtful – working to understand the distinct and interconnected pieces of an extremely complex project on a challenging site. What became clear to the Task Force was just how much site planning and land uses impacted the community's fiscal concerns as well as its desire for open space (in light of the large amount of acreage and construction needed for the LBNL plan); addressing LBNL's needs at this particular site affected fiscal desires of the community (since LBNL would not pay local taxes); that in order to address the community's fiscal needs, additional construction and development, beyond LBNL, would need to be considered; decisions about land use on the adjacent

property in Berkeley impacted Albany decisions and desires (and vice versa); and that unanswered environmental concerns related to LBNL were of great concern to the Albany community.

Without LBNL, the developer felt “there was no project.” But while LBNL was the catalyst for the developer’s proposal and might bring certain benefits to the community, over the course of the Task Force’s work, it became increasingly clear that the location of LBNL on this site created many challenges – from timing driven by the Lab to loss of tax revenue and community control. To some, the Lab created the synergy and market draw for The Stronach Group’s proposed commercial development; for others the Lab necessitated an unacceptable level of construction on a fragile ecosystem in order to ensure replacement of the City’s and the School District’s much-needed revenue.

As in many discussions and debates about waterfronts, the overarching conversation focused on the value of open space and what a community should accept (in terms of development, scale, height, traffic, environmental impacts, etc.) in order to get that open space, and how this impacts revenues.

For Albany, over and above the strengths, challenges, and opportunities directly related to particular thematic categories of information, the Task Force noted the reality that should LBNL locate at the GGF site, the federal government would suddenly become the city’s largest employer – making the community vulnerable to policies and priorities set from a distance (and without benefit of local discussion and control).

After an arduous process, it was clear that some Task Force members were more supportive and some less supportive of the full project as ultimately described by the developers – but each had worked diligently to articulate potential strengths and challenges associated with the project, both in terms of its physical realities and the community approval process.

To many, the Albany site was unique – not only for its spectacular views and location, but also for its singularly complicated and integrated components: two cities requiring citizen votes to approve; the potential loss of revenue; private property moving into public ownership; relocating an existing business and jobs; the reality that the proposal would need to include more than LBNL in order to be financially viable; and the conversion of a site that had been the focus of community discussion over many years.

Ultimately, neither the Task Force nor the Council voiced support or rejection of the developer’s proposal. The Golden Gate Fields site was not selected as the future home of LBNL’s second campus. The selected site was one that didn’t require the purchase of new land.

Conclusion

For the Albany community, *Voices to Vision* and *V2V2* were significant and successful in their ability to lead residents through a transformative process to revisit an issue that had been contentious and divisive. In the first phase of the project, residents were informed and engaged through innovative, participatory activities that led them to dream and discuss, while understanding the real implications of those dreams on the site itself, in the city of Albany, and throughout the region.

Emerging from the *Voices to Vision* process with a newfound sense that compromise could be achieved in ways that did not water down aspirations or diminish pragmatic goals, the Albany community quickly responded to a development proposal from Golden Gate Fields with the confidence that they deserved to be informed, heard, and respected in a comprehensive community review process. The city and its residents pointed to their recently developed Design Guidelines and asked how the proposal reflected their carefully crafted vision. Indeed, the Golden Gate Fields team took the guidelines seriously and worked to create a development plan that respected the vision – and then they reimbursed the city for costs associated with a comprehensive community process.

Voices to Vision – from start to finish, over a two and a half year period – used principles of community engagement and authentic public participation to:

- build broad understanding of complex and interconnected issues;
- empower residents to give meaningful input and see how that input impacted outcomes;
- unite a community behind a common urban design vision for its waterfront;
- support Albany’s policymakers, residents, employers, and employees to demand complete and accurate information that would allow them to collectively and effectively consider the multi-faceted implications of a significant proposal for a major land parcel in their city; and
- create trust, dialog, and a sense of common ground – while simultaneously allowing for civil disagreement and discussion among those who may never fully agree, but who share a desire to productively participate in the civic life of their community.

At the start of *Voices to Vision*, Albany took a bold step and embraced an engagement process that was unlike any that had come before it – a process whose very nature would unfold over time. The results were palpable, deep, and multi-layered: as residents from neighborhoods across the city participated, they strengthened their relationships, coalesced as a community, and began to lay the groundwork for innovative urban waterfront design that would reflect their shared values.