

# BRINGING VOICES TOGETHER TO CREATE A WATERFRONT VISION

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## Hypothesis:

- Authentic community input produces data to inform development and policy
- Uniqueness of community must shape design of engagement

## Keywords:

- community, outreach, engagement, waterfront, zoning



Albany CA / USA  
Type: Case Study

## *Bringing Voices Together to Create a Waterfront Vision*

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# Voices to Vision



- Community input produces strong quantitative and qualitative data to inform development and policy
- Uniqueness of each community must shape design of engagement
- Community education and tools are key to successful participation



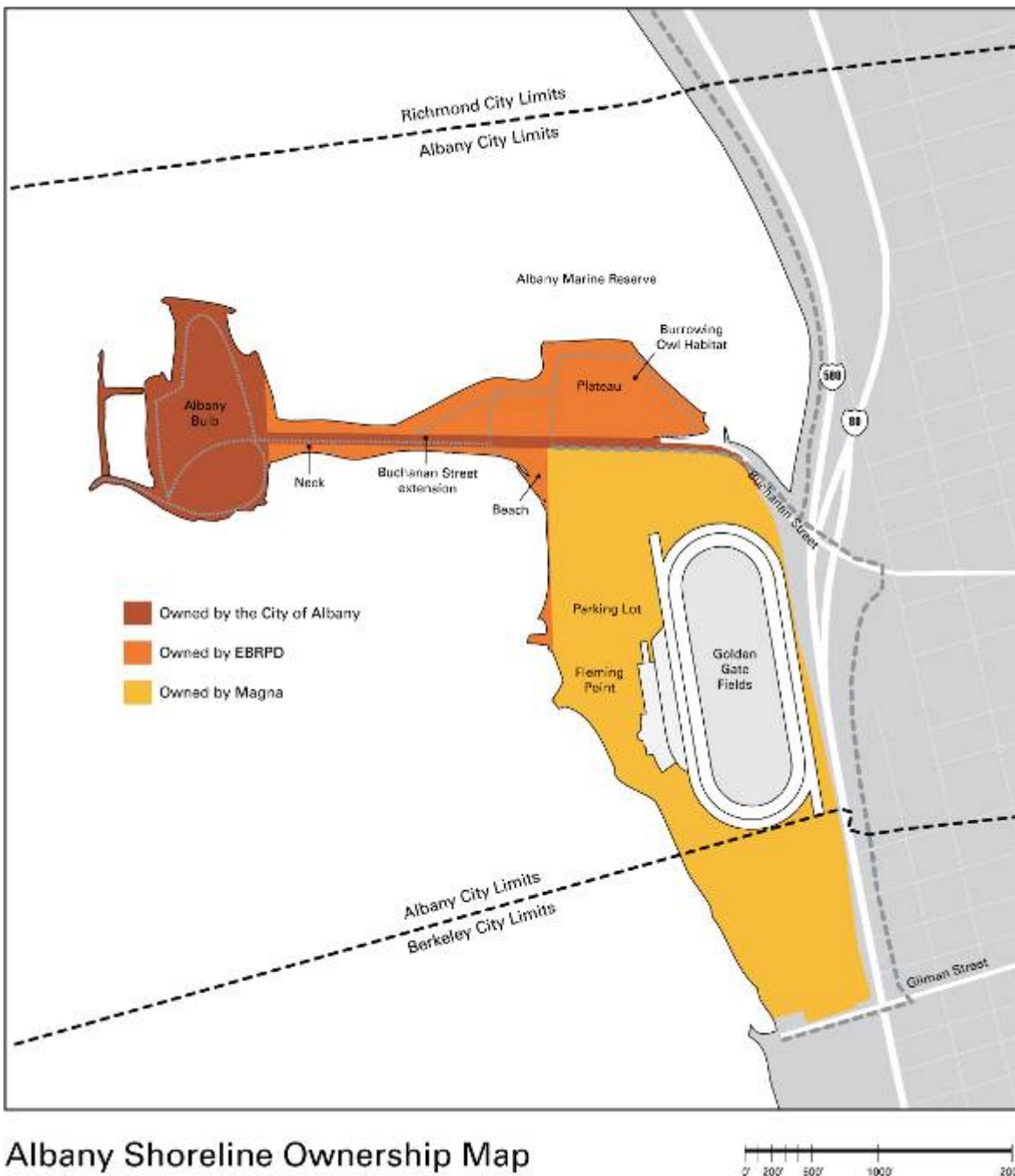
# Albany, CA

- 16,444 residents; 1.7 sq miles
- Located on S.F. Bay, north of Berkeley
- Small city within densely populated region (8.4 million)
- High education, upper middle income residents
- 7% of General Fund from racetrack at waterfront



# Albany Waterfront

- 200+ acres; 60% privately-owned
- Bedrock plus landfill – formed over 100 years
- Local initiative (1990) requires citizen vote for zoning changes
- Current zoning: sports/ water sports-related commercial sales and services; utilities; park/ rec facilities; bars; commercial rec; parking, restaurants.... and horse racing



Albany Shoreline Ownership Map



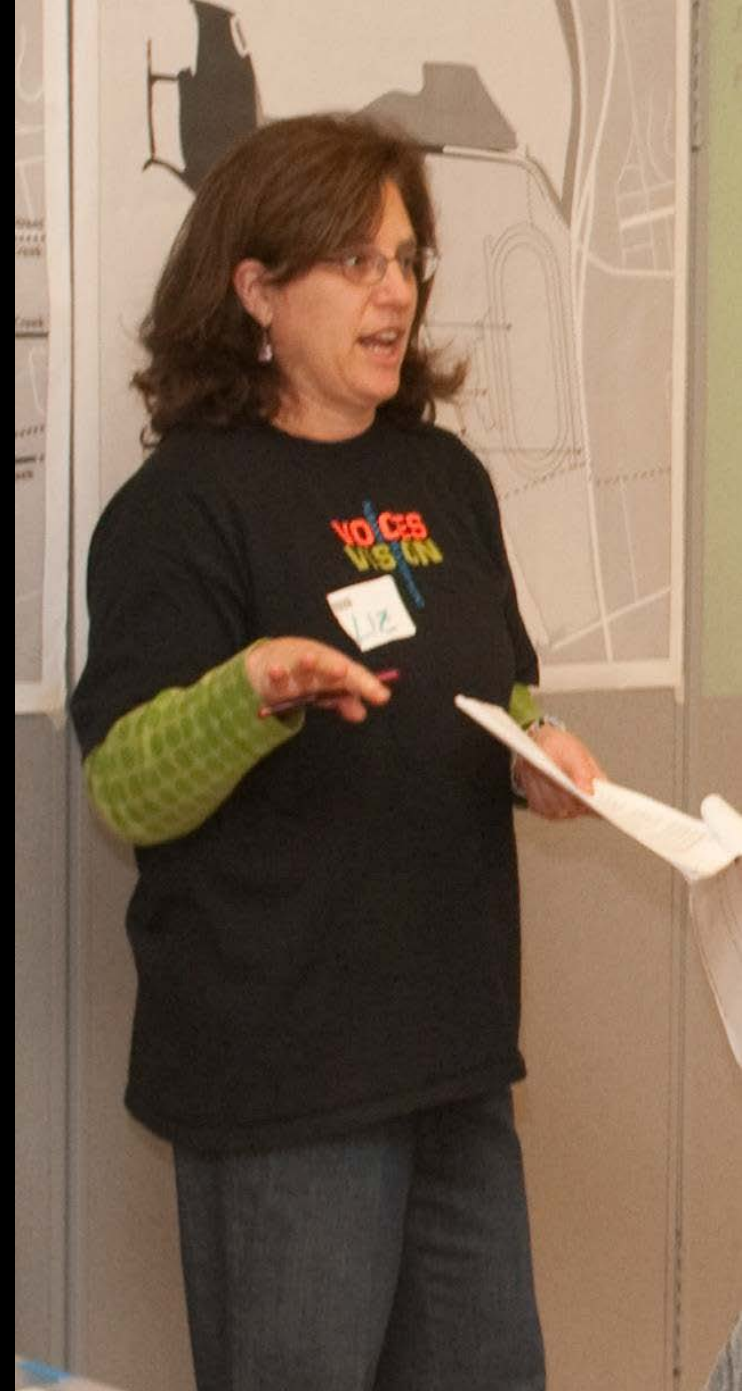


## ***Problem/Issue - 2008***

Following bitter disputes, anger, and divisiveness throughout the small city -- resulting from a developer's proposal in 2006 -- **new City Council wants a community-driven plan** for the waterfront.

# Issues

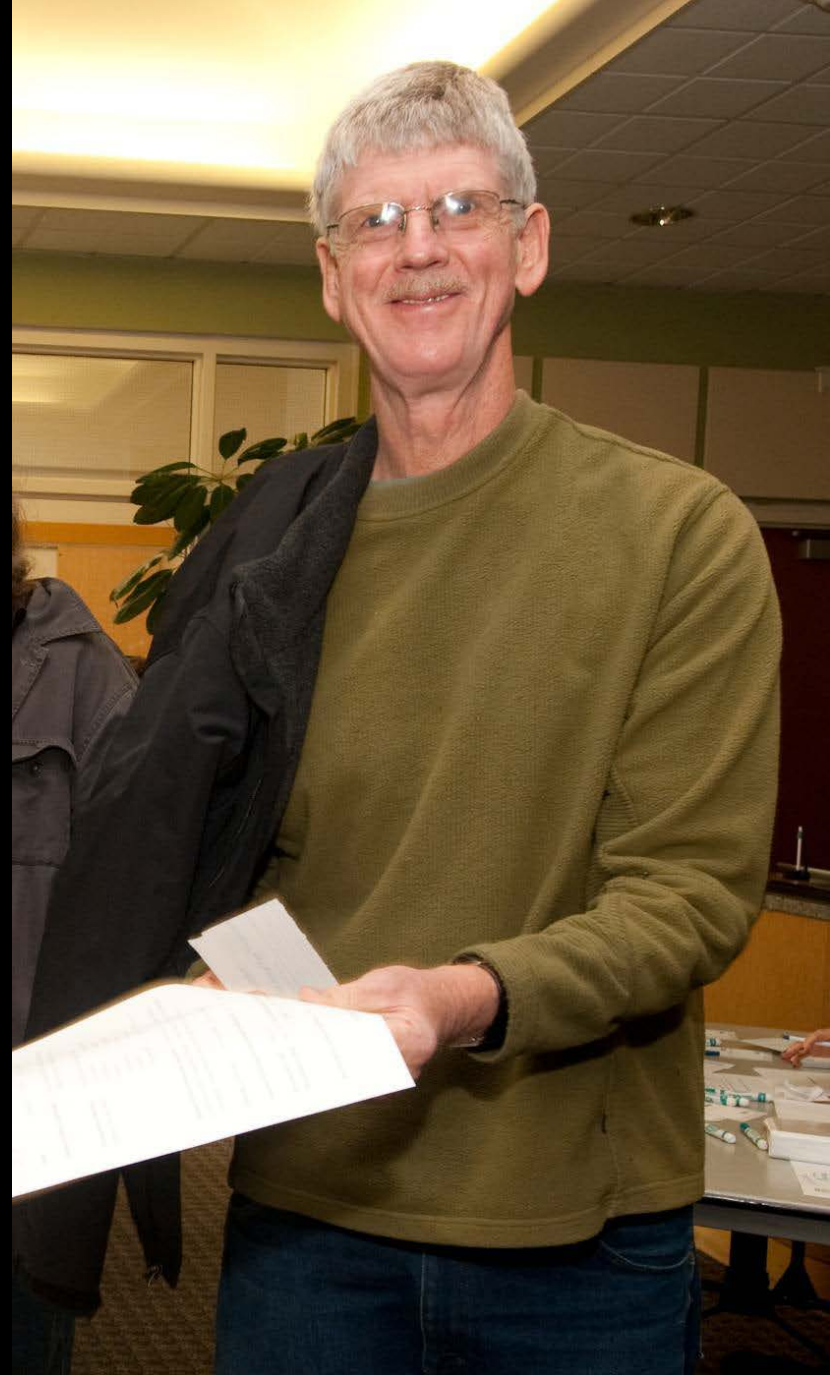
- **History of conflict**
  - *Developer-initiated plans rejected over many decades*
- **Lack of trust; issue fatigue**
  - *Required authentic engagement (accessible, hands-on, proactive, not like developer sessions); document facts; open to input, quick responses to questions; no hidden agenda, no “presentations”*
- **Widespread misinformation**
  - *Comprehensive public information materials, backed by research; disseminated to every household (not just participants)*
- **“Outsiders” dominated process**
  - *Albany residents only; one-time only*





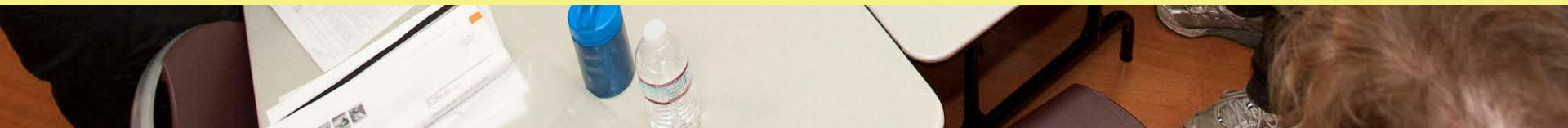
## Approach

- Build community; 38 identical neighborhood sessions; RSVP
- 10 - 50 people per session; work in small groups (five or fewer); Albany residents only
- Ensure “safe” place to voice opinions
- Encourage big thinking, grounded in reality and facts
- Encourage participation beyond “regulars;” door-to-door invitations





**A process unfolded, based on research,  
history, findings: *“Not your typical meeting!”***







ISOCARP International Planning Congress 2014. Urban Transformations – Cities and Water. Fern Tiger, University of Washington Tacoma and Fern Tiger Associates





## The Albany Waterfront Game

- Review map (1" = 200') and site parameters (elevations, setbacks, geotechnical, etc.)
- Discuss vision, big picture, personal goals for site
- Review “chips” (uses, sq. footage, acreage, height, parking requirements, tax revenue); “bright idea chips”
- Position chips on map; locate uses; calculate revenue; “name the plan;” note concerns and community benefits
- Present to full group; photograph (and color) map



## Results: Phase One

- 670 unduplicated participants +100 youth; all Albany residents; 195 maps (one per table group)
- Maps indicate open space and concern about revenues (majority dedicated >60 acres to new park; >50% showed uses generating >\$1M)
- Hotel (eco-hotel) most popular use (80%); housing and offices least popular; retail controversial
- Solutions more similar than different; adults differ from youth
- Follow up: Online Survey (*added 270 new participants*)



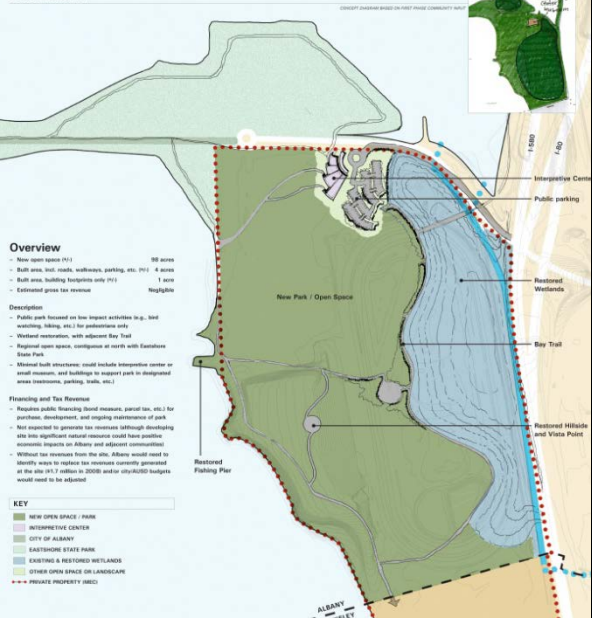


## Phase Two





Scenario 1



Scenario 2

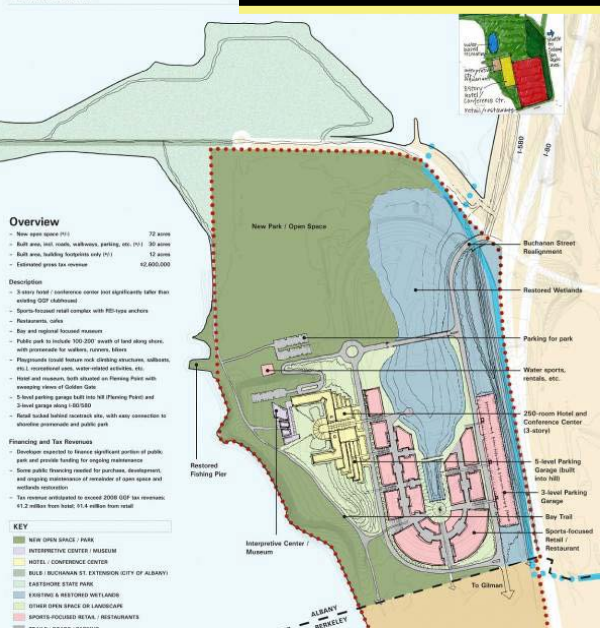


Scenario 3



# Six Conceptual Scenarios (not plans)

Scenario 4





# **Outcomes of the Community Process – 2010**

(Meaningful participation of 1 in 10 Albany residents)



# Analysis

- Majority (62%) wanted 72 acres of new open space
- Max three-story height (40 ft)
- Preference for development at south end of site (near Berkeley)
- 44% thought \$1.4M lowest revenue acceptable (24% wanted more; 13% were OK with about \$700K)
- Majority wanted park + hotel + conference center
- 36% thought hotel + retail (new uses) “appropriate” combination, this scenario most favored
- All wanted strict site development standards



# 2011: Unexpected Proposal

- LBNL (National DOE Lab) desired second campus (2M sq. ft.)
- GGF one of 6 finalists (surprise submission)
- Government ownership impacted city tax revenue and local control
- GGF site: 2 “active” cities
- GGF desires total of 2.5 – 3M sq ft *beyond* LBNL
- LBNL decision in 6 months (cannot comply with Measure C – required vote of residents)
- UC/LBNL process not engaging







## Voices to Vision “2”

- City forced developer to fund new round of Voices to Vision
- Empowered community demanded real information and meaningful participatory process + Task Force (*new form V2V2*)
- Broad community concerns emerged
- Issues identified, analyzed, discussed (*revenues, open space, building heights, land uses, lack of community control, Measure C compliance*)
- Benefits of LBNL vs. “costs” to city/community reviewed
- Informed dialogue; capacity to disagree; expanded and trusted information base

# Results

- Task Force analysis indicated many unresolved issues and concerns
  - Security of funding
  - Lack of trust in University (and its commitment to community process)
- Neither consensus nor acrimony
- No overwhelming support to encourage LBNL to select Albany site (other cities fiercely promoted their sites)
- New information gathered through V2V2 process: the “right” development proposal could gain community support
- Voices to Vision parameters remained as guiding principles





# What Happened Next? – 2012-14

- LBNL/UC selected Richmond Field Station site (owned by University of California)
- UC hired Project Manager (2013)
- UC did not get \$1.5 billion DOE funding critical to site planning and development of microscope/accelerator (validating key unresolved question raised by Albany community – what happens if...?)
- Unknown future: UC appears to be developing site for research companies and some LBNL functions



*“One generation  
plants the trees;  
another gets the shade.”*

