

## **Albany Shoreline/Golden Gate Fields/Voices to Vision**

The 190-acre Albany waterfront is a distinct feature of the McLaughlin Eastshore State Park and the greater East Bay shoreline, as well as the site of a proposed Bay Trail expansion. The available options for the waterfront are now wide open, given the recent bankruptcy of Magna Entertainment Corporation, owner of the 102-acre Golden Gate Fields racetrack and parking lot, which has long divided the McLaughlin Eastshore State Park into two halves. A coalition of environmental groups—including CESP, Citizens for the Albany Shoreline and the Sierra Club—share a common vision of the Albany waterfront entailing mixed land use for both parkland and development, with the majority of the waterfront closest to the shoreline preserved as open space.



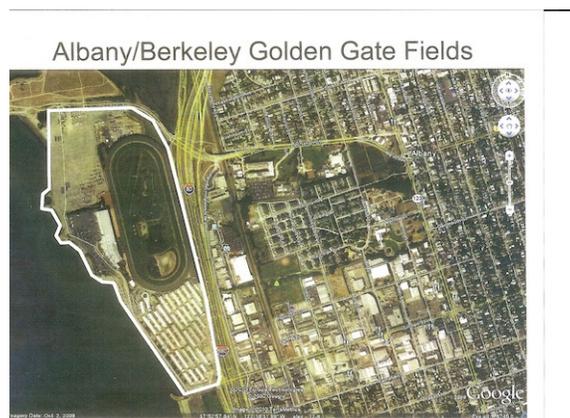
photo by Larry Tong

## **Golden Gate Fields Public Meeting With Developer Lawrence Berkeley National Lab Second Campus**

**Golden Gate Fields, 1100 Eastshore Hwy, Albany (Horse Wizard Room)**

**September 12, 2011 / September 19, 2011 / September 26, 2011**

**4:00pm-7:00pm**



We need **YOU** to come out to upcoming meetings with the developers of Golden Gate Fields (GGF) to tell them that you and the rest of the residents of Albany want them to **honor the Voices to Vision results: 75% parks and up to 25% development!**

The current large-scale development proposal at the GGF site on the Albany-Berkeley Shoreline allows only about 50 acres (out of 140) of the property for the shoreline park and much of that is squeezed in between the buildings and along the freeway. This would severely limit 'public' access to the parkland. The plan also calls for 300 feet of parkland along the west shore- but BCDC already guarantees 100 feet of this land.

[Lawrence Berkeley National Lab \(LBNL\)](#) Phase one proposal calls for 500,000 square feet and then over the next decades adding another 1.5 Million. At other sites under discussion that amount of development can fit on 15-20 acres with building heights at around 4 to 5 stories maximum, some lower. **The problem is that GGF is proposing extensive additional commercial development that will add to its bottom line but reduce the amount of public access to parkland.**

While we are open minded about the proposal to bring LBNL's new campus to the Albany-Berkeley Shoreline, we would not support a development with only 35% parkland that ignores the wishes of the Albany community as expressed in Voices to Vision. Albany spent more than a year and \$500,000 to define the community's vision of the shoreline which resulted in a plan that includes 75% of the land for park/open space and 25% for development. Please see [Voices to Vision report](#).

#### **IN ADDITION, written communication to the City is much encouraged:**

- Send a letter via E-mail to Mayor Javandel and all of city council ([cityhall@albanyca.org](mailto:cityhall@albanyca.org)) and to the city manager, Beth Pollard ([bpollard@albanyca.org](mailto:bpollard@albanyca.org)).
- **As well as a written letter to:** Mayor Javandel and City Council and to the city manager- Beth Pollard. City of Albany 1000 San Pablo Avenue Albany, CA 94706

**We have a wonderful opportunity to complete the Eastshore State Park and get the LBNL Second Campus for Albany - If the City and the developers honor YOUR Vision for the Waterfront from the Voices to Vision process!**

#### **Key issues discussed and questions to raise:**

- **We must have 75% parks and only up to 25% development**
- Development should NOT be on Fleming Point
- LBNL development can fit within the current track without expanding onto Fleming Point, the shoreline or the creek watershed.
- Additional commercial development (over and beyond LBNL) needs to be on ONLY 8-9 acres to give Albany the needed revenue. Golden Gate Fields only generates \$600,000 in tax revenues from the tax on the horse race gambling.
- If LBNL wants to 'own' the land, it should agree to pay the \$1.1 Million in property and parcel taxes for the city, schools, and library.
- If LBNL owns the land it does not legally have to comply with Measure C or Albany's zoning laws. Insist that if LBNL comes to Albany it has to contractually agree in a development agreement to comply with Measure C and Albany's zoning laws.
- Publicly state that any change to the waterfront zoning will go to a Measure C vote only after a full EIR is done as is legally required.

## **Albany Waterfront Visioning - Voices to Vision**

The long-awaited Albany waterfront re-visioning process began with Phase One in May 2009 with 38 community meetings and 650 participants that concluded July 1, 2009. Voices to Vision disseminated its publication to all Albany residences in addition to having displayed a 1/1200 scale waterfront model at the community center/library. The City of Albany sponsored Voices to Vision, "a process designed to engage the Albany community in an informed dialogue about its vision for the city and its waterfront." In Phase

Two 450 people took an online survey, and in January 2010 375 Albany residents attended more community forums. Non-resident forums were held January 19. On April 5, Fern Tiger & Associates presented a summary of study results City Council, followed by a public hearing. On April 19, 2010, the Albany City Council unanimously voted to accept the Voices to Vision Report and to treat it as a living planning document that reflects Albany residents' waterfront vision. Check for more info at: <http://www.voicestovision.com/>

## **Albany Hopes Community Input Will Resolve Waterfront Debate**

For more than 40 years the city of Albany has been caught in a game of tug-of-war over its waterfront property. But the city hopes that a new campaign to solicit community input will break the stalemate and provide a shared vision for the community's shoreline.

More than 375 Albany residents attended the city's Community Center and Senior Center over the Jan. 9-10 weekend to participate in the last round of community meetings aimed at finding common ground in a battle over the property that has pitted environmentalists against corporate developers. The meetings were the final phase of Albany's Voices to Vision program, which was designed to help find a strategic vision for the waterfront's future.

Next month, 102 acres of land owned by the bankrupt Magna Entertainment Corporation - most of which is occupied by Golden Gate Fields and its adjacent parking lots - will be put up for auction. The city hopes these community discussion sessions will provide the next owners with a blueprint for what Albany residents want for the the shoreline property.

[See the Full Story >>](#)

**Auction News:** [Golden Gate Fields to go up for auction](#)

## **Albany waterfront visioning begins**

by Steve Granholm, CESP board member

On April 21 2008, in response to the hard work of many citizens, the Albany City Council voted to begin the Albany Waterfront Visioning Process and selected Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to lead the effort.

For years, the future of the privately owned Golden Gate Fields at the waterfront has been one of the most contentious issues facing Albany. Recently, after the property's owner proposed two large developments which were vigorously opposed by citizens, the City Council decided to develop a common vision for the future of the waterfront.

This vision is to be based on an intensive public participation process, and grounded in a detailed resource analysis and the administrative realities for the property. The outcome of the process will be a Waterfront Vision with specific goals and objectives for future land use changes. This Vision will be less detailed than a Specific Plan so that approval would not require an Environmental Impact Report or a Measure "C" vote.

The City will encourage the landowner to participate in this visioning process. It is timely to develop a vision for the site that has broad support from citizens. The racetrack owner, Magna Entertainment Corporation, has recently experienced serious financial setbacks due to downturns in the horse racing industry, so there may be serious interest on the part of the owner in finding alternative uses for the site.

Fern Tiger and Associates were selected, in large part, due to their demonstrated success in designing and leading public participation processes to reach consensus in divided communities. FTA will begin by interviewing a broad cross-section of involved citizens, the racetrack owner, and owners of adjacent properties. At the same time, FTA will gather data on the environmental, social, and economic aspects of development at the waterfront. They will design and facilitate a public engagement process, which may include small informal gatherings, weekend community workshops, a waterfront education program, and

presentations/discussions at community meetings and public hearings. The final report will describe the "Guiding Vision" for the waterfront, and will summarize the public input and resource analysis that led to the Vision.

The hard work of concerned citizens has paid off and the community-based visioning process has begun. With your continued support, a consensus will be reached for a world class waterfront that will benefit future generations.

NOTE: newspaper fact sheet will be mailed out in May, and the group meetings will be done in June

## **Golden Gate Fields / Magna Entertainment Corporation**

### **What is the future of the Albany Shoreline at the racetrack?**

Magna Entertainment Corp (MEC), the owners of Golden Gate Fields (GGF) declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy last March and will auction Albany's horse racing track next February ([More auction details](#)).

As part of ongoing effort to raise funds to repay creditors, MEC got bankruptcy court approval to put Albany's GGF up for sale on Feb. 25, 2010. Bids are due Feb. 10, 2010.

This presents a fantastic opportunity for the community to have those lands (or some part of them) incorporated into the Eastshore State Park.

Magna, which owns 14 tracks in the U.S., has put up GGF, Gulfstream Park in Florida, Lone Star Park in Texas, and Baltimore's Pimlico racetrack-host of the Triple Crown's Preakness Stakes, for auction/sale to shrink the company's debt load.

The bankruptcy has been looming for years as horse racing steadily declined all over the U.S. and Magna kept piling up debt. Its downward financial spiral came this spring as MEC's investors and the investors in Magna's parent companies refused to continue bailing out the horseracing operations.

Magna's last ditch stand to save horseracing by adding shopping malls and casinos at all its racetracks failed miserably. When they tried to do this in Albany it set off a range war between the pro-developers and environmentalists resulting in the ousting of the pro-development city council.

MEC's day-to-day operations will continue uninterrupted throughout the Chapter 11 process. The racing operations may stay on even if the land is sold as it is an existing use that produces revenues and does not require massive changes on the waterfront for now. However, even if the track does not close, the unused north parking lot could be sold to the Park District and incorporated into the Eastshore State Park.

Magna's investors (including the Magna property arm M.I.D.) have announced that they want to develop the property should they gain control of it after the auction. (See, Berkeley Daily Planet, 4/1/09: Richard Brenneman)

[Golden Gate Fields Auction Set for April 3](#)

[Golden Gate Fields Owner Nixes Annual Report](#)

[Fate of Golden Gate Fields Uncertain](#)

[Hearing postponed in Magna bankruptcy](#)

Background: Golden Gate Fields is a horse racing facility with a racetrack, grandstand and parking facilities located in Albany in the middle of the Eastshore State Park. (Its horse stables are in Berkeley.) Throughout each of the changes in ownership, the property has been used as a horse-racing track since it opened in 1939, with a brief interruption during World War II. Since its heyday in the mid-1900s, the

sport of horse racing has been in steady decline. Today, most tracks struggle with declining attendance and with other sporting events commanding an increasing share of the entertainment audience. Also, since much of the betting now takes place through the internet, there has been a decline in the amount of revenue the City of Albany receives, which only arrives through bets placed at the tracks.

At the end of the 1990s Magna Entertainment Corporation, a Canadian-based company bought the Golden Gate Fields Racetrack. Magna initially envisioned rejuvenating the Bay Area's horse betting industry but Golden Gate Fields consistently fails to turn a profit. In the face of staggering losses Magna entered into an agreement with Southern California mall developer Rick Caruso to build a shopping mall in the north parking lot of Golden Gate Fields in 2005. As a result, Albany citizens work together with Citizens for East Shore Parks, Citizens for the Albany Shoreline and Albany Mayor Robert Lieber to place considerable pressure on Magna to abandon the mall plans and convert Golden Gate Fields into open space.

CESP, CAS and the Sierra Club circulated the Albany Shoreline Protection Initiative petition to block the building of the mall. The initiative called for, among other things, a 600 foot undeveloped setback from the shoreline and a moratorium on development without a public waterfront planning process. The initiative campaign succeeded in collecting more than 2,400 signatures - about a third of the Albany electorate!

With overwhelming community support for the initiative, the Albany City Council moved to place the matter on the November ballot. Magna succeeded in convincing a Superior Court to block the initiative on a technicality. However, the Albany community was unified in opposition to the Caruso mall development plan.

This community unity and action contributed to the election of two progressive candidates to the Albany City Council: Marge Atkinson and Joanne Wile, creating a progressive majority in City Council to protect the shoreline. In the face of increasing community opposition and a new City Council Caruso abandoned his mall plans in 2006. This progressive City Council prompted an independent community planning process for the waterfront to empower citizens to decide the future of the waterfront.

Private consultant Don Neuwirth drafted four alternatives for the Albany waterfront. CESP, the Sierra Club and Citizens for the Albany Shoreline (CAS) supported a Visioning Program.

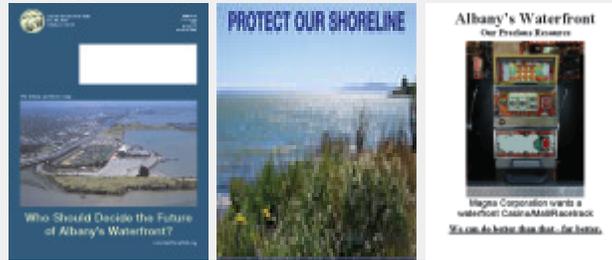
The City Council recently approved a Visioning Program along the lines that CESP, CAS and the Sierra Club advanced. The Visioning Program will:

1. First identify and obtain economic and other relevant information it feels is important for the public to make an informed decision about a community vision;
2. Engage in an open planning process for a community vision;
3. Put the Albany Waterfront Committee in charge of the planning process; and
4. Make no change in zoning until the developer/landowner legally guarantees a plan to preserve the maximum amount of park and open space including Fleming Point.

This Visioning Program comes at a good time. Magna has publicly stated that it may propose a new plan for the property because it is currently losing money. CESP hopes we can create a vision that addresses the future of the property should the track close. We will be participating in the City's future visioning program.

To view the Visioning Program of the Neuwirth report click [here](#).

## Albany Publications



- [Golden Gate Fields Pushes for Casino, Mall.](#)  
Magna Corp. is planning to add casino gambling and a large development to Golden Gate Fields Racetrack - smack in the middle of the Eastshore State Park.
- [Developer drops plans for Albany mall.](#)  
Council vote puts shoreline's future on November ballot
- [Waterfront surprise: Developer pulls out of mall project.](#)  
Caruso Affiliated pulls plug over city council.
- [Lack of impact report trounces shoreline plan.](#)  
Southern California-based firm likely to pursue other local projects, possibly in Berkeley or Richmond.
- [Letters to the Editor - Daily Planet](#)  
Albany Concerns
- [Contra Costa Times Editorial](#)  
Racetrack uses wrong tactic to fight initiative
- [Contra Costa Times Editorial](#)  
It's easy to read between the lines with Magna