

**ALBANY WATERFRONT PLANNING
FINAL REPORT**

Summary of Recommendation

Neuwirth & Associates recommends a two-phased planning and community participatory process. First, we propose that a consultant be engaged by the city to:

- Collate and organize all the existing planning information compiled over the years by all the previous waterfront planning exercises. No new environmental information needs to be generated.
- Conduct an extensive experiential educational process in which the community and its appointed and elected officials engage in structured activities and tours of the Albany waterfront and other comparable Bay Area waterfronts. This environmental and planning information should become the basis of the community's planning values and principles for the waterfront.

The above process would be guided by the Waterfront Committee for recommendation to the City Council. This is essentially Scenario #3 as proposed in the Preliminary Report.

Secondly, based on the planning principles, community values and site opportunities and constraints, an independent design competition should be held to produce up to five (which is it, singular or plural?) conceptual plans for the 100 acres of Golden Gate Fields (GGF). A consultant who specializes in design competitions should conduct this phase. The outcome could be at least five innovative conceptual plans grounded in the factual resource analysis and community values that emerge from the work in the first phase. The Waterfront Committee should lead the entire process with appropriate benchmarks reviewed by the City Council.

Background and Discussion of Scenarios in the Preliminary Report

Neuwirth & Associates prepared a Preliminary Report on Waterfront Planning, which has been revised and is attached. It describes the community participation process (including summaries of public meetings) and proposes four possible planning scenarios. After two sessions with the Waterfront Committee and one session with the Planning and Zoning Commission, we have incorporated their input and a conducted additional analysis. Our conclusion is that none of the

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scenarios, in the form described in the preliminary report, merit final recommendation to the City Council.

Scenario #1 proposed not to conduct any waterfront planning at all. It would allow the required Housing Element and General Plan revisions to be completed without the distraction of a simultaneous and intense waterfront planning process. An additional consideration is the current disinterest of the property owner in engaging with the City, which bodes well for a hiatus. However, the waterfront is the fulcrum of politics in Albany and cannot be ignored. Doing nothing now is actually doing something on the waterfront. It continues the status quo that no one is happy with.

Scenario#2 would embed the waterfront into the General Plan. This could derail the General Plan and Housing Element's statutory requirement and potentially undermine the General Plan. Therefore, we reject this alternative.

Scenario#3 would ground a visioning process in the environmental and policy realities of the GGF lands. This is an attractive alternative in that it begins with civic engagement and education as the foundation for a creative process. The disadvantages of the process as described are that it may not generate innovative concepts and may not resolve the controversy of whether the racetrack operates with or without additional development or is replaced by new development with an expanded park. In order to address these concerns, we suggest a creative cost-effective program based on this scenario, one that starts with civic engagement, education, and identification of community values and principles, and then provides an opportunity to produce a range of innovative concepts for the property at limited City expense.

Scenario#4 would be a community generated specific plan with the ultimate outcome of a development/public benefit agreement. An excellent, elegant plan can be prepared for GGF. An innovative community involvement process can be implemented to engage many people in an open and transparent civic exercise. A vibrant, economically viable, ecologically balanced and exciting waterfront can be designed. A consultant team with enough money and time can write an Environmental Impact Report. However, Neuwirth & Associates recommends that this is not the time for that effort because no one, not even the on-site staff of Magna can assure the participation of the landowner in any planning effort at this time. Therefore, the probability of an expensive and extensive waterfront planning process yielding a real outcome is dubious until Magna engages the community and funds the process.

Recommended Waterfront Planning Program

Neuwirth & Associates recommends modifying Scenario#3 and proposes a two-phased program. The first phase consists of community education, involvement, constraints analysis, and values identification. To complete the visioning process, the second phase could consist of a design competition as the most efficient and cost-effective waterfront planning. Once initiated, this can be accomplished in approximately 12 months at a cost of less than \$200,000. We suggest that this two-phase process be initiated and led by the Waterfront Committee. The first task compiles of existing planning and environmental information on GGF. The many previous plans have a great deal of relevant data. Plus, a great deal of information already exists in regulatory agencies such as the Water Quality Control Board, CalTrans and Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). Moreover, community members, academics and environmental groups have a wealth of knowledge of the GGF grounds, and its shoreline, creeks and cultural landscape. The cost of developing new information should not be borne by the public, absent landowner participation.

The planning and environmental information will form the basis of a resource opportunities and constraints report. Concurrent with the presentation of this information to the public in workshops at the Waterfront Committee, structured activities should be planned for the public at the waterfront such as walking, bird watching, and kayak and canoe tours to familiarize the community with the resources on the Albany shoreline. Hopefully, Magna might promote tours of the racetrack and grounds. Tours should be conducted to see other comparable Bay Area waterfronts. As this fact-finding process proceeds, the Waterfront Committee should lead a discussion of planning principles and values for the waterfront. This should have the maximum feasible public participation using a mix of techniques outlined in our Preliminary Report. One quantitative measure, such as a telephone poll or mail survey, should be conducted. The meetings should be televised on KALB or web cast if feasible. A listserv should be maintained to make this as interactive as possible. Bi-weekly Waterfront Committee meetings should be augmented by at least one Town Hall weekend event. Other appropriate City Commissions and Committees should be invited to join the Waterfront Committee when relevant topics are covered. The proposed meeting schedule is detailed in the Scope of Work below. Consultant cost should not exceed \$100,000 for this level of effort. This phase should take approximately six months. Consultant team should compile the information in a graphically attractive and succinct text for public presentations and to be available on the web.

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The resource opportunities and constraints assessment combined with the planning principles and values form the program or prospectus for a design competition. The City should hire a consultant who specializes in running design competitions. This advisor will suggest several professional jurors and help the City select several local jurors and run the process as outlined in the Scope of Work below. The total cost of the competition should be less than \$100,000. The outcome should be at least five different conceptual plans for GGF. These will reflect the program developed by the Waterfront Committee. For example, each competitor could design two conceptual plans, one with and one without the racetrack. Magna could also be invited to submit a plan. This process should take approximately six months.

The City Council should reserve up to \$100,000 for the winner to refine the best plan into a more detailed plan as a potential next step in waterfront planning. This should be done if and when there is widespread consensus supporting the winning plan.

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Recommended Scope of Work

The City Council should direct staff to issue a Request for Proposals with a cost not to exceed \$100,000 with the following schedule and scope of work for phase of this proposed waterfront planning process:

PHASE ONE- RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS WITH PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Task	Schedule	Est. Cost
Reconnaissance of existing planning documentation-	Month 1	\$15,000
Preliminary Discussion of Survey/Poll	Month 1	
Public Discussion of Aesthetics, Pubic Art & Cultural Resources	Month 2	
Walking Tour of Albany waterfront & racetrack	Month 2	
Public Discussion of Bay, Creeks & Hydrologic Issues including sea level rise	Month 2	
Public Discussion of Land Use Principles and Values I	Month 2	\$15,000
Public Discussion of Climate, Noise & Air Quality Issues	Month 3	
Public Discussion of Fiscal/Economic Issues		
Tour of Albany Waterfront by canoes & kayaks	Month 3	\$15,000
Public Discussion of Geology & Soils	Month 4	
Public Discussion of Biological Resources	Month 4	
Bird Watching Tour of Albany Waterfront	Month 4	
Public Discussion of Principles and Values II	Month 4	\$15,000
Public Discussion of Hazards & Toxics in Groundwater & Structures	Month 5	
Public Discussion of Parks and Recreation	Month 5	
Public Discussion of Transportation, Parking & Traffic	Month 5	
Tour of comparable Bay Area Waterfronts	Month 5	\$15,000
Public Discussion of Public Utilities & Services	Month 6	
Public Discussion of Land Use Principles and Values III	Month 6	
Town Hall Meeting & Survey/Poll on Principles and Values	Month 6	
Compilation of Resource Opportunity & Constraint	Month 6	\$25,000
Phase One Report with Planning Values		
Phase One		\$100,000

(Survey will take longer than a couple of weeks to prepare, conduct and compile.)

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PHASE TWO- DESIGN COMPETITION

The City Council, upon approval of the resource opportunities and constraints report with the planning principles and values, should issue an RFP for a design competition advisor not to exceed \$80,000.

Task	Schedule	Est. Cost
Competition Planning & Establish Selection Committee	Month 7	\$1000
Announcement & Request for Qualifications	Month 7	\$2000
Pre-proposal Briefing & Site Tour	Month 8	\$1200
Review Statements of Qualifications & Select Finalists	Month 9	\$1000
Conduct Program Workshop & Draft Competition Program	Month 9	\$3500
Begin Competition	Month 9	\$1500
Finalist Site Visit & Briefing (honoraria \$10,000X5@50%)	Month 9	\$26,000
Answers to Questions	Continuous	\$3,000
Mid-Point Reviews	Month 10	\$1,300
Submissions Due	Month 12	\$1,000
Public Exhibit & Workshop	Month 12	\$1,500
Finalist Presentation to Jury, Council & Public (honoraria \$10,000 for 5 teams@ 50%)	Month 12	\$26,000
Expenses & miscellaneous (cost estimates, market studies and economic analysis of revenue generation potential)	Month 12	\$16,000
Phase Two		\$85,000

TOTAL COST
Phase One= \$100,000
Phase Two= \$85,000
Contingency=\$15,000
Optional Refinement of Winning Design=\$100,000
Total Estimated cost=\$300,000