

Megaplex and Parking Structure

An Alternative Proposal

Presented by
Estuary Park Action Committee

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Megaplex and Parking Lot - An Alternative Proposal.

Problems associated with the Megaplex/Parking structure

A great majority of Alameda citizens do not seem to be in line with the City Council plan to convert the Alameda Theatre to a Megaplex and the Long's parking lot into a parking structure.

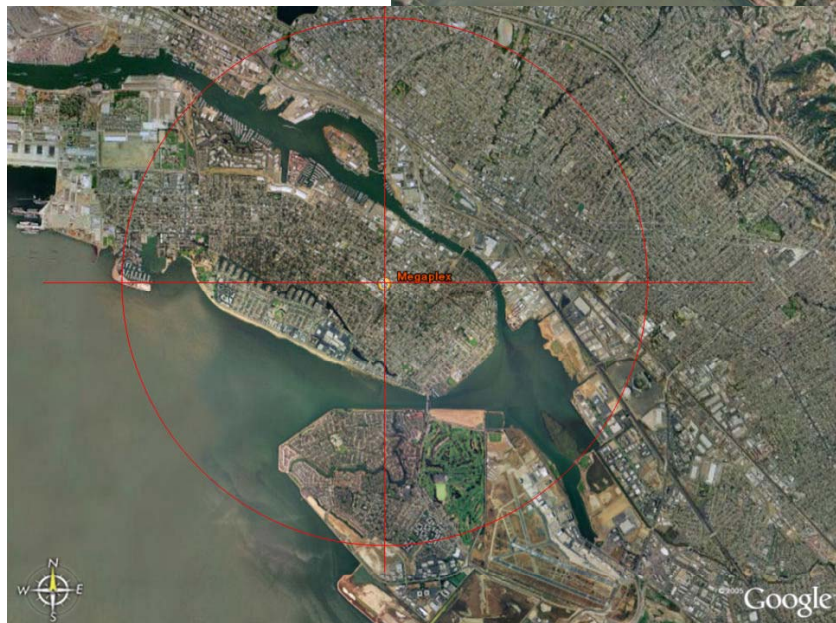
The Megaplex is financial risky and offers little benefit to most of our citizens. Citizens who've studied the numbers will detail why the Megaplex project is a highly risky financial adventure. The risk is certain in an era when home and boutique theater easily outcompete large movie establishments for comfort, convenience, price, and safety, not to mention their support of family unity and neighborhood solidarity.

The Megaplex is not a solution the people want, nor will it result in the desired outcome. In fact, it threatens to dissipate the City's treasury, not increase it, while degrading the Park Street area with disproportionate development that will clog streets at best.

We also question if there has been thought about where the target audience for the Megaplex will come from. The citizens of Alameda will not be able to support all 7 screens proposed for the Megaplex. These images give a clear picture of where the off island Megaplex customers will draw from.



Consider the audiences



targeted by films that will be shown at the Megaplex, 12 to 30 year olds for the most part. People in that demographic will not have large amounts of money to spend beyond a bite to eat on Park Street.

The crowds will bring problems. How many of you have attended movies at the Regal Cinemas in Jack London Square in Oakland and wondered about the need for an almost constant presence of armed police officers on the street and in the theater?

The planned Megaplex and a towering parking lot can flood the Park Street/Civic Center Plaza area with traffic carrying people with little interest in Alameda other than the Megaplex destination. Such problems are not the answer to our or the City's need for more sales tax revenues. We all understand the desire of Park Street merchants to bring more people to the street to shop and increase their profits. We all understand the desire of city government to attract shoppers to Alameda who increase the tax revenues for the city. We understand the hope for a tax increment on increased property values. But we question the Megaplex plan as a means of accomplishing these goals. In narrowly focusing on merchant profits and the small percentage passed to the City in sales tax, and a vain hope for any tax increment, the City's plan overlooks the advantages of more creative, inclusive plans the could enrich us all.

We should rethink how best to spend an estimated \$25 million of our community's money (\$45 million including interest) on a project that has a very dubious financial outcome. That kind of money could be spent on improvements that benefit the commercial district, benefit residents, and invite East Bay and Peninsula neighbors to join us in pleasant, safe, and enriching activities.

Alternatives are possible

EPAC is certainly opposed to the 7 screens and the parking structure, especially now that the City has passed over \$1.5 million to the owner of the Alameda Theatre before the citizens have endorsed that project. EPAC would like to propose that Estuary Park should be considered as an alternative to the Megaplex and Parking Garage plan, as a keystone in development extending from the Estuary through the Park Street commercial area.

A more modest 3 screen movie theater is a more viable plan, good for Alameda, and good for Park Street. It would cost less, and risk less. But it won't yield events that by themselves create a better, more attractive environment that could extend from the Estuary to South Shore. The City knows it must improve Park Street and has already begun. Let's elaborate on that vision and see what we might build if we agree to spend the millions in a different way.

In other presentations before this Council, EPAC has detailed our ideas for developing an active park on the Estuary near the Marine base on Clement. The City has agreed. Specifically, the council voted to set aside one million dollars as seed money for acquiring land there, a necessary step in the Recreation and Parks Department application for Prop 40 grant money available for urban park development. Approximately ten acres of this part of Alameda is planned for the active Estuary Park and parking lot.

A history of the struggle for Estuary Park, extending from the City's plan for that park in the 1991 Master Plan to recent activism that supported the City's decision to acquire the land can be found at <http://www.alamedareport.org/epac>

We support the development of Estuary Park linked by water taxi to Union Point Park and to City Hall by a promenade along Oak Street, then along Park, extending ultimately to South Shore, east and west by light rail and bike paths.

What does this alternative development look like?

I've used Google satellite maps to create a possible scenario of what could be done with the Dutra, Fox, Collins properties, referred by us as Estuary Park, and how that land, combined with Park Street development could be a feasible alternative to the Megaplex plan.

Eminent Domain would be a great idea to use to acquire this land because it really does qualify as a blighted area.

This picture shows the relationship between City Hall, the Dutra, Fox, Collins properties, and Union Point Park presently being constructed by Oakland.



Our first point is the location of parking where parking is better situated to provide access to Park Street and City Hall without producing the increased traffic, pollution and congestion in the Civic Center area that the parking structure will.

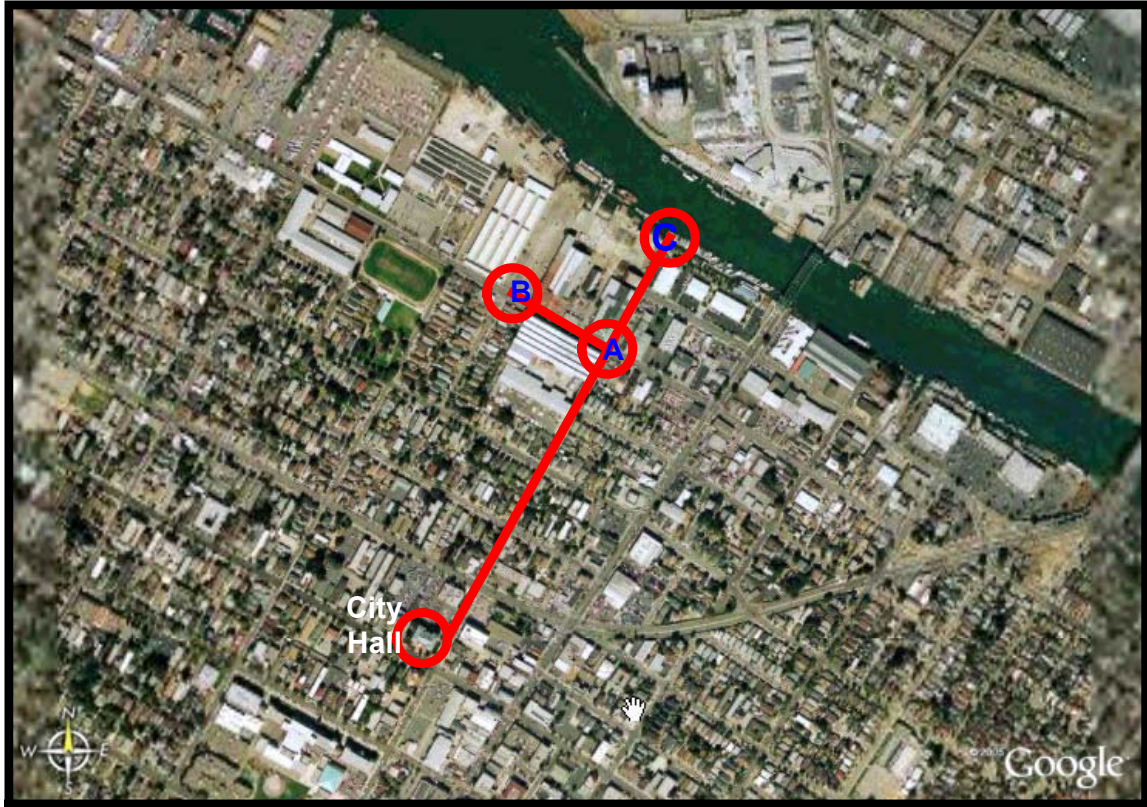
The long, thin section of the Fox property is approximately 2000 feet from the city hall, less than half a mile!

City Hall to A ___ 1900 feet
A to B _____ 580 feet
A to C _____ 2587 feet
1/2 mile = _____ 2640 feet

One Environmental Impact statement shows the Fox property is heavily polluted and would require a lot of cleanup before the land could be used for residential property. In the park acquisition plans written by Alameda Recreation and Parks, part of the polluted Fox land would be used for a parking lot because it really isn't suitable for much else and would limit the degree of exposure and cleanup required.

First, lets move the parking area:

Why not move the parking lot from the middle of town to just 2480 feet down the street to the side of downtown? Move traffic off Park Street instead of adding more to an all ready crowded street.

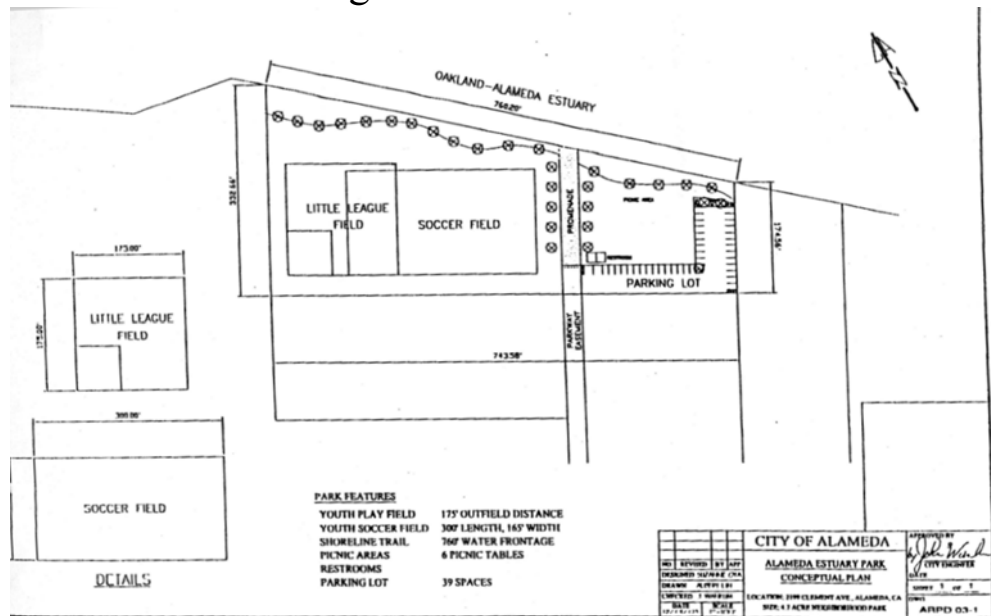


City Hall to A = 1900 feet
A to B = 580 feet
A to C = 2587 feet
½ mile = 2640 feet

A = Corner of Clement Street and Oak Street
B = Fox property at Clement Street
C = Waters edge at the Estuary

Second, this plan reduces real urban blight:

This proposal is more than just an alternative for the parking lot. It is a plan to add to the beauty of Alameda by taking a blighted section of town and making it a useful area that would solve several problems for the city. Alameda Parks and Recreation has already designed an active park on Dutra and as stated before, the parking area on part of Fox. The entire Fox property is perfect for a parking lot since it is long and extends from Clement Avenue to the waters edge.



Third, connections to downtown:

Connections to downtown could be easy and healthy by using water taxi, bicycle, walkway, and light rail.

As mentioned previously, plans are also in proposal stage to create a light rail/bicycle trail on Clement as part of the Rails to Trails, Bay Trails, and Beltline projects. A light rail on Clement would pass directly in front of the parking lot providing Park Street connections for those who don't want to walk.



These maps, from

<http://www.bikealameda.com> show the water taxi traveling from the Bay Ferry landing to Jack London Square to provide North Island travelers access to BART.

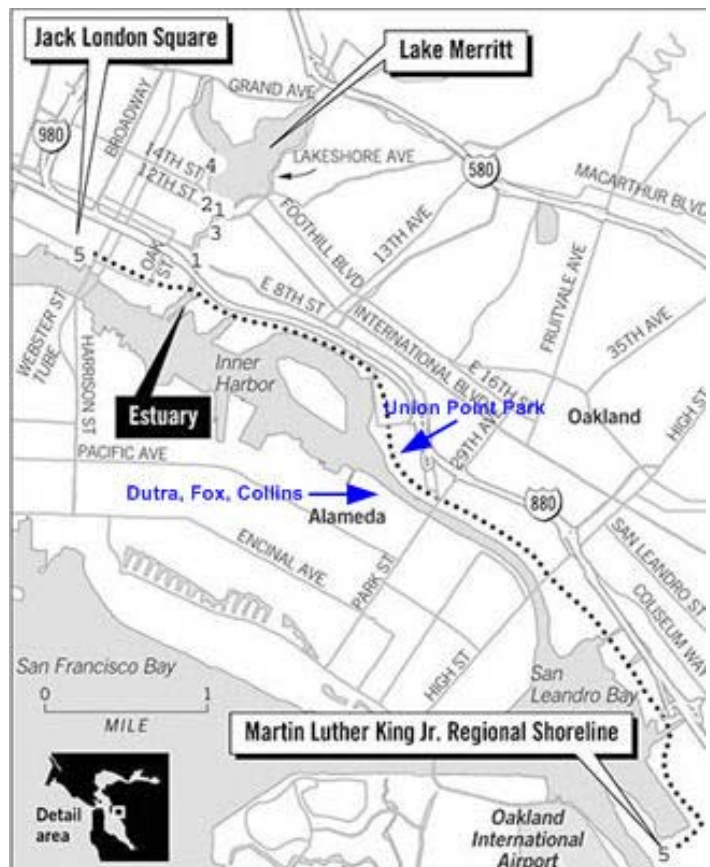
The water taxi continues to Marina Square, Grant Street and Government Island. Strange that the water taxi doesn't extend to our end of the Island. Oakland is presently building Union Point Park directly across the Estuary from the Dutra property. Extending the water taxi just a bit further to join Union Point Park and Estuary Park would provide access from Oakland to Park Street shops and provide bike riders a safe crossing from Alameda to Oakland. Alameda city should work with Oakland to develop a bicycle path from Union Point Park to the Fruitvale BART Station. The water taxi would help to remove pedestrians and bike riders from the bridges and out of harm's way; safer for all of us.



Moving pedestrian and bike traffic from Union Point Park to Park Street shops would let the visitors park their cars in Oakland instead of bringing them into Alameda; another win for us.

A bike path and Bay Trail where Estuary Park is planned along Clement Street and then to Oak Street. These proposed routes fit right into the idea of using the Dutra, Fox, Collins property to create a beautiful addition to the Civic Center Plaza section of Alameda and Park Street improvements.

The dotted line in this drawing shows the proposed pathway along the Estuary on the Oakland side. The voters of Oakland approved over \$100 million dollars in bonds for this project. When given the opportunity to protect their side of the Estuary, the people and city government stepped up to the idea.



Fourth: Fox parking will help the neighbors of Hamilton Park:

The Fox parking lot would be within a block of the high school recreation field at Hamilton Park. Neighbors around the football field are in constant conflict with the influx of traffic and parking problems when there are activities at Hamilton field. The Fox parking lot would be a most welcome addition toward solving these problems for several blocks around the field; another win for all.

Fifth: The Collins Property:

The Collins Property: could include an outdoor stage for theatrical and musical events, like Shakespeare in the Park. What a marvel idea in a beautiful setting.

The Collins property, lying at the corner of Clement and Oak Streets, is the largest section of land in our Dutra, Fox, Collin's proposal. The Collin's property isn't part of the Alameda Parks and Recreation proposal. Why not use the money from the proposed parking lot and acquire the entire blighted area and make it a show case park for Alameda. To quote the 1991 Master Plan, *"This park will require a major funding commitment by the City, but will probably do more than any other single project to ensure Alameda's long-term quality. It could have the character of San Francisco's marina Green and would attract all age groups to enjoy large and small boats on the Estuary, views of the Oakland skyline and hills, and active sports. The new park would serve a sector of the City that is short of park space, and would guarantee the high quality of housing proposed for the area."*

We propose the Collin's lot be used to build an open air amphitheater. An amphitheater rounds out a complete open space solution to this part of Alameda. With a bit of imagination you can see: local bands presenting free summer concerts for teenagers, Shakespeare in the Park presentations for the more cultured among us, a short walk down a beautifully landscaped promenade from our new Library provides a place to hold outdoors reading and presentations, an active park for children to play in and additional resources for Alameda Park and Recreations. The park will become a much needed addition to a part of town that is sadly lacking in such resources, but will serve all of Alameda.

Example of what can be done!



This is a beautiful example of what can be done with an open air amphitheater. The permanent tent covers a seated area that can be used during inclement weather so events don't have to be cancelled due to rain and the raised field gives a wonderful view for lawn seating of the performance, the Estuary, and the Oakland hills. A structure like this could be designed for the Collins property. With an open air amphitheater, citizens of Alameda will really get to enjoy the Estuary. Revenue

earned from renting the amphitheater and grounds would bring in the needed revenue that could exceed the desired sales tax from the theater and parking structure.

Sixth: Make Oak Street one-way from the waters edge to City Hall.

A plan I have presented to this City Council before is to make Oak Street from City Hall to Clement Street a one lane, one-way street. Take the freed up lane on Oak Street and make it a beautifully landscaped promenade (promenade means "to go on a leisurely walk") joining a wide boardwalk along the Estuary. The one lane would allow business owners and residences who live on Oak to retain access to their properties while providing near by shoppers and workers (city hall included) a place to stroll from Park Street to the Estuary during lunch time or before an evening meal and a movie; a place to relax and enjoy a resource our citizens should be benefiting from.

Rap up: How will it all work together?

Extending our imagination a bit further: The park and expanded parking lot can be a lot more than an active soccer field. People come to the park during the day time to enjoy a wonderful open space with resources for relaxation and recreation, regattas, and festivals. Some continue on to Shore Line to enjoy the beach, shopping, and eating before returning back to Park Street. They can travel by light rail, riding bikes, or just enjoying a stroll up Park Street to shop and have dinner. Then they go to the 3 screen renovated theater to enjoy a movie. Fewer cars will have traveled up Park Street but people will be encouraged to come and enjoy themselves. They will have left their cars on the side of town, shopped and been entertained. Everyone can appreciate that: visitors, merchants, the city treasurer, but most importantly, all citizens of Alameda will gain a beautiful addition to their city. The City Hall and Library plaza will be extended to the water. What an urban possibility. What synergy.

Estuary Park, when combined with the City Hall, Library, Park Street to South Shore, as well as West to Webster and points East, is a far richer idea than a risky Megaplex and traffic snarl. People are encouraged to travel to Alameda from Union Point Park. The smaller movie theater performs the purpose intended, to provide safe entertainment and is not a magnet for those we would rather not invite to Alameda. Bikers are provided a means of crossing the Estuary other than the bridges. The south end of the Island is provided with easier, safer access to Fruitvale BART and the water taxi to the Bay Ferry landing. The Light Rail, Bay Trail and bike paths on Clement and Oak Street help move people around Alameda that is healthier for them, for us, and for the environment.

Estuary Park can be a landing on a necklace of parks circling Alameda, creating possibilities for large and small scale sports and aquatic events, an outdoor stage for theatrical and musical events; shopping, dining, movies, and unrivaled scenery from the Estuary to the Bay.

Isn't this a much better, environmentally friendly, comfortable, safe, and enriching project than yet another Megaplex tied to a parking structure, even if such a project could make money?

Summary:

1. Moving the parking lot from the Long's parking lot to the Fox property:
 - A. Provides a solution to the Megaplex parking structure that most don't seem to want
 - B. Provides parking within walking distance to Park Street but on the edge of town instead of bringing cars into the center of town where they aren't wanted.
 - C. Makes use of a blighted section of the Estuary that isn't suited for much more than a parking lot due to the pollution known to be there.
 - D. Provides a connecting spot for the proposed light rail and bike path planned for Clement Street and Oak Street needed to move people to Park Street and on to South Shore.
 - E. Provides much needed access to the water taxi for connections to Fruitvale BART and the Bay Ferry landing.
 - F. Solves the long time problem of parking during sports activities at Hamilton Park and makes the neighbors very happy.
 - G. Provides parking for visitors to activities at Estuary Park.
2. Creating a landscaped promenade down Oak Street from City Hall to the water would:
 - A. Provide a one way street that would give the home owners and businesses on Oak Street access to their properties.
 - B. Provides a pleasant environment for a walk or bike ride from the parking lot to Park Street shops, the Library, City Hall, the movie theater, and restaurants. Also provides a nice place for Park Street workers to walk during their lunch time and work breaks.
 - C. Extends the Civic Center Plaza to the water's edge.
3. Building the proposed active park on the Dutra property:
 - A. Fulfills the plans from the 1991 master plan to provide a park on this land.
 - B. Provides needed open space for a section of Alameda that is very limited in park space.
 - C. Provides a much needed active park to be used by the youth of Alameda.

- D. Provides open space on the Estuary for all of Alameda's citizens to enjoy.
 - E. Provides a place on the Estuary for connections to Union Point Park and the Bay Ferry.
 - F. Provides a place for bicycle connections to the Fruitvale BART Station.
4. Building an open space park and amphitheater on the Collins property.
- A. Provides additional open space on the Estuary for all of Alameda's citizens to enjoy.
 - B. Provides an extension to the Civic Center Plaza that preserves a beautiful area on the Estuary.
 - C. Provides space for an outdoor amphitheater to be used for many different kinds of activities that would bring outdoor enjoyment and activates to Alameda.
 - D. Parking and rental revenues would bring new resources to the city.
 - E. Activities would bring shoppers, dinners, and movie attendees to Park Street while extending the influence to the beach and South Shore shops as well.

Conclusion:

This project would do more to improve Park Street than 7 movie screens and a very large parking lot that brings unwanted cars onto Park Street and into the Civic Center Plaza area. It would add parking, beauty, recreation, and leisure open space that is beneficial to all of Alameda. It improves an area of Alameda that has been mostly forgotten and increases property values for the area. It also preserves the last part of the Estuary available to be used by all of Alameda citizens instead of the few who would live in a housing development on these properties.

Best of all, much of this plan has already been achieved by the combined efforts of many citizen groups united in the push for a better Alameda. Our plan brings these projects together into one effort designed to improve a very large area of Alameda and the Estuary, an area that includes Alameda Civic Plaza. This project improves Alameda for all of Alameda not a small group.

Dare to Dream - then work to make the dream come true.

This is what we have the opportunity to clean up. and make beautiful.

View from Park Street Bridge.



View of Collins property from across the Estuary



View of Fox and Dutra from across the Estuary



Pictures from EPAC web site: Joseph Woodard <http://www.alamedareport.org/epac/>

Here are some example of simple amphitheatres that I found on the Internet

