Project Description

The horse barn area of the Golden Gate Fields complex lies opposite the site, adjacent to Gilman Street. Access to the horse barns is controlled at a driveway and gate house on the north side of Gilman Street near the I-80 access ramps. The horse barn area occupies about 29 acres and is located in Berkeley, while the reminder of Golden Gate Fields (about 53 acres) is located in the City of Albany.

Interstate 80¹ and the Bay Trail bike path border the project site on the east. A chain link fence marks the boundary and there are no gates or breaks in the fence that would permit pedestrian or vehicular access to the site from the frontage trail or bike path. Vehicular parking is not permitted along the frontage road. I-80 is a major freeway with 5 lanes, including a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane, in each direction where it passes over Gilman Street. It has an average daily traffic volume of 250,000 vehicles a day.

The west frontage road has two travel lanes. It typically has high traffic volumes in both the morning and afternoon commute periods when drivers utilize it to avoid congestion on I-80. West Frontage Road begins/terminates at Gilman Street. The West Berkeley Industrial Area is found on the east side of the freeway. Several manufacturing and supply businesses are located adjacent to the east Frontage Road, and the Union Pacific railroad corridor is located two blocks to the east, on what would be Third Street.

The parcel is adjacent to the lands of the Eastshore State Park on the south and west. The Park’s Master Plan was approved in December 2002.² The Eastshore State Park contains 2,262 acres of tidelands and 260 acres of uplands, of which approximately 797 acres of tidelands and 115 acres of uplands are located in the City of Berkeley. To date, none of the park’s facilities have been constructed, but habitat restoration work has commenced in the Meadows area, along the north side of University Avenue. In the lexicon of the Eastshore State Park Plan the area that borders the playing fields site on the south is termed the “North Basin Strip.” Uses proposed for the North Basin Strip include an interpretative center, a hostel, water access and a boathouse, restrooms, turf and picnic facilities, trails, a waterfront promenade, and up to 3 acres of parking.

¹Adjacent to the site, the freeway is technically Interstate 80/580. The combined Interstates split at the Buchanan Street Interchange, less than one-half mile north of the site. In this report the freeway will be referenced as Interstate 80 or I-80.
²See section II, F, 3, Relationship to Plans, for further discussion of the Eastshore State Park Plan.
The western side of the playing fields site also abuts the Eastshore State Park. The upland area is a long, thin wedge of land starting at the edge of the rip-rapped shoreline near the site’s southwestern corner and widening to about 130 feet at Gilman Street. See the Site Plan, Figure 6. This area is generally unimproved and has been used informally by fishermen, walkers, and others to gain access to the bay front. A portion of the northern part is a paved extension of the Golden Gate Fields lot and the boundary line between the project site and the Eastshore State Park property is not marked. The Eastshore State Park Plan calls for this upland area to be a “promenade” that would include a segment of the Bay Trail.

The Eastshore State Park also extends beyond the shoreline and encompasses all of the tidelands (and open water) of the North Basin. The Park plan calls for enhancement of the North Basin for use by non-motorized watercraft, while also minimizing disturbance to rafts of wintering ducks and water birds.

E. THE PLAYING FIELDS PLAN

1. OVERVIEW

The preliminary sports field plan has been developed by Dillingham Associates, under contract with the City of Berkeley and in consultation with the Association of Sports Field Users and representatives of the parties to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement.

The Plan, which is shown in Figure 6, calls for the development of one hardball, two soccer, two softball fields all of which are adaptable as multi-use fields. The hardball field would be designed to accommodate baseball in the summer and field sports in the fall with sufficient space to host adult regulation-sized soccer games. The softball fields would be adaptable to one regulation youth soccer field and one soccer practice field.

The northeastern section of the site would be designed to be consistent with the proposed design of a roundabout serving the ramps and Frontage Road on the west side of the interchange. Construction of the roundabout will require a small section of the site, which will affect the location of the existing bicycle path, and may require adjustments in the preliminary sports field plan during final design. See Sections II, G. Related Projects and III, O. Transportation and Traffic, below.
PLANNING FIELDS PLAN

FIGURE 6

Source: Dillingham Associates

Gilman Street Sports Fields
City of Berkeley
January 10, 2005
The Plan calls for construction of a small field house in the northwest corner and a tot-lot and picnic table in the southwest corner. A restroom would be provided in the field house and vault toilets would be constructed near the tot-lot. Parking would be provided in three areas: a lot in the northwest corner, a lot along the southern boundary, and street parking on Gilman Street adjacent to the northern boundary. The use of angle parking would allow an increase in the number of street spaces, but would require vehicles to turn around at the end of Gilman when entering or leaving the spaces. A traffic circle is proposed at this location to facilitate this maneuver. The number of travel lanes would be reduced to one westbound lane (inbound) and two eastbound lanes (outbound).

The playing fields complex would be operated under the terms of the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement, which call for the City of Berkeley to lease the land and take the lead in the design, permitting, environmental review, construction and operation of the facilities. It is expected that the development capital will come from State or regional park bond funds and that the operation and maintenance costs will be recovered from user fees.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Gilman Street Playing Fields project is to develop, maintain and operate additional sports fields for use by youth and adult athletic leagues in Berkeley, Emeryville, Albany, El Cerrito and Richmond.

The five cities have entered into a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JPA) which specifies that, if found to be feasible, the playing fields shall be developed on the proposed site owned by the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) at the foot of Gilman Street in the City of Berkeley. Secondary objectives of the project explicitly noted in the JPA include:

- Avoid any potentially significant adverse impacts from the project on a population or habitat of a species listed under the Federal or California Endangered Species Act.
- Free up space on the Albany Plateau area of the Eastshore State Park that is designated as a site for playing fields so that it can be used for other, unspecified, park purposes;
3. DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Grading and Site Preparation
The project site is generally flat, with a gradual slope (+/-1%) from the frontage road toward the Bay. There is a low mound of fill and dirt near the site’s southwestern corner that rises about 5 feet above the surrounding land and a small drainage channel along the mound’s southerly side that is 1 - 2 feet deep.

Development of the sports fields would require grading to remove the existing asphalt pavement and existing earthen mound, and provide for appropriate imported base fill for the artificial fields and well-drained sub-base soil for the natural turf areas. As can be seen in Figure 7, the fill would be precisely contoured in order to create optimal playing surfaces for the respective sports. The contours would be modified to slope toward the middle of the site and, except for a portion of the baseball field, all the fields would drain to a new storm drain that would be installed beneath the fire lane/maintenance road. The Preliminary Plan assumes that the on-site storm drains would be connected to existing City of Berkeley storm drains in Gilman Street and in the Frontage Road.

The preliminary grading plan calls for all of the field surfaces to have a have a 1.5% slope, with the soccer and softball fields dropping about 2.25 feet across their widths. The slopes may have to be modified slightly depending upon the drainage characteristics of the imported soil. The soccer fields and two of the three practice sports fields would be level across their lengths. The baseball pitcher’s mound would be the highest point on the new site, at elevation 12, and the baseball outfield would be crowned to the right of center field at elevation 10.8.

The parking lots would be designed to slope to storm drain inlets and would have slightly greater slopes than the playing fields. The final grade levels along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site would match the existing ground surface levels, however, narrow slopes about 1 – 4 feet high would be constructed along the western boundary of the site and the inside edge of the parking lot at the southern boundary.

Overall, it is estimated that the project would require about 27,000 cubic yards of cut and 15,000 cubic yards of fill. The grading would be phased, with construction of the base for the soccer fields, the storm drain spine and the Gilman Street Parking lot coming first, and independent of
the grading for the remainder of the project. After Phase I, a stockpile of approximately 14,000 cubic yards of fill would be retained on-site for application in Phase II. At the end of Phase II, about 13,000 cubic yards of excess cut would have to be hauled off-site.

Field Surfaces
The two soccer fields would be surfaced with FieldTurf™, a manufactured synthetic turf product. FieldTurf™ is made with proprietary polyethylene “alloy” fibers engineered to have a very low “abrasion index.” The fiber package is infilled, at the rate of about 10 pounds per square foot, with a patented mix of silica sand and cryogenically formed, rounded rubber granules.

At present there are over 158 FieldTurf™ installations in California, including the Oakland Raiders Practice Field, and fields at San Jose State University, Laney College, Skyline College, College of San Mateo, Cesar Chavez Education Center (Oakland) and High Schools in Piedmont, Lafayette (Acalanes), Vallejo, Pittsburg, Larkspur (Redwood), Mill Valley (Tamalpais), and San Anselmo (Sir Francis Drake).

The other fields would be surfaced with natural turf, and would require irrigation from March through October. No water service is currently provided to the site and a new 2-inch water meter would be installed with service from a water main in Gilman Street. Irrigation water lines would be installed beneath these field areas following completion of the grading work.

EBMUD is constructing a distribution system to provide reclaimed water for irrigation and possibly other non-potable uses for customers along the I-80 corridor. When the reclaimed water becomes available, the irrigation system for the playing fields would be switched over to use the recycled water.

Lighting
All of the fields would be illuminated to permit night use. Engineered sports lighting systems would be custom designed and installed by one of several companies specializing in these applications. Generally, the multiple lights would be installed on 70- to 90-foot tall poles anchored 12-feet or more into the ground. The lights would be shielded and aimed to provide relatively bright, even lighting on the fields and sharp cut-off at the edge of the playing surfaces.
in order to minimize glare and light spill. It is expected that average illumination levels of 18-20 footcandles can be achieved on the fields while the lighting levels along the property lines would be less than 2 footcandles. The color spectrum of the field lights would approximate daylight, as contrasted with the more yellow tones of nearby streetlights and the existing security lights.

Lighting use would be controlled by the parties responsible for operation and maintenance of the fields and would be available only when games or practices are scheduled in advance. Typically, the lights would be on from dusk until 9 or 11 pm most evenings, and only the fields in use would be illuminated.

**Access and Parking.**
Access to the site would be provided from Gilman Street, as it is today. A new driveway entrance would be constructed approximately 100 feet from the northwest corner of the site, leading into a parking lot for 83 cars. This parking lot would be adjacent to the Field House and restrooms, and disabled spaces would be provided.

A new entrance to the site would be developed along the Frontage Road, almost 1,300 feet south of Gilman Street, near the site’s southern boundary. This driveway would involve a crossing of the existing bike path, and would provide entry to an 82-car parking lot with a cul-de-sac turnaround at the end. Disabled spaces would also be provided in this lot.

Finally, a portion of the Gilman Street frontage along the site would be reconstructed to permit angle parking for up to 38 cars. Those on the north side would be on the street right-of-way, while the spaces on the south side would be mostly on land that is part of the project site. The use of angle parking will require vehicles to turn around at the end of Gilman Street when either entering or leaving the spaces. To facilitate this maneuver, a traffic circle would be constructed at this location.

**Maintenance and Emergency Access**
A 20-foot wide fire lane/emergency access and maintenance road would be constructed along the edge of the two soccer fields. Routine maintenance access would be provided from a 12-foot wide asphalt surface. The additional 8-foot width necessary to ensure good access for emergency vehicles would be provided on the synthetic turf, which can support up to 40,000
Project Description

Pounds per square foot. The road would have gated access from Gilman Street. As noted, most of the field areas would drain to this road, where storm drain inlets would collect the runoff and transport it to the existing storm drainage system. The maintenance road would provide easy access to all of the fields for routine maintenance activities.

Fencing and Planting

The design calls for development of a planting strip with trees and shrubs along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the site. No planting is specified along the western (shoreline) side, as it is assumed that this area would be developed for part of the Bay Trail or other park and open space uses by the State as part of the Eastshore State Park.

The Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s (BCDC) jurisdiction is indicated by the 100-foot setback line from the water, as shown on the site plan. The tot-lot proposed in the southwest corner of the site is within the 100-foot shoreline band and would require a permit from BCDC. As can be seen on the plans, the softball and baseball fields would be setback approximately 120- to 150-feet from the shoreline band.

In order to keep errant balls away from public streets and trails and from adjacent fields, fencing of various heights would be erected along most of the field boundaries. See Figure 7. Twenty-foot high chain-link fences would be installed at the end of the soccer fields and 12-foot high fences would be located along the Frontage Road side. A 12-foot fence would be located along the western edge of the maintenance access road, separating the softball/practice field areas from the soccer fields. The outfield fences for the softball and baseball fields would be temporary 8-foot high fences that would be removed and stored during the off-season, so the fields could be converted to fall use. Ten-foot fences would be installed along the first and third base field lines for the softball and baseball fields and a 10-foot fence would also be erected along the border between the northern parking lot and the adjacent winter sports/softball field. Backstops made of fencing material would be provided at the baseball and softball fields, as well.

Bike Path Connector

The plans call for construction of a spur to the existing Bay Trail along the Frontage Road, extending along the site’s northern boundary to the edge of site. This is proposed in anticipation of a future trail that might be developed along the shoreline as part of the Eastshore
State Park. It would also provide direct bicycle access to the fields, as it is anticipated that some players would ride bikes to practices or games.

Field House
A field house and restroom building of about 1,700 square feet in floor area would be constructed in the parcel’s northwest corner near the end of Gilman Street. While the Preliminary Plan locates the field house inside the property boundary, it could be relocated a few feet to the north or west during final design, when the detailed plans for the connector trail, Gilman Street cul-de-sac, parking lot, parking lot entrance and other site features are established. If the Field House were sited to encroach onto the Gilman Street right-of-way the City would take action to abandon the affected portion of the right-of-way.

As shown on Figure 8, the Field House would contain storage areas for field maintenance and sports equipment, a meeting room, a snack bar and a public restroom. Sewer service is available in Gilman Street, or nearby at the Golden Gate Fields site; telephone service would have to be extended to the site.

Tot-Lot and other Amenities
A tot-lot would be developed in the southwest corner of the site, with at least one play structure. While sewer service is not available at this location, a concrete vault toilet would be constructed, and a pumping service would be engaged for routine pumping and disposal, similar to other operations managed by the EBRPD.

Small bleachers would be provided at each soccer and softball field and two would be provided at the baseball field.