

From Beach Reporter Archives: Letters To The Editor

Beach Report Editor's note: "Last week, we asked our readers about the AES power plant site in Redondo Beach."

The following was published on May 6th, 2010.

Strive for a greener future

As a third-generation Redondo Beach citizen, the sight of the power plant has long been a subject of discussion in our family. I am not the first in my family to lament its existence, nor will I be the last.

Many of us in this seaside community look forward to a day when more, rather than less, regard for the quality of life is the determining factor in how we vote and act. We've already seen what happens when high-density development takes center stage over mindful community planning. It's called the Esplanade and the Redondo Beach pier condo development at The Village. Let's not repeat those dreadful concrete mistakes.

Our children deserve more open spaces and [natural beauty](#). Knowing that we are in the bottom percentiles for open park lands should be incentive enough to strive for a greener future for our community.

Anna Bisson, Redondo Beach

Plant should be responsible neighbor

If it's here to stay, it should be a responsible neighbor. The plant has been obsolete and inefficient for decades. Where's the beach in Redondo Beach?

Donna Madden, Redondo Beach

People voted for a park

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought the people of Redondo Beach already voted to use the AES site as a park. I realize that the people and their values and interests don't count for much these days, especially when the real estate interests and the other special interests, many of whom don't even live here, just want another opportunity to suck more money out of the land, regardless of what the average, everyday citizen wants. God forbid we don't let them suck every last dollar out of every parcel of land, regardless of what those of us who live here and pay taxes here want.

Marilyn Spivey, Redondo Beach

Not a pretty view

You're kidding, right? After 10 years of listening to all this, I am convinced that the powers that be and the masses here only really care about one thing: fighting with each other. Drive west on 190th/Herondo from Prospect, get to the top of the hill and look west. Take a real good look at what completely dominates Redondo Beach. Pittsburgh, the "Smokey City" of the 1950s, looked prettier. If you look close enough, you can see the new entrance scape to Catalina Avenue being swallowed up by the high-tension wires. That view is just lovely, something to really be proud of. I'm so happy to pay huge amounts of property taxes just to look at that mess every day.

What is the City Council's legacy to leave after all this time? New sewer lines. That and the city employees' pension plan. When can we take tours to see where our tax dollars are going? Here is a suggestion: Let's ask AES (since it isn't going anywhere or modernizing or tearing down the smoke stacks) if we can put up a three-ring circus inside its property. I'd say that's good for another 20 years of debate.

John Wogan, Redondo Beach

Consider the future

Realistic? Citizens decide land usage. It's only a matter of money Practical? Therein lies the problem. AES will shut down for the right price, so let's negotiate successfully to create a peaceful parkland area adjacent to the sea. Power lines' right of way could also be available for parking, dog parks and picnics. Keep the seaside lagoon and make Redondo the family-friendly city we'd like. If we need to dig a bit deeper now for the future, we certainly should. The legacy we leave should be more than the demolition of stately homes replaced by concrete structures along the Esplanade and the demolition of the original heart of Redondo to create apartments and condos.

We must think of more than just ourselves and our lives, regardless of how good we might have it. What will we leave for our children and their children? What is already done cannot be reversed. But we have a chance now to partially right those wrongs. Let's put ourselves in the proud position of consideration of our futures. A park, a park, my kingdom for a park.

Sandy Pringle, Redondo Beach

Connect the cities' parks

The best use of the property would be a park. My vision would to have this park connect to the jogging trail that runs on the old railroad right of way that runs next to Valley View. With the power plant gone, the power lines that run along 190th can go, too. In place of them would be a park and bike path. I'd like to see all the larger parks in Redondo and Hermosa connected.

The city needs to get going on this so that it happens sooner, not later.

Chris Albertson, Redondo Beach

Revert to original state

Park space is measured in acres per 1,000 residents, and average park space in the USA is about 13 acres per 1,000. Even including beaches, Redondo has about 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. This number would decrease further if the AES site redevelopment allowed for 2,998 condominiums.

The AES site is State Landmark No. 373: Redondo Salt Lake. Let it revert to its original salt lake state.

Mary Jo Cittadino, Redondo Beach

Repetition

There is a saying that doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results is the definition of insanity. If I were king for a day, I would listen to all those who worked so hard to stop the Heart of the City, voted for Measure "J" and put Bill Brand into the office of City Council. I would ask the local papers and city leaders to stop asking this same question over and over again in that insane hope that the community is going to answer what City Council members want to hear. Yes, I would take down that AES power plant and replace it with open spaces for all the public to enjoy. I would open up that hidden view corridor from PCH to the sea. With this, I would push surrounding property values up to where they belong and provide a destination that will become the drive chain for a renewed local economy.

Jim Vaught, Rancho Palos Verdes

City efforts

Those who would argue that AES is here to stay need only remember who started the debate over the future of the AES site. In the last 10 years, the city of Redondo Beach has spent hundreds of thousands of tax dollars to push a mega-residential development plan for the AES site, the so-called Heart of the City plan. That plan included lots of engineering and conceptual drawings, studies on the fiscal and environmental impacts, and months of community meetings and workshops, not to mention the ballot initiatives in the last couple of elections.

Would the city have spent that kind of effort if there was no clear and legal path to obtaining the property?

Those who question the logic of discussing the future of the site, by claiming that the AES will never leave, are either misinformed, or are aligned with the pro-development forces who would do nothing with the site and bide their time rather than acquiesce to the wishes of Redondo's citizens - that the AES site be converted to open space.

Stephen Carey, Redondo Beach

Rezone property for future

Redondo Beach has a great opportunity to rezone the AES power plant site to eliminate industrial uses; and to work with various government agencies, conservancies, private foundations and the residents of the South Bay to create the beautiful waterfront park the South Bay so desperately needs.

This has been done in many areas in California, but for some reason the South Bay has missed the boat. Two power plants are being demolished in San Francisco, as well as one in San Diego. It's time for state agencies and local governments like Los Angeles County and neighboring cities, not just Redondo Beach, to start the long process to make this a reality for us. The Sierra Club and many local leaders have supported this effort for the last six years. It's time everyone got involved to make it happen.

One reason I ran for office and became a member of the executive board of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club is to advocate for South Bay cities to restore industrial lands like this one for public use. How great would it be to drive past a beautiful park with a beautiful view where an ugly power plant sits today? Not only would this revitalize the business district here, it would dramatically improve the quality of life for everyone in the South Bay. Future generations are depending on us.

Joan Davidson, Redondo Beach

Area needs parkland

At this point, the AES power plant actually generates electricity for only a few months a year, sometimes as little as a few weeks, depending on demand. The power AES generates doesn't go directly to the local community; it goes into the regional power grid. So the plant should not be viewed as essential, or even needed, for our local utilities infrastructure.

The era of seaside electricity generation, with all its associated environmental damage, is drawing to a close; and we should decide soon what future use is appropriate for our waterfront. Already, the voters of Redondo Beach have decisively rejected residential development for the AES tract, and the City Council has zoned the area nonresidential.

What's needed now from an environmental, social and economic standpoint is parkland, especially since the South Bay is particularly "park-poor" compared with most of California's urban areas. Our historic seaside salt lake and surrounding wildlife habitat can be restored; and local, drought-resistant native plants can flourish.

Both locals and visitors will have a better chance to enjoy and appreciate the phenomenal natural beauty of our coastline. Think a park will attract tourists better than industrial development? Of course. Will surrounding businesses prosper? No doubt.

Don't be fooled by those who say we can't afford to buy the place. California, through its Coastal Conservancy, spends hundred of millions of dollars every year to acquire and restore coastal parklands. With vision and forward-looking leadership, there's no reason it can't happen here.

David Wiggins, Redondo Beach

It's about our quality of life

Redondo Beach residents voted for a park on the AES site in 2005, but the future of AES isn't solely about a park. This is about the quality of life for the entire South Bay. Do we want a power plant and co-located desalination

plant on our waterfront, or should the property be designated for nonindustrial use? That's the question.

The Redondo City Council could vote now to rezone the AES site for uses other than power generation. That gives AES eight years' notice that reindustrializing is not how the city desires to use its waterfront. This notice allows AES to fulfill its commitment to provide power through 2018.

This is not a "taking of the land" or use of eminent domain. The California state laws give the cities authority to zone lands to reflect the wishes of the people. The Redondo Beach City Planning Department presented this very option to the Redondo Planning Commission in May of 2004:
<http://laserweb.redondo.org/weblink/docview.aspx?id=59711>.

Upon rezoning, AES would be faced with a decision regarding its property, which would no longer allow for power generation. At that time, various groups - State Coastal Conservancy, public sector agencies, the people, conservancies and private foundations - could work to buy the property and consider restoration of the wetland and/or other uses of the land as desired by the people who live here.

Redondo Beach has the authority to determine the future uses of its waterfront.

Councilman Bill Brand, Redondo Beach

Quality of life could be enhanced

Beyond a doubt, the quality of life for South Bay residents would be greatly enhanced if the AES area was used for purposes other than reindustrialization. My family has seen some interesting plans for a potential park and wildlife area. We would hate to think that this is merely a dream.

Joan Barry Yamashiro, Redondo Beach

Create space for residents to enjoy

As a Hermosa Beach resident, I want to show support for the citizens of Redondo Beach who have been blatantly ignored by the city of Redondo Beach. Residents have clearly expressed their desire for a park where AES currently stands. I understand that AES has a lease of the land through 2018, but I was surprised that the council has not chosen to rezone the AES site for other uses when it has the power to do this. AES's plans to re-power its plant and combine it with a desalination plant would not only be a huge eyesore at the entrance to the city, but will create pollution right next to our homes and harm our marine life.

The South Bay is park-poor, and we need to work together to create a space that residents can enjoy for generations to come. Other cities have done this, and we can, too. AES does not have the power to decide to be here for 100 years when it only has a lease through 2018. It can be gone in 2018. All it takes is a vote. Let's finally get the Redondo Beach City Council on board.

Christine Wike, Hermosa Beach

A regional issue

I found this week's question easy to answer. Coincidentally, I just came across a mailer that was sent out by the Redondo Beach City Council dated June 1999. It called for a meeting to inform the public of alternative uses of the AES site, it mentions, "open for comments and suggestions." The heading stated, "AES Redondo Beach wants to modernize its power plant" and "wants to make 25 acres available for reuse." Since then I have learned that there used to be a saltwater lake located there. This area is situated along the Pacific Flyway; birds traveling from Canada to Mexico found nourishment at this juncture. It is no wonder we are losing some of our finest bird species; there is nowhere for them to stop for food. We have lost 90 percent of our wetlands along the California coast.

This should not just be a question for South Bay citizens, this should be a question for the entire region. My answer should be clear at this point. We should restore the area to the habitat it once was, let's stop pussy-footin' around. We should put it back the way we found it, because it is the right thing to do.

Jillaine Force, Redondo Beach

Enlarge the marina

It is my contention that the true long-range future of Redondo Beach and its harbor rests on the eventual razing of the power plant and opening up the land it occupies for development. Until this issue is settled, it is foolhardy to try for any developments in the small amount of land which is already suitably developed. I am a longtime sailor and have a boat in the harbor at "M" dock. I like the harbor the way it is. There is not enough land available for a workable launch ramp. Look at the boat launch area at Marina del Rey to see what I mean.

With the power plant gone, the marina could be enlarged, and both a park and commercial development sustained. Let's stop trying to squeeze new developments into space that is already being used. Let's stop trying to cut off people's views by buildings.

Robert F. Brodsky, Redondo Beach

Think about the future

Industrial uses along our waterfront were once a viable option but as our city has grown they no longer are. Redondo and the entire South Bay needs open space and a view to our beautiful ocean, the very reason we live here, not an old polluting AES plant, a new polluting desalination plant or even more condos. A nature park there could become the jewel of the South Bay. It could be augmented with fee-based venues to help costs. Paths could be linked to the pier. After all, Redondo citizens voted on this issue and opted for a park with nature preserve, not more condos or a desal plant. Furthermore, the California Coastal Conservancy has said it would assist Redondo in this endeavor. Let's think about future generations of the South Bay and come up with a sustainable open space area we can all enjoy.

Mimi Andersen, Redondo Beach

Open space is possible

The large park idea for the current AES plant and surrounding industrial properties came in direct response to the city pushing large development for the site starting in 2002, with AES a willing partner.

Come 2018, if AES and its shareholders decide it makes good business sense to reinvest/retrofit tens of millions of dollars into a 50-year-old facility, convince state/ local officials to grant another license to generate power in a dense urban area and secure a contract to sell that power - more "power" to them. That's our economic system, which I proudly support.

But for us to make no plans for securing a substantial amount of that property from willing sellers for public open space because the local AES GM says it's not going anywhere or because a few city officials display their indignation at our efforts to date seems shortsighted. Should AES be successful to continue beyond 2018 with a smaller footprint as it advertises, that should free up property it may be interested in selling. Given how angry some local city officials were at AES last year, you'd think they'd want to lead this charge today.

Public open space on this site is possible if you want it. If you think this is a pipe dream, ask people and government officials in East Bay near Oakland, Ormond Beach in Ventura and Chula Vista; all communities that purchased and are restoring industrial waterfront properties for public open space and parks. Why not Redondo Beach?

Don Vangeloff, Redondo Beach

Area needs a waterfront park

I've traveled all up and down the coast of California, the U.S. and around the world. I've seen beautiful waterfront parks elsewhere. Why don't we have one here?

We need a beautiful park with a view of the ocean where people can relax, exercise and have reason to come here.

The beach is indeed our backyard, but the AES plant spoils it all for us. The city of Redondo Beach should work with the county, the state, the federal government and other agencies to claim our waterfront property for residents and visitors. What a great opportunity we have to improve our quality of life and upgrade our business community at the same time. Of course this is realistic. Other communities figure it out. Why can't we?

Tracy Robison, Redondo Beach

Supports open space

I support open space for the South Bay. The AES plant site offers the opportunity for open space for future generations to enjoy, given visionary and creative leadership now. In my opinion, the benchmark is Central Park in New York. Sure it could sell and develop that land, but is that the best value for the city, residence and visitors to NYC?

Redondo Beach residents voted for a park on the AES site in 2005. The South Bay Land Conservancy organizations and select community and state leaders are working hard to make the parkland financially realistic. See the possibilities at <http://www.southbayparks.org/>. Show your support with your wallet and your actions if you value open space.

I encourage South Bay voters and leaders to act to increase park land in Redondo Beach. The AES site offers an opportunity for creative leadership. Creative leaders can deliver economic benefits when creating open space and low traffic development. The entire South Bay will benefit by less traffic congestion and the economic benefits of a parkland planned for financial success. What Redondo Beach leaders do now will impact the the entire South Bay community so voice your opinions.

Kaye Gagnon Sherbak, President, VOICE, Manhattan Beach

Wants a park there

A great park with a walkway through it and maybe even a dog park area for Redondo Beach-licensed dogs only (to keep it small). You have to be a resident to use dog portion of park. The main portion of park would have water features and maybe small kiosk eating stands/coffee. What a great face lift for Redondo to make us able to compete with our upgraded neighbors to the north and south of us. We seem to be the ugly duckling with no special place for the residents/locals to hang out and call their own. It would bring parking revenue and tourists to the surrounding waterfront restaurants. I am a homeowner and would love to see it happen. How great would that be? OK then, when are you starting?

Audra Cramer, Redondo Beach

A recreational park on the site

I believe that something that is more aesthetically pleasing than a power plant would be more in line of beautifying a beachfront community would be welcome. If possible, it would be preferred to keeping it with a recreational parks type of area.

Connie Abela, Redondo Beach