

## **Article One:**

### **UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL**

Certiably green

Gaylord hotel would be environmental leader – FSI Commissioned Job

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An updated environmental document for the entire Chula Vista bayfront is to be released today, 17 months after last seen by the public. The document runs in the thousands of pages now, but its essence can be stated in a sentence: Gaylord Entertainment has committed to building a green hotel.

Only 10 hotels in the United States have received certification for energy and environmental excellence. So, Gaylord's 2,000-room hotel, coupled with a medium-sized convention facility, would be the largest on the West Coast and a national leader on the environmental front.

The bayfront plan developed by the San Diego Unified Port District and Chula Vista would do wondrous things. It would safeguard fragile wetlands next to a nature preserve, improve three marshes, clean up decades of industrial pollution, preserve 200-plus acres as parks or open space, and bolster the economy with hotels, retail businesses and condominiums. But without the Gaylord project as a source of funds, the 550 acres of bayfront is likely to languish.

The draft environmental report was submitted for public comment in late 2006. The Environmental Health Coalition and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers teamed up to file 550 pages of questions, stalling the process for the last 17 months. In the meantime, Gaylord, the port district and Chula Vista are close to wrapping up negotiations for a separate lease agreement of 39 acres for the hotel-convention center, and another for bond financing.

The U.S. Green Council certifies buildings for LEED status (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Points are awarded for various features, from the major to the minute, in energy efficiency, water conservation and environmental friendliness.

Gaylord is not yet into the design specifics. On the outside, however, look for native, water-thrifty landscaping feathered to blend into the natural habitat, undulating trails and a patio and signature atrium in keeping with the surroundings. Look for construction sound walls and other measures to avoid disturbing breeding birds. Parking would be hidden from view and buildings turned to keep view corridors open. Inside, look for low-water use devices, lights that turn off automatically, and recycling as a mantra.

Gaylord also has committed to improve upon the latest California energy efficiency standards by 15 percent and state global warming act standards by 20 percent.

Last summer, the community saw through organized labor's duplicitous arguments that a \$1 billion project creating 9,000-plus construction jobs and 3,000 permanent jobs was of little merit if all union demands were not met. Now, the labor-backed Environmental Health Coalition will lose all credibility if it continues to nitpick a hotel that would be among the most environmentally friendly in the entire country.

Details of public involvement in the resort financing deserve careful scrutiny when finally determined. At every stage so far, this has been shown to be a world-class project that the region can be proud of.