

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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December 22, 2010

TO: All Design Review Board Members

FROM: Will Travis, Executive Director [415/352-3653 travis@bcdc.ca.gov]
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SUBJECT: Alameda Boatworks (First Review)
(For Board consideration on January 10, 2011)

Project Summary

Applicant. Francis Collins

Project Representative. Philip Banta and Associates Architecture.

Site Location. The proposed project is located at 2235 Clement Street, a 9.48-acre parcel east of the Park Street Bridge in the City and County of Alameda. The site is bounded by Clement Avenue on the south, Oak Street on the east, Elm Street on the West, and the Alameda/Oakland Estuary to the north. The site is currently unused with a few vacant warehouses.

The northern portion of the project site is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps). The project proponents are currently working to obtain a real estate license from the Army Corps in order to make improvements along the shoreline area.

Project Proposed and Public Access. The Alameda Boatworks project is a proposed 182-unit single-family residential community that includes 156 single-family units and 26 multi-family units. The project is proposed as six separate neighborhoods connected by approximately two-acres of pedestrian pathways and waterfront open space.

The proposed development is described as a sustainable 'solar community' within walking distance of the civic and commercial center of Alameda. The applicant states that the proposed project would discourage automobile use and promote bicycle and pedestrian access by reducing street widths and providing off-street residential garage parking. Each home would have a south facing roof ready for photo-voltaic panels, a stair-well skylight designed to provide direct sunlight to allow passive heating and cooling, an on-site garden with raised planting beds and compost boxes, capacity to utilize grey water, and bicycle friendly foyers and garages. The six neighborhoods would be differentiated through landscaping, paving materials, and residential design and colors.



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The proposed project would provide pedestrian pathways to link the six neighborhoods and three bicycle/pedestrian pathways perpendicular to the shoreline within the site. Located adjacent to the residences, private yards, the pathways are intended to guide the public from Clement Avenue towards the estuary, and residents towards the Alameda Commercial district.

Along the estuary, the proposed project would provide public access parking, an approximately 60 to 100-foot-wide open space area with lawn, trails, a 75-foot-wide 'boardwalk-like' space in the center of the waterfront, and a rental corridor connecting the new residences and nearby community to the waterfront. Pending authorization by the Army Corps, the project proponents intend to remove approximately 4,883 square feet of dilapidated docks from the Bay, place an approximately 810-square-foot pier in the Bay for public access, and create stair access to the water for kayaks. Within the 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction, the project proponents propose to clean up the shoreline by placing riprap, filling two former shipways to create a leveled lawn area and pathway, and creating public access paths along the waters edge.

Public Access Issues. The McAteer-Petris Act and the San Francisco Bay Plan both allow the placement of fill in the Bay for improved shoreline appearance or public access. The goals of the Public Access Design Guidelines for the San Francisco Bay are in part, to maximize views and physical connections to the Bay and to create a "sense of place." The Bay Plan Public Access Policy 1 states: "[a] proposed fill project should increase public access to the Bay to the maximum extent feasible, in accordance with the policies for Public Access to the Bay." The Bay Plan Public Access Policy 6 states, in part: "[p]ublic access improvements provided as a condition of any approval should be consistent with the project and the physical environment...and provide for the public's safety and convenience. The improvements should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline, should permit barrier free access for the physically handicapped..., include an ongoing maintenance program, and should be identified with appropriate signs." The Bay Plan Public Access Policy 8 also states, part: "[a]ccess to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means to connect the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available.

The staff believes that the project raises four primary public access issues: (1) whether the proposed project provides, maintains and enhances visual access to the Bay and the visual quality of the Bay and shoreline; (2) whether the proposed development provides public access connections to inland communities and continuity along the shoreline; (3) whether the proposed development takes advantage of its Bay setting; and (4) whether the proposed project provides useable public access areas.

1. **Does the proposed project provide, maintain and enhance visual access to and visual quality of the Bay and the shoreline?** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that visual access should organize structures to "enhance and dramatize views of the Bay and the shoreline from public thoroughfares and other public spaces," and to "allow Bay views and access between buildings." Regarding visual quality, the *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that a shoreline development should, "use building footprints to create a diversity of public spaces along the Bay," and "utilize the shoreline for Bay-related land uses as much as possible."

Currently, the site is not accessible by the public. Due to the existing gradual slope of the site from the shoreline towards Clement Avenue, the Bay is not visible from Blanding Avenue, the nearest public street. The proposed project would provide limited view corridors down Elm Street and Oak Street from Clement and Blanding Avenue. The proposed open space along the Estuary would provide broad views of the water and the Oakland hills beyond.

The Board should evaluate the project to determine whether it would maximize views of the Bay and Estuary from the project location and between units, whether the project would enhance views from the opposite shore of the Estuary from existing public access areas, and whether the project would enhance the visual quality of the Bay and shoreline.

- 2. Does the proposed development provide public access connections to and continuity along the shoreline?** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that a shoreline development should, “incorporate the designated Bay Trail route,” and “provide a clear and continuous transition to adjacent developments.” It also states that a development should, “use local public street networks to inform shoreline site design and to extend the public realm to the Bay,” ...“provide connections perpendicular to the shoreline,” ...“promote safe pedestrian and bicycle access,” and ...“connect shoreline developments to transit sources such as water taxis.”

The proposed project would connect public access with public access in the adjacent property to the west at Elm Street. On the adjoining property to the east, security fencing blocks access.

The San Francisco Bay Trail is currently working with the City of Alameda to designate Alameda’s waterfront edge as the preferred Bay Trail alignment. If designated by the City, this project would provide a Bay Trail connection along the northern waterfront edge of the site. Bicycles and pedestrians would be able to access the site from Clement Street down Elm Street, Oak Street, and three interior paths through the site. An internal network of trails is also proposed down Blanding Avenue and through the six residential neighborhoods.

The Board should evaluate the connections to and along the waterfront and advise the Commission on whether they provide adequate connections to and along the shoreline.

- 3. Does the proposed development take advantage of the estuary and Bay setting?** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that development along the shores of the Bay should take maximum advantage of the attractive setting that the Bay provides. This includes, “orienting development to Bay views,” ...“orienting public access areas and improvement to take advantage of views of opposite shores,” and ...“utilizing the shoreline for Bay-related uses.”

The applicant states that the proposed project would provide a variety of ways into and through the site. The project is proposing to create a variety of environments and landscaped areas throughout the project. The largest public space would be a waterfront park along the estuary edge which would include lawn areas, pathways, flexible recreation areas, and stairs down to the water for kayak access to the Estuary.

The Board should advise the staff, the applicant and the Commission on whether the proposal takes maximum advantage of the Bay setting, what uses should be accommodated at the site, or whether some modifications would take better advantage of the Bay setting.

4. **Does the proposed project provide useable public access areas?** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that, “[s]horeline access areas are most enjoyed when they are designed to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities.” The guidelines further state this may be accomplished by, “providing basic public amenities, such as trails, benches, play opportunities, trash containers, drinking fountains, lighting and restrooms that are designed for different ages, interests and physical abilities,” and that shoreline areas should “maximize comfort” and “take advantage of existing site characteristics.”

The proposed project provides a large open space area along the estuary edge, a variety of public access pathways throughout the site, and a varied shoreline including a public access pier and stairs down to the water for kayak access. The shoreline would be improved by placing fill to create a level landscaped area and pathways. If the project proponents are unable to secure a Real Estate License for the land owned by the Army Corps, the shoreline would be designed to restrict access to the water in a way that would be both safe for the users and blend in with the surrounding site, including fencing ranging from 3 to 6-feet in height.

The Board’s advice is sought on whether the proposal makes the public access useable, or whether some modification(s) would improve the public access proposal. In the event that the applicant is unable to secure rights to the shoreline from the Corps, the Boards advice is sought for providing safe, effective and attractive barriers to the shoreline until the area can be open for access.