

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 10600 • San Francisco, California 94102 (415) 352-3600 • Fax: (415) 352-3606 • www.bcdc.ca.gov

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdd.ca.gov)
Ellen Miramontes, Bay Design Analyst (415/352-3643; ellen.miramontes@bcdd.ca.gov)
Ethan Lavine, Coastal Program Analyst (415/352-3618; ethan.lavine@bcdd.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Alameda Point “Site A” Waterfront Park, Phase 1; First Pre-Application Review
(For Board consideration on April 11, 2016)

Project Summary

Project Proponents. Alameda Point Partners, LLC

Project Representatives. April Philips, April Philips Design Works (Landscape Architect); Baldauf Catton von Eckartsberg Architects (Pavilion Architect); Dan Schaefer and Chris Mills, BKF Engineers (Civil Engineer); Joe Ernst and Bryan Graves, srmErnst (Developer); Jim Feeley, Trammell Crow Residential (Developer); Madison Marquette (Developer)

Project Site. The approximately 68-acre project site (“Site A”) is located at the western end of the City of Alameda, at the location of the former Naval Air Station (Exhibit 1). The project site is bound by Main Street to the east, West Tower Avenue to the north, and the Seaplane Lagoon to the south. The site is bisected by West Atlantic Avenue and several other wide streets, including the east-west streets Avenue F, West Trident Avenue, West Seaplane Lagoon Avenue, and West Atlantic Avenue, and north-south streets Ferry Point, Orion Street, and Hancock Street (Exhibit 5). The site currently contains buildings and other structures from the time of its operation as the Naval Air Station, including seaplane hangar buildings, an airplane taxiway, and a historic bulkhead/seawall structure along the shoreline (Exhibit 6).

The proposed project is the first among several projects that would ultimately result in the redevelopment of the majority of the area of the former Naval Air Station into a mixed-use, transit-oriented development and nature reserve called Alameda Point (Exhibit 2). The proposed project would be at the retail core of the redeveloped Alameda Point. Site A would be developed in three phases extending out as far as 2035 (Exhibit 3).

Project Description. The project proponent has provided conceptual designs for a waterfront park that would ultimately span the length of the project site along the Seaplane Lagoon (Exhibit 7), but the Board’s review today is focused on the design of a 520-linear-foot waterfront park that would be built as part of Phase 1 of the proposed project (Exhibit 11). In addition to the waterfront park, Phase 1 would also entail construction of approximately 670 residential units and approximately 68,000 square feet of retail uses outside of the Commission’s jurisdiction. Exhibit 4 shows the full extent of Phase 1 of the proposed project, as well as the proposed new Alameda Point ferry terminal, which would be located just south of the project site and which would be developed concurrently by the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) and the City of Alameda. The Board will review the proposed ferry terminal project at a later date.

As part of a future phase of Site A, a recreational water access facility, including a public boat dock serving non-motorized small boats, would be developed along the eastern side of the Seaplane Lagoon and to the north of the proposed ferry terminal. This portion of the project will return to the Board for a future review.

One and a half acres of the proposed Phase 1 waterfront park would be located within the Commission’s 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction. The remainder of the park (1.13 acres) would be located outside the Commission’s jurisdiction, extending back roughly 200 feet from the shoreline in places. As depicted on Exhibit 11, the project proponent conceptualizes the park as three distinct spaces: (1) the “Promenade and Terrace,” consisting of a shoreline walkway and a stepped terrace seating area with ADA-accessible ramps (Exhibits 16-19); (2) the “Taxiway,” consisting of a tree-lined walk- and bike-way, a large lawn, picnic areas, and potential future retail development (Exhibits 20 and 21); and (3) the “Overlook,” consisting of a large wood deck and a pavilion to house a café and public restrooms (Exhibits 14 and 15). The project proponent envisions that regular public programming and periodic special events would occur at multiple spaces within the park (Exhibit 22).

Design Review Issues. The Board’s comments and recommendations are sought on the following proposed public access improvements in consideration of the following Commission policies and guidelines:

1. **Physical Access: Connections to and Movement within the Park.** The Bay Plan policies on Public Access state, in part, that:

“Improvements should be designed and built to encourage...movement to and along the shoreline...” and that “[a]ccess to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available. Diverse and interesting public access experiences should be provided....”

BCDC’s Public Access Design Guidelines state, in part, that a shoreline development should:

“...provide a clear and continuous transition to adjacent developments,” “use local public street networks to inform shoreline site design and to extend the public realm to the Bay,” and “provide connections perpendicular to the shoreline.”

Exhibits 12 and 13 show the proposed circulation network for the Phase 1 waterfront park. The network consists principally of: (a) a 33-foot-wide pedestrian waterfront promenade along Seaplane Lagoon (the “Lower Promenade Trail”); (b) a 10-foot-wide pedestrian trail running east-west along the top of the stepped terrace (the “Upper Promenade Trail”); (c) a 34-foot-wide shared pedestrian and Type 1B bike trail (the “Taxiway”) that runs east-west across the site, connecting to the Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway; (d) a Type 1A bike trail that runs east-west along Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway until its intersection with the “Taxiway,” and that runs north-south along Pan Am Way and Ferry Point Way; and (5) vehicular access and parallel parking along Ferry Point Street, the Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway, and Pan Am Way.

The Bay Trail would run east-west from Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway onto the “Taxiway,” and north-south along Ferry Point Way. A shared plaza along Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway would connect to Ferry Point Way and Pan Am Way, within which the pedestrian, bike, and vehicular routes would intersect and pedestrian crossings would be provided. A stepped terrace would provide pedestrian connections from the higher portion of the site (NAVD 88 +13.71) down to the waterfront promenade (NAVD +9.71), as would two ADA-accessible sloped trails running through the terrace.

The Board’s advice is sought on whether the project provides adequate and desirable connections to future shoreline park areas and adjacent developed areas, including the future ferry terminal to the south. Does the park design encourage movement to and along the shoreline within the park, and for all users including persons with disabilities? Are the connections to the Bay Trail from Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway appropriately located? Does the design minimize the potential for conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists? Will bicycle through-traffic be able to easily move along the shoreline unimpeded, while also not impacting pedestrian circulation?

2. **Adequate, Usable, and Attractive Public Access Spaces.** The Bay Plan policies on Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views state, in part, that:

“All bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay. Maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, [and] from the Bay itself...”

BCDC’s Public Access Design Guidelines state, in part, that public access spaces should be:

“...designed and built to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities along the shoreline,” to create a “sense of place,” and be “designed for a wide range of users.” “View opportunities, shoreline configuration and access points are factors that determine a site’s inherent public access opportunities.”

The Phase 1 waterfront park would include: (a) a trail network along the Seaplane Lagoon and along the top of the stepped terrace (Exhibits 12 and 13); (b) a large “overlook” deck with seating areas, public restrooms, and a café (Exhibit 15); (c) a rotating public art installation; (d) a large open lawn; (e) two groves of either Gingko trees or London Plane trees; (f) rows of palm trees (Exhibit 23); and (g) a variety of seating areas. Lighting would consist of typical light poles as well as wind turbines with lights (Exhibits 20 and 25). The project proponent also proposes various site programming options, including food trucks, outdoor movies, group yoga, markets, etc. (Exhibit 22).

The Board's advice is sought on whether the proposed public access for the Phase I project is sufficient to accommodate the expected level of use, designed to take advantage of existing and new site characteristics, and of an appropriate scale. Does the design of the public space take advantage of the Bay setting? Are the appropriate sorts of amenities provided? Are site furnishings attractive and durable, and do they help create a "sense of place?" Is the shoreline development organized to allow Bay views? Is the proposed site programming appropriate?

3. **Sea Level Rise.** The Bay Plan policies on Public Access state, in part, that:

"...public access should be sited, designed, managed and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding."

"Any public access provided as a condition of development should either be required to remain viable in the event of future sea level rise or flooding, or equivalent access consistent with the project should be provided nearby."

The proposed Phase 1 waterfront park would leave intact the historic bulkhead/seawall structure located along the Seaplane Lagoon. At an elevation of +9.71 NAVD 88, the top of the overhang of the bulkhead is presently at the elevation of the 100-year flood. As sea levels rise, the project proponent anticipates the increasing occurrence of overtopping events at the waterfront walkway along the bulkhead. While this walkway would be periodically inundated and unusable, the project proponent plans to provide for continued public access along the shoreline at a higher elevation behind the stepped terrace, where the Bay Trail and other park facilities are located (Exhibits 18-19, and 29-31). In the future, the project proponent proposes to adapt to higher tides and storm events by repurposing portions of the park to install a system of levees or seawalls. Included within Exhibits 32-37 are three proposed strategies showing the potential designs for a system to achieve resilience against the future 100-year flood, including 66 inches of sea level rise and two feet of freeboard.

The Board's advice is sought on whether the proposed public access areas have been sited and designed to adequately avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding. Is adequate public access to the shoreline provided at higher elevations during periods when the walkway is inundated and unusable to the public? Will the public access facilities be managed and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts during periods of shoreline flooding?

The Board should also evaluate the project proponent's proposed adaptation responses. Would adequate public access be provided following any or all of the three proposed adaptation responses? Which of the three would be preferable?