

# San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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**TO:** All Design Review Board Members

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**SUBJECT: West Gateway Public Access Area; Second Review**  
(For Board consideration on March 6, 2017)

## Project Summary

**Project Sponsors.** California Capital Investment Group; City of Oakland.

**Project Representatives.** Phil Tagami (California Capital Investment Group Oakland Global), John Monetta (City of Oakland).

**Project Site.** The site for the West Gateway Public Access Area is located at the Oakland Touchdown of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (Bay Bridge), at the terminus of Burma Road (currently under construction) and west of Wharf 7 in the West Gateway area of the former Oakland Army Base, in the City of Oakland, Alameda County. The site is also located adjacent to the future Gateway Park, and south of the Bay Bridge bicycle path. Directly east of the subject site, a bulk and oversized terminal is planned, but not yet permitted by BCDC.

**Background.** The public access project is proposed pursuant to a requirement of BCDC Permit No. M2013.013.01, issued to California Capital Investment Group Oakland Global and the City of Oakland. The permittees are required to provide an approximately 91,476-square-foot West Gateway public access area with improvements including:

“approximately 80 to 100 parking spaces, drive aisles, walkways, landscaping, an adequate amount of site furnishings, such as seating and trash receptacles, lighting, an improved viewing area at the south end of the public access area, and other improvements to be determined by the BCDC Design Review Board process. Cost and safety, among other factors may be taken into consideration when determining what specific improvements are appropriate for the West Gateway public access area.”

Special conditions in the BCDC permit require that the design and improvements of this area be reviewed by the Design Review Board. Other special conditions, regarding continuity with the future Gateway Park and resilience of the improvements to sea level rise and flooding, also apply.

As further described in the permit Findings and Declarations, the permittees have “agreed to construct the public access improvements required [by the permit] because they intend to rely on the public access improvements...as some, if not all, of the public access improvements necessary to find that the future development of the Oakland Bulk and Oversized Terminal...provides the maximum feasible public access consistent with the project.” However, this terminal has not yet been fully designed nor has it been authorized by the Commission.

**Proposed Project.** Since the Board’s first review of the project on October 17, 2016, staff has worked with the designers to address Board’s comments and additional input from the BCDC staff and Gateway Park stakeholders. The design presented at this meeting addresses the immediate improvements to the site, while allowing for future improvements to be added to the space over time. In order to widen the pedestrian connection between Burma Road and the wharf, the proposed project reduced the number of parking spaces from 98 to 57 parking spaces (including 4 ADA spaces). The Gateway Park stakeholders, including California Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the East Bay Regional Park District, the San Francisco Bay Trail Project and the East Bay Municipal Utility District support the modified design with 57 spaces. In the future, other public parking in the general area would include approximately 100 spaces in a lot across Burma Road and could also include approximately 84 spaces as part of the vision plan for Gateway Park.

In the modified design, the pathway along the west side of the parking lot has been widened from an eight-foot-wide asphalt pathway to a 26-foot-wide pathway area consisting of a 10-foot-wide boardwalk, 4-foot-wide boardwalk “furnishing zone,” and a 12-foot-wide asphalt pedestrian and bicycle pathway. The western edge of the pathway would be supported by a stacked block retaining wall that could be removed or upgraded when the adjacent park is further designed. The pathway would lead to the wharf where there is a mix of boardwalk space and paved space to allow for a variety of activities. The pedestrian pathway continues north around the Burma Road traffic circle with the intention of connecting to a possible future bicycle and pedestrian crossing over the EBMUD easement, connecting to the Bay Bridge Bicycle and Pedestrian path. The proposed project includes bicycle racks at three locations, approximately 20 benches, 13 trash receptacles, string lights mounted on posts along the western edge of the wharf and walkway, pole lighting, landscape planting areas and commemorative signage. A sign would be located at the terminus of Burma Road. A 42-inch-tall guardrail would be installed along the edge of the wharf and along a portion of the western edge of the parking lot. An 8-foot-tall chain-link fence with razor wire would be installed along the eastern edge of the wharf and parking lot in order to separate the parking lot from the terminal site, which is a US Customs zone. An existing eight-foot-tall chain-link fence would remain on the west side of the parking lot until it is removed when the future Gateway Park is developed and the site remediation has been completed. The drive aisle through the parking lot would terminate at a round-about, that is bordered by the boardwalk and bollards. The roundabout allows for cars to turn around and for trucks to enter and exit the adjacent terminal site.

**First Board Review.** At its first review of the project on October 17, 2016, the Board made the following comments. Modifications to the proposed project related to their comments are provided.

- 1. One of the Board members requested cross-sections depicting sea level rise information and existing grades.** Additional information has not been provided. At the time of issuance of the permit, the staff and the permittees agreed to utilize the existing paving for the new parking lot, based on the financial expectations of the project. Although the architect has acknowledged that the area will be inundated by sea level rise, the permittees have agreed to the conditions of the permit, which state that the public access be constructed and maintained to avoid damage and flooding caused by changing shoreline conditions and/or sea level rise. The staff will work with the permittees to ensure that the public access improvements built at the existing grade are designed to tolerate periodic flooding. Should future flooding significantly affect the public's enjoyment of the site, the permittees are required to implement maintenance measures (such as raising land elevations and structures, or redesigning or relocating public access features), or provide alternative access when maintenance becomes infeasible.
- 2. The Board members suggested making the western edge more attractive and usable for pedestrians and bicyclists by widening the public access, providing more "human-related" improvements, extending the boardwalk in a future phase of the development, and providing more than just benches in the viewing areas.** The pathway was widened from an eight-foot-wide asphalt pathway to a 26-foot-wide pathway area consisting of a 10-foot-wide boardwalk, four-foot-wide boardwalk "furnishing zone," and a 12-foot-wide asphalt pathway. Clusters of benches, waste receptacles, bicycle parking and trees are provided in the furnishing zone. String lights would provide lighting along the western boardwalk edge while pole lights will provide lighting for the parking lot. Benches are still proposed in the viewing areas on the wharf. The project team has also mentioned picnic tables could be placed on the site.
- 3 Some of the Board members suggested the use of the terminus area as a multi-program activity area, and providing power and water services to facilitate those activities. One of the Board members suggested making the deck rectilinear and creating a uniform space to make the area's use more flexible.** Electrical outlets would be located along the fence on the wharf to provide power for events. The deck has been modified with rounded edges to incorporate the shape of the traffic circle into the overall design.
- 4. The Board members agreed that trees were unnecessary in the parking area and may obstruct the view. One member suggested clustering trees for a more natural experience.** In the modified design, the trees would be clustered at the entrances, interspersed along the pathway to provide shade near the seating and provide a scale and rhythm to the 500-foot long walkway.

**Public Access and Design Issues.** The Board’s advice and comments are sought on the following issues relative to the applicable BCDC policies and guidelines and the requirements of the BCDC permit:

### 1. Design of Public Access

The Bay Plan policies on Public Access include, in part:

- “A proposed fill project should increase public access to the Bay to the maximum extent feasible...”
- “...maximum feasible access to and along the waterfront and on any permitted fills should be provided in and through every new development in the Bay or on the shoreline...”
- “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 persons with disabilities to the maximum feasible extent, should include an ongoing maintenance program, and should be identified with appropriate signs.”

BCDC’s Public Access Design Guidelines include, in part:

- Public access should be designed to create a “sense of place” and “in a manner that ‘feels public.’
- Project design should delineate “between public areas and private development – use fences, planting, elevation and signs where private or conflicting uses are proposed...”
- Use “site furnishings...to provide visual cues that the shoreline space is available for public use.”
- “Provide 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.”

Further, BCDC Permit No. M2013.013.01 requires:

- “...the permittees shall make the approximately 91,476-square-foot (2.1-acre) West Gateway public access area...available to the public and shall construct improvements within this area that include approximately 80 to 100 parking spaces, drive aisles, walkways, landscaping, an adequate amount of site furnishings, such as seating and trash receptacles, lighting, an improved viewing area at the south end of the public access area, and other improvements to be determined by the BCDC Design Review Board process. Cost and safety, among other factors may be taken into consideration when determining what specific improvements are appropriate for the West Gateway public access area.”

- “The West Gateway public access area...shall be designed in coordination with the Gateway Park stakeholders. Prior to any construction of the west Gateway public access area..., the design and public access improvements shall be reviewed and approved by the Commission’s Design Review Board.<sup>1</sup>”

The proposed project would provide 57 parking spaces; a 26-foot-wide pathway area consisting of a 10-foot-wide boardwalk, four-foot-wide boardwalk “furnishing zone,” and a 12-foot-wide asphalt pathway; a boardwalk area on the wharf; bicycle racks at three locations; approximately 20 benches; 13 trash receptacles; string lights mounted on posts along the western edge; landscaping; and interpretive signage.

## 2. Public Access Connections

The Bay Plan policies on Public Access include, in part:

- “Access 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....”

Further, BCDC Permit No. M2013.013.01 requires:

- “The permittees shall create safe, seamless, and continuous connections with adjacent public access trails and the future Gateway Park, including using similar public access furniture, landscaping palette, fencing, trail surfaces, etc. Prior to the opening of Gateway Park west of the West Gateway public access area, any fencing along the western boundary of the West Gateway public access area shall be removed and all grading shall be completed to provide a seamless connection between the West Gateway public access area and the park.”

Nearby public access includes: Class II bicycle lanes on the north and south sides of Burma Road; a sidewalk along the south side of Burma Road and around the Burma Road terminus; the Bay Bridge trail and an associated parking lot; and the future Gateway Park. In addition, a special condition of the permit requires that the permittees (i.e. the project proponents) coordinate with Caltrans to plan and implement a safe and direct pedestrian and bicycle crossing from the West Gateway public access area to the Bay Bridge trail.

## 3. Public Views

The Bay Plan policies on Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views include, in part:

- “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 view of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas....”

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<sup>1</sup> The Design Review Board should provide design recommendations.

The public views towards the Bay are to the west and southwest of the site. The view down the drive aisle is towards the corner of the public access area at the south end of the wharf. A 42-inch-tall guardrail, constructed of wood and wire mesh would be installed on a portion of the western edge of the parking lot and along the edge of the wharf. Trees have been removed from the parking lot, and moved to the pathway adjacent to the parking lot.

### **BOARD QUESTIONS**

***The Board's advice and recommendations are sought on the following considerations regarding the design of the public access:***

1. *Does the revised proposal provide an attractive public access area that encourages diverse activities?*
2. *Are the proposed improvements appropriate given the site's location and future adjacent uses?*

***The Board's advice and recommendations are sought on the following considerations regarding public access connections:***

1. *Does the modified pathway allow for a safe, seamless and continuous connection to the Burma Road sidewalk and crossing to the north?*

***The Board's advice and recommendations are sought on the following considerations regarding public views:***

1. *Is the public access area designed to enhance and take advantage of the views of the Bay and shoreline?*