

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: Design Review Board Members

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**SUBJECT: Mixed-Use Development at 557 East Bayshore Road, City of Redwood City;
First Pre-Application Review**
(For Design Review Board consideration on August 5, 2019)

Project Summary

Project Proponents & Property Owner. SyRes Properties (developer) and Redwood Crossings LLC (property owner).

Project Representatives. Glen Ceridono (SyRes Properties), Michael Fassler (VillaSport), Victor Castillo (Redwood Crossings LLC), Jonathan Ennis (BDE, Residential Architect), Paul Lettieri (The Guzzardo Partnership Inc., Landscape Architect).

Project Site. The project site is located at 557 East Bayshore Road, in the City of Redwood City, San Mateo County, near U.S. Highway 101. The site is bounded by East Bayshore Road to the south, a ditch¹, Smith Slough and the San Francisco Bay Trail to the north, and properties to the east and west containing car dealerships and storage facilities. The site is also just south of Bair Island Ecological Reserve, a San Francisco Bay Plan-designated Wildlife Refuge Priority Use Area.

Existing Conditions and BCDC Permit History. (Exhibit 9-11) Formerly the site of a drive-in movie theater constructed in the 1950s, the 14.36-acre parcel was redeveloped in 1991 as the Century Park 12 movie theater complex, which operated until 2003. Currently the theater buildings are vacant and the site is being used for temporary parking storage by several nearby car dealerships. The project site includes an approximately 70,000-square-foot theater complex, 1,140 parking spaces, and 171 trees. Adjacent to the shoreline is a dedicated 50-foot-wide public access easement area (approximately 41,000 square feet), and four shoreline parking spaces are provided in the southwest corner of the site as required by BCDC Permit No. M1988.016.03.

The project site is adjacent to a PG&E-owned parcel to the north that contains an 888-foot-long ditch. Immediately north of the ditch is a levee that separates the ditch from Smith Slough. A 1,900-foot-long segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail runs atop the levee within an easement held by the City of Redwood City. The levee trail has two formal trailheads where the public can access Bair Island: one is located to the west of the project site, where the levee Bay Trail intersects with East

¹ Based on site observations at different days and times, the ditch appears to be tidally influenced and contains tidal marsh vegetation.

Bayshore Road, near Whipple Avenue; the second access point is at Bair Island Road to the east of the project site where there is a dedicated parking lot for visitors.

The levee trail was built in 2013 as part of the Bair Island Trail Improvement Project (BCDC Permit No. 2012.003.01) by the City of Redwood City. This permit included an upland condition alternative analysis of the Century 21 Theater Complex (Section III.2.b.(2)) that considered a possible bridge from the theater site over Smith Slough to provide a Bay Trail connection to the Bair Island Ecological Reserve. The upland analysis of the bridge alternative was ultimately rejected stating that: "... the City does not have funding for construction of a bridge and for acquisition of an easement even if the property owner was willing. Therefore, the City determined that this upland alternative is not feasible."

Proposed Project. (Exhibit 12) The proposed project would demolish the existing theater complex and construct two residential buildings providing 480 housing units (85 affordable) for approximately 650 residents. The project would also include the VillaSport Athletic Club, a 97,100-square-foot building including a spa and a café with interior and exterior seating that is estimated to host up to 4,500 members. The club would be open to the public with paid entry. The project would remove 801 of the existing 1,140 surface parking spaces, and retain 339 at-grade parking spaces. An additional 783 parking spaces would be provided within two five-storey residential buildings, 614 spaces would be dedicated to residents and 169 for athletic club members. The project would also dedicate a 0.16-acre right-of-way at the frontage of East Bayshore Road to the City of Redwood City. Approximately 1.08 acres (46,891 square feet) of the site are located within the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band. Work within and nearby the shoreline band would include the following:

1. **Shoreline Pathways and Open Space.** (Exhibits 7-8; 14-17 and 22) The project would include approximately 9,935 square feet of pedestrian paths, including an 18-foot-wide bike/pedestrian path, as well as 2,368 square feet of concrete walkways and boardwalks to provide multiple options for navigating the public outdoor space adjacent to the residential units. The walkways would lead to a 1,645-square-foot lawn area, and 4,065 square feet of decks and overlooks with wood benches, concrete seat walls, Adirondack-style chairs, and picnic tables. The open space would be accessed by a Paseo that connects East Bayshore Road to the shoreline or by the public access road on the eastern edge of the site.
2. **Landscape Planting.** (Exhibits 23-24) Approximately 32,110 square feet of native grasses and perennials would be planted within the shoreline band, specifically where the site slopes down to the ditch. Approximately 5,900 square feet of bioretention areas are located adjacent to the public access areas near the residence buildings.
3. **Shoreline Access and Parking.** (Exhibit 12) Seven public shore parking spaces would be located in the northeast corner of the site, and would be accessed from East Bayshore Road via a 26-foot-wide public road. This road would be the primary access route to the proposed shoreline public access area.

Approximately 13.12 acres of the project site is located outside of the Commission's permitting jurisdiction. Work outside the Commission's jurisdiction would include the following:

1. **Paseo Scenic View Corridor.** (Exhibits 5-6) The public Paseo would be the central view corridor to the Bay through the mixed-use development and allow for both pedestrians and bicyclists to directly access the new public shoreline amenities from East Bayshore Road. Visitor-serving amenities including 20 short-term bike parking spaces, an outside café plaza

with public seating, 23 new trees and additional plantings, would be provided along the Paseo.

2. **Residential Development.** (Exhibits 18) Two residential buildings would provide 480 residential units consisting of a mix of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, with 85 of those units set aside for affordable housing spread over the locally proscribed income levels (i.e., very low, low and moderate). Internal to the residential buildings, two five-storey wrapped parking structures would provide 614 residential parking spaces, 169 parking spaces for the athletic club, and 160 long-term bicycle storage spaces. The residential buildings would also include private open spaces with common area amenities.
3. **VillaSport Athletic Club.** (Exhibits 18) Directly adjacent to East Bayshore Road, the VillaSport Athletic Club would consist of a spa and a café with interior and exterior seating. VillaSport features an active gym and offers temporary child care in over 12,000 square feet of kids' programmed space, summer and holiday camps for kids, six group exercise studios offering more than 200 classes per week, four swimming pools including an outdoor family recreation pool with two 26-foot waterslides, NBA regulation sized basketball court, women's, men's and family locker rooms, and long-term bike parking for 24 bicycles.

Resilience and Adaptation to Rising Sea Level. (Exhibits 19-21) According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA"), current 100-year base flood elevation (BFE) for the project site is +10.0' NAVD88. As proposed, the project's public access areas would be raised approximately 2 feet to an elevation of +12.4' NAVD88 and the residential buildings and sports club would be raised approximately three feet to an elevation of 13.0' NAVD88. The proposed project is sufficiently elevated to avoid flooding under today's 100-year flood event conditions.

Under the projections in the 2018 State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance (2018 State Guidance) document for medium-high risk aversion projects in a high-emissions scenario, the proposed public access areas could flood in extreme storm events at 2050 (approximately 10 inches in a 100-year storm), but would not be expected to flood under a normal tidal regime. Staff have analyzed the public access under the medium-high risk scenario because the public access area would be permanently guaranteed for the life of the project and there is not sufficient room to adapt in place without significant modifications.

By year 2100, under the 2018 State Guidance's "low emissions" scenario for medium-high risk aversion, the public access areas would be anticipated to flood beginning with approximately 5 inches of water at Mean Higher High Water, 1.5 feet in a King Tide (1-year storm) event, and 3.9 feet in a 100-year storm event. The proposed residential buildings and sports club would be anticipated to flood beginning with approximately 11 inches in a King Tide event and 3.3 feet in a 100-year storm event. The "high emissions" scenario presents an even more significant level of flooding for the end of the century projections.

The proposed sea level rise adaptation strategy includes the future placement of a 4- to 6-foot-tall seawall between the public access trail and the ditch. The existing Bay Trail located on the levee of the adjacent PG&E parcel is at an elevation of approximately +10.0' NAVD88. The project proponents have also indicated that this levee could potentially be raised in the future to serve as a flood barrier for the project site, although this strategy is not currently proposed as part of the project.

Project Approvals. The Notice of Preparation for the project's Environmental Impact Report is scheduled to be presented at the City of Redwood City's Planning Commission in July 2019.

Commission Findings, Policies & Guidelines

San Francisco Bay Plan Policies. The Bay Plan **Public Access** policies state, in part, that “...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...” Further, these policies state, in part: “[a]ccess to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare...” Additionally, “...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.” The Public Access policy findings also state that San Francisco Bay “...provides an environment for numerous forms of public enjoyment including viewing, photography, wildlife observation, nature study, fishing, wading, walking, bicycling, jogging, or just sitting beside the water,” and that public access is an integral component of development.

Bay Plan Public Access policies, as they relate to wildlife, state that “[p]ublic access should be sited, designed and managed to prevent significant adverse effects on wildlife,” and that “[p]ublic access improvements provided as a condition of any approval should be consistent with the project and the physical environment, including protection of Bay natural resources, such as aquatic life, wildlife and plant communities...”

The proposed project would provide open space and a public seating area along the ditch shoreline adjacent to Smith Slough with views to the Bair Island Ecological Reserve. Two opportunities for the public to access the shoreline area would be via the Paseo, a central view corridor to the overall site and the dedicated public access connection to the east where the shoreline parking is located.

Bay Plan Public Access policies, as they relate to sea level rise, state that “[p]ublic access should be sited, designed, managed, and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding,” and that “[a]ny 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 project site will be raised approximately 3 feet to address sea level rise to mid-century and an adaptive strategy plan for a sea wall is being proposed to address projected end of century flooding.

The Bay Plan **Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views** policies state, in part, that “all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay” and that “[m]aximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas...” Furthermore, “[s]tructures and facilities that do not take advantage or complement the Bay should be located and designed so as not to impact visually on the shoreline. In particular, parking areas should be located away from the shoreline.” In addition, these policies state, in part: “Developments along the shores of tributary waterways should be Bay-related and should be designed to preserve and enhance views along the waterway, so as to provide maximum visual contact with the Bay.”

The project would include a central view corridor located between the two residential buildings.

The Commission's **Public Access Design Guidelines** state, in part, that public access should be designed "so that the user is not intimidated nor is the user's appreciation diminished by large nearby building masses...." Furthermore, "public access improvements should be designed for a wide range of users," should "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," and should be designed for the weather of the site. The guidelines also state that viewing the Bay is the "most widely enjoyed 'use' and projects should be designed to "enhance and dramatize views of the Bay."

Board Question

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

Public, Usable and Bay Setting:

1. Do the public spaces "feel public" and allow for the shoreline to be enjoyed by the greatest number of people?
2. Do the public access areas provide a unique "sense of place" that would attract all users to the shoreline?
3. Does the proposed design encourage diverse Bay-related activities?

Connections and Continuity:

4. Does the proposed project provide a clear connection to the adjacent levee Bay Trail and the Bair Island Trail?
5. Does the proposed design enhance the public invitation to the site from East Bayshore Road?

Visual Access and Visual Quality:

6. Does the design of the Paseo maximize views and physical connections to the shoreline?
7. Do the proposed shoreline improvements preserve and enhance views along the waterway?

Wildlife compatibility:

8. Does the proposed shoreline planting and activities respond to the adjacent natural wildlife habitat areas in Smith Slough and Bair Island?
9. Do the proposed amenities allow for and enhance the viewing and study of wildlife?

Sea Level Rise:

10. How can the public areas be appropriately designed to be resilient and adaptive to sea level rise?