San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
375 Beale Street, Suite 510, San Francisco, California 94105 tel 415 352 3600
State of California | Gavin Newsom – Governor | info@bcdc.ca.gov | www.bcdc.ca.gov

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TO: Design Review Board Members

FROM: Lawrence Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Ashley Tomerlin, Senior Bay Design Analyst (415/352-3657; ashley.tomerlin@bcdc.ca.gov)
Shruti Sinha, Shoreline Development Analyst (415/352-3654; shruti.sinha@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: **1301 Shoreway Life Sciences Development Project, City of Belmont, San Mateo County; First Pre-Application Review**
(For Design Review Board consideration on August 7, 2023)

Project Summary

Project Proponents
1 Shoreway Owner, LLC, subsidiary of Four Corners Properties

Project Representatives
Rich Ying, 1 Shoreway Owner, LLC. c/o Four Corners Properties (Four Corner, Project Manager for Property Owner); Karen Kuklin, DGA Architects (Project Manager, Principal Architect); Rene Bihan, SWA Group (Landscape Architect), Raquel Fones, BKF Engineers Inc (Civil Engineer); Blake Dilsworth, KPFF Consulting Engineers (Structural); Genaro Morales, Watry Design Inc. (Structural Engineer, Parking); Mario Perez, EXP Inc. (MEP / Lighting / T24).

Project Location (Exhibit 2-3)
The proposed life sciences redevelopment project would be developed on a 6.91-acre (301,130-square-foot) site at 1301 Shoreway Road in the City of Belmont, San Mateo County, just outside of the Redwood Shores waterfront community. The project site is bounded by Sem Lane to the northwest, Shoreway Road to the southwest, a PG&E substation to the south, and the Belmont Creek to the east. The site shares the Belmont Creek shoreline with 10 Twin Dolphin and 200 Twin Dolphin, both recently reviewed by the DRB in 2022. Shoreway Road is adjacent to, and runs parallel with, Highway 101, and is the first cross street by drivers taking the northbound Ralston/Marine Pkwy exit.

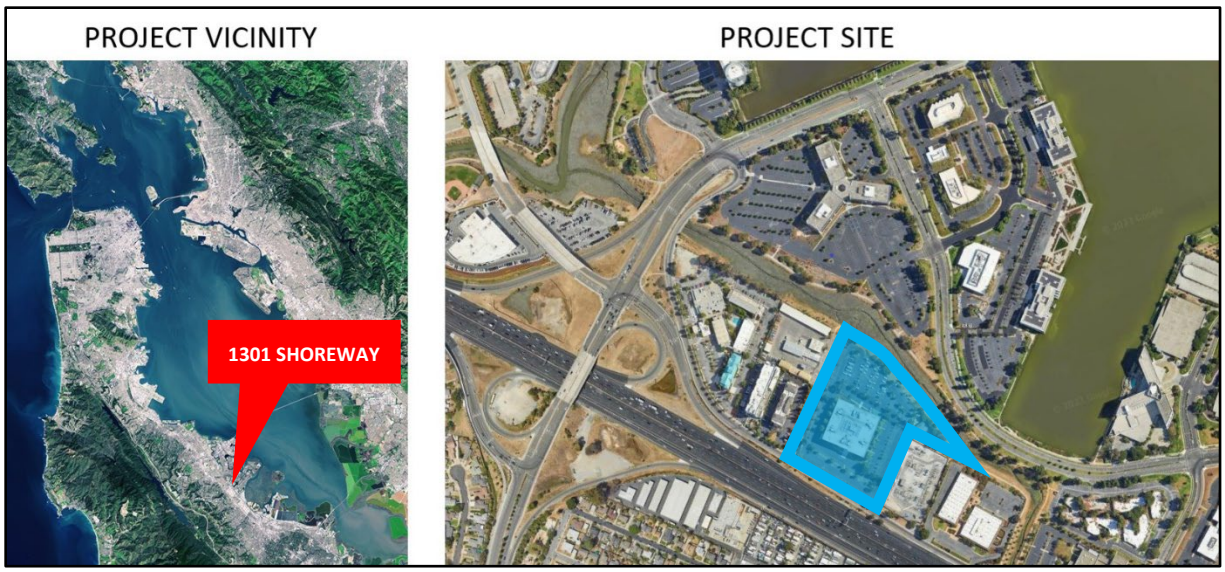

Figure 1. Project location

Project Overview

The purpose of the project is to redevelop the 6.91-acre site with a life sciences campus. The project proposes to demolish the existing four-story office building on site and construct two 7- to 8-level office/R&D buildings and a 9-level parking garage. The project proposes both on-site and off-site public access improvements, including widening the Belmont Creek Trail, constructing a new sidewalk along Sem Lane to provide public access from Shoreway Road to the shoreline, adding five new bicycle racks and three new Public Shore parking spaces at the trailhead, and enhancing the existing public access areas with refreshed seating amenities.

Project Site

Site History

The 6.91-acre site is currently occupied by the Redwood Shores Health Center, a four-story, approximately 142,496-square-foot building constructed in 1984 along with a surface parking lot with 571 parking spaces. The majority of the public access area within the project site is situated atop a FEMA-certified levee on land owned by the Redwood Shores Business Center Association (SBCA).

Permit History

The existing permit for the project site, BCDC Permit No. M1981.064.02, was originally issued on May 18, 1982 in association with the construction of the aforementioned 48,000-square-foot building, then called the "Belmont Shores Office Building." The permit required the area shown on Sheet 2 of the planting plans submitted with the original application to be dedicated for public access (see Figure 2 below). Within this area, the original authorization required for public access: "appropriate" landscaping, a 10-foot path, and no fewer than three benches and two public access signs.

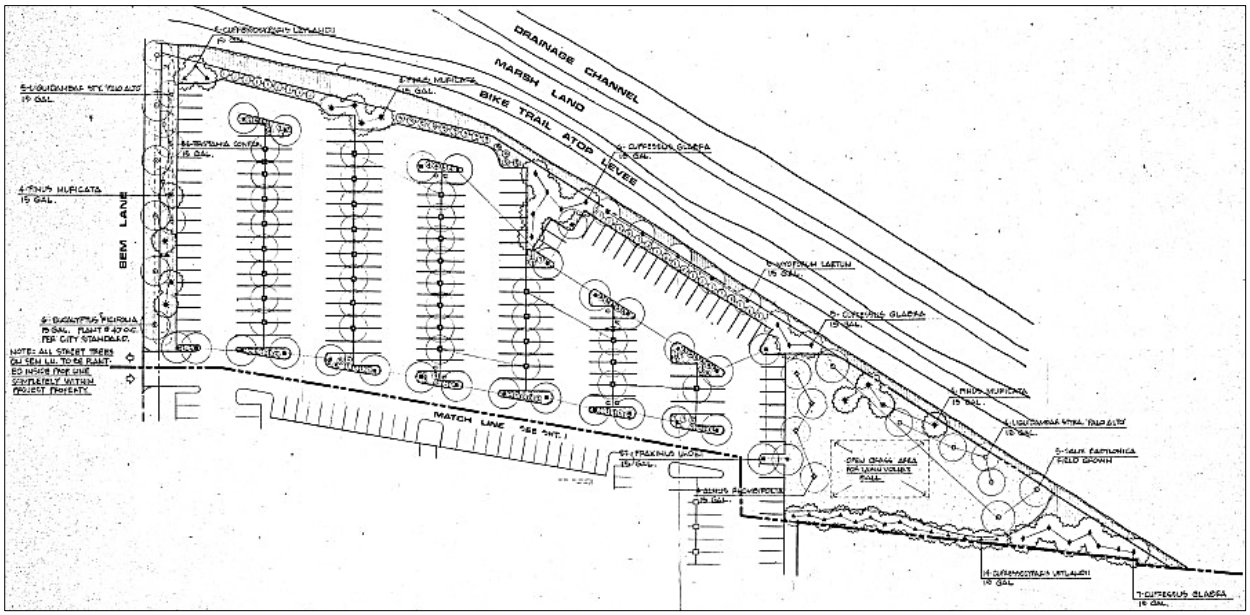

Figure 2 Sheet 2 of Planting Plan showing public access area along the levee.

Since the original authorization, the permit has since been amended twice. On July 15, 1982, Amendment No. One authorized the installation of an 18-inch pipe through the Belmont Creek for drainage purposes. On July 10, 1985, Amendment No. Two authorized the construction of a 2,048-square-foot tennis court, 1,000-square-foot of which would be in the shoreline band. As the tennis court was proposed for private use, the amended permit required additional public access in the form of an 8-foot-wide path on the north side of the tennis court from the 6-foot-wide pathway from the parking lot to the levee.

Existing Conditions (Exhibits 3-8, 10)

The project site is flat and fully paved for the surface parking lot surrounding the Redwood Shores Health Center building. The existing 57,659-square-foot total public access area is located mostly outside of Four Corners Properties' northern property line, atop an 860-foot-long segment of a FEMA-certified levee on land owned by SBCA, and excludes the existing parking lot and sports court. The existing public access is comprised of the minimum improvements required by Special Condition II-B-3, including: a path, landscaping, two decomposed granite paths, three benches, and two "Public Shore" signs. The permit requires the path to be 10 feet wide; however, the project team reports that the existing trail is 5 feet wide.

An existing 5-foot-wide pedestrian trail, the Belmont Creek Trail, runs along the top of the Belmont Creek levee. Note that the Belmont Creek Trail is not part of the San Francisco Bay Trail system. The nearest alignment of the San Francisco Bay Trail is approximately 200 feet away, along the northbound side of Twin Dolphin Drive.

Currently, the public can access the Belmont Creek Trail at the project site from two locations along the site's adjacent cross-streets. One access point is at the terminus of Sem Lane, where the trail begins behind barricades. Sem Lane is a short, dead-end road used for city vehicle access, has no continuous sidewalk, and is barricaded at the end that meets the trail. The other access point is the vehicular entrance to the parking lot from Shoreway Road. There is no dedicated pedestrian path from either cross street to the trail.

Of the three public benches along the Belmont Creek Trail, two are derelict and unusable due to overgrown vegetation. The sports court, which is currently used as a basketball court, is not part of the total public access area described in the permit and is not available for public use. Along the north side of the sports court, however, there is a seating node with four picnic tables for public use and narrow paths connecting the tennis court to the parking lot, the parking lot to the seating node, and the seating node to the Belmont Creek Trail. The access paths are not ADA-compliant and there are currently no dedicated Public Shore parking spaces.

With respect to views, the levee makes it impossible to see the creek from anywhere but the upper edge of the levee itself. The shoreline public access area atop the levee, including the Belmont Creek Trail, can be seen from entrance of Sem Lane. It can also be seen from the Shoreway Road entrance when there are no cars parked along the viewer's line of sight.

Social and Environmental Context

The Commission has developed a Community Vulnerability Mapping Tool to help inform its analysis of how socioeconomic indicators and contamination burdens contribute to a community's vulnerability to climate change. The mapping tool collects information at the level of Census blocks using 2020 data and at the level of the Census tract using CalEnviroScreen 3.0. Commission staff use the tool to help identify certain Equity Priority Communities. These communities include those disproportionally affected by environmental pollution and hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation, and those with higher concentrations of people with socioeconomic characteristics indicative of a higher degree of social vulnerability.

BCDC's Vulnerability Mapping Tool shows this project area as having "moderate" social vulnerability and "lower" contamination vulnerability based upon Census data. Demographics for this area include children under five years of age, single parents, and people who are not U.S. citizens, people who are severely housing cost burdened. There are also some areas to the west of the project site that have "high" social vulnerability. Demographics for these areas include renters, children under five years of age, people over 65 years of age and living alone, people without a vehicle, people with limited English proficiency, and people who are not U.S. Citizens.

Proposed Project

Infill Development (Exhibits 1, 11, 15, 18, 21-35)

The purpose of the project is to redevelop the site with a new office/R&D building and a detached parking garage in Belmont's RC zoning district. The project proposes to improve the existing Belmont Creek Trail by widening the trail from five to eight feet, and adding a 6-foot-wide publicly accessible sidewalk along Sem Lane from Shoreway Road to the shoreline, adding five bicycle racks and three public access parking spaces at the Belmont Creek trailhead, enhance existing seating and sport court amenities, and provide Public Shore and wayfinding signage.

1. **New Structures.** The project proposes to replace the existing building with two new office/R&D buildings (Buildings 1 and 2) and a detached parking garage totaling 542,035 square feet of building area. As proposed, Building 1 would be eight stories and Building 2 would be seven stories. The parking garage would have 9 levels and accommodate approximately 1,626 parking spaces. The floor area ratio (FAR) of the site would increase to 1.8 SF. All three buildings would be constructed outside of the shoreline band. There are 105 surface level site parking spaces, with three proposed parking spaces dedicated for public's use and enjoyment.
2. **Total Public Access Area.** The new development will increase the total public access area from 57,659 square feet of dedicated public access to 68,886 square feet. The public access improvements at the project site will occur both within and outside of the Commission's jurisdiction.
3. **Belmont Creek Trail.** The public open space improvements at the project site would include the refurbishment of the Belmont Creek Trail and trailhead along Belmont Creek. The project would renovate the existing permeable trail surface to allow for ADA compliance, widen the trail to eight feet.
4. **Seating Areas.** The project would restore the existing seating areas and add a new 3,622-square-foot space for public seating with three additional benches and three additional picnic tables.
5. **Fitness Nodes.** The project proposes two fitness nodes with street fitness equipment. The first fitness node would be located at the inner courtyard near Building 2 and provide a sit-up bench, dip bar, and assisted calisthenics stepper. The second fitness node would be located immediately south of the sports court and provide a climbing and hanging bar and sit-up bench.
6. **Birding Nooks.** The project proposes two "quiet" areas for passive recreation and birding. The first birding nook, located just south of the trailhead, would be a pop-out from the trail and shaded by trees. The second birding nook would be located right along the trail, near the parking garage. The project intends to encourage birding in these areas with interpretive signage on the ecology and wildlife at the site.
7. **Amenities and Signage.** The primary public access point to the trail is located at the trailhead, at the base off Sem Lane. Bollards, connective sidewalks, bike parking with a bike tool station, and vehicular parking would be placed adjacent to the trailhead and marked with public access signage. The proposed project would also relocate the existing trash enclosure near the entrance of the Belmont Creek Trail to new trash enclosures outside of Building 2 and deep into the site between Building 1 and the parking garage. The delivery/loading areas would be located adjacent to the trash enclosures.
8. **Circulation and Parking.** The Belmont Creek Trailhead improvements propose to add three Public Shore parking spaces to provide convenient vehicle parking for people accessing the Belmont Creek Trailhead. Pedestrian access to the trail would be available through a six-foot-wide continuous sidewalk along Sem Lane connecting the existing sidewalk along Shoreway Road to the trailhead at the end of Sem Lane. These concrete

paths connect parking to the Belmont Creek trail and its amenities, as well as the interior courtyard, buildings, and parking garages. The new sidewalk would include BCDC wayfinding signage at Shoreway Road along the property frontage to indicate a public trail ahead, and educational and wayfinding signage at the trailhead to enhance trail connection legibility and character.

9. **Landscape.** The project proposes an update to the tree and understory planting palette on site to include native/adaptive plants to improve biodiversity, reduce water consumption and provide seasonal interest. Stormwater treatment zones would be integrated within the interior of the site to capture all stormwater on site and reduce runoff to the creek.

10. **Views.** The existing views from Sem Lane and Shoreway Drive to the Belmont Creek Trail are currently blocked by the large parking lot and dense, overgrown planting at the creek edge. The streetscape that would be created by the proposed buildings is intended to draw focus to the view corridor along Sem Lane. Within the shoreline public access area, seating nooks will be provided at points that take advantage of "near-creek" views. At the basketball court, dense planting and a large screening tarp would be removed from the fence to enhance the visibility of the trail, creek, and surrounding public access spaces.

Sea Level Rise (Exhibit 9-11 and 17)

The Belmont Creek is located adjacent to the site to the east and northeast and is protected by an existing FEMA-certified levee. The project site is located within FEMA designation Zone X (area with reduced flood risk due to levee). The current building sits at an elevation of 11.5 feet. The project team was not able to provide elevations for the existing Belmont Creek Trail located at the top of the levee. To accommodate City of Belmont requirements, the project will raise portions of the site where future buildings will be located to an elevation of 12 feet and provide a gradual slope to conform to the adjacent properties and public streets.

The project relies on the County of San Mateo sea level rise vulnerability assessment final report, dated March 2018. According to this report, sea level rise projections for 2050 ranges between 5 inches to 24 inches. Given the inland location of the bay waters along the muted tidal regime of Belmont Slough, staff cannot analyze the potential impacts of sea level rise on this site without a site-specific flood risk assessment. However, BCDC's Flood Explorer tool indicates significant flooding due to levee overtopping with a water level of 48 inches above current mean higher high water. This is equivalent to a 5-year storm event with 24 inches of sea level rise.

Belmont Creek forms a natural border between the cities of Redwood City and Belmont. Any changes to one side of the creek must be part of a coordination between FEMA, San Mateo County, the City of Redwood City, and the City of Belmont. Such an effort would require significant study to evaluate effects on other segments of the overall levee system. Raising the elevation of the public access improvements along the FEMA-certified levee to minimize the flood risk anticipated by mid-century would be significant and beyond the ability of the project sponsors to implement on their own given the role of others under the National Flood Insurance Program. For these reasons, the project team proposes no additional resiliency measures at this time.

Community Engagement

The project team began its community outreach efforts after approaching BCDC. In preparation for their DRB review, BCDC staff advised the project proponents to engage with underserved communities in the area.

The project team, with the approval of the City of Belmont Planning Department, has engaged in a Public Outreach Meeting Schedule by which nearby residents received notifications for public meetings. The first Public Outreach meeting was a Design Team presentation of the project design on May 3, 2023. The second Public Outreach Meeting was an opportunity for the general public to provide feedback on the presented design to the Applicant on May 31, 2023. The third and final Public Outreach, held on June 28, 2023, was intended to provide an opportunity for the project team to respond to the community comments received during the second Public Outreach Meeting. Notice was given 30 days in prior to the meeting, with both a zoom link and in-person option to view exhibits based on the proposed development. There was no meeting attendance from those invited.

Approval & Construction Timeline

The project proponent is currently involved in the process to obtain local entitlements. The project was submitted to the City of Belmont on July 22, 2022 and revised and submitted twice, firstly on October 5, 2022, and most recently on May 8, 2023. The City's review of the May 8th submission is still pending. The project proponent plans to formally submit a permit application to BCDC following its final DRB review.

Commission Plans , Policies, and Guidelines

San Francisco Bay Plan Policies

The *San Francisco Bay Plan* (Bay Plan) contains a number of policy sections relevant to the design of the public access areas for this project, including the sections on Priority Use Areas; Public Access; Recreation; Appearance, Design and Scenic Views; Environmental Justice and Social Equity; and Climate Change.

As shown on **Bay Plan Map No. 6**, the site does not carry a Priority Use designation.

The Bay Plan's **Environmental Justice and Social Equity** Policy 3 states that "equitable, culturally-relevant community outreach and engagement should be conducted by local governments and project applicants to meaningfully involve potentially impacted communities for major projects and appropriate minor projects in underrepresented and/or identified vulnerable and/or disadvantaged communities," and "evidence of how community concerns were addressed should be provided."

Pursuant to the Bay Plan's **Climate Change** policies, projects "should be designed to be resilient to a mid-century sea level rise projection. If it is likely the project will remain in place longer than mid-century, an adaptive management plan should be developed to address the long-term impacts that will arise based on a risk assessment using the best available science-based projection for sea level rise at the end of the century" (Policy 3), and that "wherever feasible and appropriate, effective, innovative sea level rise adaptation approaches should be encouraged" (Policy 5).

The Bay Plan's **Public Access** policies state 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" (Policy 2); that "public access improvements provided as a condition of any approval should be consistent with the project, the culture(s) of the local community, and the physical environment, including protection of Bay natural resources" (Policy 8); and that "access to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means" (Policy 10).

Public Access Policy 5 states that "public access that substantially changes the use or character of the site should be sited, designed, and managed based on meaningful community involvement to create public access that is inclusive and welcoming to all."

Public Access Policy 6 states that "public access should be sited, designed, managed and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding."

The Bay Plan's **Appearance, Design and Scenic Views** policies state that "all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay" (Policy 2), and that "views of the Bay from vista points and from roads should be maintained by appropriate arrangements and heights of all developments and landscaping between the view areas and the water" (Policy 14).

Public Access Design Guidelines

The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access should feel public, be designed so that the user is not intimidated nor is the user's appreciation diminished by structures or incompatible uses, and that there should be visual cues that public access is available for the public's use by using site furnishings, such as benches, trash containers, lighting, and signage. The *Public Access Design Guidelines* further state that public access areas should be designed for a wide range of users, should maximize user comfort by designing for weather and day and night use, and that each site's historical, cultural, and natural attributes provide opportunities for creating projects with a "sense of place" and a unique identity. The Bay Plan Public Access policies on these Design Guidelines state "The Design Review Board should encourage diverse public access to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying population. Public access should be well distributed around the Bay and designed or improved to accommodate a broad range of activities for people of all races, cultures, ages, income levels, and abilities."

Board Questions

Staff recommends the Board frame its remarks of the proposed park considering the public access objectives found in the Commission's Public Access Design Guidelines. Additionally, please provide feedback on the proposed public access park project with respect to the Commission's policies on sea level rise, and environmental justice and social equity.

The seven objectives for public access are:

1. Make public access PUBLIC.
2. Make public access USABLE.
3. Provide, maintain, and enhance VISUAL ACCESS to the Bay and shoreline.

4. Maintain and enhance the VISUAL QUALITY of the Bay, shoreline, and adjacent developments.
5. Provide CONNECTIONS to and CONTINUITY along the shoreline.
6. Take advantage of the BAY SETTING.
7. Ensure that public access is COMPATIBLE WITH WILDLIFE through siting, design, and management strategies.

In addition, staff would like the Board's advice on the following issues:

a. How does the project proposal result in public spaces that "feel public," and does the project proposal allow for the shoreline to be enjoyed by the greatest number of people?
b. The proposal includes both passive and active public access uses along the shoreline integrated with campus-oriented uses like the sports court and parking. Does the siting of these public and campus-oriented programs enhance and activate the shoreline in a manner that is inviting to public users?
c. What additional improvements could enhance the public access experience from the publicly accessible courtyard to and along the shoreline?
d. Given the increase in scale and size of the buildings onsite, does the proposed design provide legible connections from the adjacent roadways and bike/pedestrian networks to draw users into and through the site to the Belmont Creek Trail and shoreline?
e. Are the public access areas appropriately designed to be resilient and adaptive to sea level rise in balance with ensuring high-quality public access opportunities?