

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: 200 Wind River Development Project, City of Alameda, Alameda County; Second Pre-Application Review
(For Design Review Board consideration on December 11, 2023)

Project Summary

Project Proponents

Blue Rise Ventures, LLC (owner)

Project Representatives

Eric Tecza, RA, Blue Rise Ventures (Vice President of Development); Ryan Braniff, Blue Rise Ventures (Managing Partner); Matt Malone, Perkins & Will (Senior Landscape Architect); Angelo Obertello, P.E., CBG Civil Engineers (Principal Civil Engineer).

Project Location (Exhibits 3-6)

The 200 Wind River Development Project is a 4.92-acre site comprising the southern tip of the 20.4-acre Wind River office campus at 200 Wind River Way in the City of Alameda, Alameda County. Located along the northern shore of Alameda Island, the current project is bounded to the south and west by Atlantic Avenue, to the east by Alaska Basin, and to the north by the remainder of the Wind River office campus, whose northern boundary is a shoreline fronting the Alameda Estuary.

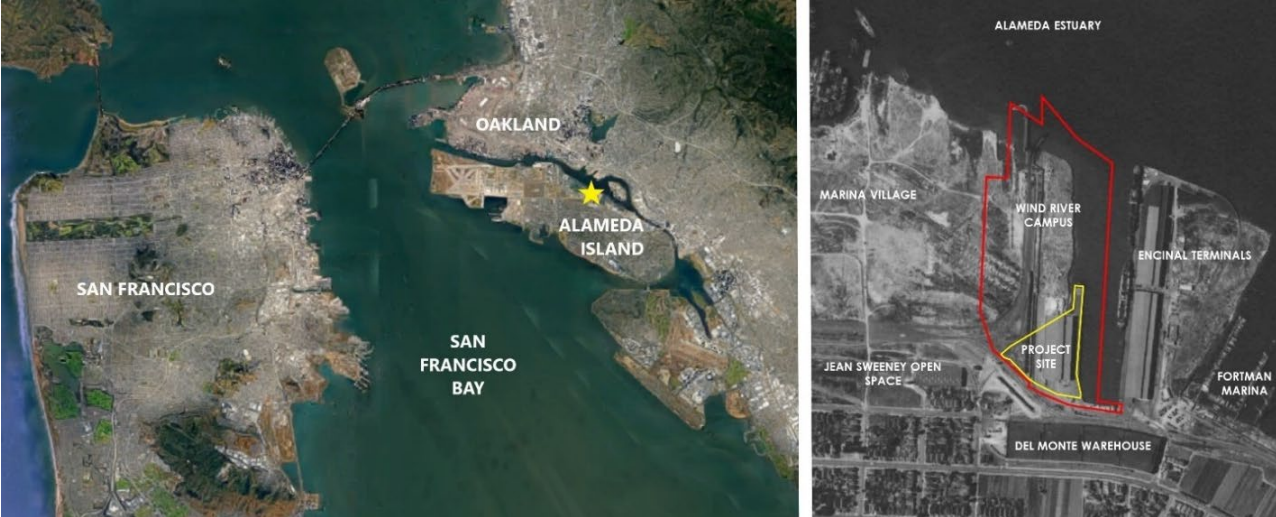


Figure 1. Project location

Project Overview (Exhibits 1 and 7)

The project proposes to develop a new life sciences campus over an existing 4.92-acre surface parking lot at 200 Wind River Way. The project would construct a three-story, approximately 120,000-square-foot office and research and development (R&D) building at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue, Clement Avenue, and Sherman Street (newly created as part of an adjacent development), completing the campus originally envisioned in the 1997 Wind River Master Plan. BCDC Permit No. 1997.009 originally authorized a 5-building project, four of which have been built out. Instead of building out Building 5, which would have been located just north of the 4.92-acre parking lot as contemplated by the 1997 permit, property owner Blue Rise Ventures is now proposing to build a larger office building in the aforementioned parking lot in order to accommodate the larger spaces needed for laboratory facilities.

This project also proposes public access improvements, including removal of a degrading timber wharf to create open water and enhance views to the Bay, renovation of the remaining concrete portion of that wharf with pedestrian paths offering connectivity to a new shoreline trail, and public access amenities such as seating, game tables, and a bocce ball court.

Project Site

Site History (Exhibits 4-6)

The first known inhabitants of Alameda Island were the Ohlone, who called the area Huchiun. According to the map “Shellmounds of Huchiun” (2023) by artist and cartographer Gabriel Duncan of Alameda Native Art and the Alameda Native History Project, the northern tip of Alameda Island, encompassing all of what is now Marina Village and the project site, was once a tidal wetland. The nearest known shellmound is approximately half a mile southeast of the project site.

In modern history, use of the site has been exclusively industrial. Around the turn of the 20th century, The Alaska Packers Association used the rectangular harbor known today as the Alaska Basin as a winter docking location for its fishing fleet. Historical photographs show Alaska Basin densely filled with multi-masted sailing ships. The site had a warehouse and a rail spur of the Alameda Beltline, connecting to a switching yard to the west (on what is now Jean Sweeney Open Space Park), and a pier at the north end of the campus, the concrete abutments of which are still visible. The site was modified in the early 1960’s to accommodate containerized cargo. By 1982, the warehouse was removed from the wharf, and by 1993, the site appears largely abandoned. Construction of the current office campus began in 1998.

A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment by the Alameda County Health Department has identified and listed a small area of residual motor oil-contaminated soil under the parking area on the western portion of the site. The contaminated area is currently capped with clean soil and asphalt, but the proposed project would require disturbing the cap and contaminated soil underneath. The project team reports that it is subject to a county-imposed Risk Management Plan and must comply with precautions included in the plan for the event the affected soil is disturbed.

Permit History (Exhibit 7)

BCDC has issued several permits in the vicinity for public access, utilities, and shoreline protection. BCDC Permit No. 1997.009.00 originally authorized the Wind River office campus development on November 26, 1997. The 200 Wind River Way project is the final component of that overall office campus development. The permit originally authorized the construction of four 2- to 4-story office buildings, each approximately 100,000 square feet and partially located within the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction (a fifth building was constructed outside the Commission's permitting jurisdiction). It also authorized: 1) replacement of the existing concrete rubble riprap along the shoreline with an improved quarystone riprap revetment; 2) replacement of a deteriorated pier at the northern end of the wooden wharf with a ferry pier; 3) capping contaminated soil at the site with asphaltic concrete and clean soil; and 4) development of approximately 972,355 square feet of paved roadways, pedestrian paths, landscaping, public access area.

The overall Wind River office campus project is a phased project; the following is a brief summary of the public access phasing required by the existing permit (1997.009.05):

1. **Phase I (completed).** Approximately 189,320 square feet of public access, including 10- to 12-foot-wide paved pathways, landscaping, lighting, 11 benches, 3 garbage containers, 2 decomposed granite trails to the water's edge, 23 signed public access parking spaces, and 5 public access/Bay Trail signs.
2. **Phase II (completed).** Approximately 41,500-square-foot wooden wharf with 5 benches, 5 garbage containers, one public access/Bay Trail sign, a permanent, 10-foot-wide landscaped public access connection from Atlantic Avenue to the shoreline; and interpretive signage on the history of the Alaska Basin and its use by the fishing industry and canneries.
3. **Phase III (completed).** Five overlook decks and approximately 832 square feet of paths connecting to the existing shoreline path along the northern end of the property, 7 benches, lighting, and an approximately 9-foot-tall, 14-foot-wide, wooden trellis, an interpretive panel on Overlook 4, and a fiberglass tide gauge mounted on the southern face of the eastern historic concrete ferry pier.

[BCDC staff note that while the above permit provisions expressly require "Bay Trail" signage, no portion of the Bay Trail currently exists on any part of the Wind River office campus. The permit's requirement of Bay Trail signage may have contemplated official Bay Trail designation in the future, but property owner Blue Rise Ventures is not aware whether its predecessors undertook to obtain the designation.]

To date, the permit has been amended five times, mostly for time extensions to complete required public access features. Amendment No. One authorized the phasing of the public access improvement to generally coincide with the phased construction of the Wind River office campus and the installation of a temporary public access connection from Atlantic Avenue to the shoreline until the City of Alameda's (recent) completion of a modified street system nearby which established a permanent driveway for the Wind River office campus. Amendment No. Two was a time extension to install public access overlooks along the shoreline in lieu of the 4,100-square-foot pier required in Phase III of the original project. Amendment No. Three was

another time extension to construct the public access overlooks and connector paths. Amendment No. Four reduced the dedicated public access area from 189,320 square feet to 184,820 square feet because 4,500 square feet was transferred to the BCDC permit for an adjacent property. Finally, Amendment No. Five was another time extension granted to complete the public access at issue in Amendment No. Three.

Existing Conditions (Exhibits 5-7, 14, 16)

The 4.92-acre project site is currently a parking lot. Even when Wind River Systems still occupied the buildings to the north, the parking lot was very lightly used, as evidenced by aerial photos circa 2002. The parking lot is relatively remote to the campus office buildings and has historically been underutilized since the late 1980s, when the site wound down its cargo operations and containerized cargo traffic shifted to the nearby Port of Oakland. . From 2020 to 2023, the project site was used for temporary construction parking by the builders of the adjacent Alta Star Harbor housing development.

Today, the most prominent feature of the site is the abandoned wharf, which occupies the entire eastern edge of the site along Alaska Basin. The wharf is constructed of creosote-coated timber piles and pile caps, heavy timber decking and an asphalt top surface. A recent inspection of the wharf found that while the concrete portion of the wharf is in fair to good condition, 30 percent of the piles supporting the outboard timber portion of the wharf are severely deteriorated. The shoreline below and to the north of the project site is stabilized with stone riprap.

An informal path along the eastern edge of the site has been created over time through pedestrian use. This path provides views of Alaska Basin and leads to the publicly accessible Wind River Park, a shoreline public access area with the larger Wind River office campus located north of this project site. The publicly accessible shoreline features can be accessed through three points: 1) from the southeast corner of the site, the public can walk onto the wharf from the new sidewalk and cycle track along Clement Avenue; 2) from the northwest, there is a public path off Atlantic Avenue, just south of the main vehicular entrance (Wind River Way), leading directly east through the Wind River office campus and connecting with the shoreline path on the south side of Building 300; and 3) from the northern edge of the site, pedestrians can enter Wind River Park via a walking path between Building 600 and the Encinal Yacht Club to the north.

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 disproportionately 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.

According to the Community Vulnerability Mapping Tool, the project is located within a census block with a reported population of 1,308 people and has low social vulnerability and lower contamination vulnerability. There are no social vulnerability indicators in the 90th percentile, and the one social vulnerability indicator in the 70th percentile is for people who are severely housing cost burdened. Other census blocks near the project site vary from low to high social vulnerability and have more social vulnerability indicators in the 70th and 90th percentile.

Proposed Project

Infill Development (Exhibits 1, 7-10, 12-13, 15, and 17-25)

The 200 Wind River Development Project proposes to develop a new office and R&D building at the site at 200 Wind River Way in the City of Alameda, Alameda County. The proposed project would develop the existing parking lot at 200 Wind River Way for the building and redevelop the western shore of the Alaska Basin with an enhanced public waterfront. The project also proposes significant improvements to the existing public access along the shoreline with new public access paths and amenities.

1. **New Structures.** The project proposes a single new structure on the site, which is a three-story laboratory and office building of approximately 120,000 square feet, yielding a floor area ratio of 0.56 on the 4.92-acre site. The structure of the building would be steel atop a concrete pile and grade beam foundation. The main entrance to the building would be marked by a ground floor colonnade, below a façade combining glass curtainwall and metal panel. At full occupancy the building is expected to accommodate approximately 300 employees, depending on the space need of the end users.

This building would replace Building 5 as originally contemplated and authorized by BCDC Permit No. 1997.009.00. It would be located just south of the originally-planned location for Building 5.

2. **Shoreline Trail.** There is no Bay Trail at the project site or anywhere within the overall Wind River office campus. The project proposes to pave an existing 700-foot-long bike and pedestrian trail along the west side of Alaska Basin. This shoreline trail would be at minimum 14 feet wide and include decomposed granite shoulders on either side. At the site's northern boundary, this segment would connect to the existing public trail leading towards Wind River Park. The relative flatness of the site would allow for a trail that is ADA compliant with only a few shallow slopes.
3. **Publicly Accessible Wharf and Amenities.** The project proposes to remove the existing wooden wharf and renovate the concrete wharf that would remain after removal of the wooden portion. The renovated wharf would have a new decking surface, bocce court, outdoor game tables, various types of seating and turf area. At-grade improvements between the Shoreline Trail and wharf include lounge chairs (which roll on rails, an homage to the old crane rails), hammocks, picnic and café-style seating, and permanent shade structures to allow for use throughout the year. All of the site improvements between the Shoreline Trail and the shoreline would be dedicated for public access, resulting in a net increase of approximately 1,000 square feet to the existing required public access area, even after removal of the degrading wooden wharf.

4. **Circulation.** The majority of users access the campus by personal vehicle, arriving on Alameda via either the Webster Tube or the Park Street Bridge, which are approximately equidistant from the project site (approximately 1.5 miles each way). The project site is served by the AC Transit Line 19 bus, with a stop at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Wind River Way. The Research Park also operates a shuttle for employees that runs daily to and from the Oakland 12th Street BART station. Additionally, The Research Park is collaborating with the Alameda TMA to bring an accessible public water shuttle to the Alameda Estuary with a future stop in Alaska Basin, further enhancing the range of transportation options and relieving congestion through existing vehicular pinch points. The project intends to maintain the integrity of the current and planned pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as create new connections (via pedestrian-only and shared-use paths) to the Shoreline Trail.
5. **Parking.** Parking for the project would be provided through multiple surface lots. The construction of the proposed building would require reconfiguration of the surface parking lot and would result in fewer total parking spaces, but would not reduce the existing thirteen dedicated Public Shore parking spaces at the southeastern edge of the 200 Wind River project site (the remaining ten Public Shore parking spaces are located elsewhere throughout the Wind River office campus). The parking reconfiguration would, however, relocate the existing thirteen Public Shore parking spaces further inland from the edge of the southeastern shoreline but still adjacent to the Shoreline Trail. Additionally, ten publicly accessible bike parking spaces would be distributed around the project site.
6. **Landscape and Open Space.** The project proposes to anchor the landscape design with major elements along each side of the triangular site. Along the northwest façade of the building, a tree-lined pedestrian allée (“Sherman Court”) would align with Sherman Street and provide a direct connection from the vehicular intersection to the Shoreline Trail. Sherman Court would be surfaced with unit pavers and lined by Columbia London Plane trees. At the shoreline, the major public recreation area in the zone between the Bay Trail and the renovated wharf would be lined by Cajeput Trees. Along Clement Avenue, the project would maintain the existing pedestrian path, cycle track, and planting. The interior of the site, a triangular private zone formed by the wings of the building footprint, would contain a combination of bioretention areas and campus-oriented seating areas surfaced with decomposed granite and interspersed with Jacaranda and Elegant Water Gum trees. Understory planting would consist of a range of drought-tolerant flowering shrubs, grasses and succulents.
7. **Views.** The primary viewpoint to the water from the adjacent roadways is along Clement Avenue at the southern end of Alaska Basin, where the road passes closest to the existing seawall. Public parking spaces have been placed as close as possible to this point. From within the site, the best views of the water are seen from the existing public path along the shoreline. Removal of the existing timber wharf would open up views of the water from both vantage points. Improvements to the existing concrete wharf are intended to provide a more inviting vantage point for pedestrians to view the water; however, the proposed new building would obstruct views to the shoreline for people in

vehicles driving north up Sherman Street and east down Atlantic Avenue. The project team reports that the relatively high existing elevation of the site above the water already prevents a clear view of the water from this distance. It follows that the finished floor elevation of 15.6 feet (NAVD88) planned for the new building would further diminish visual access to the Bay and shoreline from the aforementioned public thoroughfares.

Sea Level Rise (Exhibit 9)

The wharf elevation is 13.8 feet (NAVD88), which is 4.0 feet above the current 100-year base flood elevation plus sea level rise as projected by the California Ocean Protection Council for the medium-high risk aversion scenario, and 2.0 feet above projected levels in the year 2050. However, the expected life of the project is at minimum 50 years, and the projected end-of-century water level of 16.8 feet would cause inundation at the project site. At regular high-high tides, however, the current shoreline elevation would be just above the 2100 MHHW level of 13.4 feet. Should it become necessary in the latter part of the century, the Shoreline Trail could be elevated 2- to 3 feet, creating a small levee to protect it, as well as the building and the parking areas. On the water side of the Shoreline Trail, the concrete wharf would still be within the 2100 projected flood plain. The project team asserts that the structure and finish materials proposed for the renovated wharf would be resistant to damage by infrequent inundation.

Shoreline Protection (Exhibit 9)

This project is part of a larger project that has already constructed a Commission-authorized quarystone riprap revetment for shoreline protection. However, because the project would remove a deteriorating timber wharf, it also proposes to expand the existing riprap over the length of shoreline that would be exposed by the wharf removal.

Community Engagement

To date, the project team has engaged with the board of Bike Walk Alameda (a local non-profit that advocates for improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians) and the Encinal Yacht Club (the project's closest neighbor). Leadership of the organization has suggested the inclusion of additional dockage and a small boat launch in Alaska Basin, which the project team is considering. Additional groups the project team anticipates engaging include the Alameda Transportation Management Association, the residents of the adjacent Alta Star Harbor and Littlejohn Commons, the Alameda Boys & Girls Club, Bay Trail, and the local Small Business Association. BCDC staff recently provided the project team with a list of relevant community-based organizations (CBOs) which it plans to engage in the coming months.

Approval & Construction Timeline

200 Wind River Way is currently in its second round of review by the Alameda Planning Department but has received no approvals to date. Design Review approval by the City of Alameda is expected in early 2024. The project is categorically exempt from additional CEQA review because the total project area is less than five acres. The project team plans to submit a formal BCDC application after DRB approval. A construction schedule has not been set; however, the project proponents expect to begin construction as soon as all necessary permits and approvals have been received.

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 Public Access; Recreation; Appearance, Design and Scenic Views; Shoreline Protection; Environmental Justice and Social Equity; and Climate Change. This 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." The project site is not within an area identified by BCDC's Community Vulnerability Mapping Tool as having high social vulnerability, but the project team has engaged some community-based organizations (CBOs) and intends to reach out to more in the near future.

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 project is already at a finished floor elevation of 15.6 feet (NAVD88), which is 5.8 feet above the current BFE and 3.8 feet above the BFE projected for 2050. However, the expected life of the project is at least 50 years; therefore, the project site would not be resilient to flooding at 2100 if it remained at its current elevation.

The Bay Plan's **Shoreline Protection** Policy 1 states that "new shoreline protection projects... should be authorized if: (a) the project is necessary to provide flood or erosion protection for... proposed development, use or infrastructure that is consistent with other Bay Plan policies; (b) the type of protective structure is appropriate for the project site, the uses to be protected, and the causes and conditions of erosion and flooding at the site; (c) the project is properly engineered to provide erosion control and flood protection for the expected life of the project based on a 100-year flood event that takes future sea level rise into account; (d) the project is properly designed and constructed to prevent significant impediments to physical and visual public access; (e) the protection is integrated with current or planned adjacent shoreline protection measures; and (f) adverse impacts to adjacent or nearby areas, such as increased flooding or accelerated erosion, are avoided or minimized." Additionally, Policy 5 states that "all shoreline protection projects should evaluate the use of natural and nature-based features."

This project is part of a larger project that has already constructed a Commission-authorized quarystone riprap revetment for shoreline protection. However, because the project would remove a deteriorating timber wharf, it also proposes to expand the existing riprap over the length of shoreline that would be exposed by the wharf removal.

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). The project would provide public access along the shoreline, including seating and overlooks, as well as construction of a new shoreline trail.

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." The project team has reached out to local CBOs and is considering the feedback it has received from them. The project team plans to engage additional CBOs while it is in the process of seeking local entitlements and preparing for its BCDC application.

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 project site has existing riprap for shoreline protection, which would be expanded when the wooden wharf is removed.

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). Although the proposed office and R&D building would obstruct the existing views available to motorists along Sherman Street and Atlantic Avenue, the project would also implement significant improvements to the public's experience of the shoreline on the renovated wharf, the Bay Trail, and the zone between these two features.

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 also "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." With respect to views, Objective No. 3 of the Guidelines is to "provide, maintain, and enhance visual access to the Bay and shoreline"; for example, by "locating buildings, structures, parking lots, and landscaping of new shoreline projects such that they enhance and dramatize views of the Bay and the shoreline from public

thoroughfares and other public spaces. Objective No. 4 of the Guidelines is to “maintain and enhance the visual quality of the Bay, shoreline, and adjacent spaces”; for example, by “providing visual interest and architectural variety in massing and height to new buildings along the shoreline,” “using building footprints to create a diversity of public spaces along the Bay,” “locating service facilities away from the shoreline,” and “utilizing the shoreline for Bay-related land uses as much as possible.”

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:

1. 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?
2. What additional improvements would enhance the public access program along the shoreline? Are there additional elements that would further develop the recreation program as currently proposed?
3. Are the public access areas appropriately designed to be resilient and adaptive to sea level rise, ensuring high-quality public access opportunities over time?
4. Does the design provide legible connections from the adjacent roadways and bike/pedestrian networks to draw users into and through the site to the Bay Trail and connecting with the entire campus and its shoreline?
5. Has the current design proposal adequately addressed the change in visual access to the Bay with the relocation of the Building 5 site? Does the Board have suggestions for maximizing views through the site to the Bay?