

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

May 1, 2025

TO: Design Review Board Members

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415-352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Ashley Tomerlin, Senior Bay Dev. Analyst (415-352-3657; ashley.tomerlin@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Draft Summary of the March 10, 2025, BCDP Design Review Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order and Meeting Procedure Review.** Design Review Board (DRB) Chair Jacinta McCann called the hybrid meeting to order on Zoom, at approximately 5:00 p.m.

a. **DRB Board Members.** Chair Jacinta McCann, Vice Chair Gary Strang, Cody Anderson, Leo Chow, Tom Leader and Stefan Pellegrini were present in person.

b. **BCDC Staff.** Ashley Tomerlin, Yuriko Jewett, Katharine Pan and Alyssa Plese were present in person. Michael Ng attended the meeting online.

c. **Project Proponents.** Patrick Van Ness (Signature Development Group); Sarah Kuehl, Claire Geneste (EinwillerKuehl, Inc., Landscape Architect).

2. **Staff Update.** Ashley Tomerlin provided updates on the upcoming 2025 DRB meeting dates with the next DRB Review Meeting scheduled for Monday, May 12. The tentative agenda includes a second review of the Marina Point project in Richmond and a first review of upcoming development projects at the Berkeley Marina.

3. **Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda.** There was no public comment.

4. **Legal Briefing.** Michael Ng, Senior Staff Attorney, provided an overview of the DRB's authority, rights and responsibilities, as well as the Board's function within the agency as prescribed in the McAteer-Petris Act, the Bay Plan, and the State regulations governing the board.

5. **Brooklyn Basin, Channel Park (Second Review).** A second post-permit issuance review of Channel Park. The proposed 6.2-acre waterfront park is situated at the confluence of the Oakland Estuary and the Lake Merritt Channel, within the Brooklyn Basin redevelopment area in the City of Oakland, Alameda County. The proposed project features a 0.67-acre open water basin with a tidal channel and includes the Bay Trail and pedestrian walkways; a native scrub and bird garden; an interpretive learning garden and timeline trail; and a recreational lawn with picnic area.

a. **Staff Presentation.** Alyssa Plese provided a staff introduction to the project site and context.



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b. **Project Presentation.** Sarah Kuehl and Claire Geneste (EinwillerKuehl) provided an overview of the project with a slide presentation. The presentation focused on the significant changes in the design since the Board last saw the project in 2019.

c. **Board Clarifying Questions following Presentations.**

- (1) Chair McCann inquired about the availability of the interim public access trail on the Channel Park site; when visiting the site recently it appeared to be blocked off. Staff responded that the trail is available for use, however the “Public Shore” sign is not posted at the trailhead as required. Staff was able to access the trail during a recent site visit but will follow up with the permittee to ensure that access is available, and the sign is reinstalled.
- (2) Board Member Leader inquired about the outcome of the previous design review. Staff confirmed that the Board’s previous review had no follow up action but recognized that the project before the Board today is significantly different which is why it needed to come back for review. Chair McCann added that the previous review included two parks presented as one project.
- (3) Board Member Pelligrini asked staff to clarify if the park acreage has changed from the previous design to the current proposal. Staff responded that the acreage increased. The permit requires a 4-acre park, and the current design provides an approximately 6-acre park.
- (4) Chair McCann requested clarification for the status of the bikeway crossing that was initially planned to connect to the Lake Merritt area to the waterfront shown in the 2019 review. Staff responded there is currently no funding for the project and it is not scheduled to move forward at this time.
- (5) Board Member Pelligrini asked if the demographics of the new occupants of the development are reflected in the staff EJ analysis for the project. Staff responded that majority of the data set is based on the 2020 census block groups but there have been some recent updates that may have included the newer residents to the site but is not able to confirm at this time. Staff will research the answer and follow up with the Board.
- (6) Board Member Leader stated that he likes the interior basin design but asked if the design team could confirm that there is enough flushing to avoid silting. The design team responded that the environmental engineering team studied this condition and is comfortable with the design.
- (7) Board Member Chow asked the design team to clarify how they arrived at the shape of the basin and if there was any consideration to reduce the shoreline slope to achieve a better balance between water surface area and the grass planting. The design team responded that the design of the basin was informed by a permit requirement to provide the minimum .65-acre of open water area. Several geometries were explored and this scenario was where the team landed.
- (8) Board Member Chow asked for clarification of the curb configuration related to the Bay Trail as it passes through and adjacent to vehicular areas, he asked if curb ramps would be installed or would it be a flush condition. The design team confirmed that there is a 6” curb that ramps down to the roadway. The grading of the roadway on the northside is constrained by the existing grade of the

Embarcadero. It may be possible to avoid ramping in this location but will require further study by the civil engineers.

- (9) Board Member Chow and Chair McCann asked for clarification of the width of the Bay Trail, especially in areas where it is shared with a vehicular area. The design team noted that the Bay Trail is consistently 18 feet wide, 12-foot paved mixed-use trail with 3-foot shoulders, and in the area where the Bay Trail follows along 4th Avenue it meets with a protected two-way cycle track that then connects to the Embarcadero. The trail remains protected with no vehicular conflict.
- (10) Chair McCann asked for clarification as to why the Bay Trail only partially runs along the shoreline of the park. The design team responded that since the Fifth Avenue community is a separate property owner, the connection is better served between the private parcel and Parcel M to allow for a continuous Bay Trail loop alignment through the development site. A smaller network of access paths is available to get park visitors to the water.
- (11) Board Member Pellegrini inquired about Option B of the adaptation plan for the project. He asked if the Bay Trail located to the south of Option B set at a grade to address the 2100 flood condition. The design team noted that in some places the trail grade is set above the 2100 flood level, in other places a 24" wall would be in place for Bay Trail protection.
- (12) Board Member Pellegrini asked if the base elevation of Parcel M is set above the park elevation. The design team responded that the base elevation for the building is set at 20 feet and is designed for slightly higher than 2050 sea level rise, but not for 2100.
- (13) Board Member Pellegrini requested clarification of the public access to the basin. He asked if people or dogs would be able to access the area. The design team stated that birds are being prioritized for this area as requested by the Fifth Avenue community adjacent to the site. It is being designed more for habitat and less for people and dogs will most likely be restricted from this area of the site.
- (14) Board Member Anderson noted that Option B does give more of an ecotone levee option which connects the dots for providing a habitat forward design but also observed that a lot of programmatic square footage will be compromised. The design team responded they could calculate the exact square footage if needed but the intent of the design is to provide a future condition that is softer, and not concrete based, to allow for less burden and maintenance in the future.
- (15) Vice Chair Strang asked for clarification of the existing soil conditions and expressed concern for how the project will convert an industrial site to support the native ecology proposed for the project. The design team stated that onsite soil testing for agricultural suitability still needs to be completed, but the team anticipates that soil for planting at the surface will be built up from where the existing grade is now.

d. **Public Comment.** There were no in-person public comments. Staff received one written public comment letter from Lily Brown, MTC/ABAG Bay Trail Planner that is included at the end of this summary.

e. **Board Discussion.** The Board discussed how the project responds to the seven objectives for public access found in the Public Access Design Guidelines, provided feedback on the proposed public access improvements with respond to the Commission's policies on sea level rise and environmental justice and social equity, and addressed the staff questions listed below.

(1) The seven objectives for public access are:

- i. Make public access PUBLIC.
- ii. Make public access USABLE.
- iii. Provide, maintain, and enhance VISUAL ACCESS to the Bay and shoreline.
- iv. Maintain and enhance the VISUAL QUALITY of the Bay, shoreline, and adjacent developments.
- v. Provide CONNECTIONS to and CONTINUITY along the shoreline.
- vi. Take advantage of the BAY SETTING.
- vii. Ensure that public access is COMPATIBLE WITH WILDLIFE through siting, design, and management strategies.

(2) Staff also have the following specific questions for the Board's consideration

- i. Is the modified proposal consistent with the vision of a regional shoreline attraction? What design recommendations does the Board have to enhance these spaces to ensure that it is used by both nearby residents and visitors?
- ii. Are the public access areas appropriately designed to be resilient and adaptive to sea level rise, ensuring high-quality public access opportunities over time?
- iii. Does the current project design successfully address the site context and needs of the surrounding community? Does it contribute to a shoreline character unique to the Bay setting?
- iv. Is the proposed planting design appropriate for the project site?

Summary of Key Issues and Board Comments

(1) Public Access and Bay Trail Connection

- i. Board Member Chow noted that the Bay Trail is designed in a very linear fashion where the rest of the site embraces a more organic design and feel. He recommended a meandering geometry for the Bay Trail to slow people down noting that through traffic is likely using bicycle facilities on Embarcadero.
- ii. Board Member Chow and Chair McCann discussed the width of the Bay Trail and how in some places it appears to conflict with the right-of-way and transition from sidewalk to the street. They requested a diagram be provided in the future to better clarify the vehicular, pedestrian, and cycling uses of the site, particularly as the Bay Trail connects to the Embarcadero.

- iii. Board Member Pellegrini expressed concern that the edge condition of the Bay Trail may invite the public to access the basin. He suggested a raised boardwalk condition with a step may provide a better delineation of the trail edge and help cue where users are and are not supposed to go. He also stated that while a boardwalk condition may not be a design standard for the Bay Trail, it may be appropriate to design that condition here given the redundancy of smaller pathways to the shoreline that encourage a habitat forward experience. Board Secretary Tomerlin asked if the character of the shoreline Bay Trail is more acceptable as a spur “loop” and if the Fifth Avenue connection could be provided, would the Board’s opinion change. Board Member Pelligrini agreed that a different approach would be taken if the Fifth Avenue connection was provided.
- iv. Board Member Leader stated pulling the proposed Bay Trail alignment upland from the shoreline in some areas is reasonable in this case; the shoreline should offer more than just cycling. The small pathways along the shoreline are appropriate.
- v. Chair McCann noted that the sightlines play a critical role in the design given the turns in the Bay Trail and the berm proposed as part of the adaptation plan for example.
- vi. Board Member Pelligrini stated that the building appears to be disconnected from the site and there would be value for the Board to see the frontage condition and how the tenant access interfaces with the public park.
- vii. Vice Chair Strang stressed that while it may not be in the purview of the Board’s review, Parcel M does play a critical role in how it interfaces with the site and would like to see a more developed design. He also stated that he is concerned that townhomes at this site may not generate the funds to cover the operations and maintenance component of the park that may be required.

(2) Water Basin and Breakwater Design

- i. Board Member Leader expressed concerns that the basin will experience silting and recommended that the team conduct sediment modeling to confirm that the flushing is appropriately addressed.
- ii. Board Member Anderson recommended that to address potential siltation at the water basin, the project team could explore redirecting stormwater drainage to help naturally manage the silt in and out of the basin.

(3) Planting Recommendations

- i. Vice Chair Strang stated that the proposed plant palette is excellent but noted that the overall design scheme relies heavily on successful installation and establishment of the plants. He stated that it is a very ambitious design and to address its complexity, he recommended the project include a comprehensive soil plan for the site. He recommended that a letter of intent for the maintenance plan be developed. If installed

and established correctly, the planting has the potential of being a low to no-maintenance feature on the site.

- ii. Chair McCann noted that in other areas of the Bay, lawn areas are not used by people as intended due to the duck/geese population taking over. She stressed that operations and maintenance will need to be prioritized for the lawn area to succeed.

(4) Sea Level Rise Adaptation Scenarios

- iii. Boad Member Leader stated that of the two options presented for sea level rise adaptation he supports Option B as it allows the site to transition over time. He stated that the berm could be built higher to create an overlook or support the Bay Trail.
- iv. Board Member Chow noted that Option B leaves behind a “hard geometry” and this area could be refined to support a more organic form similar to the berm.
- v. Board Member Pellegrini also stated that Option B is his preferred adaptation scenario and noted that the future scenario for shoreline proposes a significantly different public program than the present; he noted that they could be more consistent and better aligned.
- vi. Board Member Anderson stated that Option B is proposing a managed retreat. He noted that much of the Bay shoreline is an armored condition and appreciates the habitat and wildlife forward approach but noted that the change in landscape will still need to be “managed” and more study for how the site will transition over time is required. He asked when the fill condition would begin to exist for example.

(5) Key Comments from the Chair.

- i. Chair McCann highlighted Vice Chair Strang’s comments related to the planting proposed for the project, and that the Board supports the development of a soil plan and a memo of intent regarding operations and maintenance of the planting scheme for the project.
- ii. Chair McCann emphasized that the concerns regarding the sedimentation in the basin should be addressed and recommended the team work closely with their engineering consultants on those challenges.
- iii. Chair McCann noted that the Board unanimously prefers Option B for the adaptation strategy.
- iv. Chair McCann highlighted the conceptual comments for the Bay Trail that were put forth by the Board including exploring a meandering geometry and a boardwalk condition.
- v. Chair McCann summarized that this was a first review of a new park design for the development project. She noted that the park concept is very strong, but an additional review is recommended to understand the Bay Trail alignment, the park’s interface with the town homes, addressing the sedimentation challenges, and understanding the separation of people and pets.

f. **Project Proponent Response.** Patrick Van Ness from Signature Properties addressed the Board with a few comments. He clarified that State Lands Commission is driving the location of Parcel M and that the location was selected so the project can provide a Bay Trail connection beyond the Fifth Avenue community. He also clarified that the project team is working toward securing City of Oakland entitlements for Parcel M now and is anticipating construction to begin in the first quarter of 2026. The design team weighed in to state that there are some complicated existing conditions related to the grades and ongoing study with the engineer is in process that may provide additional options for the Bay Trail alignment.

6. **Meeting Adjournment.** Board Member Leader moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice Chair Strang seconded the motion. The meeting concluded at 7:23 p.m.

From: [Jewett, Yuriko@BCDC](mailto:Jewett.Yuriko@BCDC)
To: [Jewett, Yuriko@BCDC](mailto:Jewett.Yuriko@BCDC)
Subject: RE: BCDC's Design Review Board Meeting - March 10, 2025
Date: Thursday, March 13, 2025 3:30:30 PM

From: Lily Brown <lbrown@bayareametro.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 2:43 PM
To: Plese, Alyssa@BCDC <alyssa.plese@bcdcc.ca.gov>; Tomerlin, Ashley@BCDC <ashley.tomerlin@bcdcc.ca.gov>
Cc: Nicola Szibbo <nszibbo@bayareametro.gov>; Toshi Shepard-Ohta <tshepard-ohta@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: RE: BCDC's Design Review Board Meeting - March 10, 2025

Hi Alyssa and Ashley,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Channel Park, Brooklyn Basin Redevelopment Project, Phase IV for BCDC's DRB meeting. We are providing the following comments on behalf of the Bay Trail Team at MTC/ABAG for the DRB review and ask that you please provide copies to the project sponsors and the DRB.

1. Bay Trail Width/Separation/Connections:

- a. We appreciate that the Bay Trail width was increased from the 2019 proposal of 15 feet to 21.5 feet to now 30 feet throughout the entire segment per the description on page 7. This is an appropriate width as the Bay Trail Design Guidelines request a starting point of an 18-foot-wide Bay Trail corridor with additional width to be considered based on the expected level of use of the Bay Trail in the future. Since this development is anticipated to be a high use and high demand area due to the scale of the development of Brooklyn Basin - the formation of a new neighborhood district, the creation of a shoreline park space, and connections to Downtown Oakland and Jack London – a 30 feet width through the Bay Trail is appropriate.
- b. The concept designs lack information on the width of the Bay Trail. We request that Bay Trail widths be added to the concept designs and that the widths be confirmed as 30 feet per the project description.
- c. We request more information on the segment of bicycle/pedestrian path that is adjacent to the parking lot but not designated as Bay Trail. What is the width of this segment? Why is it not designated as Bay Trail? How does it connect to Bay Trail on either end?
- d. We request more information on how the Bay Trail connects to the exiting Bay Trail on Embarcadero as this is not shown in the concept designs.

- 2. Proximity to Shoreline:** the concept design from 2019 shows the Bay Trail along the shoreline whereas the new concept designs show the Bay Trail set inland on the site.

The Bay Trail is intended to provide users with a shoreline experience and to be located as close to the shoreline as possible. We request more information on why the Bay Trail alignment was moved inland.

3. **Bay Trail User Amenities:** We appreciate the project sponsor's proposal to add benches, lighting, picnic tables, and trash cans to the project site but request that the DRB and project sponsor include other amenities valuable to Bay Trail users such as bottle fill/water fountains and bicycle repair stations as part of the Project.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this project and look forward to our continued partnership in improving the Bay Trail system. Please let us know if you have any questions regarding our comments.

Thank you,

Lily Brown *(she/her)*

Bay Trail Planner and Project Manager

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O: (415) 778-6721 | M: (510) 325-4169