

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

375 Beale Street, Suite 510, San Francisco, California 94105 tel 415 352 3600 fax 888 348 5190

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 Development Design Analyst (415/352-3657; ashley.tomerlin@bcdc.ca.gov)
Schuyler Olsson, Senior Environmental Scientist (415/352-3668; schuyler.olsson@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Strategy to Advance Flood protection, Ecosystems and Recreation along San Francisco Bay (SAFER Bay) in the Cities of East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Redwood City, in San Mateo County; First Pre-Application Review

(For Design Review Board consideration, July 13, 2026)

Project Overview

Project Proponents

San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority (SFCJPA) and the Cities of East Palo Alto and Menlo Park

Project Representatives

Tess Byler, SFCJPA, Project Manager

Alec Nicholas, City of East Palo Alto, Special Projects Manager

Eric Hinkley, City of Menlo Park, Associate Engineer

Project Location (Exhibit 3)

The Strategy to Advance Flood protection, Ecosystems and Recreation along San Francisco Bay Project (“SAFER Bay Project” or “Project”) is a regional project that extends along approximately seven miles of Bay shoreline, starting from O’Connor Street in East Palo Alto (at San Francisquito Creek) to Pond 7C in Redwood City, near the Menlo Park city boundary to the northwest. As shown in Figure 1, the project area encompasses current and former salt ponds, wetlands and restoration sites, a PG&E substation, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) State Route 84 (SR 84)/Dumbarton Bridge west touchdown, a private corporate campus, residential development, and community facilities.





Figure 1. Project vicinity and overview (extracted from Final Environmental Impact Report)

Project Overview (Exhibits 3-5)

The Project includes shoreline protection, restoration, and recreational features along approximately seven miles of San Mateo County shoreline, as shown in Figure 1 above.

- **Shoreline protection.** Features include levees, floodwalls, hybrid shoreline protection features, and flood risk reduction structures, and are designed to satisfy current FEMA coastal flood protection requirements (i.e., the existing 100-year flood event with required freeboard for FEMA accreditation) and up to an additional 3.5 feet of elevation to account for anticipated sea level rise as well as other applicable FEMA design criteria.
- **Restoration.** Major restoration elements include tidal salt marsh restoration, enhancement of pond habitat for western snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*, WSP), conversion of existing seabird islands in Pond SF 2 to WSP habitat, and creation of seabird islands in the Ravenswood Pond Complex; creation/restoration of salt marsh-upland transition habitat along a 10:1 levee slope within the Ravenswood Pond Complex; and a 3:1 levee slope with transitional habitat elsewhere within the project site.
- **Recreation.** The Project overlaps with segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail) and other trails and includes improvements to shoreline access. Where the Bay Trail would be replaced or extended, the segments would incorporate design standards adopted for the Bay Trail and designed in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. By elevating shoreline

trails, the Project would also reduce the current trails' exposure to flooding, thereby increasing public access and trail longevity.

The Project is comprised of eight reaches (Figure 1 and described below), to be administered by different entities and implemented over multiple design packages. The design packages are at various stages in development that will inform the Board's current review. The design packages from south to north:

- **South of Bay Road Reach (City of East Palo Alto) – targeting 100% design by October 2026 – project review**
- North of Bay Road Reach (City of East Palo Alto, in coordination with others) – program review
- Dumbarton Approach Reach (SFCJPA, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), San Francisco Public Utilities Commission [SFPUC] and Caltrans) – program review
- **Substation and Marsh Restoration, Tech Campus, and Bayfront Expressway Reaches (City of Menlo Park) – targeting 90% design by December 2026 – project review**
- Bedwell Bayfront Park Reach (To be determined) – program review
- Marsh Road Reach (San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District [One Shoreline]) – program review

Summary of BCDC Preapplication Process

Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT)

The project team has been undergoing a pre-application review process with the San Francisco Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration (BRRIT) team since March 2020. The BRRIT is an interagency team of staff from seven regulatory agencies, including BCDC and six other state and federal agencies, that works collaboratively to improve the permitting process for multi-benefit restoration projects in San Francisco Bay that are eligible to receive funding under Measure AA.

Measure AA is a voter-approved, 20-year regional parcel tax program passed in 2017, that provides roughly \$25 million annually to fund projects throughout the nine-county Bay Area that restore wetlands and wildlife habitat, improve water quality, reduce pollution, enhance shoreline resilience to flooding and sea level rise, and expand public access to the Bay. The BRRIT works closely with project teams to identify and resolve any potential permitting issues, and to improve project design and expected outcomes early during the pre-application phase. The BRRIT has met with the SAFER team approximately six times during pre-application since March 2020, in addition to smaller meetings with specific BRRIT agencies.

Engineering Criteria Review Board (ECRB)

The Project is scheduled to be reviewed by the ECRB on July 22, 2026.

Project Site

Site History

The project area was originally tidal marsh inhabited by the Ohlone and Costanoan peoples. In the mid-1800s, the land was developed as a shipping town, including construction of a wharf at the end of Bay

Road, in what is now East Palo Alto, and initial residential subdivisions. The land later transitioned to agricultural and manufacturing uses.

In 1910, the Dumbarton Rail Bridge opened and provided a freight rail connection between Newark and Redwood City until 1982. The rail right-of-way and western touchdown are located just north of the current Midpeninsula Open Space District's (Midpen) Ravenswood Preserve. In 1927, the Dumbarton Vehicular Bridge opened. That bridge was replaced by the current structure in 1982. In 1974, the approaches to the bridge were widened up to 94 feet and involved filling 10.75 acres of salt ponds, marsh, and managed wetlands.

From 1932 to 1960, the land known today as Cooley Landing was used as a county dump. While much of the material was burned, most of the current Cooley Landing peninsula is the result of the landfill. From 1960 to 1998, this peninsula was home to the Palo Alto Boat Works, a marine repair operation. In 1998, this parcel was sold to Peninsula Open Space Trust and later transferred to the City of East Palo Alto in 2006. The site went through remediation, and Cooley Landing Park opened to the public in July 2012.

In the 1950s, the Leslie Salt Company used much of the marshlands for salt production, constructing a levee system to manage tidal waters in the resulting ponds. In 1981, Midpen purchased parcels south of SR 84, opening the Ravenswood Preserve in 1989. Midpen's marsh restoration began in 2000. In 2003, the State of California and the United States acquired 16,500 acres of commercial salt ponds in San Francisco Bay from Cargill, Inc. (successor to Leslie Salt). The purpose of the acquisition was to protect, restore and enhance the property for fish and wildlife, and to provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation and education. Many of the berm alignments seen today reflect the historic berm alignments in place when BCDC jurisdiction was established in 1965.



Figure 2. Composite of 1965 aerial imagery overlaid on modern street map

BCDC Jurisdiction (Exhibit 12)

The Project, including the new levees that will support public access, involves work within BCDC's Bay, 100-foot shoreline band, and salt pond jurisdictions (Figure 3). Significant portions of former salt ponds SF2, R3, R4, and R5 are classified as BCDC Bay jurisdiction, due to full or managed tidal restoration activities that occurred within the ponds after establishment of BCDC jurisdiction on September 17, 1965. The portions of those ponds that remain above Bay elevations (e.g. upper portions of external or internal berms/levees or internal islands) retain salt pond jurisdiction. Ponds R1 and R2 have not been restored and as such retain BCDC salt pond jurisdiction, including the ponds and surrounding levees.

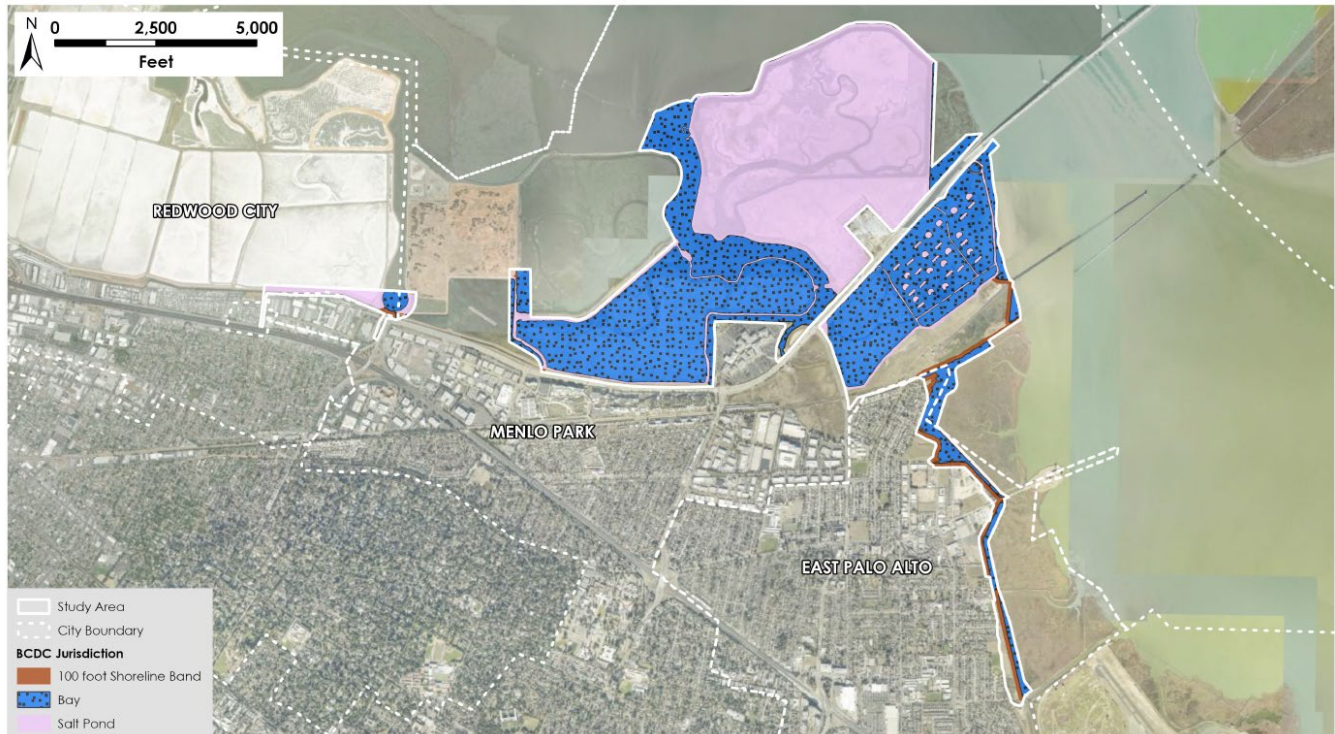


Figure 3. BCDC Jurisdiction (figure developed by project team)

BCDC Permitting History

Existing BCDC Permits at Project Site

The BCDC permitting history in the project area is extensive, ranging from minor capital improvement projects to major restoration, dredging, fill, and shoreline protection projects. The selected permits listed below are most relevant to the public access in the project area and have been organized geographically by levee reach. A description of each proposed levee reach is provided in the Project Description section below.

South of Bay Road Reach (East Palo Alto)

- **BCDC Permit No. M1981.071.01 (City of East Palo Alto).** Authorized the installation of a new pump station at O'Conner Street and San Francisquito Creek. The permittees are required to make the existing levees west and northwest of San Francisquito Creek available for pedestrian access, viewing, and fishing.
- **BCDC Permit No. M1983.058.00 (City of Palo Alto).** Authorized the improvement of 3000 linear feet of levee. Public access improvements include creation of an 8-foot-wide bicycle and pedestrian path along the top of the levee, a 140-foot-long, 10-foot-wide bridge across San

Francisquito Creek to link the new path to another path outside BCDC jurisdiction, and wayfinding signage.

- **BCDC Permit No. M1988.005.00 (San Mateo County and Midpen).** Authorized construction of connector path between Runnymede Street to the existing levee top Baylands Trail.

Substation and Marsh Restoration, Tech Campus, and Bayfront Expressway Reaches (Menlo Park)

- **BCDC Permit No. 1978.026.08 (Sun Microsystems/Facebook).** Authorized the development of a peripheral access road, parking facilities, and public access in the 100-foot shoreline band. Required public access includes 4.8 acres of a landscaped area; a 4,700-linear-foot, 6-foot-wide bicycle/pedestrian path; six viewing plazas/seating areas; parking for 10 vehicles; and the Facebook Bay Trail undercrossing.
- **BCDC Permit No. 1999.016.04 (Caltrans).** Authorized SR 84 widening and safety improvements. The public access included pedestrian safety and accessibility improvements at the intersection with University Ave.; bicycle route improvements including sharrows, widened shoulders, and bicycle and pedestrian pathways along much of the SR 84 western bridge approach and the frontage road; widening of the Facebook undercrossing; viewing areas; benches; interpretive elements; and wayfinding.
- **BCDC Consistency Determination No. C2017.008.02 (USFWS).** Authorized restoration at the Ravenswood Complex (Ponds R3, R4, R5, and S5) as part of Phase 2 of the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project. Public access includes a half-mile trail atop the improved north-south levee between the Bay Trail at Bayfront Expressway and Bedwell Bayfront Park (shown as the Flyway Trail on Exhibits 6 and 7), a viewing platform with amenities, and interpretive elements.

Future Design Packages: North of Bay Road (East Palo Alto) and Dumbarton Approach (SFCJPA)

- **BCDC Permit No. 1973.020.15 (Caltrans).** Within the SAFER Bay project area, the permit authorized filling of 10.75 acres of salt ponds, marsh, and managed wetlands to widen the western Dumbarton Bridge approach to 94 feet and create three connector roads with adjacent bicycle paths. The required public access includes 8- to 10-foot-wide minimum bicycle and pedestrian pathways on land and on the bridge, a bridge belvedere and plaza, a lookout area, parking for 11 vehicles, and wayfinding. The lookout replaced public access on the north side of the western bridge approach that was required in BCDC Permit No. 1999.016, and was displaced by the pumpstation.
- **BCDC Permit No. 1982.015.08 (Lucky Acre Associates).** The permit authorized creation of a channel to prevent people from entering the marsh, road expansion and installation of drainage and utilities. The public access improvements include two public access boardwalks, 830 linear feet of all-weather surfaced pathways, a sidewalk, a landscaped public access area with amenities, parking for five vehicles, and wayfinding signage.
- **BCDC Permit No. 1985.008.00 (Leslie Salt Company).** For work authorized in Redwood City, the permit required 1,400 linear feet of trail on the bayfront levee south of the Dumbarton Bridge.
- **BCDC Permit No. M1988.005.00 (San Mateo County and Midpen).** In addition to the Runnymede Street path described above, the permit also includes levee improvements and construction of two segments of the partially completed County Baylands Trail and associated public access improvements, including two viewing decks.

- **BCDC Permit No. 2003.007.06 (California Department of Fish and Wildlife).** Authorized habitat restoration at former salt ponds, public access trails, viewing platforms, and interpretive displays as part of the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project. This project came before the Board in 2007; the Board focused on ensuring resilient elevations for public access, adequate parking, “access to access”, and designing dead end trails to attract more public usage.
- **BCDC Permit No. M2019.025.00 (Midpen).** Authorized habitat enhancement and Bay Trail improvements including boardwalk connectors between the Bay Trail levee and a San Francisco Public Utilities Commission maintenance road, repaving, and pedestrian bridge across the tidal channel.

Other Relevant Permits

- **BCDC Permit No. M1980.104.00 (County of San Mateo).** Authorized widening and improvement of Bay Road in Palo Alto from 25 to 93 feet, including landscaping and bicycle lanes. The work was never constructed
- **BCDC Permit No. M2011.002.02 (City of East Palo Alto).** Authorized shoreline protection, renovation of a boat launch facility for emergency services, and creation of a public park and education center at Cooley Landing Park. Required public access improvements include a restroom, bike racks, picnic tables, interpretive exhibits, benches, and parking for 12 vehicles.

Existing Conditions

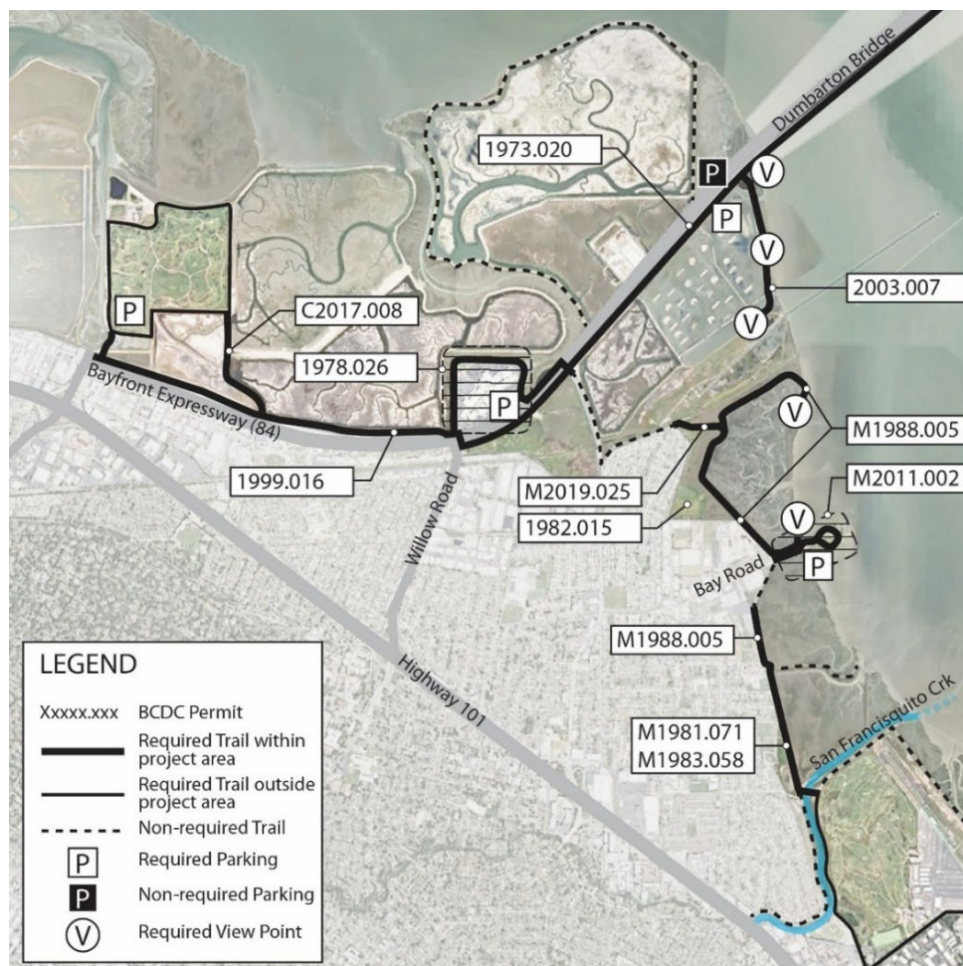


Figure 4. BCDC-required public access in and along the project area.

Existing Uses and Public Access (Exhibits 6-7)

Public access in the project area has been developed overtime and many different permits as noted above (Figure 4). The primary public access feature is Bay Trail including Class I shared use paths, unpaved levee top trails, and boardwalk. Nearby refuge areas and open space have also developed shoreline trails for passive and active recreation such as bird watching and fishing.

There are five formalized viewing platforms located at two of the restoration sites south of SR 84. Four of the viewing platforms would not be changed by this project. A fifth viewing area is located on the south side of the Dumbarton Bridge underpass (the northernmost viewing area shown in Figure 4 above). The viewing area consists of a large concrete bridge footing remaining from the previous seismic upgrade to the Dumbarton Bridge, and is located outboard of the proposed floodwall. The project team has not yet determined whether the viewing area would be removed and relocated (to a location yet to be determined) or protected in place. This location has historically been used for pier and shoreline fishing, though the Ravenswood Fishing Pier associated with the Dumbarton Bridge permit was removed with the 2009 seismic retrofit. Another fishing pier is located at East Palo Alto's Cooley Landing, approximately 1.5 miles to the south.

Circulation (Exhibits 6-7)

The project area is currently accessed via the Bay Trail, many neighborhood connections, and Public Shore parking areas. The existing Bay Trail runs along most of the project reaches, and along with local connector and nature trails, is the primary improvement providing public access, recreation and non-motorized transportation. Trail conditions vary greatly in materiality and condition along the shoreline and include paved sections up to 12 feet wide, 5- to 10-foot-wide unpaved levee trails, boardwalks, and sidewalks. The Bay Trail along Bayfront Expressway/SR 84 is currently limited to the south side of the roadway from Willow Road to the Caltrans Vista Point at the bridge touchdown.

Public Shore parking is available at the key shoreline destinations Cooley Landing, Dumbarton Bridge Vista Point Parking, the Meta campus, and Bedwell Bayfront Park. There is also non-required shoreline parking available along the frontage road, north of SR 84, and street parking in the East Palo Alto neighborhoods.

Transit options are generally limited in the project area.

Project Description

The Project includes shoreline protection, restoration, and recreational features along approximately seven miles of San Mateo County shoreline. The overall purpose is to reduce risks to people, property, and infrastructure from current tidal flooding and projected sea level rise through engineered and natural features that enhance shoreline ecosystems and improve recreational opportunities.

The Project was divided into eight levee reaches during preparation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report. During the July 13, 2026, meeting, the Board will conduct detailed review of four reaches, which are currently progressing to 90% or 100% design by late 2026, as described in the Project Schedule section. The remaining reaches will be reviewed by the Board at a programmatic level at the July 13 meeting, and may be reviewed by the Board in detail at a future meeting when the design has progressed further.

The following levee reaches will be reviewed in detail on July 13:

South of Bay Road Reach (East Palo Alto) (Exhibits 21-33)

- Design lead: City of East Palo Alto
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 5,270 linear feet of a levee/floodwall hybrid. The top of the Bay Trail and floodwall are designed to an elevation of 12.8–18 feet and 16.5 feet North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88)¹, respectively. A flood gate is proposed at Bay Road, where the road is not being raised. The flood gate will not be subject to Board review during the July 13 meeting, but may be reviewed at a future meeting in conjunction with the North of Bay Road Reach.
- Habitat elements: The Project includes transition zone habitat with 3:1 horizontal-to-vertical (3H:1V) slopes adjacent to the Faber and Laumeister marshes. Certain tidal marsh channel segments would need to be realigned near the bayward levee toe to account for levee impacts.
- Recreation: The Project includes realignment and widening of the Bay Trail to 20 feet; re-establishing connection to the Faber–Laumeister Trail; and enhancing and creating pedestrian access points from the adjacent community.

Substation and Marsh Restoration (Menlo Park) (Exhibits 34-37, 45-48)

- Design lead: City of Menlo Park
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 5,215 linear feet of levee, designed to an elevation of 10 to 21 feet.
- Habitat elements: The Project include transition zone habitat composed of 10H:1V slopes adjacent to Pond R2, restoration of tidal salt marsh in Ponds R1 and R2, and creation of seabird nesting islands in Pond R1.
- Recreation: The Project includes decommissioning 1.8 miles of the looped Ravenswood Trail around Ponds R1 and R2. As part of a future phase, the remainder of the trail would be converted to two spur trails originating on either side of the Ravenswood Substation. The northernmost 1,500 feet of the western spur trail would be closed during the seabird nesting season. The spur trails are not subject to review during the July 13 meeting.

The Project was also recently modified to include a new trail segment outboard of the PG&E substation, intended to replace the existing trail connection provided by the Ravenswood Trail that is planned for closure with the levee breaches. The levee is designed to accommodate an 18- to 20-foot-wide trail. The intent of the new segment is to ensure continued connectivity along the shoreline. This is a recent design modification that has not been reviewed in detail by the other BRRIT agencies, but initial discussions with agency staff have suggested there may be concerns with potential impacts on wildlife from this element. As such, it has not been confirmed if the Bay Trail would be included on top of the substation levee or if it would go along the frontage road, on the inland side of the PG&E substation.

¹ All elevations given throughout the rest of the document are in NAVD 88.

An overlook is also proposed at the northeast corner of the PG&E substation that includes a secondary pedestrian path at a lower elevation, a sculptural seating element, waste receptacles, and interpretive signage.

Tech Campus (Menlo Park) (Exhibits 34-37, 41-45, 47)

- Design lead: City of Menlo Park
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 4,940 linear feet of levee and levee/floodwall hybrid. The top of levee is designed to 19.3–22.3 feet; the top of levee/trail around Meta Headquarters is designed to 14.7–19.6; and the top of floodwall designed to 18.5.
- Habitat elements: Elements include transition zone habitat (primarily grassland) with 3H:1V slopes adjacent to Ravenswood Slough, and enhancement of western snowy plover habitat in Pond R3.
- Recreation: The Project would extend the Bay Trail from Substation and Marsh Restoration Reach to a public shoreline access trail at Meta Headquarters and replace a public shoreline access trail around Meta Headquarters. The levee is designed to accommodate an 18-foot-wide trail. Also proposed are three overlooks, including seating with a shade structure, sculptural seating elements, waste receptacles, a secondary pathway at lower elevation, a bike/pedestrian bridge connecting to the substation reach, and accessible connections to adjacent inland access points. The addition of this bridge is a recent design modification that has not been reviewed in detail by the other BRRIT agencies, but initial discussions with agency staff have suggested there may be concerns with potential impacts on wildlife from this element. As such, it is not confirmed whether the proposed bridge would ultimately be included in the project. Trail connectivity would be maintained with or without the bridge.

Bayfront Expressway (Menlo Park) (Exhibits 34-37, 38-41, 47)

- Design lead: City of Menlo Park
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 6,700 linear feet of levee designed to elevation 10 to 19.6 feet NAVD 88.
- Habitat elements: The Project includes transition zone habitat (primarily grassland) with 3H:1V slopes adjacent to Pond R4, and enhancement of western snowy plover habitat in Pond R3.
- Recreation: The Project includes approximately 4,200 linear feet of levee-top trail that will run parallel to the existing Bay Trail, which is landward of the proposed levee, and improvement of the existing Flyway Trail. The levee is designed to accommodate an 18-foot-wide trail. Also proposed are seating with a shade structure, sculptural seating elements, waste receptacles, interpretive elements, accessible connections to the existing pathway at lower elevation, and three overlooks.

The following levee reaches will be reviewed at a programmatic level on July 13:

North of Bay Road (East Palo Alto) (Exhibit 5)

- Design lead: City of East Palo Alto, in coordination with others
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 4,735 linear feet of levee, designed to elevation 17.8 to 18.5 feet. A flood gate is proposed at the railroad tracks.

- Habitat elements: Elements include transition zone habitat with 3H:1V slopes adjacent to Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and realigning channel segments near the levee toe to account for levee impacts.
- Recreation: The Project would realign and widen the Bay Trail to 20 feet from Bay Road to the Midpen Bay Trail boardwalk, and route a boardwalk section over the proposed levee.

Dumbarton Approach (Menlo Park) (Exhibit 5)

- Design lead: SFCJPA, in coordination with USFWS, SFPUC and Caltrans
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 9,135 linear feet of levee, floodwall, and levee/floodwall hybrid. This reach is split into three smaller segments. The southern segment, south of Pond SF2 (in coordination with SFPUC) would range in elevation from 18.5 to 21.4 feet. The central portion through Pond SF2 would range from 8.0 to 24.4 feet. In the Northern segment (in coordination with Caltrans) the top of floodwall would be 18.5 feet and the top of Bay Trail would be 14.5–21 feet.
- Habitat elements: The Project includes transition zone habitat with 3H:1V slopes adjacent to Mosely Tract Marsh, and expansion and enhancement of western snowy plover habitat in Pond SF2.
- Recreation: In this area, recreational trail access (the Pond SF2 Trail) is currently provided along the eastern side of cell U1 and the southeast corner of cell U4 on Pond SF2. Two viewing platforms constructed by the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project (SBSPRP) are located along this trail, including one in cell U1 and another near the terminus of the trail in cell U4. The new levee would intersect the southern portion of the Pond SF2 Trail, approximately 265 linear feet east of the existing viewing platform. To maintain the existing public access to this viewing platform, the Project would include an American Disabilities Act compliant ramp over the levee to the viewing platform. A 300-foot buffer would be included between suitable WSP habitat in SF2 (Cell U4) and the viewing platform to minimize wildlife disturbances. In addition, the platform would be outfitted with coyote rollers to prevent avian perching.

Separately, a third viewing area is located on the south side of the Dumbarton Bridge underpass, which would be located outboard of the proposed floodwall. The project team has not yet determined whether the viewing area would be removed and relocated (to a location yet to be determined) or protected in place.

- The Project includes new Bay Trail north of SR 84 along the frontage road and widening of affected existing portions of the Bay Trail south of the eastbound lanes of SR 84.

Bedwell Bayfront Park (Menlo Park) (Exhibit 5)

- Design lead: To be determined
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes approximately 1,065 linear feet of levee designed to elevation 12.1 to 18.6 feet.
- Habitat elements: The Project includes transition zone habitat (primarily grassland) with 3H:1V slopes adjacent to Pond R4. No salt marsh modifications or improvements are proposed.
- Recreation: The Project would extend the Bay Trail west to Marsh Road Reach.

Marsh Road (Menlo Park and Redwood City) (Exhibit 5)

- Design lead: San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District (One Shoreline)
- Shoreline protection: The Project includes 3,165 linear feet of levee designed to elevation 11.1 to 18.6 feet.
- Habitat elements: Transition zone habitat includes 3H:1V slopes adjacent to Flood Slough. No salt marsh modifications or improvements are proposed.
- Recreation: No improvements are proposed.

Project Schedule (Exhibit 20)

The Project is currently in pre-application review with BCDC and the BRRIT. The Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project was certified by the SFCJPA governing board on May 28, 2026. The project team plans to complete 100% design of the South of Bay Road Reach (in East Palo Alto) by October 2026; complete 90% design of the Substation and Marsh Restoration, Tech Campus, and Bayfront Expressway Reaches (in Menlo Park) by December 2026; and submit permit applications to BCDC in early 2027. Project construction of the various levee reaches would be phased from approximately 2029 to approximately 2034, though there is substantial uncertainty in the final construction timeline. Because the Board is only reviewing certain reaches during the initial review in July 2026 as described above, it is anticipated that any BCDC permit issued for the Project may include a special condition requiring the project team to present the remaining reaches to the Board at a future date and prior to receiving final plan review and commencing construction on those reaches.

Social and Environmental Justice Planning 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 block groups using American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 5-year estimate data and at the level of Census tracts using CalEnviroScreen 4.0, and is used by Commission staff to help identify communities where environmental justice may be a concern. 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.

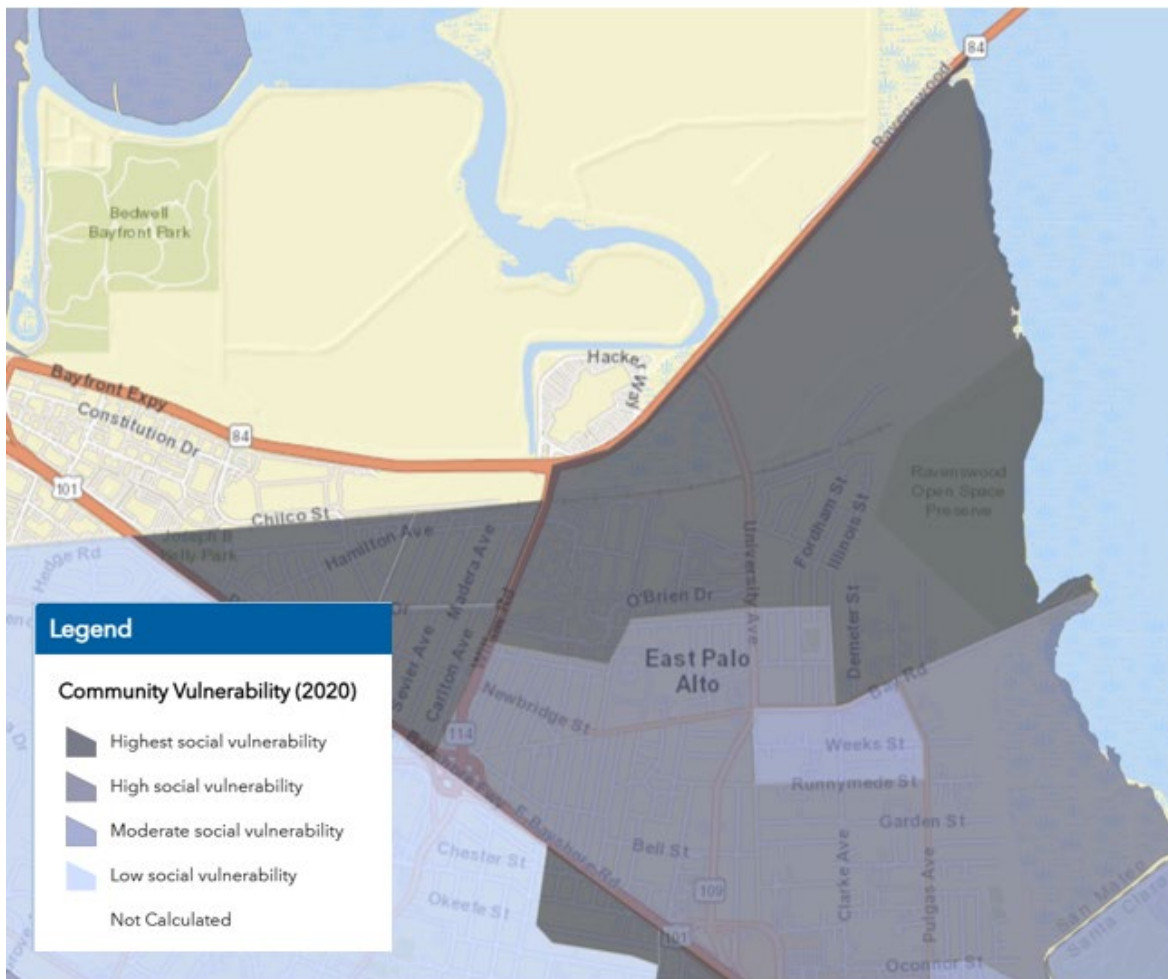


Figure 5. Community vulnerability at project area, 2020

According to the Community Vulnerability Mapping Tool (ACS and BCDC, 2023), significant portions of the Project are located within or adjacent to various Census block groups identified as having moderate or high social vulnerability, and moderate to highest contamination vulnerability. As the Project spans multiple census blocks in the Cities of East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Redwood City, summary information is provided below social and contamination vulnerability indicators²:

- 70th Percentile (Social Vulnerability): Disabled, Limited English Proficiency, No High School Degree, No Vehicle, Not U.S. Citizen, People of Color, Renter, Severe Housing Cost Burden, Single Parent, Under 5, Very Low Income
- 90th Percentile (Social Vulnerability): Disabled, Limited English Proficiency, No High School Degree, Not U.S. Citizen, People of Color, Renter, Severe Housing Cost Burden, Single Parent, Under 5
- 70th Percentile (Contamination Vulnerability): Cleanup Sites, Groundwater Threats, Hazardous Waste, Impaired Water Bodies, Solid Waste Sites

² The lists combined all indicators that were identified under the relevant percentile for one or more census blocks within or immediately adjacent to the project site.

- 90th Percentile (Contamination Vulnerability): Cleanup Sites, Groundwater Threats, Hazardous Waste, Solid Waste Sites

Community Engagement (Exhibit 16)

The project team began initial community engagement efforts during completion of the SAFER Bay Project Feasibility Studies for the Cities of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto in 2016. Efforts broadened substantially in 2019, when the SFCJPA began a partnership with local community-based organizations (CBOs) Nuestra Casa and Climate Resilient Communities (“CRC”, then part of Acterra). Nuestra Casa and CRC led development of a formal public engagement plan for the project in 2022, which was further updated in April 2026. The engagement plan is designed to raise awareness of flooding and sea level rise risks to the communities and the need for adaptation planning, and to provide meaningful opportunities for community input on the project design.

Starting in 2025, the project moved from SFCJPA-led to city-led design for specific levee reaches. Consequently, the cities of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto developed and began implementing separate City-specific outreach plans. The outreach plans emphasize reducing barriers to community participation through various methods, including language translations and interpretation; culturally-appropriate communications; bringing engagement to where community members are; offering stipends, meals, childcare, and transportation assistance to participants; and other methods.

Outreach efforts have included a mix of in-person and online engagement strategies to reach and gain input from diverse stakeholders, including workshops, presentations, site tours, pop-ups, and other events; a SAFER community advisory group; public surveys; social and other media; newsletters and mailings; canvassing; project webpages; and other methods. The project team has also begun conducting tribal consultations.

To date, the project team has conducted more than 150 public outreach events, reaching more than 3,000 people within the FEMA floodplain. Additional outreach is planned throughout project design and construction.

During a recent community workshop in East Palo Alto, community members expressed satisfaction with current plans for Bay Trail ramp locations at Runnymede, Cypress, and MLK Park, with many expressing interest in installing stairs at these locations. There was unanimous support for interpretive signage, including relating to environment and wildlife; history; and safety/navigation. There was strong interest in flowering vegetation and public art along the trails. Other project elements requested for future development included public amenities, such as water stations, shaded areas, benches with solar charging outlets, and bike repair stations; and better project integration with stormwater and sanitary sewer systems. Community members also expressed the desire to retain alternate trail access when trails are temporarily closed or impacted due to construction.

According to the project team, certain environmental groups have expressed a desire for a narrower levee and trail within the South of Bay Road Reach, compared to the proposed 20-foot-wide trail, to reduce impacts to Laumeister and Faber Marshes.

Other common community priorities described the project team include: 1) timeliness of project implementation to appropriately address flood risks; 2) minimizing construction impacts (including traffic, risks of existing soil, groundwater contamination and air quality concerns; 3) grouping trails and

shoreline access together, including location, design, and temporary closures; and 4) managing the possible increase in trash due to more people on the trails.

Project changes made due to community outreach efforts to date include a modified project footprint within the Tech Campus reach (i.e., re-routing a portion of the reach along the urban-marsh interface to retain approximately two acres of salt marsh, and adding a pedestrian bridge over the marsh); a detailed groundwater rise evaluation; soil testing; using Residential Environmental Screening Levels for soil import; use of electric construction vehicles where feasible; and consideration of baseline and real time air noise monitoring.

Commission Plans, Policies, and Guidelines

San Francisco Bay Plan Policies

The San Francisco Bay Plan (Bay Plan) contains several policy sections relevant to the design of the public access areas for this project, including the Bay Plan Map (No. 7); Environmental Justice and Social Equity; Climate Change; Recreation; Public Access; and Appearance, Design and Scenic Views.

San Francisco Bay Plan Map Policies

- **Policy No. 7, Dumbarton Bridge:** “Approaches should provide for fishing and wildlife observation. Maintain existing public path.”

Environmental Justice and Social Equity

- **Policy No. 3 (in part):** “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 such outreach and engagement should continue throughout the Commission review and permitting processes.”

Climate Change

- **Policy No. 3 (in part):** “...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 No. 5:** “Wherever feasible and appropriate, effective, innovative sea level rise adaptation approaches should be encouraged.”

Recreation

- **Policy No. 1 (in part):** “Diverse and accessible water-oriented recreational facilities, such as marinas, launch ramps, beaches, and fishing piers, should be provided to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying population, and should be well distributed around the Bay and improved to accommodate a broad range of water-oriented recreational activities for people of all races, cultures, ages and income levels.”

- **Policy No. 3.a.** “General Recreational facilities should:(1) Be well distributed around the shores of the Bay to the extent consistent with the more specific criteria below...(3) Be feasible from an engineering viewpoint; and (4) Be consistent with the public access policies that address wildlife compatibility and disturbance...(7) Access to marinas, launch ramps, beaches, fishing piers, and other recreational facilities should be clearly posted with signs and easily available from parking reserved for the public or from public streets or trails. (8) To reduce the human health risk posed by consumption of contaminated fish, projects that create or improve fishing access to the Bay at water-oriented recreational facilities, such as fishing piers...should include signage that informs the public of consumption advisories for the species of Bay fish that have been identified as having potentially unsafe levels of contaminants. (9) Complete segments of the Bay and Ridge Trails where appropriate, consistent with Policy 4-a-6.
- **Policy No. 6** (in part): “To enhance the appearance of shoreline areas, and to permit maximum public use of the shores and waters of the Bay, flood control projects should be carefully designed and landscaped and, whenever possible, should provide for recreational uses of channels and banks.”

Shoreline Protection

- **Policy No. 6 (in part):** “Adverse impacts to natural resources and public access from new shoreline protection should be avoided. When feasible, shoreline protection projects should include components to retain safe and convenient water access, for activities such as fishing, swimming, and boating, especially in communities lacking such access. Where significant impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation or alternative public access should be provided.”

Public Access

- **Policy No. 2 (in part):** “...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...except in cases where public access would be clearly inconsistent with the project because of public safety considerations or significant use conflicts, including unavoidable, significant adverse effects on Bay natural resources. In these cases, in lieu access at another location preferably near the project should be provided. If in lieu public access is required and cannot be provided near the project site, the required access should be located preferably near identified vulnerable or disadvantaged communities lacking well-maintained and convenient public access...”
- **Policy No. 4 (in part):** “Public access should be sited, designed and managed to prevent significant adverse effects on wildlife.”
- **Policy No. 5 (in part):** “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. In particular, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and/or underrepresented communities should be involved.”
- **Policy No. 6:** “Public access should be sited, designed, managed and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding.”

- **Policy No. 7 (in part):** “Any 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.”
- **Policy No. 8 (in part):** “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... The improvements should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline, should provide barrier free access for persons with disabilities, for people of all income levels, and for people of all cultures to the maximum feasible extent, should include an ongoing maintenance program, and should be identified with appropriate signs, including using appropriate languages or culturally-relevant icon-based signage.”
- **Policy No. 9:** “In some areas, a small amount of fill may be allowed if the fill is necessary and is the minimum absolutely required to develop the project in accordance with the Commission's public access requirements.”
- **Policy No. 10 (in part):** “Access to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available”
- **Policy No. 13 (in part):** “The Public Access Design Guidelines should be used as a guide to siting and designing public access consistent with a proposed project. The Design Review Board should advise the Commission regarding the adequacy of the public access proposed. The Design Review Board should encourage diverse public access to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying population.”

Appearance, Design and Scenic Views

- **Policy No. 2 (in part):** “All bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay. Maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore.”
- **Policy No. 14 (in part):** “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.”

Board Questions

Staff recommends the Board frame its remarks of the proposed public access improvements considering the existing permit requirements and the proposed development project. The Board may wish to refer to the public access objectives found in the Commission’s Public Access Design Guidelines. Additionally, please provide feedback on the proposed public access improvements 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.

Staff also has the following specific questions for the Board's consideration:

1. Does the Board have any recommendations on the proposed circulation network and the adequacy of connections to and along the shoreline? Do the various destinations and programmed nodes feel cohesive?
2. Does the Board have recommendations for elements or design criteria to be included in the less developed reaches? If these reaches come back to the Board for review, what would you like to see included in those designs and packages?
3. Are the proposed elevations sufficiently resilient to sea level rise for the life of this project? Does the project design overall provide sufficient flexibility for future adaptation to sea level rise?
4. As described in the Project Description, initial BRRIT agency discussions suggest there may be concerns regarding potential wildlife impacts related to two recent design modifications (i.e., the pedestrian bridge within the Tech Campus reach and the trail alignment on the Bayside of the PG&E substation within the Substation and Marsh Restoration Reach). Does the Board have recommendations on how to avoid or minimize wildlife impacts in these areas while retaining trail connectivity and desirable public access experiences?
5. Where proposed features may need to be removed due to potential impacts on natural resources, does the Board have recommendations for priorities or alternative programming to guide further design development?
6. What factors should staff account for in considering a reduction of Bay Trail width within the South of Bay Road reach for the purpose of reducing impacts to the adjacent marsh area resulting from levee fill?