

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: Bottoms Property Residential Development, Richmond
(For Board consideration on February 10, 2014, First Pre-Application Review)

Project Summary

Applicant: Shea Homes

Project Representatives: Don Hofer, Shea Homes; Rob Wainwright, Wainwright Consulting

Project Site. Shea Homes has the option to purchase the Bottoms Property, in the City of Richmond, Contra Costa County. The 25-acre project site consists of 11 acres of land and 14 acres of water. It is bounded by Seacliff Drive to the west, a single-family residential neighborhood to the north, Canal Boulevard and the Port of Richmond's Shipyard No. 3 to the east, and the San Francisco Bay to the south. The site is generally flat, with a small bluff on the north side of the property. There is a small beach along the northwestern part of the shoreline and scattered rubble and debris along the southeastern part of the shoreline.

The property has been subject to remediation associated with prior industrial uses conducted at the site involving ship repair and salvage. In 1998, per a State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) order, most of the site was remediated except for an area adjacent to the Bay and an area beneath Seacliff Drive that cannot be developed for residential purposes. DTSC certified that cleanup levels were met allowing for unrestricted land use within the remediated areas.

The City of Richmond constructed a segment of Bay Trail between Canal Boulevard and Seacliff Drive in 2013 within a City-owned easement on the property. The Bay Trail also runs along Seacliff Drive and Canal Boulevard, to the west and east of the property. Vehicle parking is not allowed along Seacliff Drive in the vicinity of the proposed project. The project site is otherwise vacant and undeveloped.

Proposed Project and Public Access. Shea Homes proposes to build a new 60-unit residential development consisting of five 2-story buildings along the shoreline and four 4-story buildings inland. They anticipate approximately 170 residents. The primary property entrance would be from Seacliff Drive. A secondary entrance is proposed along Canal Boulevard at the northwest corner of the site. The proposed buildings would be located outside of the Commission's jurisdiction, while some private patios, landscaping, walkways, an entry road, and public access improvements would be located within the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction. Grass-covered dunes would provide a natural separation between public shoreline areas and the proposed residences.

Existing public access includes the segment of Bay Trail recently installed by the City of Richmond between Canal Boulevard and Seacliff Drive and associated way-finding signs. The beach is informally used for various recreational activities such as paddle boarding, sailing model boats, and strolling along the shoreline.



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The project would result in new public access amenities and provide connections to the Bay Trail recently installed by the City. Proposed improvements include: (1) widening the existing sidewalk near the proposed project entrance on Seacliff Drive for safer pedestrian and bicycle access to the trail; (2) installing traffic signs and a crosswalk where a new vehicle entrance is proposed along Canal Boulevard at the northwest corner of the site; (3) providing approximately 12 public access parking spaces at the adjacent Port of Richmond property; and (4) installing landscaping, two benches, an interpretive panel, and two trash cans. The project Homeowners' Association would assume on-going maintenance responsibility for the Bay Trail and the public access area in the future.

Design Review Issues. Staff requests that the Board consider the following issues in reviewing the proposed project:

1. **Connections to the Public Access.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Public Access policies state: "Improvements provided as a condition of any approval should... provide for the public's safety and convenience." The applicant has worked with the City of Richmond and the Trails for Richmond Action Committee (TRAC) to devise solutions for safer access to the Bay Trail from Seacliff Drive and along Canal Boulevard. Near the project entrance on Seacliff Drive the applicant proposes to widen the sidewalk from five feet to ten feet. Where a new vehicle entrance is proposed along Canal Boulevard the applicant proposes to install traffic signs and a crosswalk.

The Board should advise on whether the proposed improvements near the project entrances on Seacliff Drive and Canal Boulevard would provide a safe and secure experience for trail users. The Board should also consider whether the design at these two connections provides access to persons with disabilities to the maximum extent feasible.

2. **Proposed Amenities.** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access spaces should be "designed and built to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities along the shoreline", to create a "sense of place", and be "designed for a wide range of users". The *Guidelines* further state "view opportunities, shoreline configuration and access points are factors that determine a site's inherent public access opportunities." Proposed amenities include approximately 12 public access parking spaces on the adjacent Port of Richmond property, landscaping, two benches, an interpretive panel, and two trash cans.

The Board's advice is sought as to whether the proposed amenities are appropriate or could be enhanced for visitors. Is the proposed seating and landscaping optimally sited to take advantage of viewing opportunities afforded at the site? The Board should consider whether the proposed location for parking on the adjacent Port of Richmond property is convenient, if the number of spaces is adequate, and if on-site parking near the Seacliff Drive project entrance is needed for visitors with disabilities that may not be able to access the site from the parking proposed on the Port of Richmond property.

3. **Water Access.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Recreation policies state: "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..." The policies also state: "Launching facilities should be accessible and designed to ensure that boaters can easily launch their watercraft." The beach is reportedly used by community residents for various recreational activities, such as paddle boarding, sailing model boats, and strolling along the shoreline. The applicant is open to providing access to the shoreline, but is reluctant to construct any in-water improvements. Shallow water depths at this location may limit recreational activities. An existing launch site is located less than a mile away at Ferry Point in the Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline Park.

The Board's advice is sought on whether access to the beach is desirable. The Board should also consider how the shoreline access would function and integrate with shoreside amenities.

4. **Visual Access.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views policies state: "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." The proposed development would impact views of the Bay from Seacliff Drive and Canal Boulevard.

The Board should consider whether views of the Bay may be further preserved and enhanced from public