

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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July 7, 2023

Amended Application Summary

777 Airport Boulevard Life Sciences Redevelopment Project

(For Commission consideration on July 20, 2023)

BCDC Permit Application Number: 2022.004.00
Applicant: Lincoln Property West, LLC
Project Description: Construct an 871,000-square-foot, 13-story life sciences building with built-in garage, and expand and improve an existing one-acre shoreline public access area.
Location: Within the 100-foot shoreline band, at 777 Airport Boulevard, in the City of Burlingame, San Mateo County.
Application Filed Complete: July 7, 2023
Deadline for Commission Action: October 5, 2023
Staff Contact: Shruti Sinha (415/352-3654; shruti.sinha@bcdc.ca.gov)



Figure 1: Vicinity maps of project site.



Amendments to the Application

An application summary for BCDC Application No. 2022.004.00 was previously mailed on May 5, 2023, for a public hearing before the Commission on May 18, 2023. On June 8, 2023, the applicant requested a material amendment to the application to modify the shoreline protection proposed for the project. The original application proposed to remove the existing shoreline armoring at the site and replace it with 16,780 square feet of new new riprap that would have required approximately 750 cubic yards of Bay fill over a 2,300-square-foot area below the Mean High Water Line (MHWL). The amended application proposes to leave the existing shoreline armoring in place and to build a short retaining wall and place 3,000 square feet of new riprap on top of the existing armoring. This revetment would be placed at a minimum elevation of 2 feet above the MHWL.

As amended, the application would involve no Bay fill or construction activities below the MHWL and no net change to the total public access area proposed for improvement. The amended application would not require a Section 401 Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board; additional design, planning, or environmental review by the City of Burlingame; or additional review by the Commission's advisory boards.

Project Overview

Project Description

The project before the Commission involves the construction of a 13-story, approximately 871,000-square-foot life sciences building with built-in parking garage at 777 Airport Boulevard. All but 84 square feet of the building would be located outside the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction. Within the shoreline band, the project proposes to redevelop an existing 21,700-square-foot public access area around the existing Bay Trail. As part of these shoreline public access improvements, the project would also redevelop an approximately 24,500-square-foot public right-of-way along the western boundary of 777 Airport Boulevard with a contiguous Bay Trail extension and other shared landscape features. The project, as amended, would also construct a new retaining wall and place 3,000 square feet of new riprap in the shoreline band, on top of the site's existing shoreline armoring.



Figure 2: Rendering of proposed life sciences building from Airport Boulevard.

Public Access

An approximately half-acre dedicated public access area exists at the project site, which was created in association with the construction of a 214-room hotel in the mid-1980s. If approved, the permit for this project would supersede the existing permit for the former hotel development.

This project would significantly improve the existing shoreline public access areas. The redeveloped public access area would feature an improved and widened accessible San Francisco Bay Trail (widened to 14 feet from the existing 9 to 11 feet), a widened pedestrian path connecting Anza Boulevard to the Bay Trail, pedestrian and vehicular access from Airport Boulevard to the shoreline, a shoreline plaza with visitor amenities, a sloped lawn with terrace seating, an overlook with ample seating, and a furnished picnic area. This project would retain 11 Public Shore parking spaces near the shoreline and provide an additional two ADA-accessible spaces among them. Other improvements to the public access area would include an enhanced public access signage program, bike racks, several picnic tables, a binocular viewscope, a drinking fountain with pet bowl, a dog bag post, new benches along the Bay Trail, and native and adaptive landscaping for screening and shade.

The amendments to the original application have affected the proposed design of the public access area by reducing the size of the picnic area by 100 square feet and increasing the size of the overlook by 100 square feet. There has been no net change in the total public access area proposed for improvement as a result of the application amendment.



Figure 3: Diagram of proposed new and improved public access facilities on site and off site.



Figure 4: Rendering of proposed shoreline public access improvements.

Flooding and Sea Level Rise

The project would address rising sea levels by raising the project site and armoring its shoreline with riprap. The project would raise the majority of the site, including the Bay Trail, to elevations between 13 and 14 feet (NAVD88). The Bay Trail would gradually slope to 11.5 feet at the project’s eastern boundary to meet the existing elevation of the property to the east, and to 10.9 feet at the project’s western boundary to meet the existing elevation for the Anza Boulevard overpass. The proposed shoreline protection would be constructed to a minimum height of 14 feet throughout. Applying projections from the 2018 State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance documents for the “high-emissions” and “medium-high” risk aversion scenarios, the project’s proposed elevations would protect the majority of the public access from flooding caused by sea level rise and extreme storm events through 2050.

The project’s end-of-century adaptation plan is to further raise elevations to a minimum of 16 feet. Applying the same standards and projections as for 2050, this elevation would protect the majority of the public access from flooding through 2100. If the parcels to the west and east of the project site are redeveloped before 2065 with a minimum elevation of 16 feet (as required by a recent City ordinance), the shoreline revetment and other public access areas at this project’s east and west boundaries could likewise be adjusted to protect the entire site from flooding.



Figure 5: Section diagram of shoreline elevations and projected sea level rise through 2050.

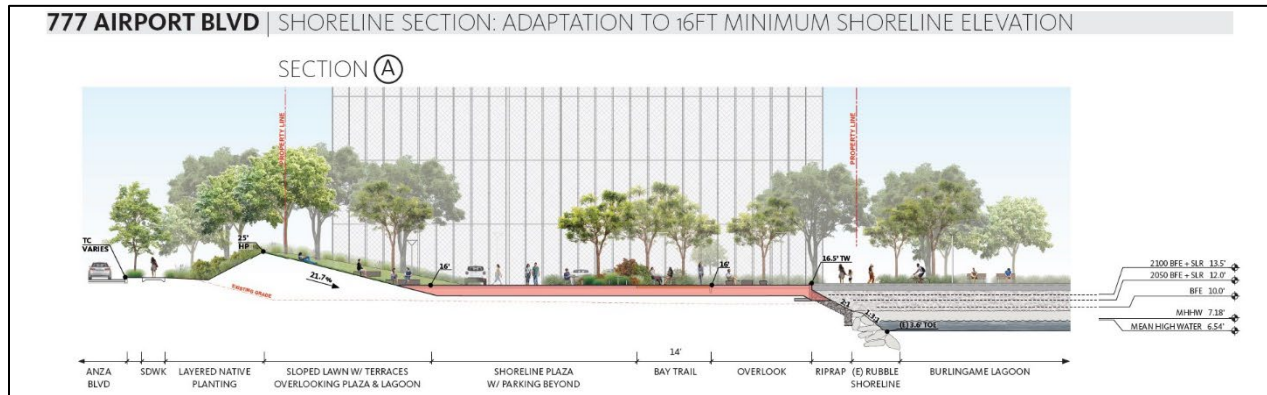


Figure 6: Section diagram of shoreline elevations and projected sea level rise through 2100.

Environmental Justice and Social Equity

According to the Commission’s Community Vulnerability Mapping Tool, the proposed project is located in an area of “low social vulnerability,” and thus not within an identified vulnerable or disadvantaged community. Within a 1- to 2-mile radius of the project site, and on the other side of Highway 101/Bayshore Freeway, the mapping tool shows communities southeast of the project site that have “high” or “highest” social vulnerability.

The proposed project has involved noticing and public hearings typical of the City of Burlingame’s local entitlement process. Public comments received by this process informed the project team’s decision to provide landscaping along Anza and Airport Boulevards, bike racks, and lighting. In April 2022, the applicant emailed a number of environmental and environmental justice organizations to invite discussion and feedback on the project. Of these organizations, the applicant received responses and scheduled virtual meetings with Acterra, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Committee for Green Foothills, Golden Gate Audubon, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Sequoia Audubon Society, and Sierra Cub Loma Prieta. The applicant reports that comments were focused mostly on areas of bird-safe design and sustainability features (e.g., photovoltaic power, EV charging stations, etc.) and expansion of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing capacity for sustainability features (e.g., EV chargers). The applicant also invited the above organizations to the Commission’s Design Review Board’s (DRB) review of the project in May 2022. Public comment at the DRB meeting recommended bird-safe design and avoiding encroachment of the office building into the Commission’s 100-foot shoreline band.

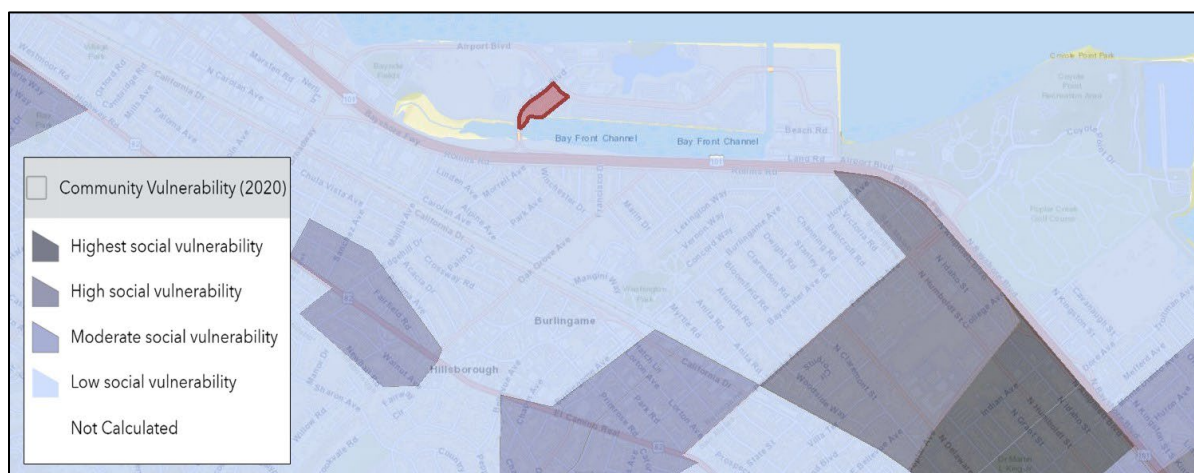


Figure 7: Map showing community vulnerability in the vicinity of the project site.

Schedule and Cost

Construction would begin as early as summer 2023. By this schedule, project completion is expected by 2025. The estimated total project cost is approximately \$168 million.

Issues Raised

The staff believes the primary issues raised by the proposed project are:

- (1) **Public Access.** Would the project provide the maximum feasible public access, consistent with the project, to the bay and its shoreline in accordance with the relevant McAteer-Petris Act and Bay Plan polices?
- (2) **Sea Level Rise.** Would the project continue to provide maximum feasible public access in the future given anticipated sea level rise?
- (3) **Environmental Justice and Social Equity.** Is the project consistent with Bay Plan policies on Environmental Justice and Social Equity?

Staff Notes

The staff notes the following considerations for the Commission:

Design Review Board. The Commission's Design Review Board (DRB) reviewed the project at a public hearing on May 9, 2022, where the project received a generally favorable response. The DRB provided direction to the permittee and BCDC staff on improvements to the design of the public access areas. In response to the DRB's feedback, the project was modified to incorporate many of the DRB's recommendations, including the following:

- **Relocate Surface Parking.** Parking at ground level has been reconfigured. Two public shore parking stalls with direct access to the shoreline would be shifted from the north side to the south side of the vehicular driveway. All 11 public shore parking stalls would be located immediately adjacent to the shoreline public access area, alongside two shared ADA-compliant stalls. Private parking along the south side of the building has been reduced to allow space for these stalls.
- **Increase Visibility of Access Path from Anza Boulevard.** The pedestrian access path from Anza Boulevard to the Bay Trail would be widened to 12 feet (50 percent wider than previously shown) and bollard lights would be added along this widened path to enhance nighttime circulation and enhance visual connectivity. The Anza Boulevard sidewalk would also be widened to 6.5 feet along the entire project frontage to enhance pedestrian connectivity along this edge.
- **Increase Visibility of Access Path from Airport Boulevard.** The legibility of public access would be improved with a redesign of the Airport Boulevard Plaza to signal welcome to members of the public walking or driving along Airport Boulevard.

- **Increase Visual Access to the Shoreline at Ground Level.** The building at ground level would be pulled back along its south edge to expand ground-level views and enhance connectivity to shoreline (similar to a chamfer, as suggested by the DRB). As a result of this change, the ground-level extent of building within the 100-foot shoreline band would be reduced from 236 square feet to 84 square feet (a 65-percent reduction).
- **Use Pedestrian-Oriented Landscaping to Connect Airport Boulevard to Shoreline.** The building and landscape at ground level have been redesigned to create a continuous Linear Plaza connecting Airport Boulevard to the shoreline public access area. This connector would be paved with enhanced pedestrian paving as a continuation of the Airport Boulevard Plaza and Shoreline Plaza, with an average width of 17.5 feet. This is intended to create a clearly public and inviting conduit to the shoreline.
- **Use Emergency Vehicle Access (EVA) for Pedestrian Access.** The EVA would be closed to daily vehicular traffic from Anza Boulevard and may be used by pedestrians as a path to access the shoreline and west side of the building. (Note: Anza Boulevard will likely never be a significant pedestrian conduit because it is a freeway offramp.)
- **Resolve Disconnect Between Shoreline Park and Corporate/Parking Garage Character of the Campus.** Ground-level building activation, including public plazas, a café, public art, and interpretive programming along the east, west, and south faces of the building would encourage public access and use of the shoreline. Public shore parking along the southwest of the site is intended to activate the west face of the building. Six levels of office/lab windows would overlook the public shoreline. Garage massing, cladding, and materiality would be continuous with the office/lab floors above to minimize the perception that the public open space is adjacent to a garage.
- **Adapt the Shoreline Public Access Areas for Runoff.** The site has been designed with a series of bioretention/flow-through planters to retain the first 1.25 inches of rain during each rain event, per City of Burlingame requirements. In the future, when the shoreline is raised to the higher elevation of 16 feet (providing flood protection through end of century), the site would maintain its capacity to retain the first 1.25 inches of rain. The adapted shoreline would protect the building from flooding from the Burlingame Lagoon.

Applicable Laws and Policies

The following laws and policies are applicable in the Commission's review of the proposed project:

- McAteer-Petris Act: Sections 66602 (Maximum Feasible Public Access Consistent with a Project) and 66632.4 (Permits for Projects within the Shoreline Band)
- San Francisco Bay Plan policies on: Environmental Justice and Social Equity; Climate Change; Shoreline Protection; Public Access; Appearance, Design and Scenic Views; and Other Uses of the Bay and Shoreline