San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
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TO: Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: **1301 Shoreway Life Sciences Development Project, City of Belmont, San Mateo County; First Pre-Application Review**
(For Design Review Board consideration on January 8, 2024)

Project Summary

Project Proponents

1 Shoreway Owner, LLC, subsidiary of Four Corners Properties.

Project Representatives

Rich Ying, 1 Shoreway Owner, LLC. c/o Four Corners Properties (Four Corner, Project Manager for Property Owner); Karen Kuklin, DGA Architects (Project Manager, Principal Architect); Rene Bihan, SWA Group (Landscape Architect), Raquel Fones, BKF Engineers Inc (Civil Engineer); Blake Dilsworth, KPFF Consulting Engineers (Structural); Genaro Morales, Watry Design Inc. (Structural Engineer, Parking); Mario Perez, EXP Inc. (MEP / Lighting / T24).

Project Location (Exhibits 3-12)

The proposed life sciences redevelopment project would be developed on a 6.91-acre (301,130-square-foot) site at 1301 Shoreway Road in the City of Belmont, San Mateo County, just outside of the Redwood Shores waterfront community. The project site is bounded by Sem Lane to the northwest, Shoreway Road to the southwest, a PG&E substation to the south, and the Belmont Creek to the east. The site shares the Belmont Creek shoreline with 10 Twin Dolphin and 200 Twin Dolphin, both recently reviewed by the DRB in 2022. Shoreway Road is adjacent to, and runs parallel with, Highway 101, and is the first cross street by drivers taking the northbound Ralston/Marine Pkwy exit.

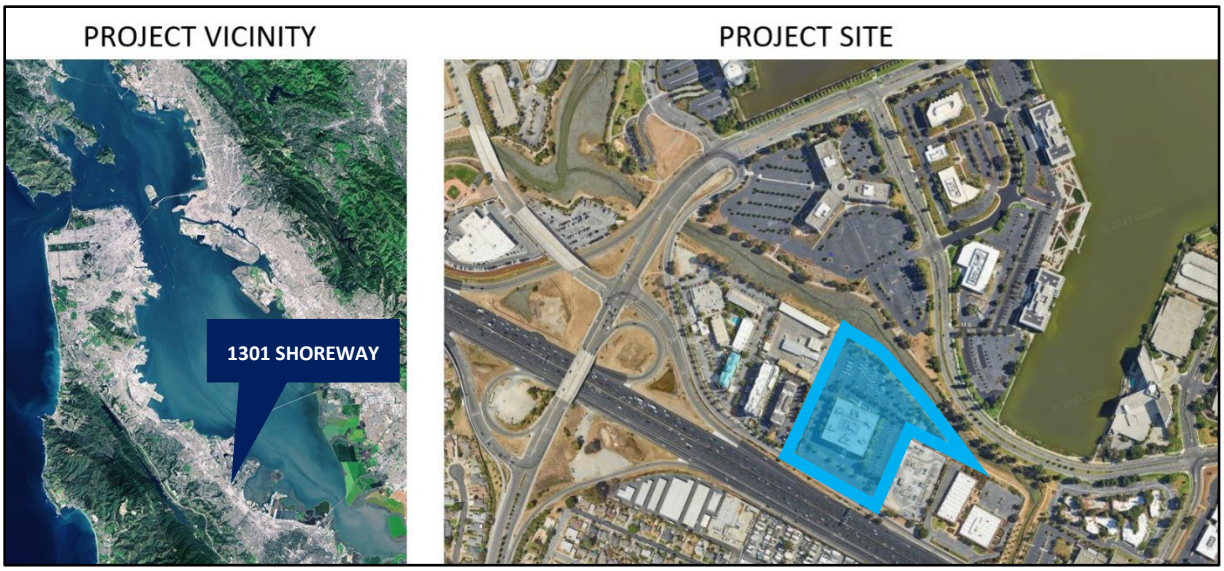

Figure 1. Project location

Project Overview

The purpose of the project is to redevelop the 6.91-acre site with a life sciences campus. The project proposes to demolish the existing four-story office building on site and construct two 7- to 8-level office/R&D buildings and a 9-level parking garage. The project proposes both on-site and off-site public access improvements, including widening the Belmont Creek Trail, constructing a new sidewalk along Sem Lane to provide public access from Shoreway Road to the shoreline, adding five new bicycle racks and three new Public Shore parking spaces at the trailhead, and enhancing the existing public access areas with refreshed seating amenities.

Project Site

Site History

The 6.91-acre site is currently occupied by the Redwood Shores Health Center, a four-story, approximately 142,496-square-foot building constructed in 1984 along with a surface parking lot with 571 parking spaces. The majority of the public access area within the project site is situated atop a berm on land owned by the Redwood Shores Business Center Association (SBCA).

Permit History (Exhibit 6)

The existing permit for the project site, BCDC Permit No. M1981.064.02, was originally issued on May 18, 1982 in association with the construction of the aforementioned 48,000-square-foot building, then called the "Belmont Shores Office Building." The permit required the area shown on Sheet 2 of the planting plans submitted with the original application to be dedicated for public access (see Figure 2 below). Within this area, the original authorization required for public access: "appropriate" landscaping, a 10-foot path, and no fewer than three benches and two public access signs.

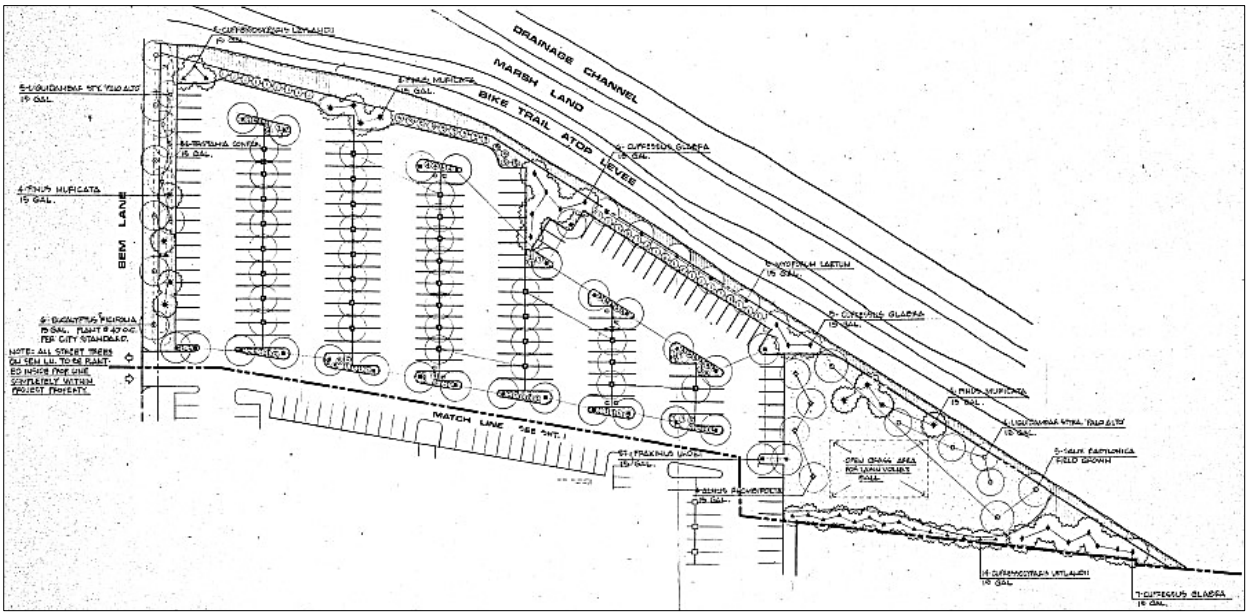

Figure 2 Sheet 2 of Planting Plan showing public access area along the levee.

Since the original authorization, the permit has since been amended twice. On July 15, 1982, Amendment No. One authorized the installation of an 18-inch pipe through the Belmont Creek for drainage purposes. On July 10, 1985, Amendment No. Two authorized the construction of a 2,048-square-foot tennis court, 1,000-square-foot of which would be in the shoreline band. As the tennis court was proposed for private use, the amended permit required additional public access in the form of an 8-foot-wide path on the north side of the tennis court from the 6-foot-wide pathway from the parking lot to the levee.

Existing Conditions (Exhibits 2-14, 22)

The project site is flat and fully paved for the surface parking lot surrounding the Redwood Shores Health Center building. The existing 57,659-square-foot total public access area is located mostly outside of Four Corners Properties' northeastern property line, atop an 860-foot-long berm on land owned by SBCA and excludes the existing parking lot and sports court. The existing public access is comprised of the minimum improvements required by Special Condition II-B-3, including: a path, landscaping, two decomposed granite paths, three benches, and two "Public Shore" signs. The permit requires the path to be 10 feet wide; however, the project team reports that the existing trail is 5 feet wide.

The existing 5-foot-wide pedestrian trail, the Belmont Creek Trail, runs along the top of the Belmont Creek berm. Note that the Belmont Creek Trail is not part of the San Francisco Bay Trail system. The nearest alignment of the San Francisco Bay Trail is approximately 200 feet away, along the northbound side of Twin Dolphin Drive on the other side of the creek.

Currently, the public can access the Belmont Creek Trail at the project site from three locations: the trailhead at the terminus of Sem Lane, the site's driveway at Shoreway Road, and the entrance to the trail where it meets Shoreway south of the site. Sem Lane is a short, dead-end road used for city vehicle access and has no continuous sidewalk for pedestrian access and the vehicle entrance from Shoreway Road does not provide pedestrian facilities into the site.

Of the three public benches along the Belmont Creek Trail, two are derelict and unusable due to overgrown vegetation. The sports court, which is currently used as a basketball court, is not part of the total public access area described in the permit and is not available for public use. Along the north side of the sports court, however, there is a seating node with four picnic tables for public use and narrow paths connecting the tennis court to the parking lot, the parking lot to the seating node, and the seating node to the Belmont Creek Trail. The access paths are not ADA-compliant and there are currently no dedicated Public Shore parking spaces.

With respect to views, the berm obstructs views to the creek from anywhere but the upper edge of the berm itself. The shoreline public access area atop the berm, including the Belmont Creek Trail, can be seen from entrance of Sem Lane. It can also be seen from the Shoreway Road entrance when there are no cars parked along the viewer's line of sight.

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 disproportionally 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.

BCDC's Vulnerability Mapping Tool shows this project area as having "moderate" social vulnerability and "lower" contamination vulnerability based upon Census data. Demographics for this area include children under five years of age, single parents, and people who are not U.S. citizens, people who are severely housing cost burdened. There are also some areas to the west of the project site that have "high" social vulnerability. Demographics for these areas include renters, children under five years of age, people over 65 years of age and living alone, people without a vehicle, people with limited English proficiency, and people who are not U.S. Citizens.

Second DRB Review

First DRB Review

The project was first reviewed by the DRB on August 7, 2023. Overall, the project was received as positive addition to the recent redevelopment of other properties surrounding Belmont Creek, with many Board members commending the trail nodes proposed for various types of passive and active recreation. The Board noted that the site's location placed it at a disadvantage in terms of legibility and connectivity to nearby public access areas. The following is a brief summary of the Board's recommendations for project improvement:

1. **Site Design.** The Board wished to see more details about the condition and quality of the public-private interface, more information on site planning, building impacts to public access areas (climate, perceptible), and clarity regarding the areas between the private development and shoreline public access improvements. The Board also wished for more details on the visual connections to and from the public access area from the right-of-way and within the development.
2. **Circulation and Orientation.** The Board recommended use of clear signage or a trail map to orient people to the site, connections to public access spaces and improvements, and how to access them. The Board observed that the public access area is sited "behind the building" and felt the project needed clear and inviting signage/wayfinding so that members of the public would not feel they had landed in a space in which in which they were not supposed to be.
3. **Public Access.** The Board strongly encouraged making the sports court publicly accessible. It felt that the court was a draw which could serve as an "anchor" of public access use and would complement the proposed fitness courts. The Board also encouraged using the "power of small moves" for wayfinding and public serving amenities, e.g., a drinking fountain. The Board also recommended pursuing connectivity to the larger district, perhaps with a district trail map to orient people and create awareness.
4. **Shoreline Protection.** The cross-sections of the berm seems to show adequate flood protection, but when seen in plain view, there appear to be weaknesses. The Board wished to understand the extent of the berm, whether the berm continues beyond the project site, and how it conforms to adjacent properties. It also wished to know if the berm would be effective without improvement on adjacent properties.

Project Updates for 2nd DRB Review (Exhibits 13-21)
In response to the Board's comments at the project's first DRB review, the project proposal has been revised as follows:

1. **Sports Court and Auxiliary Nodes.** The sports court is now proposed as a publicly accessible facility, with auxiliary fitness and seating nodes added along its north and southeastern sides. The sports court is intended to serve as a multi-use facility, with lines painted for basketball, volleyball, and pickleball, and would be available to all members of the public during daylight hours. The conversion of the sports court and auxiliary area from private to public would add another 10,539 square feet to the overall area proposed for dedicated public access at the project site. This would increase the existing total public access area from 57,659 square feet to 83,594 square feet.
2. **Shoreline Protection.** Having established that the shoreline edge at the site is a berm rather than a FEMA-certified levee, the project proposes to raise the shoreline edge to 12.5 feet (NAVD88) which would keep the site resilient to flooding through mid-century.

3. **Signage.** The project proposes to place wayfinding and educational signs at the trailhead on Sem Lane and along the Belmont Creek Trail. The project also proposes to install two BCDC wayfinding signs on Shoreway Road along the property frontage to indicate the location of the trail.

Proposed Project

Infill Development (Exhibits 15-35)

The purpose of the project is to redevelop the site with a new office/R&D building and a detached parking garage. The project proposes to improve the existing Belmont Creek Trail by widening the trail from 5 to 8 feet, adding a 6-foot-wide publicly accessible sidewalk along Sem Lane from Shoreway Road to the shoreline, adding 5 bicycle racks (each with parking capacity for 2 bicycles) and 3 public access parking spaces at the Belmont Creek trailhead, enhance existing seating and sport court amenities, and provide Public Shore and wayfinding signage.

1. **New Structures.** The project proposes to replace the existing building with two new office/R&D buildings (Buildings 1 and 2) and a detached parking garage totaling 542,035 square feet of building area. As proposed, Building 1 would be eight stories and Building 2 would be seven stories. The parking garage would have 9 levels and accommodate approximately 1,626 parking spaces. The floor area ratio (FAR) of the site would increase to 1.8 SF. All three buildings would be constructed outside of the shoreline band. The project also proposes to construct a surface parking lot with 105 parking spaces within the shoreline band, three of which would be dedicated for shoreline public access parking.
2. **Total Public Access Area.** The new development will increase the total public access area from 57,659 square feet of dedicated public access to 83,594 square feet. The public access improvements at the project site will occur both within and outside of the Commission's jurisdiction.
3. **Belmont Creek Trail.** The public open space improvements at the project site would include the refurbishment of the Belmont Creek Trail and trailhead along Belmont Creek. The project would raise the shoreline upon which the trail lies, widen the trail to eight feet, and renovate the trail's existing permeable surface to allow for ADA compliance. Bollards, connective sidewalks, bike parking with a bike tool station, and vehicular parking would be placed adjacent to the trailhead and marked with public access signage.
4. **Sports Court.** The sports court is now proposed to be publicly accessible facility, with auxiliary fitness and seating nodes added along its north and southeastern sides. The sports court is intended to serve as a multi-use facility, with lines painted for basketball, volleyball, and pickleball, and would be available to all members of the public during daylight hours.
5. **Trail Nodes.** The project would renovate the existing seating areas and add three new "nodes" that would pop out from along the northern part of the Belmont Creek Trail. From north to south, these trail nodes would include an "Entry Node" at the trailhead, a "Birding Nook" across the proposed office building, and a "Botanica Node" across the

campus courtyard. These nodes are intended to offer different types of quiet enjoyment to the public and would be supplemented with interpretive signage on the ecology and wildlife at the site.

6. **Fitness Nodes.** The fitness nodes earlier proposed for points along the Belmont Creek Trail are now proposed as auxiliary facilities to the sports court to be located along the north and southeast of the court. The fitness nodes would include seating in addition to fitness equipment, such as sit-up benches, dip bars, calisthenics bars, and hanging bars.
7. **Signage and Wayfinding.** The primary public access entrance to the trail is located at the trailhead, at the base off Sem Lane. Wayfinding and educational signs would also be placed at the trailhead and along the trail. The project also proposes to install two BCDC wayfinding signs on Shoreway Road along the property frontage to indicate the location of the Belmont Creek Trail.
8. **Circulation and Parking.** The project proposes to add 3 dedicated "Public Shore" parking spaces and bike parking for 10 bicycles. Bike and vehicular parking would be placed adjacent to the trailhead and marked with public access signage. Pedestrian access to the trail would be available through a six-foot-wide continuous sidewalk along Sem Lane connecting the existing sidewalk along Shoreway Road to the trailhead at the end of Sem Lane and from the southeast where the trail would connect to the existing trail on the adjacent properties. Concrete paths connect parking to the Belmont Creek trail and its amenities, as well as the interior courtyard, buildings, and parking garages.
9. **Landscape.** The project proposes an update to the tree and understory planting palette on site to include native/adaptive plants to improve biodiversity, reduce water consumption and provide seasonal interest. Stormwater treatment zones would be integrated within the interior of the site to capture all stormwater on site and reduce runoff to the creek.
10. **Views.** The existing views from Sem Lane and Shoreway Drive to the Belmont Creek Trail are currently blocked by the large parking lot and dense, overgrown planting at the creek edge. The streetscape that would be created by the proposed buildings is intended to draw focus to the view corridor along Sem Lane. Within the shoreline public access area, seating nooks will be provided at points that take advantage of "near-creek" views. At the sports court, dense planting and a large screening tarp would be removed from the fence to enhance visibility to and from the trail, creek, and surrounding public access spaces.

Sea Level Rise (Exhibits 15-35)

The Belmont Creek runs along the east and northeast of the project site and is protected by an existing berm that is not an engineered levee, but appears similar to the FEMA-certified levee on the opposite side of the creek at 10 Twin Dolphin and 200 Twin Dolphin. The project site is located within FEMA designation Zone X (area with reduced flood risk due to levee). The current shoreline elevation ranges from 10.5 feet (NAVD88) to 11.5 feet. The project proposes to raise the shoreline elevation to a minimum of 12.5 feet, and up to 15 feet in certain areas to screen the existing transformer site and provide added protection for some seating areas. This elevation would make the site resilient to flooding through mid-century but not end-of-century.

The project team proposes to further raise the shoreline as necessary to adapt to end-of-century flood risks.

Community Engagement

The project team began its community outreach efforts after approaching BCDC. In preparation for their DRB review, BCDC staff advised the project proponents to engage with underserved communities in the area.

The project team, with the approval of the City of Belmont Planning Department, has engaged in a Public Outreach Meeting Schedule by which nearby residents received notifications for public meetings. The first Public Outreach meeting was a Design Team presentation of the project design on May 3, 2023. The second Public Outreach Meeting was an opportunity for the general public to provide feedback on the presented design to the Applicant on May 31, 2023. The third and final Public Outreach, held on June 28, 2023, was intended to provide an opportunity for the project team to respond to the community comments received during the second Public Outreach Meeting. Notice was given 30 days in prior to the meeting, with both a zoom link and in-person option to view exhibits based on the proposed development. There was no meeting attendance from those invited. The project was subject to the public notice and comment requirements for DRB meetings at its first DRB review on August 7, 2023, but the only public comment received at that meeting was a letter of support from the SBCA, which is the owner of the shoreline parcel within the project site. The project team reports no further community engagement since its first DRB review.

Approval & Construction Timeline

The project proponent is currently involved in the process to obtain local entitlements. The project was submitted to the City of Belmont on July 22, 2022 and revised and submitted twice, firstly on October 5, 2022, and most recently on May 8, 2023. The City's review of the May 8th submission is still pending. The project proponent plans to formally submit a permit application to BCDC following its final DRB review.

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 the sections on Priority Use Areas; Public Access; Recreation; Appearance, Design and Scenic Views; Environmental Justice and Social Equity; and Climate Change.

As shown on **Bay Plan Map No. 6**, the 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." For its first DRB review, the project team reported a community outreach campaign that was largely unsuccessful in engaging members of the local

community. Except for a letter of support from the owner of the shoreline parcel within the project site, the project did not receive any public comment at its first DRB meeting and has not reported any further community outreach since that meeting.

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 proposes to raise the shoreline edge upon which most of the public access area lies to a minimum of 12.5 feet (NAVD88), which would make the site resilient to flooding from the Belmont Creek through 2050 but not through the end of the century. For end-of-century resiliency, the project team proposes to raise the shoreline even higher as needed after mid-century.

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 public access proposed for this project primarily involves enhancing the existing public access along the shoreline of the project site. This includes widening and paving the existing Belmont Creek Trail, adding programmed nodes along the trail for small fitness courts, seating, birding, and other quiet enjoyment.

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 proposes to convert an existing private sports court along the trail into a publicly accessible space. Additionally, the proposed improvements to the existing Belmont Creek Trail include nooks for different types of activities (e.g., birding, exercise with fitness equipment) and would make the trail ADA-compliant.

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 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). The project proposes to create a new pedestrian sidewalk at Sem Lane that leads to a significantly improved trailhead entrance marked with public access

wayfinding signage intended to invite the public into the public access areas located behind the buildings. The project would also replace and relocate the existing trash enclosure near the entrance of the Belmont Creek Trail to outside of Building 2 and deep into the site between Building 1 and the parking garage. Delivery and loading areas would be located adjacent to the trash enclosures.

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 state "The Design Review Board should 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 *Public Access Design 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:

a. 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?
b. What additional improvements could enhance the public access experience to and along the shoreline?
c. Given the increase in scale and size of the buildings onsite, does the proposed design provide legible connections from the adjacent roadways and bike/pedestrian networks to draw users into and through the site to the Belmont Creek Trail and shoreline?
d. Does the revised signage plan provide sufficient notice of and invitation to people travelling along Shoreway Road and Sem Lane to the public access area along the back of the site?
e. What type of events and what frequency of flooding events affecting public access spaces should trigger adaptive actions at the project site?