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PRESENT

FLIGHT PARK AT ALAMEDA POINT

SEPTEMBER 1, 2011



NATURAL RESOURCE PLANNING AND DESIGN



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STEPHANIE V. LANDREGAN, FASLA PRINCIPAL

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The Greenspace Opportunity at Alameda Point

There are sound reasons why Golden Gate University's Center on Urban Environmental Law (CUEL) selected Alameda Point as the initial focus of its greenspace program.

In one of the most urbanized locales in the nation, Alameda Point constitutes more than 500-acres of unbuilt land surrounded by San Francisco Bay waters. It contains extensive saltwater and freshwater wetlands, supports a colony of the threatened California Least Tern, and offers spectacular unimpaired views of the San Francisco skyline. Establishing a large-scale natural park at the core of a re-envisioned Alameda Point holds the prospect of improved property values on nearby lands, the availability of wetlands mitigation funds to fund the park, and the reduced long-term maintenance costs associated with a more naturally sustained landscape.

On both economic and environmental grounds, CUEL recognized Alameda Point as a once-in-a-generation urban greenspace opportunity. The realization of this opportunity, however, is complicated by the jurisdictional division that occurred when the Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) located at Alameda Point closed in the 1990s. With this closure, the unbuilt portions of the Alameda Naval Air Station containing the jet fighter tarmac were retained by the Navy while the more built portions of the NAS were transferred to the City of Alameda. Since then, the federal and City of Alameda land use planning processes have proceeded on separate tracks.

For the federal portions of Alameda Point, the Navy is moving ahead with plans for toxic cleanup and wetlands restoration, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has a long-standing proposal to create a national wildlife refuge, and in recent years the Veterans Administration has expressed interest in constructing new facilities. For the City of Alameda portions of Alameda Point, a public consultation and environmental impact assessment process is now underway (known as *Going Forward*) to determine the nature and location of development. While the *Going Forward* process is proceeding, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (associated with the University of California at Berkeley) has approached the City of Alameda with a proposal for a new Alameda Point research facility.

CUEL, in collaboration with the Professor Stephanie Landregan and her colleagues at the UCLA Landscape Architecture Department, is working to articulate a broader greenspace vision for Alameda Point and to identify the regulatory and financing solutions to make this vision a reality.

The Hannover Principles and Imagining *Flight Park*

The challenge ahead will to be integrate and align the federal and City of Alameda land use planning processes for Alameda Point. The Hannover Principles for Design in Sustainability (adopted in 2000 in conjunction with the World Fair held in Hannover, Germany) provide a template to meet this challenge.

The Hannover Principles call for open space/habitat designation and planning that “respects natural borders” more than the jurisdictional borders of particular agencies. For greenspace at Alameda Point, this means planning across federal and City of Alameda boundary lines to maximize habitat benefits and to preserve viewsheds. This also means siting any new structures at Alameda Point, such as the new Veterans Administration facility being considered, within or adjacent to existing development to avoid the vehicular traffic and fragmentation of scenic vistas and wildlife corridors that would result from locating such structures in the more open expanses.

The Hannover Principles also caution against “overplanning” greenspace such that ecosystems and habitats are not provided with sufficient latitude to balance themselves out over time. In a section titled *Humility in Design*, the Hannover Principles advocate that we “leave space for the design to evolve on its own.” For greenspace at Alameda Point, this points to large swathes of contiguous open space (on both the federal and City of Alameda portions) with wildness and habitat the high priorities. In terms of those areas within the City of Alameda *Going Forward* planning process, envision a 500-foot wide bank of grasslands and dunes along the Seaplane Lagoon's north shore. Imagine a several hundred-acre expanse of interconnected wetlands as the centerpiece of the Northwest Territories (along the entrance to the Oakland-Alameda Estuary).

As shorthand for this notion of developing integrated greenspace along the lines suggested by the Hannover Principles, CUEL has employed the term *Flight Park*. This term evokes and honors the prior Navy uses of the site as an air station as well as the extensive bird and waterfowl on the site. In using the term *Flight Park* CUEL is not suggesting that there necessarily needs to be “one” park at Alameda Point under the jurisdiction of a “single” entity. Rather, the concept of *Flight Park* is employed as a device to allow everyone involved – City of Alameda staff, federal planning staff, adjacent communities, park agency staff, wildlife advocates – to think about the greenspace opportunities (both environmental and economic) at Alameda Point in a broader way. This broader perspective can help inform the planning process for both the City of Alameda and federal agencies.



Wetlands Make *Flight Park* Economically Feasible

When considering the critical question of how to fund the creation and maintenance of greenspace at Alameda Point, the most cost-effective way to address these fiscal concerns is to think big rather than small. That is, the establishment of a large-scale contiguous naturalist landscape (with wetlands throughout) at Alameda Point is a far more viable economic prospect than the establishment of a collection of several isolated small-scale non-naturalist manicured parks.

First, to the extent wetlands were a dominant element of the greenspace at Alameda Point, a Flight Park Wetlands Mitigation Bank could be established to secure investments for the construction and enhancement of these wetland resources. There are a variety of activities/projects in the Bay Area with adverse potential impacts on wetlands (both saltwater and freshwater), such as those frequently undertaken along the shoreline by the Port of Oakland. Those involved in undertaking and approving such activities/projects are often in search of wetlands enhancement and wetlands creation projects along or near San Francisco Bay which can be funded to mitigate/offset such impacts. As such, there is already a strong market for the type of wetlands focused greenspace proposed for *Flight Park*.

Second, in the case of a large acreage naturalist greenspace (such as envisioned for *Flight Park*), the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) may be interested in adding portions of Alameda Point to its existing system of public parklands. In fact, the EBRPD has several million dollars in recent bond money allocated for Alameda Point, and representatives from the EBRPD have indicated that they would be interested in creating new parkland at Alameda Point “if” it is a large acreage naturalist park.

Third, as reflected in the *Humility in Design* concept set forth in the Hannover Principles, large-scale naturally balanced landscapes (such as *Flight Park’s* proposal for wetlands hydrologically connected the Bay and expansive dune grasslands with native plants) tend to maintain themselves much more readily and at much less expense than the restrictive micro-designed landscapes generally associated with small isolated municipal parks.

Fourth and finally, large-scale naturalist greenspace (such as *Flight Park*) increases the desirability and value of adjacent and nearby properties, thereby contributing to municipal property tax revenues and the economic success of commercial development in close proximity to such greenspace. As Professor John Crompton noted in his article *The Impacts of Parks and Open Space on Property Values*, “a strategy of conserving parks and open space is not contrary to a community’s economic health, but rather is an integral part of it.”



The National Park Service (NPS) reached the same conclusion as Crompton in its resource book *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors*. The NPS book reported: “Rivers, trails and greenway corridors are traditionally recognized for their environmental protection, recreation values and aesthetic appearance. These corridors also have the potential to create jobs, enhance property values, expand local businesses, attract new or relocating businesses, increase local tax revenues, decrease local government expenditures and promote a local community.” The NPS book went on to clarify, however, that “Many studies have found that the potential for increase in property value depends upon the characteristics of the open space and the orientation of the surrounding properties. Property values increases are likely to be highest near those greenways which highlight open space rather than highly developed facilities and which have limited vehicular access.” The publication further noted that greenspace with highly developed facilities and extensive vehicular access (the type of parks initially proposed for the City of Alameda portions of Alameda Point) often led to a decrease in nearby property values, as such areas often become associated with “nuisance factors” (criminal/gang activity, drug usage and dealing, graffiti, etc).

A report by the natural resource economics firm of Robert Hrubes & Associates titled *Overview of Potential Economic Benefits of the Proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge* made similar findings, noting that benefits of the proposed refuge “can be captured in higher land values due to the proximity to an open space area that, because it is undeveloped, provides attractive viewsheds of the bay waters and San Francisco skyline.” This report also noted that “Businesses may be more willing to relocate to other portions of the present [Naval] air station because of the undisturbed views of the Bay and San Francisco skyline afforded by the refuge.”

The observations in the Crompton article, NPS book and Hrubes & Associates report all bear directly on the City of Alameda *Going Forward* planning process. In the areas near the Seaplane Lagoon, there are now proposals under consideration for Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory to build a new facility and for the creation of a Seaplane Village of restaurants and shops. *Flight Park’s* proposal for a 500-foot wide swath of dune grassland along Seaplane Lagoon’s northern edge will create the grand vistas and spectacular natural landscapes that will make Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory a place people want to work at and Seaplane Village a place people want to visit. *Flight Park* also contains the particular parkland characteristics noted in the NPS book – an emphasis on open space rather than highly developed park facilities – that tend to increase rather than decrease surrounding property values.

With *Flight Park*, natural habitat becomes the core fiscal and economic strategy for Alameda Point.

Professor Paul Stanton Kibel
Co-Director, Center on Urban Environmental Law (CUEL)
Golden Gate University School of Law

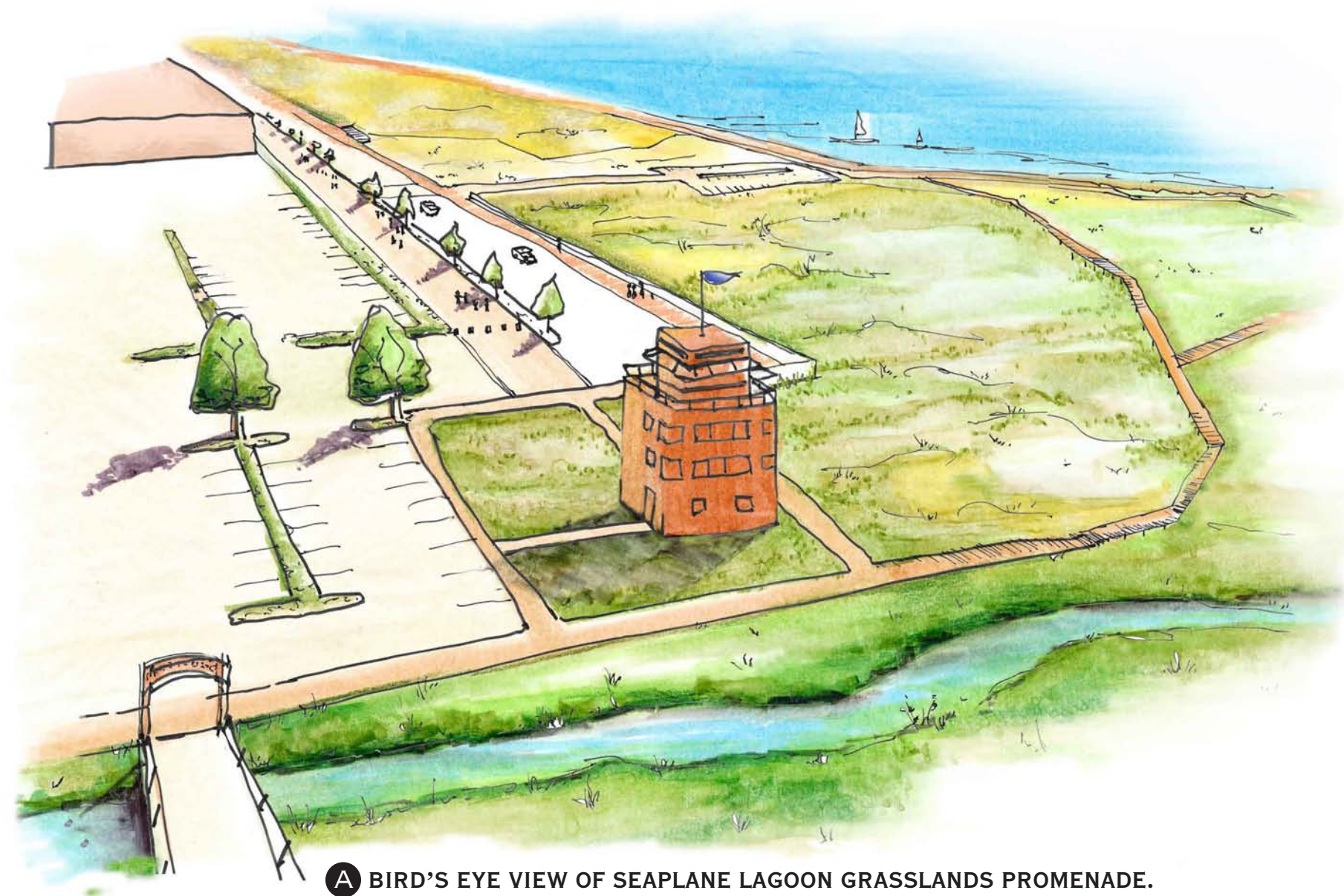




FLIGHT PARK AT ALAMEDA POINT
 PROPOSED PARK AND WETLANDS

LEGEND

- 1 FLIGHT PARK
- 2 MITIGATION WETLANDS
- 3 HISTORIC REMNANT AIRSTRIPS "EXHIBITION RUNWAY"
- 4 POSSIBLE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION FACILITY
- 5 LEAST TERN BEACH
- 6 ECO HOTEL
- 7 CONTROL TOWER MUSEUM AND NATURE CENTER
- 8 PROMENADE GRASSLANDS
- 9 SEAPLANE LAGOON VILLAGE (SHOPS/RESTAURANTS)
- 10 LAWRENCE BERKELEY NATIONAL LABORATORIES CAMPUS
- 11 RESTORED WETLANDS AND GRASSLANDS AND SITE OF PROPOSED NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF SEAPLANE LAGOON GRASSLANDS PROMENADE.

VIGNETTE LOCATION





VIGNETTE LOCATION



B VIEW ALONG SEAPLANE LAGOON BOARDWALK TOWARD LAWRENCE BERKELEY NATIONAL LABORATORY CAMPUS AND OF THE PROPOSED SEAPLANE VILLAGE (SHOPS/RESTAURANTS)





© ENTRY TO LEAST TERN WILDLIFE REFUGE

VIGNETTE LOCATION





VIGNETTE LOCATION



D LEAST TERN BEACH VIEWING PLATFORM ACROSS THE BAY LOOKING SOUTHEAST TOWARD SAN FRANCISCO





BEFORE



AFTER

E VIEW ALONG SOUTHWEST PERIMETER BOARDWALK IN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

VIGNETTE LOCATION





F SOUTHERN PERIMETER BOARDWALK THROUGH FLIGHT PARK

VIGNETTE LOCATION





BEFORE



AFTER

G VIEW FROM FLIGHT PARK POINT TO TREASURE ISLAND

VIGNETTE LOCATION





H VIEW ACROSS OAKLAND INNER HARBOR TO NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FLIGHT PARK AT ALAMEDA POINT

VIGNETTE LOCATION





VIGNETTE LOCATION



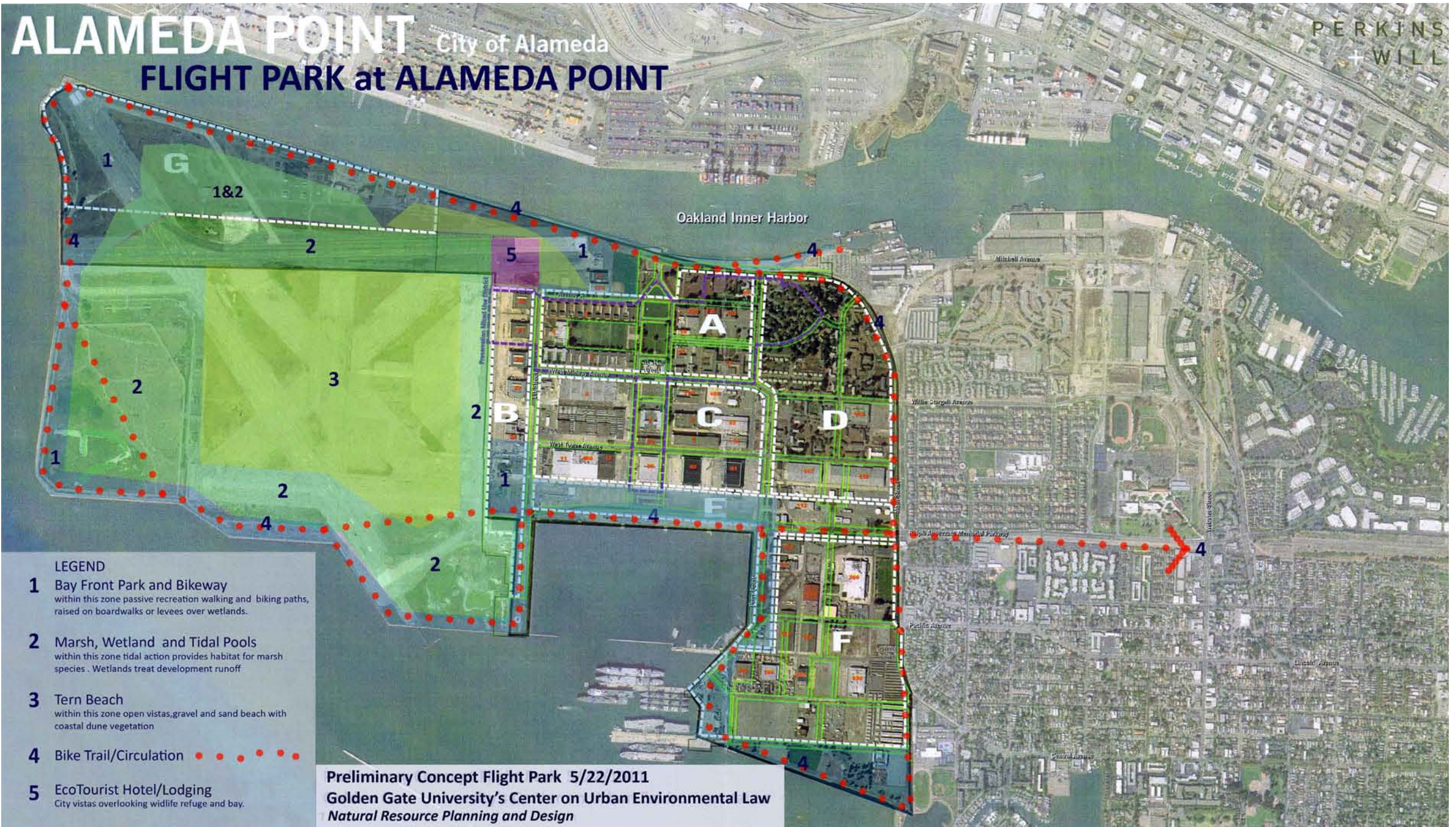
1 VIEW FROM ECO HOTEL TO SAN FRANCISCO ACROSS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



ALAMEDA POINT City of Alameda

FLIGHT PARK at ALAMEDA POINT

PERKINS
+ WILL



- LEGEND**
- 1** Bay Front Park and Bikeway
within this zone passive recreation walking and biking paths, raised on boardwalks or levees over wetlands.
 - 2** Marsh, Wetland and Tidal Pools
within this zone tidal action provides habitat for marsh species. Wetlands treat development runoff
 - 3** Tern Beach
within this zone open vistas, gravel and sand beach with coastal dune vegetation
 - 4** Bike Trail/Circulation
 - 5** EcoTourist Hotel/Lodging
City vistas overlooking wildlife refuge and bay.

Preliminary Concept Flight Park 5/22/2011
Golden Gate University's Center on Urban Environmental Law
Natural Resource Planning and Design

- A** Prioritize adaptive reuse of existing buildings
Limited opportunity for new construction
Preferred land uses - parks and open space, cultural and entertainment, civic uses and schools, live work, offices, hotels, multi-family houses, mixed-use (residential over commercial), limited single-family houses
- B** Prioritize adaptive reuse of existing buildings
Limited opportunity for new construction as per 1999 Biological opinion (BO)
Preferred land uses - light industrial, beverage manufacturing, tasting rooms and distribution, renewable energy facilities, cultural and entertainment, recreational park, retail, office, mixed-use (residential over commercial), limited single-family houses
- C** Adaptive reuse where financially feasible
New construction supported
Preferred land uses - light industrial/warehouse uses, offices & live work, mixed-use (residential over commercial), multi-family houses, cultural and entertainment, civic uses, retail, cultural and entertainment, recreational park, renewable energy facilities
- D** Preferred land uses - single-family houses, multi-family houses, live work, mixed-use (residential over commercial), parks and open space, recreational uses, urban agriculture & community gardens, civic uses, cultural & entertainment venues, offices, schools
- E** Preferred land uses - parks and open space, maritime-related uses, recreational uses, visitor-serving retail, cultural & entertainment uses, multi-family houses (outside State Lands), live work, office
Coastal grassland, with boardwalk at lagoon edge. Development setback from lagoon minimum 500 ft.
- F** Preferred land uses - parks and open space, maritime-related uses, renewable energy facilities, recreational uses, retail, office, light industrial, multi-family houses, mixed-use (residential over commercial), single-family houses
- G** Preferred land uses - parks and open space, maritime uses, recreational uses, large-scale public events - Antiques by the Bay, renewable energy facilities, urban agriculture and community gardens, temporary commercial use
Parks, open space interspersed with wetlands and tidal pools and marsh habitat. Park facilities and maintenance of open vistas.



536 MISSION STREET, SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA 94105-2968

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