

# 2

## PLAN BACKGROUND

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Specific Plan articulates a vision for a transit-oriented neighborhood that is based on detailed analysis of site conditions and other technical development concerns that affect the feasibility of development. Following is a summary of the key development considerations that have informed the preparation of this Specific Plan.

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Alameda has a history of transit-oriented development. The City experienced its earliest momentum with the arrival of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1886, and today's travelers, in the same fashion as those in the early 1900s, are a short ferry ride away from San Francisco. From the earliest days of the City's existence, developers oriented land use towards public transportation, making Alameda a walkable city before the automobile became popular. A collection of retail shops with upper-story apartments overlooked the Park St. Streetcar line, with density tapering down as one moved away from the corridor. There is a clear opportunity at Alameda Point to continue to ameliorate traffic congestion and encourage pedestrian and multi-modal travel by adding more transit options.

The City of Alameda's desire to redevelop Alameda Point has created an opportunity for reuse of a large piece of well-situated land. The Plan Area is considered infill development because the infrastructure for development is pre-existing and the area is within a central Bay Area city. Redevelopment

of the Plan Area can be accomplished without unduly taxing the region's natural and man-made resources. The large scale of the Plan Area gives the City and the people of Alameda a unique chance to re-invent the Plan Area using a new standard of sustainable growth and to devise an enhanced, mixed use living environment and healthier lifestyles for future Alamedans.

The special character of the Plan Area has elicited substantial public input for each of several prior public planning processes focused on Alameda Point. Because of this extensive participation, there is a "database" of concerns and interests that has been a valuable resource for the preparation of this Specific Plan. This Specific Plan has incorporated many of the themes expressed during these public meetings.

The Plan Area offers extraordinary, broad, long-range views of much of the rest of the Bay Area because it extends out into the Bay at a central location. Yerba Buena Island, San Francisco, the Oakland-Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge appear to be a stone's throw away to the west and to the east the City of Oakland and the East Bay Hills form a distinctive backdrop.

The existence in the Plan Area of numerous historic structures creates an opportunity to revitalize such resources and share with future generations the unique role that Alameda played in U.S. military history. Other opportunities include the presence within the Plan Area of tenants whose mission is the assistance of those in need, businesses and recreation enterprises, as described in *Section 2.2.7* below.

Countervailing all of these opportunities are several significant technical considerations that have been the focus of much analysis in order to ensure that reuse of the Plan Area is technically and financially feasible. These are detailed below.

**2.2.1 Geotechnical Conditions**

The existing topography of the Plan Area includes a slight, east-west ridge located at approximately Midway Avenue from which the Plan Area generally slopes either to the south towards the Seaplane Lagoon or to the north towards the Oakland Estuary. Stormwater from the Northwest Territories area drains toward the Estuary. Overall, the Plan Area is gently sloped and typically has gradients of less than one percent. See *Figure 2-1: Geotechnical Conditions*.

Plan Area soils are composed of surface and near-surface layers of sandy and silty unengineered fill, underlain by Young Bay Mud that is, in turn, underlain by Yerba Buena mud (Old Bay Mud). The presence of Young Bay Mud and unengineered fill can result in differential settlement when structures are placed upon it unless building and soil engineering solutions are used to minimize the settlement. The strategy for soil stabilization and building foundation design will vary by location according to the depth of the Young Bay Mud layer and the intensity of land use that is planned.

**2.2.2 Flood Plain Inundation and Sea Level Rise**

A large portion of Alameda Point lies just above water. In 1984, a study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that certain portions

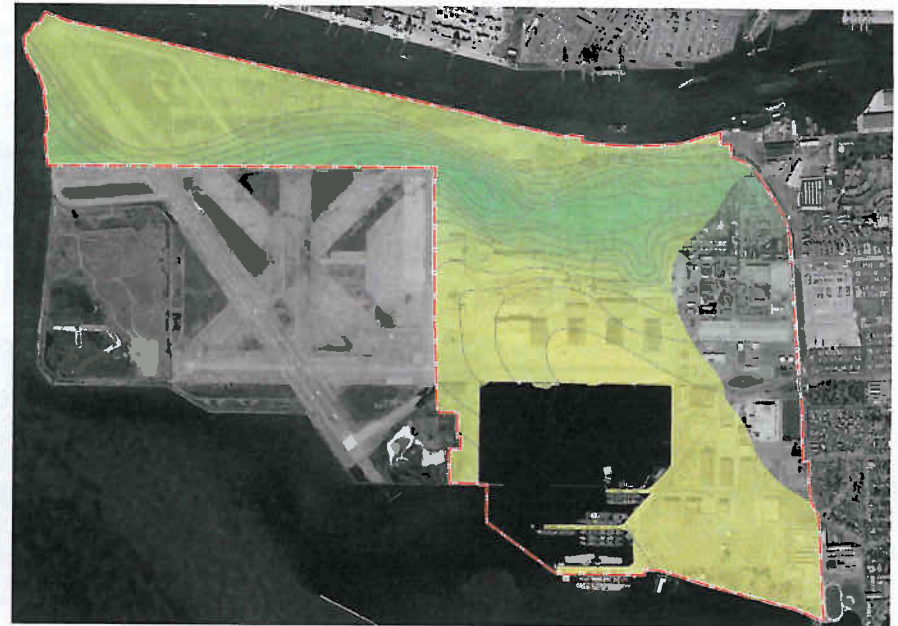


Figure 2-1: Geotechnical Conditions

**Legend**

- - - Plan Area Boundary
- Young Bay Mud
- Area at Risk of Liquefaction

Not to Scale



of Alameda’s west end, most notably along the waterfront, would be susceptible to flood damage in the event of a 100-year flood. In addition, topographic studies revealed that contiguous inland areas are at risk given the potential for sea level rise. Mapping of the latest projected sea level rise is underway at the U.S. Geological Survey. Other sources of potential flooding include high tide events, wind and wave run-up, and localized storm water runoff impacts. See *Figure 2-2: 100-year Flood Plain and Sea Level Rise*.

Recommendations for the adaptive reuse of historic buildings must consider the consequences of potential ground floor inundation within the next century. New construction must include supplemental fill in order to elevate buildings to minimize flooding due to rising Bay waters. This matter will receive further review during the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) analysis of the Plan Area that will take place after the Navy conveys the land to the City.

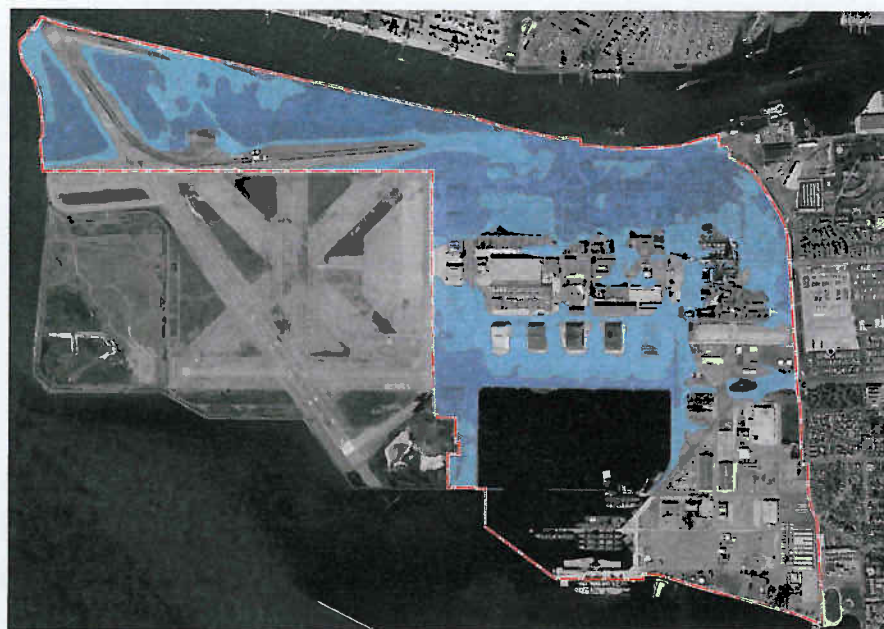


Figure 2-2: Floodplains and Sea Level Rise

- Legend**
- - - Plan Area Boundary
  - 100-Year Flood Plain
  - 18" Rise in Sea Level

Not to Scale



### 2.2.3 Historic District

Portions of the former NAS Alameda were identified in a 1992 report by Architectural Historian Sally Woodbridge as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places ("National Register"). Its use of the Streamline Moderne architectural style, as well as integration of site planning, architectural detailing and landscape design principles, renders the base characteristic of "Total Base Design." The City has designated certain areas as eligible for National Register listing as a Local Historic Monument. Woodbridge's report describes a list of buildings and other resources to be prioritized during future preservation efforts. The AP-Preservation Mixed Use (AP-PMU) district has been established to protect the unique military legacy of Alameda by facilitating reuse, in accordance with Historic Resource Design Guidelines, of key buildings, objects, structures and landscaped areas within that district.

### 2.2.4 Vegetation and Wildlife

Most of the Plan Area has been disturbed by over 60 years of military and industrial activity. Except in the Northwest Territories where hydrophytes, hydrophitic soils and wetland hydrology have been observed, the Plan Area is sparsely planted with ornamental, native and non-native trees, shrubs and groundcover.

More than a decade of study of the California Least tern colony west of the Plan Area as well as of other biological resources will inform the development practices within the Plan Area. Specific mitigation measures to protect endangered species in the vicinity of the Plan Area

will be developed through a federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation process and incorporated into the Project's regulatory agreements.

### 2.2.5 Soil and Groundwater Contamination

Most of the Plan Area has been used for industrial activities, some areas since the early 1800s. Historic site uses include two landfills, a municipal airfield, an army base, an oil refinery, various manufacturing facilities and the Naval Air Station. These earlier operations have resulted in soil and groundwater contamination.

The Navy is cleaning up the former NAS Alameda under the oversight of federal and State environmental regulatory agencies. The objective of the cleanup activities is to reduce contaminants to levels that are protective of human health and the environment, and that are acceptable for residential or commercial reuse within their respective designated areas. Additional cleanup will continue, as needed, to meet State and federal requirements for the anticipated land uses.

### 2.2.6 California Public Trust Doctrine

California's Public Trust doctrine protects the rights of the public with regard to the State's waterways, including current and former tide and submerged lands, by delineating permitted uses of that land. Trust lands belong to the public and are to be used to promote public rather than exclusively private purposes. Navigation, fisheries, commerce, hotels, water-oriented recreation, public recreation facilities, playgrounds, parks,

and open space are among the activities permitted on Public Trust lands. Housing and offices not related to a Trust use are not permitted on Trust lands.

There are currently over 1000 acres of reclaimed tide and submerged lands within former NAS Alameda that are currently subject to the Public Trust. In 2000, the NAS Alameda Public Trust Exchange Act (SB 2049) authorized a reconfiguration of these Trust lands. This exchange was

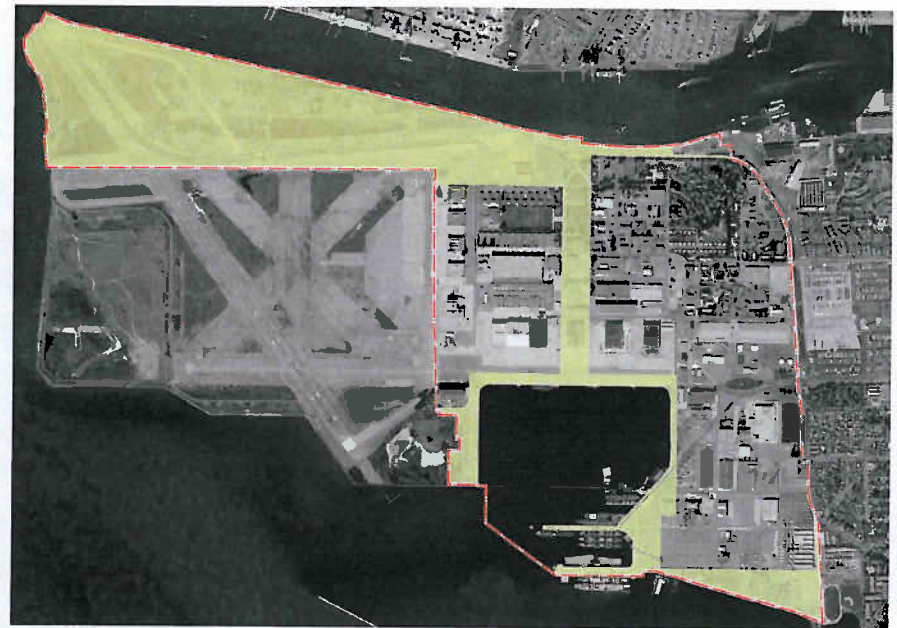


Figure 2-3: California Public Trust Lands Following Exchange

#### Legend

- - - Plan Area Boundary
- Public Trust Following Exchange

Not to Scale



North

sought so that valuable waterfront lands could be placed under the Trust in exchange for lifting the Trust from certain interior lands in order to allow for contiguous development. This exchange, which will occur upon the Navy's conveyance of the former NAS Alameda to the City, is shown on *Figure 2-3: Public Trust Lands Following Exchange*. It will result in more developable land adjoining existing Alameda development and more water-oriented land uses near the Bay and Estuary. The City of Alameda will act as a trustee of the Trust lands for all former NAS Alameda land, including the Plan Area.

### **2.2.7 Primary Existing Tenants**

The ARRA has a Lease in Furtherance of Conveyance and is the Navy's master tenant. Some of the ARRA's tenants provide supportive housing or have existing businesses in buildings in the Plan Area but in locations that are not compatible with the Specific Plan's proposed Land Use Plan. This Specific Plan allows for the relocation of ARRA's current tenants within the Plan Area. In addition, the Maritime Administration currently leases Piers 1 and 2 for marine-related industrial uses, and the Hornet Foundation leases Pier 3, where the USS Hornet is moored and open to the public as the USS Hornet Museum. The land use program described in *Chapter 3: Land Use* allows these uses to continue.