



# DESIGN REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

PLN21-444

**TO:** Design Review Board

**FROM:** Community Development Department, Planning Division **HL**  
Andrea Villarroel, Planner I

**SUBJECT:** **Brickyard Cove Residential (PLN21-444):** Study Session to provide and receive comments on the proposed design of a 94-unit multifamily residential project.

**LOCATION:** Vacant Lots on Brickyard Cove Road, between Seacliff Estates and Brickyard Landing (APN: 560-340-043 and 560-340-039).

**ZONING:** RM1, Multifamily Residential

**GENERAL PLAN:** Medium Density Residential

**OWNER:** Pacific Gas & Electric Co.

**APPLICANT:** Republic Brickyard LLC



## BACKGROUND:

The subject site consists of two vacant parcels on a former PG&E natural gas tank site. The 5.9-acre site is located on Brickyard Cove Road between Seacliff Estates and Brickyard Landing. The site is relatively flat in the southern portion, and steeply rises upward where the natural hillside was excavated to make

room for the former natural gas tank. The site is mostly barren, with some existing trees on the western edge and on the northern hillside, and shrubs near the site frontage along the Bay Trail. The site is currently zoned RM1, Multifamily Residential, with a General Plan designation of Medium Density Residential.

**PROPOSAL:**

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The applicant, Republic Brickyard LLC, is seeking approval of a rezoning to PA, Planned Area district for a residential development consisting of 94 residential units. The Planned Area district would allow more flexibility to the applicable zoning requirements, such as building height and massing. The project consists of nineteen, 3-story townhome buildings. These residential units will range in size from 1,380 to 1,735 square feet (SF) with a mix of 2- and 3-bedrooms. A 4,600 SF resident community building is proposed at the front of the site, which will include a clubroom, fitness room, property management office space, and outdoor amenity space with a pool, spa, barbecues, and game tables.

Type	Number of Buildings	Total Units	Elevation Style	Total SF
4-Plex	5	20	A, B	50,774
5-Plex	10	50	C, D, G	85,651
6-Plex	4	24	F, E	63,459
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>94</b>		<b>205,419</b>

The subject site will be graded to create a more gradual slope that meets with the existing natural hillside in the northern section of the site. The proposed grading will require approximately 88,000 cubic yards (CY) of soil import. This will allow the currently flat and slightly depressed site to have new residential buildings terrace up the hillside. The ultimate grades will be similar to the original, natural condition of the hillside before PG&E occupied the site. Retaining walls of varying heights around the perimeter of the site will be required, due to the current grade of the hillside. Biotreatment areas along the project frontage will treat stormwater runoff that will be generated due to the proposed grade change.

The townhomes will be accessed by a street that connects Brickyard Cove Road and northward up the hillside, with alleys and buildings on both sides of the street. The front of the townhomes will provide shared paseos, and garage access will be located at the alleys in the rear of the buildings. The building fronting Brickyard Cove Road will include covered porches for each unit. Decorative paving will be included at pedestrian crosswalks and key entry areas. Depending on the location of the building along the hillside, some units will be accessed from the paseo on the ground floor, others on the second floor. Each unit will have a two-car garage (188 spaces total), and additional parking will be provided on-site for visitors (22 spaces total).

Community amenities include improvements to the existing Bay Trail to meet current design guidelines outlined in the Bay Trail toolkit. Also, a seating area and historical plaque are proposed along this modified section of the trail. A small community garden will be built along the project frontage, and public art will also be incorporated into the development.

The project will also involve subdividing the site into 23 lots and creating condominium units.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

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An Initial Study is currently underway to determine if the project may result in any significant impacts that require mitigations.

## **DISCUSSION:**

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The applicant is pursuing a Rezoning from RM-1 district to PA, Planned Area District to allow more flexibility to the applicable zoning requirements. In the RM-1, the maximum building height is 35 feet; the proposed building height extends to 36.3 feet. The massing of the third story and above cannot be greater than 80 percent of the ground floor footprint. The applicant is requesting to exceed this threshold for several three-story buildings on the property. The Rezoning to Planned Area District requires approval by the City Council with a recommendation by the Design Review Board and Planning Commission. However, it should be demonstrated that the proposed development is superior to the development that could occur under the standards applicable to the underlying base district, and will achieve superior community design, environmental preservation and/or substantial public benefit.

### ***Geotechnical Report***

A Geotechnical Investigation by Cornerstone Earth Group dated April 25, 2022, was prepared for this project. The report recommends the residential structures be supported on post-tensioned (PT) concrete mat foundations bearing entirely on natural soil or engineered fill material. Retaining walls may be supported on drilled, cast-in-place, straight-shaft friction piers, with a depth of at least 10 feet below the lowest adjacent grade, except in the case for shallow bedrock conditions. Imported soil for use as general fill material should be inorganic with a Plasticity Index (PI) of 23 or less, and not contain recycled asphalt concrete where it will be used within habitable building areas.

### ***Subcommittee Meetings***

There have been multiple subcommittee meetings to provide design feedback to the applicant.

The most recent DRB subcommittee meeting was held on July 26, 2022, with Chair Livingston and Vice-Chair Carter participating. Exhibit A includes the hand sketches presented at the meeting for feedback. The applicant has furthered updated the hand sketches to reflect feedback received at the meeting now shown as Option 2. Below is a summary of the comments from the subcommittee along with a response from the applicant and staff.

1. The color palette should use natural tones, ex. brown and sage green. The roof colors can be dark gray or black. The entry doors can have an accent color. No white trim.

Applicant's Response: The color palette is now shown in muted "earthy" green and brown tones. This color scheme will blend in more with the hillside as opposed to a more vibrant beach feel of the blue, green, and white color palette. There are different shades of the same color proposed to provide subtle accents in the elevations. The windows and trim are shown in similar or complimentary earth tones. The front doors have an accent color. The roofs are a dark gray / black.

Staff's Response: The introduction of the new color palette will allow the design to blend in more with the hillside as opposed to the more vibrant look of the previous color palette.

2. Materials to consider include shingles (at the top of the building) and siding. Board and batten and brick should be avoided. Concrete may be used at the garage.

Applicant's Response: Shingles were introduced to the material palette to allow for a more organic/natural feel. Buildings will consist of only 2 materials. Plaster with reglets primarily on the ground floor with either horizontal siding or shingles on the upper levels to create a more uniform and simplified elevation. Board and batten, and brick elements have been removed. The metal guardrails were replaced with glass guardrails.

Staff's Response: Simplifying the building materials used will allow for a more cohesive design that will allow it to blend in with the hillside.

3. Architecture should blend in with the hillside. More subtle massing.

Applicant's Response: The roof lines were simplified by introducing some hip roofs with lower pitches. Extended roof lines are incorporated instead of repeated gables. The floor plate was lowered on the second level. These measures reduced the overall height of the building so they will blend in better with the hillside while allowing for more bay view opportunities. The end units also have a lower roofline from the center of the buildings to reduce the massing at the property lines. Decorative chimneys were removed for the same reason. Unusable/decorative balconies that were facing the alleys were eliminated to create a more simplified and clean elevation. Balconies were retained and expanded where bay views are anticipated.

4. Redesign the front entry.

Applicant's Response: Front entries are accentuated with canopy awning or furred massing.

Staff's Response: Entries have been designed to appear to have a more porch-like feeling than what was originally depicted in previous design options.

5. Garage doors should all be the same vertical paneling.

Applicant's Response: The garage doors are simple horizontal slats and repeated on all units for cohesiveness.

6. Consider a trail up the hill.

Applicant's Response: This proposal was not supported by the East Bay Regional Park District and will not be pursued. There are concerns about new maintenance obligations with a new trail segment. The hillside in this location is very steep and would require a lot of switchbacks. This could require public parking which the site cannot accommodate and also the liability of public access. Many of the trails in this area have developed organically, so it would be best to have the public utilize the existing trailheads to access the trails that are close in proximity to the project site.

Since the project was first reviewed by the DRB subcommittee, there have been significant changes to the building design and site plan. The general direction has been to make the buildings disappear into the hillside in an organic matter, to simplify the color palette, and to reflect the spirit of the Sea ranch style.

Chair Livingston and the architect have recently met to discuss other modifications. The architect agreed to incorporate the following changes:

- Shingle siding will be used for all buildings. Trim will only be used where needed, for example around windows and doors.
- Plaster with reglets will be used primarily on the first floor. The height of the plaster will be lowered slightly to align closer to the limit of the first floor
- The recreation building/leasing office siding will be updated to match the residential buildings.
- The buildings will be a uniform taupe color but will provide an alternative scenario with a mix of taupe and sage green buildings for the Board input.
- Porches will be considered along the building that fronts Brickyard Cove Road.

Discussion by staff has focused on the balcony design and if the balconies should have less glass to embrace a more traditional style. Additionally, the tan color for the window frames has been discussed, given the color scheme of the buildings. This direction should be provided by the Board.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

As of the publishing of this staff report, the following is a summary of the comments received from the public:

- Some residents have expressed concerns of the potential truck trips generated from importing soil to the site and the impact to the Brickyard Cove Road roadway condition due to the truck trips. All construction related impacts will be evaluated in the CEQA analysis.
- Comments from other residents emphasize that this space is already in use by wildlife and developing the land would destroy their natural habitats.
- There is a concern regarding a potential lack of infrastructure to support all the new residential buildings such as roads, schools, transportation, waste disposal, etc.

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**CONCLUSION:**

Staff and applicant are seeking input on proposed site plan and project design from the DRB and public.

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**NEXT STEPS:**

Applicant will review and consider comments provided at this study session and will present at a public hearing in the future. The applicant is planning on having a formal community meeting on September 29, 2022, and will offer to have meetings with individual HOA groups after the Study Session if it is preferred instead of the larger community meeting.

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**DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:**

- Exhibit A: Architecture Plan  
Exhibit B: Landscape Plan  
Exhibit C: Civil Tentative Map  
Exhibit D: Stormwater Compliance Report (<https://tinyurl.com/Exhibit-D-Brickyard-Cove>)  
Exhibit E: Geotechnical Report (<https://tinyurl.com/Exhibit-E-Brickyard-Cove>)

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**Appealing the Decision of the Design Review Board:**

This is a study session. No formal action will be taken by the Design Review Board, therefore, an appeal cannot be appealed.

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