



May 2, 2016

Trish Herrera Spencer, Mayor
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, California 94501

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Alameda Chamber of Commerce and its Board of Directors to express the Chamber's concern over the use of the "call for review" process by individual City Council members. A process with a very low bar that allows one Council member to call a project for review that has been approved (or denied) by the Planning Board should be used sparingly, and only when there has been an obvious mistake or a decision rendered that is inconsistent with existing City Council policy. The Planning Board reviews and approves development projects involving hundreds of thousands, and sometimes millions, of dollars in investment and risk capital. Introducing uncertainty and unpredictability into that approval process calls the future of the City into question. Economic growth needs stability and good governance to happen successfully. The reputation of the City as a great place to do business is at stake and the Chamber is respectfully requesting that the City Council carefully consider how it uses its call for review process.

Once a project that has undergone a complete public planning and decision making process, there should be a more robust process to decide that the City Council, the public, and the City staff should devote the public resources, time, and money necessary to hold an additional City Council public hearing on a previously approved project. The Chamber is concerned that these additional public hearings come at the expense of other more important issues that the City Council should be discussing and are a disincentive for businesses considering expanding or locating in the City.

Furthermore, it is discouraging that many businesses and residents may see frequent calls for review as second guessing the hard work and many hours of time that the volunteer City Planning Board members (and other boards and commissions) invest to make important decisions on behalf of the Alameda community. Pursuant to the City Charter, the Planning Board is the City Council's appointed body to make decisions regarding planning and development in the City. Frequent calls for review can undercut and devalue the hard work of many Alameda residents who devote time and energy to the City of Alameda. The Council and the community need these residents to devote this time. Please respect the efforts of our fellow Alamedans who devote so much time to our community.

Finally, if Alameda wishes to attract high quality development, reputable and respectable investors and developers, and "top of the line" professional businesses with a high regard for their employees, their reputation, and the way they treat Alameda, then the Alameda City Council must support a high quality, reputable, respectable, "top of the line" public decision-making process. The Chamber is concerned that, if Alameda develops a reputation for decision-making that cannot be predicted, cannot be counted on, and cannot be depended on, no high quality business or investment group is going to want to do business in Alameda. It would be very unfortunate if the Alameda community is left with "bottom of the barrel" businesses and investors that no other city would want.

The Alameda Planning Board and other commissions do excellent work for the City Council and Alameda Community. The property owner at 1435 Webster Street spent two years with the West Alameda community, city staff, and the Planning Board shaping a high quality, beautifully designed project that meets everybody's

needs and that will be a major asset to Webster Street and the neighborhood. The project was ultimately approved by a unanimous vote of the Planning Board and the full support of the West Alameda Business Association. The project is consistent with the General Plan, Webster Street Vision Plan, and every other City Council adopted policy document. We see absolutely no reason for this public hearing. The Chamber asks why we are having this additional public hearing at the expense of other more important City Council priorities, why this project has been delayed an additional two months, and why we must threaten Alameda's reputation as a fair and responsive place to do business by undercutting the work of the Planning Board, City staff, and the public.

The Chamber works hard every day to build Alameda's reputation as a great place to do business. These frequent "calls for review" are detrimental to our daily efforts to recruit and retain businesses. The Chamber feels so strongly about the importance of this issue that the Board has directed its Government Relations/Economic Development Committee to take a hard look at the City's call for review process and make recommendations to City staff and City Council about changes to the process to strengthen Alameda's reputation as a great place to live, work and play. We hope that the City will actively work with us on that effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Thompson", written over a horizontal line.

Kari Thompson
Chairperson GREDC
Past President

Cc: Jill Keimach
Debbie Potter
Planning Board

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