

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

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August 25, 2022

Andrew Thomas, Director
Planning, Building and Transportation Department
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear Andrew Thomas:

RE: City of Alameda's 6th Cycle (2023-2031) Draft Housing Element

Thank you for submitting the City of Alameda's (City) draft housing element received for review on May 27, 2022 along with revisions on August 23, 2022. Pursuant to Government Code section 65585, subdivision (b), the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is reporting the results of its review. In addition, HCD considered comments from the Alameda Housing Element Working Group, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society, Alameda Citizens Task Force and Paul S. Foreman pursuant to Government Code section 65585, subdivision (c). HCD also considered the City's written response to Paul S. Foreman's public comment.

HCD is pleased to find the draft housing element in substantial compliance with State Housing Element Law (Article 10.6 of Gov. Code). The housing element will comply with State Housing Element Law (Article 10.6 of the Gov. Code) when it is adopted, submitted to and approved by HCD, in accordance with Government Code section 65585.

Numerous zoning actions are scheduled for completion prior to the start of the planning period (January 31, 2023) to accommodate the regional housing need allocation (RHNA), including lower-income households, to affirmatively further fair housing (AFFH) and to facilitate and encourage a variety of housing types. These actions, among many others, are crucial to compliance and generally include Programs 1 (Alameda Point), 2 (Shopping Center), 3 (Commercial Transit Corridor), 4 (Residential District) and 6 (Large Sites and Multifamily). Please be aware, if these zoning actions are not completed by January 31, 2023, the element must include a program(s) to rezone sites with appropriate zoning and development standards pursuant to Government Code sections 65583, subdivision (c)(1), and 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i).

Public participation in the development, adoption and implementation of the housing element is essential to effective housing planning. Throughout the housing element process, the City must continue to engage the community, including organizations that represent lower-income and special needs households, by making information regularly available while considering and incorporating comments where appropriate. Please be aware, any revisions to the element must be posted on the local government's website and to email a link to all individuals and organizations that have previously requested notices relating to the local government's housing element at least seven days before submitting to HCD.

Pursuant to Government Code section 65583.3, subdivision (b), the City must utilize standards, forms, and definitions adopted by HCD when preparing the sites inventory. Please see HCD's housing element webpage at <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml> for a copy of the form and instructions. The City can reach out to HCD at sitesinventory@hcd.ca.gov for technical assistance. Please note, upon adoption of the housing element, the City must submit an electronic version of the sites inventory with its adopted housing element to sitesinventory@hcd.ca.gov.

Several federal, state, and regional funding programs consider housing element compliance as an eligibility or ranking criteria. For example, the CalTrans Senate Bill (SB) 1 Sustainable Communities grant; the Strategic Growth Council and HCD's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities programs; and HCD's Permanent Local Housing Allocation consider housing element compliance and/or annual reporting requirements pursuant to Government Code section 65400. With a compliant housing element, the City will meet housing element requirements for these and other funding sources.

HCD appreciates your hard work and dedication throughout the housing element review. HCD also applauds the leadership of the City in taking significant steps forward to (AFFH) and to accommodate the future housing needs of all segments of the community. HCD encourages the City to continue and consider comments toward these goals as part of the adoption process and looks forward to receiving the City's adopted housing element. If you have any questions or need additional technical assistance, please contact Claire Sullivan-Halpern, of our staff, at Claire.Sullivan-Halpern@hcd.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Paul McDougall
Senior Program Manager



August 21, 2022

Andrew Thomas, Planning Building and Transportation Director
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190
Alameda, CA 94501

Subject: 8-12-22 Revised Draft Housing Element

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the subject draft as well as the preliminary California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) comments.

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) has the following comments and questions regarding these materials:

- 1. Why is unlimited maximum density now shown for the transit overlay and on Park Street, Webster Street, the Stations and the North Park Street area?** We don't see anything in the HCD information request that this relates to this. This is another example of portions of the draft Housing Element functioning too much as a zoning ordinance. Although unlimited density for these areas is proposed in the most recent draft zoning amendments, not including unlimited density in the Housing Element itself would have provided some flexibility for the next stage of the Planning Board's and City Council's upcoming review of the zoning amendments.
- 2. Add discussion of potential demolitions and new construction to the Residential Infill Analysis along with the potential for lot subdivisions.** The revised draft's Site 15b Residential Infill Analysis (Appendix E) discusses how the Housing Element will allow additional units within existing buildings and on existing residential lots with unlimited density as was frequently done before adoption of City Charter Article 26 ("Measure A") in 1973, but says nothing about the potential for widespread demolition of existing buildings, especially historic buildings, for new and larger buildings (as also occurred before adoption of Article 26) that could also result from the massive Site 15b upzonings. It also says nothing about the effects of the potentially widespread subdivision of existing lots through the elimination of minimum lot area and lot width standards in all zoning districts except R-1.

In addition, the Residential Infill Analysis statement that "the City's projection of 34 additional units from conversions or additions to existing structures is very conservative and will most likely be much higher" (Page E-18), confirms our previous observations that the allowed addition of an unlimited number of units within existing buildings alone is much more than adequate to meet the

RHNA and the fair housing requirements. Our observations are further supported by Page E-17's statement that "by removing the multifamily prohibition and allowing buildings with three units, the R-2 district could accommodate *1,927 more units* (emphasis added), without increasing the overall density of the district above 21 units per acre". **We therefore reiterate our previous recommendation that the proposed blanket upzonings, including the transit overlay, be deleted**, since they are excessive and could lead to undesirable collateral impacts such as: (a) displacement of renters from existing relatively affordable (although not necessarily deed-restricted) residential units owned by small investors to build market-rate housing; (b) adverse effects on historic properties; and (c) preemption of future affordable housing sites, given that none of the Site 15b proposals require any of the new units to be deed-restricted affordable. All of these potential impacts need to be discussed in the Residential Infill Analysis.

3. It would seem that HCD's request for discussion of environmental constraints would include identification of Alameda's over 4,000 historic properties that could inhibit development involving these properties. **Why is there no discussion of historic properties as an environmental constraint in the subject draft?**
4. HCD requests discussion of the vacant sites "based on a list of questions". **Where can this list of questions be accessed?**
5. Under "quantified objectives", HCD requests "Expand rehabilitation objectives". **What kind of expansion is HCD seeking?**
6. The printed page numbers for Appendix F should begin with page F-1, but instead begin with page F-21.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (510) 523-0411 or cbuckleyAICP@att.net if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley, Chair
Preservation Action Committee
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

By electronic transmission:

cc: Mayor and City Council
Planning Board
Historical Advisory Board
Allen Tai, Planning, Building, and Transportation Department
California Department of Housing and Community Development
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee

Nancy McPeak

From: Alameda Citizens Task Force <announcements@alamedacitizenstaskforce.org>
Sent: Sunday, August 21, 2022 4:22 PM
To: Andrew Thomas
Cc: HousingElements@hcd.ca.gov; paul.mcdougall@hcd.ca.gov; Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft; Malia Vella; John Knox White; Tony Daysog; Trish Spencer; Hanson Hom; Diana Ariza; Teresa Ruiz; Asheshh Saheba; Alan Teague; Ronald Curtis; Xiomara Cisneros; Nancy McPeak; Manager Manager; Yibin Shen
Subject: [EXTERNAL] City of Alameda Draft Housing Element-Response to Aug 19, 2022, Request for Comments on the Proposed Amendments

ACT

Alameda Citizens Task Force

Vigilance, Truth, Civility

Dear Mr. Thomas:

This is in response to your AUG 10, 2022, request for comments on the proposed amendments to the draft housing element.

Our primary concern continues to be Item 15 (b) of the site inventory. We are pleased to see that you have amended 15 (b), by adding the Residential Infill Analysis. (PDF pp. 181-186). However, your analysis continues to ignore the requirements of Government Code Sections 65583.2 (b) (1) (2) (3), (5) (A) which include the following requirements summarized in the HCD Site Inventory Guidebook:

*"If the inventory identifies nonvacant sites to address a portion of the RHNA, the housing element must describe the realistic development potential of **each** site within the planning period."* (Boldface mine)

https://abag.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-08/sites_inventory_memo_final06102020.pdf

Subsection (b) (1) requires, *"A listing of properties by assessor parcel number"*. Subsection (b) (2) requires, *"The size of each property listed pursuant to paragraph (1), and the general plan designation and zoning of each property."* Subsection (b) (3) requires, *"...a description of the existing use of each property."* Subsection (b) (5) (A) requires, *"A description of existing or planned water, sewer, and other dry utilities supply, including the availability and access to distribution facilities."*

You do address the Subsection (g) requirement of the development potential, but not on the site-by-site basis that we believe the law requires. We take particular note of your conclusion on the 34 new units per year projection contained in the site inventory, where you state:

"Looking at the available capacity, the City's projection of 34 additional units from conversions or additions to existing structures is very conservative and will most likely be much higher."

We fully agree with your conclusion but are very concerned that neither the word "displacement" or the word "replacement" appears in the Infill Analysis. This ignores the displacement of renters and the immediate need for replacement housing during construction that will occur from demolitions and additions of existing residential structures.

The only provision for this impact on renters is contained in Program 14 (PDF p. 34) which asserts that the city will require replacement housing for lower income households as required by Government Code Section 65915 (c) (3). However, this law only deals with providing replacement housing in the finished project rather than dealing with where tenants will live during construction. Moreover, this law only applies to density bonus applications. Thus, no broad assurance of replacement housing for tenants in any income category, either temporarily during construction or permanently, is provided.

It is particularly troubling that Site 15(b) is open ended. That is to say that the upzoning of 18,000 parcels and the fact that 53% of Alameda residents are renters leads to the conclusion that there is no way to estimate how many renters will be displaced. Add to that the July 29, 2022 report found at <https://blog.bayareametro.gov/posts/report-paints-picture-bay-area-rental-market> that states that in East Bay communities there are 14 renters competing for every rental unit with a vacancy rate of 4.4% and our draft housing element that places our rental vacancy rate at 2.9%. This amounts to consciously designing a perfect storm for displaced renters both during construction and long term.

If the city determines to proceed with the inclusion of Site 15 (b) in the inventory, the housing element must address the natural consequences of that plan, displacement of renters, and the adverse social, economic and health impacts of the same. We refer you to the article on the subject by Dr. Rajiv Bhatia, former Director of the San Francisco Department of Health's Occupational and Environmental Health Section at:

https://unnaturalcauses.org/assets/uploads/file/bhatia_infilldevelopment.pdf#:~:text=Because%20of%20a%20combination%20of%20income%20gaps%2C%20housing,immune%20and%20endocrine%20systems%20and%20increase%20infection%20rates.

The article contains the following salient statement:

"Because of a combination of income gaps, housing costs, and demolition or conversion of rental units, infill development can cause community displacement, with additional costs to health. Displacement results in psychological stress, which can affect the human immune and endocrine systems and increase infection rates. For children, relocation can lead to emotional and behavioral problems. High housing costs and forced displacement can result a loss of social networks which provide material and emotional support, buffer stressful situations, prevent damaging feelings of isolation and contribute to a sense of self-esteem and value."

From all of the above we conclude that proceeding with the mass upzoning of our residential districts as opposed to a gradual exploration of infill development on a pilot trial basis with protection of displaced renters or abandonment of the policy altogether for the 6th cycle is in the best interests of the residents of Alameda and the Bay Area.

Sincerely,

Alameda Citizens Task Force
Paul Foreman, Board Member & Authorized Spokesperson

Mr. Thomas,

The Housing Element Working Group was formed in September 2021 by members of Renewed Hope Housing Advocates and allies in order to ensure that Alameda makes a rigorous and good-faith effort to produce a Housing Element that fulfills our obligations to produce our fair share of housing while addressing the city's long history of exclusionary housing policies. The group includes long-time members of Renewed Hope who for many years advocated for affordable housing projects and a higher density in the previous Housing Element; a member of the Planning Board who helped craft that document; a local historian, journalist and city planner who has documented Alameda's long and odious history of housing discrimination and displacement; volunteers on Campaign for Fair Housing Elements which is a statewide coalition of housing organizations, including local organizations like East Bay YIMBY and East Bay For Everyone, fighting for fair housing elements in California; and campaigners for Alameda's 2020 Measure Z, which if successful would have eliminated Article 26 – an unlawful apartment ban and density ceiling – from the city charter.

We are writing to comment on the updated draft of the Housing Element published on August 12, 2022. Our comments below reflect our ongoing engagement with the Housing Element process and our extensive and varied experience building and advocating for housing for people of all incomes and backgrounds in Alameda and the East Bay.

In general, we believe that city staff and the Planning Board have done a truly commendable job in drafting a document which is responsive to the community while focusing throughout on meeting the more stringent requirements for housing elements newly in effect for the sixth RHNA cycle. The current Housing Element draft goes a great distance toward providing for the development of Alameda's fair share of housing (5,353 new units) while attempting to distribute them equitably across the city, particularly in high-opportunity areas.

However, we believe that as written, the latest draft still does not go far enough to ensure that Alameda will be able to meet these dual goals.

MEETING OUR REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION

Per Alameda's [2021 General Plan and Housing Element Annual Report](#), Alameda's RHNA for housing construction during the current eight year cycle (2015 to 2022) is 1,723 housing units, of which 444 must be very-low-income units and 248 of which must be low-income units. With less than five months remaining in that period, the city has produced about 2,200 new units, exceeding its total housing production goal by 28%. However, the lion's share of these new units are not deed restricted affordable; in fact, the city only produced only 62% of the new units required across the VLI and LI categories:

Table 1: Alameda RHNA Fifth Cycle Housing Unit Production

Income category	Units planned	Units produced	Percentage
VLI	444	429	62%
LI	248		
moderate	283	1,771	172%
above moderate	748		
TOTAL	1,723	2,200	128%

This level of affordable housing production falls far short of the need in Alameda and the East Bay, and avoiding this outcome in the upcoming sixth RHNA cycle must be a priority in the design of the Housing Element.

Expected affordable unit production

In the Housing Sites Analysis section, the Housing Element identifies the expected capacity and expected distribution of units by income for 18 different projects and sites (some of which are entire residential zones that are being upzoned). The first ten of these are entitled projects for which the distribution of units is already set. For the remaining sites, however, the numbers are forecasts:

Table 2: Forecasted Expected Housing Unit Production

site #	name	VLI	LI	Mod	Above Mod	Total	V/LI % of total
1-10	Projects sub-total	887	428	202	2213	3730	35%
11	South Shore	200	200	200	200	800	50%
12	Harbor Bay Shopping	75	75	75	75	300	50%
13	Alameda Landing	25	25	25	25	100	50%
14	Transit Corridors	139	140	115	115	509	55%
15a	ADUs	120	120	120	40	400	60%
15b	Infill	45	75	75	75	270	44%
15c	2199 Clement	30	30	30	35	125	48%
15d	2363-2433 Mariner Square Drive	40	40	40	40	160	50%
	Total Capacity	1561	1133	882	2818	6394	42%
	RHNA	1421	818	868	2248	5353	42%

Note: Transit Corridor and Total Capacity numbers have been updated to account for new information on the 1901-1925 Webster Street property in the August HE draft.

These forecasted expected units seem to be based on overly generous assumptions and likely overestimate the number of units affordable to low- and very-low-income households that will actually be produced. It is very unlikely that there will be a significant number of new market-rate (non-deed-restricted) affordable units. The following table contrasts the income limits for low-income households of 1 through 5 members and the maximum rent these households can afford without being rent burdened with the average rent for units available on craigslist¹ for units of a size that those households would most likely be looking to rent:

Table 3: Low-income household rent burdens vs. available apartments

household size	low income limit	rent burden threshold	craigslist survey: Alameda apartments		
			bedrooms	units in range	avg rent
1	\$76,750.00	\$1,918.75	studio-1	201	\$2,145.00
2	\$87,700.00	\$2,192.50	1-2	363	\$2,512.00
3	\$98,650.00	\$2,466.25	2	183	\$2,855.00
4	\$109,600.00	\$2,740.00	2-3	238	\$3,073.00
5	\$118,400.00	\$2,960.00	3-4	75	\$4,099.00

Note that 1) these rents are for existing units of varying vintages, which would be significantly lower than average market rents for new units all else equal; and 2) the rent burden is for families at the threshold of the low-income range, meaning that the average rent in these apartments will be significantly more burdensome for virtually all low- and very-low-income households. It follows that in most cases, units will have to be deed-restricted in order to be affordable for households in this income range.

[Alameda's inclusionary housing ordinance](#) applies to new projects of 5 or more units and remodels (i.e. adaptive reuse) that increase the number of dwelling units to 5 or more. The ordinance requires these projects have a minimum of 15% of units be deed-restricted affordable as follows: four percent (4%) of the total units must be restricted to occupancy by Low-Income Households; four percent (4%) of the total units must be restricted to occupancy by Very Low-Income Households; and seven percent (7%) must be restricted to occupancy by Moderate-Income Households. For projects with fewer than 70 units, the ordinance gives specific numbers for each category.

Identified prospective sites

For specific prospective sites that have been identified, following the inclusionary housing ordinance would result in the production of the following deed-restricted affordable units:

¹ Retrieved June 30, 2022. Search terms: "SF Bay Area > east bay > housing > apartments for rent"; neighborhood = "Alameda"; and the range of bedrooms for each HH size.

Table 4: Revised Expected Deed-restricted Affordable Housing on Prospective Sites per Inclusionary Housing Requirements

site #	name	Total	VLI	LI	Mod	Market
11	South Shore	800	32	32	56	680
12	Harbor Bay Shopping	300	12	12	21	255
13	Alameda Landing	100	4	4	7	85
14a	1901-1925 Webster*	50	25	25	0	0
14b	1435 Webster St	15	0	1	1	13
14c	650 Pacific/Webster	20	1	1	1	17
14d	1414 Webster	17	1	1	1	14
14e	1916 Webster/720 Atlantic	100	4	4	7	85
14f	650 Central Avenue	150	6	6	11	127
14g	1618 Park	100	4	4	7	85
14h	1500-1504 Park/ 2411 Santa Clara	50	2	2	4	42
14i	1900 Park	7	0	0	1	6
15c	2199 Clement	125	5	5	9	106
15d	2363-2433 Mariner Square Drive	160	6	6	11	136
	Totals, identified prospective sites	1994	102	103	137	1651

* This is an all-affordable project being developed by Alameda Housing Authority.

Neighborhood upzonings (Infill, ADUs)

ADUs are by definition small projects that will produce one or two new units. There is some indication that these tend to be occupied by family members (e.g. aging parents, young adults); projected affordable units follow guidance provided in an ABAG technical memo.² For infill – here referring to development in residential zones that will be unleashed as a result of density limits being lifted – it is not clear how many projects would exceed four new units. In fact, for small projects having the inclusionary requirement kick in at 5 units disincentivizes going above 4. Thus there is reason to doubt that new projects in the infill area will result in any new deed-restricted affordable units.

Summary

The following table updates the estimated number of units by income given the foregoing analysis:

² https://abag.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022-06/ADUs-Projections-Memo_final.pdf

Table 5: Summary of Expected Unit Production by Income Category with Revised Assumptions

Site category	Total	VLI	LI	Moderate	Market
Current Projects (sites 1-10)	3730	887	428	202	2213
Identified prospective sites	1994	102	103	137	1651
ADUs	400	120	120	120	40
Infill	270	0	0	0	270
Revised Total Expected Units	6384	1109	651	459	4174
Percentage of total zoned capacity		17%	10%	7%	65%
RHNA	5353	1421	818	868	2248
Revised Surplus/Deficit (units)	1041	-312	-167	-409	1926
Revised Percentage of Required units	119%	78%	80%	53%	186%

Thus, despite planning for a 19% buffer above the total units required under RHNA, the Housing Element as written has the potential to fall well short of the needed number of very-low-, low-, and moderate-income deed-restricted affordable units, similar to what transpired during the previous RHNA cycle.

AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING

Bay Farm/Main Island imbalance

The Housing Element's most glaring deficiency in terms of AFFH is that Bay Farm is not receiving close to a proportional number of new units relative to its population:

Table 6: Main Island and Bay Farm population vs. Expected Housing Unit Production (specific sites)

Area	zip code	2021 population	Percentage of population	specific site expected units	Percentage of new units
Main Island	94501	65,565	82%	5,414	95%
Bay Farm	94502	14,471	18%	300	5%
Total		80,036		5,714	

The majority of Bay Farm's housing stock was developed as part of a 1000-acre bay infill master development project known as Harbor Bay Isle in the 1970s. In 1973, this project was barred during development by the voters on a signature ballot initiative from adding planned lower-cost multifamily housing on the site by the passage of Measure A. The developer was forced to change their plans to develop only higher-cost exclusionary single family homes and townhomes on the site. Today, CC&Rs and HOAs tie up land-use control over the majority of

that 1,000-acre development which presents a barrier to the effectiveness of upzoning in this part of the city and to any future development and infill construction.

Periphery vs. core neighborhoods

The draft Housing Element does to some extent distribute new units across the various neighborhoods in the city. However, the vast majority of site-specific expected units are either on the periphery of the main island in underdeveloped former industrial areas or relatively modern infill sites (see Figure E-1, "Housing Sites"). The following map uses bar charts to graphically represent the revised number (per Table 4 above) of expected site-specific new housing units by income category:

Figure 1: Map of Proposed Development Sites with estimated new site-specific housing units by income category



For the purposes of this analysis, the “core” area is defined as Bay Farm plus areas on the main island that are South of the northern waterfront (with the [Clement Ave Branch Railroad](#) serving as the historic boundary between primarily affluent residential and mixed industrial/working-class housing); West of Main Street; and North of the historic (pre-war) southern shore, represented by the lagoons that separate the South Shore development from the rest of the island. Using this definition, the following are revised expected new units (using the more realistic revised affordability numbers from Table 4 above) broken out by core (including estimated neighborhood infill and ADU production) vs. peripheral areas:

Table 7: Revised Housing Unit Production by Income Category and Core/Peripheral Areas

	VLI	LI	Mod	Market	Total
Core Neighborhoods	300	192	174	954	1,620
Periphery	868	518	335	3,053	4,774
TOTAL	1,144	687	512	4,041	6,384
Core % of total	26%	27%	34%	24%	25%

Given the overwhelming concentration of population and access to opportunity in Alameda’s core neighborhoods, this outcome in the 6th RHNA cycle would fail to meet the standard set by State law that “requires Alameda to ensure that its laws, programs, and activities affirmatively further fair housing, which means taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity and housing.” The Racially Concentrated Areas of Affluence (RCAs) identified by HCD (Figure 2) are within the affluent East End/Fernside neighborhood where few new units are planned, reinforcing this deficiency.

Figure 2: Racially Concentrated Areas of Affluence (RCAs)



City Charter parks provision

Article 22, Section 12 of the City Charter prohibits public parks from being “sold or otherwise alienated except pursuant to the affirmative votes of the majority of the electors voting on such a proposition,” i.e. via a ballot initiative. This is understood to prohibit parkland from being converted to residential uses. This requirement may help with the open space requirements for higher density housing required by RHNA. It should be noted that a considerable portion of this open space is Jean Sweeney Open Space Park, which was previously railway property no longer in use. A small proportion of Jean Sweeney was subsequently turned into a high-quality park, leaving the majority as underutilized space which is to be developed in future years as funding becomes available. Perhaps a win-win for both open space and affordable housing advocates could be to seek funding together with a portion of the remaining space being used for affordable housing and the rest for completing the full vision of the park.

SOLUTIONS

The demand for homes for families who cannot afford to rent apartments priced at the current market is profound, and is a direct antecedent to the homelessness crisis we are experiencing in the Bay Area. Alameda must adequately plan to produce its share of affordable homes and meet RHNA requirements for low-, very-low-, and moderate-income deed-restricted units over the next eight years.

To combat the severe shortage of subsidized affordable housing, the city can and should seek additional funding for affordable housing production, whether by bond measure or other means. In the context of the Housing Element, however, the tool we have at hand is Alameda's inclusionary housing ordinance. At the same time, AFFH requires that Alameda not steer the preponderance of new residential development away from high-opportunity and historically exclusionary neighborhoods. Alameda must therefore update its zoning regulations to enable new families, including and especially families with more modest incomes who have been historically marginalized, to enjoy the benefits of living here.

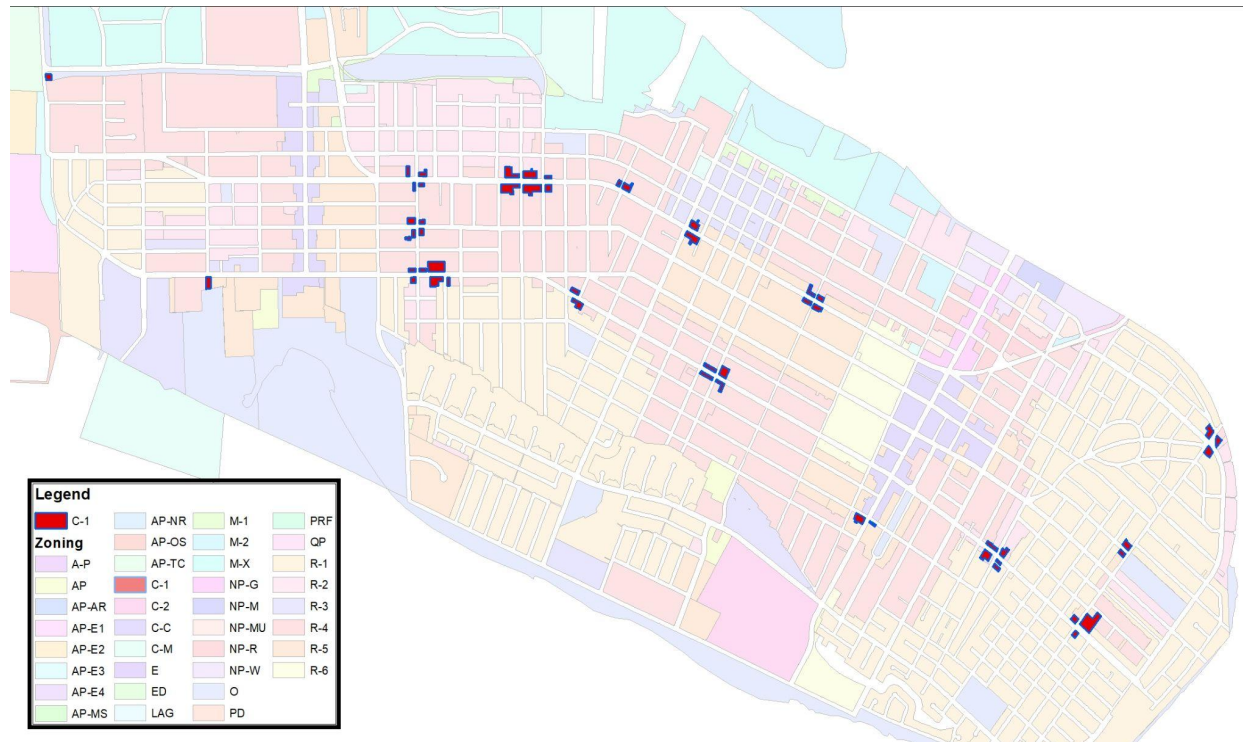
Fortunately, the Housing Element's deficiencies in both of these areas have the same solutions. Alameda can leverage additional upzoning to create more affordable homes using the inclusionary requirements, and preferentially locate that additional zoned capacity in high-opportunity neighborhoods – including those identified as Racially Concentrated Areas of Affluence – in order to affirmatively further fair housing.

Upzoning

We recommend Alameda increase capacity in several zones beyond what has already been proposed. Upzoning has an incremental effect on total capacity for new units, but it can also unlock new development as increased potential unit development makes it economically advantageous for prospective developers to engage with disparate, small property owners to assemble development sites, many of which have substantial remediation needs.

C-1, Neighborhood Business District. A major untapped opportunity is in the C-1, Neighborhood Business District zone. This zone covers properties throughout the city with legacy commercial spaces that are well-located by design: many of these parcels are on former streetcar lines that are now on or near bus routes. The proposed zoning ordinance update sets a new minimum density of 30 du/a but leaves the maximum height at two stories (30 feet) unless there is an adjacent building that is taller. Raising the height limit to allow up to four or five stories would potentially yield much-needed reinvestment in these charming but underutilized areas. C-1 parcels are emphasized below to give a sense of their importance in tying the city together with walkable neighborhood commercial amenities across all residential areas.

Figure 3: Zoning Map with C-1 emphasized

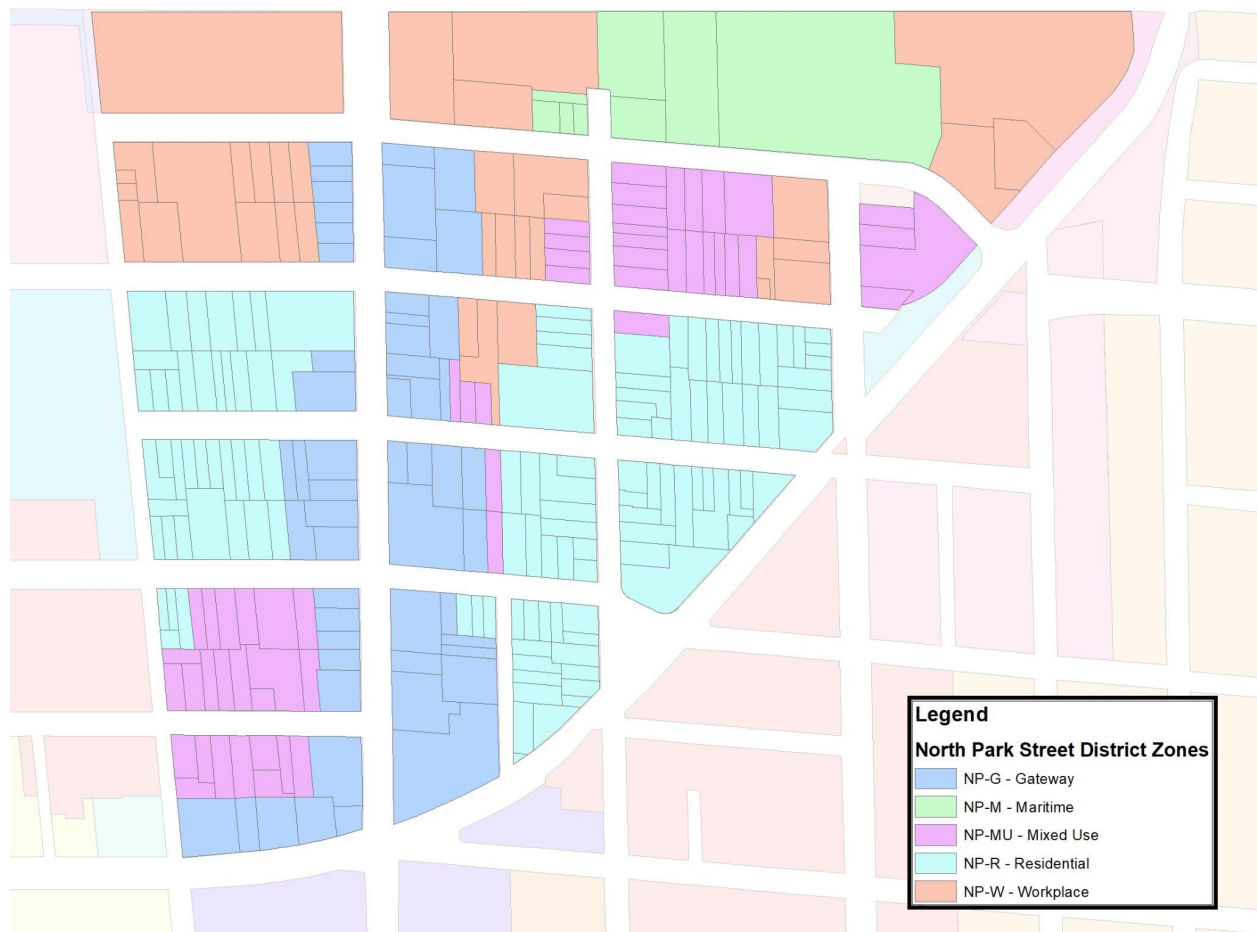


North Park Street Gateway (NP-G) and North Park Street Residential (NP-R) sub-districts. The city's objectives for the North Park Street District (Figure 4) include supporting a pedestrian friendly, transit-oriented mixed-use district and remedying the "auto-row" physical characteristics of the district while maintaining mixed use areas that have historically provided a transition between residential areas and adjacent industrial and commercial mixed-use districts. The NP-G sub-district (dark blue), which is the Park Street corridor itself, is currently proposed to be zoned at a height maximum of 60', while the adjacent residential areas (NP-R, light blue) has been proposed to have a 45' height limit. The city's objectives for the North Park Street District would only be benefitted by increasing the intensity of development in this area.

Increasing height limits in these sub-districts to 90' for NP-G and 60' for NP-R would unlock significantly increased housing production in a priority area for more intense, transit- and pedestrian-centric development, a neighborhoods that will soon be on a completed

Cross-Alameda Trail and is on or adjacent to many commercial and recreational amenities. As the city's objectives suggest, development in this area will come with significant remediation obligations due to the pervasiveness of industrial and auto-oriented current and former uses; increased allowable residential density will finally allow projects of sufficient size to cover the cost of remediation and create a neighborhood for people. This portion of Park Street is not a Historic District so it is in keeping with city guidelines to cultivate a look and feel distinct from other Alameda neighborhoods. At the same time, this area is largely buffered from existing residential areas by Tilden Way and existing automotive/industrial uses and vacant parcels.

Figure 4: North Park Street District



R-1 and R-2 Residential Districts. Both R-1 and R-2 are proposed to maintain their existing 30' height limit, while eliminating the existing density limit and apartment prohibition. Yet it is a fact that in these zones, which make up the majority of acreage available for residential development, there are hundreds of beautiful, historic homes that exceed that limit. Thus the ostensible reason for the limit, to preserve the aesthetic character possessed by many of the neighborhoods within these zones, is simply not valid. R-1 and R-2 should have their height limits increased to 45' to allow for an additional story of living space, leading to one or potentially

two additional dwelling units per parcel, either by adding a new top floor or, as is already common, lifting the house and adding a floor at or below ground level.

Harbor Bay Club (C-2). Bay Farm is home to 18% of Alameda's population but is only expected to host 5% of the new housing planned for specific sites in the housing element. There is a huge opportunity on the 10-acre Harbor Bay Club site to build hundreds of new homes and a modern recreational facility to replace the current, under-subscribed legacy facility. While the site currently has a 100-foot height limit and will be affected by the proposed city-wide repeal of Alameda's unlawful ban on multifamily housing, the current density limit of a minimum of 2,000 square feet per unit (21 dpa) is set to remain in place. This would be a major limitation and has already been determined by HCD to be incompatible with the development of more affordable multifamily housing. Alameda should eliminate the density requirement on this site to allow for more intensive residential development.

Height limit exemption for 100% affordable development

Many nonprofit housing developers who build 100% affordable housing projects create projects which are often four or five stories high and to a density of at least sixty units an acre. Having the specific height limit exemption to accommodate 100% affordable projects, especially along transit corridors and areas rich in services, would enable Alameda to better meet its housing goals for low and very low income households. This could be accomplished by adding this exemption to the proposed Transit-Oriented Housing Waiver.

Explore ground leases on well-located excess public open space

In the Parks + Open Space Element in the city's General Plan, the city has bountiful existing and planned parks but lacks sufficient funding to develop and maintain new ones; consequently the city's primary goal for this element is to "Maintain, enhance and improve the existing system of parks, open spaces, Nature Reserves, trails, and recreational facilities." This contrasts with the need to drastically expand the supply of housing in order to advance the Housing Element's goals of providing an ample supply of housing for existing and projected housing needs, affirmatively further fair housing, and ending and preventing homelessness in Alameda. The city could advance both goals simultaneously if it was able to use excess/underutilized open space for housing, providing new, low-barrier development opportunities that could be leveraged to provide new funding for park development and maintenance.

The map in Figure 5 from the General Plan shows planned public parks (lightest green), many of which have no identified funding source for development and maintenance. Only one, Jean Sweeney Open Space Park (JSOSP), is centrally located, putting it adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods, advancing the city's goals of creating walkable and transit-accessible infill development, and alleviating the need for a costly infrastructure build-out to accommodate new development.

Figure 5: Existing/Planned Parks + Open Space (from Alameda General Plan 2040)



The detailed map below shows the current status of JSOSP. Phase 1 development has now been completed, giving the city a new, beautiful, high-quality play area and community space (purple) and a bike and pedestrian path (green) that forms a major part of the Cross Alameda Trail. The remaining, approximately 14-acre undeveloped segment (red) remains empty and will not be developed until the city identifies a source of funding.

Figure 6: Development Status of Jean Sweeney Open Space Park



If a small portion of this underutilized land could be used to build housing it could help the city meet both its open space and housing goals. A significant barrier, though, is Article 22, Section 12 of the City Charter, which prohibits public parks from being “sold or otherwise alienated except pursuant to the affirmative votes of the majority of the electors voting on such a proposition,” i.e. via a ballot initiative.

However, the city need not relinquish ownership of this open space to achieve these ends. The city can issue a ground lease for a portion of this space, allowing more homes to be built while maintaining public ownership. Such an arrangement would have two major benefits: it could provide revenue for developing and maintaining new segments of the park; and it would give the city the tools to negotiate for higher affordability percentages in the resulting development than would otherwise be required. If the city chose to go this route, rezoning the relevant portion of the land may be necessary.

CONCLUSION

We look forward to a subsequent draft of the Housing Element that incorporates these suggestions and puts Alameda firmly on the path to achieving our housing production goals while affirmatively furthering fair housing across Alameda.

Thank you for your work advancing environmental sustainability, equity and affordability in our city.

Signed,
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