



October 24, 2016

(By electronic transmission)
Alameda City of Planning Board
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501

Subject: Proposed Alameda Point Main Street Neighborhood Specific Plan (Item 7-C on Planning Board's 10-24-16 agenda)

Dear Boardmembers:

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) continues to be very encouraged by the direction of this planning effort as set forth in the draft Alameda Point Main Street Neighborhood Specific Plan. We are especially pleased with the proposed two story, 30 foot height limit within the NAS Historic District.

As we have previously stated, our central concern is that new development is visually subordinate to contributing structures within the Historic District and existing historic visual character and that:

- We oppose infill around the Big Whites, whose low density and landscape design are key to historic visual character; and
- The Big Whites should be maintained as they are with no additions, exterior alterations or infill in their existing park-like setting.

Here are some specific comments on the Plan document:

1. **Infill development within the Historic District.** The following statement on page 5.20 is very important and is consistent with AAPS objectives;

Maintain the open lawn and park-like character of the beehive neighborhood. Infill of the lawns between and behind the Big Whites and behind the rows of noncommissioned officers' housing that line Pensacola Avenue and Corpus Christie Road (currently surface parking and garden) is discouraged because infill would interrupt the continuity and integrity of the Historic District. (HDG-5)

(Note: The term "Beehive Neighborhood" is used to describe the area of the Big Whites because of the resemblance of the curvilinear street plan to a beehive.)

However, despite the above statement discouraging new development within the Historic District, why are there still numerous provisions that address such infill development?

2. **Clarify exceptions to height limits.** Why does S-5 on Page 5.11 allow exceptions to the height limit and what is the process for approving such exceptions, e.g. is there public review and is a formal zoning permit application required? Height limit exceptions should probably not be permitted, which is generally the case elsewhere in Alameda except for minor vertical projections. If such exceptions are permitted, the circumstances permitting such exceptions must be explicitly defined, along with the extent of the exception expressed in feet.
3. **Colors.** The original Navy Building Color Palette should be maintained for ALL historic buildings at Alameda Point. This would aid the uninformed observer or visitor to quickly identify which buildings were built by the Navy, and which came at a later date. The Plan should therefore require that the "Big Whites" be painted only in the color palettes with which the Navy painted them. (White)
4. **Fences and Hedges.** When the Navy owned, and originally built the Big Whites, there were no fences whatsoever in that neighborhood. This is in the long tradition of "East Coast Civility"---where fences did NOT necessarily make good neighbors"---they, in fact, did the opposite.

HDG 35 and HDG 36 on Page 5.23 state:

- Avoid erecting tall and visually impenetrable fences and hedges surrounding lawns. (HDG-35)
- It is recommended that existing non-historic fences be removed. (HDG-36)

Although these provisions are helpful, HDG 35 should be changed to state that NO fences or hedges (impenetrable or otherwise) be installed surround lawns.

Thank you 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, President
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

cc: Mayor and City Councilmembers (by electronic transmission)
Andrew Thomas, Michelle Giles, Debbie Potter, and Jennifer Ott (by electronic transmission)
Historical Advisory Board (by electronic transmission)
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee (by electronic transmission)