



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892

San Francisco Bay Chapter
Serving Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin and San Francisco Counties

Reply to: 802 Balra Drive
El Cerrito, CA 94530

May 8, 2014

Andrew Thomas
Planner
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501

Subject: Draft Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Specific Plan Comments

Dear Mr. Thomas:

The Sierra Club offers the following comments on Chapter 4 – Open Space, Landscape and Sustainability of the Draft Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Specific Plan. Our comments focus on the western side of the Seaplane Lagoon.

General comments

One of the unique and admirable features of the Town Center and Waterfront Plan is the natural park area located on the western side of the Seaplane Lagoon. It is described as “ecologically rich constructed habitat areas” with a “strident ecological agenda.” “The landscape strategy is to transform this vast paved area into a thriving ecology by removing the paving and nurturing ecological succession.”

Some of the design elements, along with a qualifier in the text that existing buildings could remain if needed, raise questions about the prospects for this park to achieve its true, thriving environmental potential.

The floating offshore wetlands in the Seaplane Lagoon — envisioned as an option that “could be added for increased habitat” — point toward the underlying weakness of the design orientation.

Rather than re-engineer this shoreline area to connect with the existing Runway Wetland on the federal property, it is currently designed as a continuation of the Town Center's mixed-use development area with more active visitor uses. When the orientation is mainly to the mixed-use area, it can lead to illogical results. Floating wetlands in the lagoon transition to a grassland on the de-paved land area highly segmented by paved trails, which then transitions back to wetland on the federal property. Such an approach frustrates the achievement of the thriving ecological environment the plan purports to deliver.

The design would take greater advantage of existing ecological assets if De-Pave Park were to create a direct robust connection with the Runway Wetland. This existing wetland currently suffers from a lack of an engineered connection with San Francisco Bay, and thus it normally dries up by September until the rains return. Extending the Runway Wetland to the Seaplane Lagoon and the Bay would bring about a qualitative change for the better to this wetland area. It would allow a year-round interchange of water that would benefit wildlife and wetland vegetation alike.

In addition, there is a high likelihood that the VA will provide its own enhancement to the Runway Wetland as part of mitigation requirements for their clinic and columbarium. There is an opportunity here for a signature wetland restoration project at Alameda Point.

Planners have perhaps failed to appreciate the existing Runway Wetland, as evidenced by the text when it calls the adjacent federal area "the *planned* Nature Reserve"[italics added], as if nothing of ecological value existed just beyond the fence. The Runway Wetland exists, but other than that there are no landscape enhancement plans for the VA's vast undeveloped area at the present time.

Another benefit of a naturalized landscape connection between the Seaplane Lagoon and the existing wetland would be its ability to capture carbon. The plan recognizes the natural shoreline's value in the face of extreme weather events, but seems to give short shrift to the daily value it would provide for the Bay ecosystem.

A notable shortcoming when looking at this area from an ecological perspective, as opposed to an active park area, is that the network of trails and the accompanying foot traffic will discourage use of this habitat by birds. The amount of trails is so extensive that it will limit the number of birds that will nest, roost and feed in this area.

Lastly, the provision for keeping the existing buildings, if necessary, is a troubling clause for two reasons. First, it leaves open the possibility that the buildings will be leased for an indefinite period with potentially an expansion of their footprint to accommodate the primary economic development goal of Alameda Point redevelopment. Secondly, the structures occupy land that is more valuable from an ecological standpoint than an economic one, given the proximity to an existing wetland.

Specific comments

The Sierra Club recommends the following changes and additions to the Specific Plan:

- 1) **Existing structures in the western shoreline footprint, including Building 25** – No leases will be for a period longer than one year. The intent of this Plan is to permanently remove all buildings on the western shoreline at the earliest opportunity.
- 2) **Open Space Zoning** – Bring the zoning of the land on the western side of the Seaplane Lagoon into alignment with the goals of an “ecologically rich constructed habitat” area with public trails. The entire acreage from the Seaplane Lagoon to the federal property, including Building 25, should be zoned Open Space. The Open Space zoning, and the ecosystem restoration planned for this zone, will acknowledge the value of the growing commitment to restoring and expanding the natural San Francisco Bay Estuary being led by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership <<http://www.sfestuary.org/>>.

The temporary, short term leasing of structures does not preclude the Open Space zoning. The Antiques Faire is continuing to lease a building on the Northwest Territories for storage of its faire equipment, despite the recent rezoning of that area to Open Space.

- 3) **Timeline to construct the engineered natural landscape (De-Pave Park) on the western shoreline at the earliest possible opportunity** – The western shoreline engineering project will commence no later than when either the proposed ferry terminal or the marina on the east side of the Seaplane Lagoon commences work. This will provide an incentive to phase in environmental improvements alongside the predominantly building construction oriented future of Alameda Point.
- 4) **Modify the trail system for De-Pave Park** – For the betterment of the ecosystem and wildlife habitat, the Sierra Club recommends a more modest trail system. A simple perimeter trail system will provide an enjoyable experience for visitors of all ages without compromising ecological values. It will allow the landscape to be dedicated mainly to natural wetland habitat. A low impact trail system will make the area more inviting for birds to roost, forage and potentially nest.

It should be noted that the proposed Bay Trail alignment on the adjacent federal property has always been along the interior edge of the Runway Wetland, not around the shoreline or through the wetland. Meandering trails and camping and picnic areas were never part of the original wildlife refuge plan, and for good reason. Such intrusions would discourage bird use. The De-Pave Park area should echo this cautious approach and design the area as an extension of the Runway Wetland, not as an extension of the high use promenade on the north side of the lagoon. The proposed 147-acre park on the northwest side of Alameda

Point next to the VA property will provide more than ample amounts of active shoreline recreational opportunities, as will the nearby Enterprise Park on the south shore.

Sincerely yours,

Norman La Force

Norman La Force, Chair
East Bay Public Lands Committee

cc: Alameda Mayor and City Council

Leora R. Feeney
1330 Eighth Street
Alameda, CA 94501

May 14, 2014

Andrew Thomas
Alameda City Planner
2263 Santa Clara Ave.
Alameda, CA 94501

RE: Comments to **Draft Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Specific Plan**

Dear Mr. Thomas,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Specific Plan. My interest in the development of this area is to insure that current wildlife resources are considered, protected, and hopefully enhanced. The Seaplane Lagoon hosts many birds, resident and migratory, together with foraging harbor seals, and no doubt, the fish that attract these animals. Chapter 4 – Landscape and Sustainability is of particular interest.

It was with considerable pleasure that a natural area was described in rich language for the west end of the Seaplane Lagoon. A transition from developed urban activity to the federal Nature Reserve seems an excellent concept with a rare consideration for the teaming wildlife that uses the lagoon, from rafts of wintering ducks and grebes to our summertime foraging pelicans and our endangered Least Terns. The Seaplane Lagoon also hosts a unique pair of Ospreys that have called Alameda home since 2009. Resident herons, oystercatchers and more enjoy this area daily throughout the year.

With increased human opportunities planned for areas that are now used by wildlife, I am pleased that the document proposes a space where our natural resources can co-exist with minimal disturbance. My concern is that this alternative may never come to fruition. It doesn't seem possible with Buildings No. 25 and 29 standing in the way. The document implies they will remain if needed. I see them as always being of use to someone, and they will also always require access. "Depaving" appears unlikely.

Is this proposed natural area a real desire of the city plan or is it simply a distant possibility if current occupation of the west side isn't needed? This question haunts me. Watching over decades, I have seen the promise of excellent proposals lost in the end. Sadly, I came to feel that they were a ruse. Sincere intentions for the natural and mitigating ecological areas must be clearly supported with appropriate zoning, limited lease options, and a time line that will allow grants for the project to be written soon. This is a grant winning design that could develop an incentive for other cities around the world to use in urban settings. It would attract high-end businesses to Alameda Point if created early in the project's timeline.

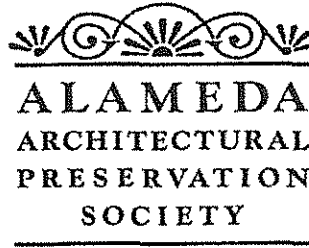
A trail would be sufficient for the public along this area with an occasional bench. Outdoor eating and resting opportunities at cafés and vendors along other sides of the lagoon would be enhanced by the natural shoreline habitats with minimized activity and extraordinary distant views. I would also suggest a much needed Osprey platform or two.

I urge you to create a final document that has language that will insure that the described natural area at the Seaplane Lagoon's west side is intended to happen soon. Do not produce a final document that has a loophole so large the U.S.S. Hornet could sail through. I fear the current language will lead to continued view blocking structures, concrete, and potentially additional development. I ask you to compare the current view westward from the other sides of the lagoon - to the view without structures and restored habitats.

Thank you for offering the natural west shore proposal. It is a wonderful design that shows appreciation for a unique Alameda resource and one of life's great teachers and entertainers: Nature. The final document deserves to have language that guarantees its future.

Sincerely,
Leora Feeney
Leora Feeney

cc
Mayor Gilmore
Members of the Alameda City Council
Jennifer Ott
Golden Gate Audubon Society



April 27, 2014

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

Subject: Proposed Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Precise Plan (Item 7-C on Planning Board's 4-28-14 agenda)

Dear Boardmembers:

The draft Plan proposes a height limit of 50' in front of the Seaplane Lagoon hangers. Since the hangers themselves are 50' tall, the 50' height limit will effectively block the view of the hangers from across the Seaplane Lagoon and destroy the existing iconic viewscape (see attached photo).

As AAPS has previously recommended, new infill construction within the Historic District, including in front of the hangers, should be limited to no taller than 30 -- 40' so that views of the Historic District buildings are less obstructed and help ensure that the new buildings are visually subordinate to the historic buildings to maintain the District's character.

Staff had previously suggested to AAPS that compatibility of new development within the Historic District could be better accomplished through Design Guidelines rather than zoning standards. However, the proposed Historic District Infill Guidelines (pp122-129) are rather sketchy and mostly just restate the 50' height limit in front of the hangers and 35' height limit between the hangers.

Although the staff report states that the Guidelines include the provision "building design should include simple clean forms that respect the industrial character of existing buildings which comprise the NAS Alameda Historic District", we could not find this statement nor other statements addressing building design within the Guidelines. Such statements would be helpful and should be accompanied by illustrations.


The Infill Guidelines should also include the following statement:

Ensure that any new structures and additions to existing structures within the NAS Alameda Historic District are compatible with the District and are visually subordinate and deferential to existing buildings and other features that contribute to the District.

This statement is needed to address the risk that new buildings will become overly prominent, so that the historic buildings are no longer the District's dominant features, potentially destroying the District's sense of time and place and disqualifying the District from the National Register of Historic Places.

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

Attachment: Photograph of hangers from across the Seaplane Lagoon

cc: Mayor and City Council (by electronic transmission)
John Russo, Andrew Thomas, Debbie Potter, and Jennifer Ott (by electronic transmission)
Historic Advisory Board (by electronic transmission)
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee (by electronic transmission)

Alameda Point - Re: Town Center Plan Update

From: Alana Dill <alana.dill@gmail.com>
To: Alameda Point <AlamedaPoint@alamedaca.gov>
Date: 5/12/2014 3:56 PM
Subject: Re: Town Center Plan Update

I really, really hope that they will abandon the idea of calling it Town Center. It's a terrible idea. We already had a failed mall with that name and the West End is nowhere near the "center" of town. Ridiculous!

On Mon, May 12, 2014 at 9:01 AM, <AlamedaPoint@alamedaca.gov> wrote:

The City is holding the final hearings on the Town Center Plan for Alameda Point over the next several months:

May 12th Planning Board Meeting: Discussion will focus on the Planning Board sub-committee's proposed changes to Chapter 1-4.

May 27th Planning Board Meeting: Discussion will focus on the Planning Board sub-committee's proposed changes to Chapter 5-8.

June 9th Planning Board Meeting: Public hearing to consider Planning Board recommendation to the City Council to approve the Town Center Plan.

July 1st City Council Meeting: Public hearing to consider recommendation to the City Council to approve the Town Center Plan.

All Planning Board and City Council hearings are held at 7:00 PM on the 3rd floor of City Hall located at 2263 Santa Clara Avenue.

alamedaca.gov/alameda-point

[Facebook.com/AlamedaNAS](https://www.facebook.com/AlamedaNAS)

[Twitter @AlamedaNAS](https://twitter.com/AlamedaNAS)



Good evening, President Burton and Members of the Planning Board. My name is Dave Terry.

My wife, Judy and I moved to Harbor Bay 3 years ago. We were influenced in our decision by the nearby Harbor Bay Club and the recreation services it provided us.

We joined Harbor Bay Neighbors because we believe maintaining that recreational aspect of the Planned Unit Development is of critical importance. Currently, Harbor Bay Neighbors has nearly 1000 supporters, including several HOA associations, who feel the same way about the club.

Harbor Bay Neighbors has spent hundreds of hours researching to prove that Ron Cowan and Harbor Bay Island Associates are not entitled to do whatever they want with the club.

Cowan and his minions have been less than truthful with the citizens of Alameda. For instance, their letter to the City Council dated April 16, 2013 made at least 2 statements unsupported by facts.

1.) Ron Cowan and HBIA claimed they are unable to maintain the club. However, we have seen a deed of trust for a \$7M loan secured against the club. **No** self-respecting banker would loan money against an asset that is "a challenge to maintain". This is proof the club generates sufficient revenue for such a multi-million dollar debt and that HBIA is unwilling to reinvest its cash flow from the club to maintain it.

2.) Harbor Bay Island Associates claim a court determined an indisputable right to build more homes in Alameda. No court has ever said that and the claim is completely unsupported by Section 1.5 of the 1989 Development Agreement between the City and HBIA.

Despite Harbor Bay Neighbors hard work and fact finding, HBIA has countered with name calling and openly questioning the character of our numerous supporters. The citizens of Alameda deserve an open and honest conversation about the Harbor Bay Club based on facts.

I call on you, the members of the Planning Board to demand and to ensure that such a conversation takes place.

Harbor Bay Neighbors have gone above and beyond to prove our case factually. Ron Cowan and HBIA should be made to do the same.

Dave Terry

Harbor Bay Neighbors

ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS

Representing City and County Governments of the San Francisco Bay Area



April 21, 2014

Jennifer Ott
Chief Operating Officer – Alameda Pt.
2263 Santa Clara Ave., Room 130
Alameda, California 94501

Dear Ms. Ott,

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail (Water Trail) I am submitting comments on the Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Precise Plan (Plan). The Water Trail is a voluntary, planned network of access sites throughout the nine-county Bay Area that will make it easier for people using non-motorized small boats (NMSBs) or boards to safely enjoy the historic, scenic, cultural, and environmental richness of San Francisco Bay through single and multiple-day trips. The Water Trail program is led by the State Coastal Conservancy in close collaboration with Association of Bay Area Governments, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the Division of Boating and Waterways.

We support the inclusion of the small boat launch and campground in the Plan. As mentioned in my letter to the Planning Board dated August 20, 2013, the Seaplane Lagoon Area has potential to be a prime boating destination for residents and visitors. The following are comments related to the Water Trail:

Small Boat Dock

The Plan shows a small boat dock located at the end of a pier and a boat ramp located in Seaplane Lagoon Park. Although we support inclusion of a separate dock for NMSB users, the dock is located in an area that is far from parking and likely far from a dedicated drop-off location (assuming that cars will not be allowed on the pier). Placing a launch near a boat drop-off location or near parking is a very important feature for NMSB users as carrying boats over long distances is very challenging. Please consider relocating the small boat dock to a location near parking or a drop-off. An alternate potential solution is to incorporate the small boat dock into the design of the boat ramp located on the northwest corner of the Seaplane Lagoon. A good example of a boat ramp successfully including both motorized and non-motorized use is at Alviso Marina County Park where there are two docks located on either side of the boat ramp, one of which is a low freeboard dock used by NMSB users.

Camping

The Plan includes camping in De-Pave Park. There is a demand for more boat-in camping locations around San Francisco Bay and camping in De-Pave Park has the potential to also serve NMSB users. Features that support boat-in camping include a location for boaters to land near the campsites and secure storage for boats.

Additional features that improve the usability of a site for NMSB users include public restrooms near a launch site, accessible design, and short and long-term boat storage (as detailed in my letter dated 8/20/13). Please also consider labeling water

access in your future plans as potential Water Trail sites to demonstrate the connection of Alameda Point with our nine-county regional trail.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Plan. Please do not hesitate to contact with questions at (510) 464-7936 or Gallib@abag.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Galli Basson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Galli Basson
Water Trail Planner

cc: Ann Buell, Project Manager, State Coastal Conservancy

Andrew THOMAS - Comments on Draft Plans for Alameda Point Town Center & Waterfront Precise Plan (Draft)

From: Kathleen Jensen <kathleenjensen2@hotmail.com>
To: "alamedapoint@alamedaca.gov" <alamedapoint@alamedaca.gov>
Date: 4/21/2014 12:13 PM
Subject: Comments on Draft Plans for Alameda Point Town Center & Waterfront Precise Plan (Draft)

The following are some comments I have about the very detailed well written draft plan -Alameda Point Town Center and Waterfront Precise Plan. Per article in the Alameda Sun dated April 17, 2014 residents could email comments.

1. Refer Land Use & Development Regulations Guidelines - Maximum and Minimum Building Height.
 - a. Think the graphic of the Maximum and Minimum Building Height should state the number of stories along with the height. ***The average resident relates to the number of stories not the number of feet when determining building height.*** How many stories is 65', 50', or 30' etc. ????
 - b. Suggest only 2 story residential units along Main St. adjacent to Bayport neighborhood.
 - c. Recommend any townhouse unit be no more than two stories. Otherwise too many stairs to climb within the unit. Think of yourself going up and down 3 flights of stairs every day to do laundry, clean, cook etc.
 - d. Any residential units built on top of commercial businesses needs to have elevator access.
 - e. Are you building a wall around the Seaplane Lagoon since building heights are being increased in this area?
 - f. Don't want Alameda Point to become a high rise building competition for views of San Francisco. Needs to be firm legal binding height limits set.
 - g. Adequate parking for residents. Even though the idea is for a transit oriented community people still have a car. Most have two and some more. Need adequate off street residential parking. Just look at all the cars parked along Central Ave, Santa Clara, Encinal Ave. where we have multiple unit residences.
 - h. Liquefaction. What steps taken to mitigate liquefaction which is prevalent around the area of the Seaplane lagoon?

Thank you for considering these comments.

Kathleen Jensen