

# ITEM 7-B

## CITY OF ALAMEDA

### Memorandum

To: Honorable President and  
Members of the Planning Board

From: Henry Dong  
Planner I

Date: June 8, 2015

Re: **PLN15-0179 – 2437 Eagle Avenue – Applicant: Housing Authority of the City of Alameda.** A request for approval of Design Review and Density Bonus and Waivers to allow the construction of one two-story building and two three-story buildings containing twenty-two residential units located at 2437 Eagle Avenue. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Public Resource Code 21159.23 Exemption for affordable low-income housing and CEQA Guidelines 15332 In-fill Development Projects.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Housing Authority of the City of Alameda is proposing to construct a 22-unit rental housing project affordable to low- and very low- income families at 2437 Eagle Avenue. The 0.83-acre site located at the corner of Eagle and Everett Street in the North Park Street Residential Zoning District. The proposal includes one two-story building and two three-story buildings and on-site parking, landscaping, outdoor play area and court yard, and a community room for the residents. Exhibit 1 is the Applicant's statement of Design Intent.

The subject property is a vacant lot that was the former location of Island High School. The site is adjacent to commercial and residential uses located to the west, north and east of the property. Residential homes are located adjacent to the southern portion of the property.

The project is within walking distance of many services, such as Bridgeside Shopping Center, the Marketplace and retail services on Park Street, McKinley Park, the Alameda Library, the Alameda Theater, two elementary schools, and several churches. Furthermore, AC Transit service directly to San Francisco and Fruitvale BART is located less than a block from the site. The residents of the project will also benefit from secure bicycle parking and transit passes for all households to encourage less use of cars.

The property was rezoned from M-1 (Intermediate Industrial) to R-4/PD on July 3, 2012. The property was subsequently rezoned from R-4/PD to NP-RD (North Park Street – Residential Sub-District) zoning district on May 7, 2013. The property was purchased by

Exhibit 1

Item 7-A, 11/9/2015

Planning Board Meeting

the Housing Authority in October of 2014, for the purpose of developing an affordable housing project.

The design of the buildings and site improvements is the result of a focused community design effort that included representatives of the neighborhood, the Housing Authority staff and the project architect, Anne Phillips Architecture. Four public meetings were held on June 18, 2014, November 6, 2014, November 25, 2014, and January 20, 2015. Additionally, an email group was established that included over 30 addresses for neighbors who wished to receive project updates and provide comments. A committee was also formed during the summer of 2014, with neighbors and Housing Authority staff to review proposals from twelve design firms and to select the architect.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Project Description**

The proposed residential project is designed in a court yard housing configuration with a variety of architectural features, materials and colors to complement the nearby neighborhood. The residential development includes one two-story building and two three-story buildings containing one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, including three fully accessible units. The project also includes bicycle and vehicle parking areas, a community center, landscaped pedestrian walkways, an outdoor play area, community courtyard, and a manager's office. A main entrance from Eagle Avenue, containing benches and a trellis-covered walkway, gives a welcoming appearance to the project.

The buildings are oriented towards Eagle Avenue and Everett Street to screen the parking lot located at the rear of the property. Vehicles access the site through a twenty-foot-wide driveway from Everett Street, while pedestrians access through the main entrance on Eagle Avenue.

The applicant proposes 30 parking spaces to serve the 22 units, which provides a parking ratio of 1.36 spaces per unit. AMC Section 30-7.19 allows the Planning Board to approve the proposed parking plan because of the reduced demand for parking for affordable housing. Based upon vehicle ownership in its other projects, the Housing Authority believes the 1.36 parking ratio is adequate to serve the project. The proposed parking ratio exceeds, or is similar to, other Housing Authority properties occupied by families with children. The Esperanza Apartments (1.07 spaces per unit), Roseville Village (1.09 spaces per unit), and the Shinsei Gardens Apartments (1.54 spaces per unit) each adequately meets the parking needs of the residents. In addition, the facility meets the City's Bicycle Facility Design Standards by providing a storage area for 26 long-term bicycle parking spaces, and bike racks for six short-term bicycle parking spaces.

The proposed landscape design reflects the Bay-Friendly principles for drought resistant landscaping with native plants and high efficiency irrigation. The plants were selected

for their durability and low maintenance characteristics. The plant materials will provide privacy, seasonal interest, texture and shade for the residents. Trees and shrubs help to visually soften the buildings and integrate them into the neighborhood pattern. Tall columnar trees line the parking lot edge and provide shade and screening from the neighboring properties. A four-foot-wide planting strip will be installed along Eagle Avenue to visually enhance the existing sidewalk. A trellis entry portal and raised planter beds line the pedestrian walkways. A community court yard and play area provide space for interaction between residents (Exhibit 2, Project Plans).

### General Plan Conformance

The proposal is consistent with the General Plan. The project site is designated as Medium Density Residential by the General Plan. This proposal includes 22 units. Furthermore, Policy HE-2 of the Housing Element of the General Plan calls for the City to expand the supply of affordable rental and ownership housing for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households. This proposal implements Policy HE-2 by providing 21 residential units for very low- and low-income households and one manager's unit.

### Zoning Ordinance Development Standards and Affordable Housing Density Bonus Waivers

Through the neighborhood design process, the architect worked with the neighbors to develop a site plan and architectural design that would complement and support the character of the adjacent neighborhood. The resulting plan requires certain waivers from the standards of the zoning ordinance. (Density Bonus application attached as Exhibit 3).

The subject site is zoned North Park Street Residential (NP-R). Pursuant to the AMC definitions, the Everett Street frontage is considered the "front" of the property, the Eagle frontage is considered the "side", and the property line adjacent to the side property line of the adjacent residential homes on Eagle is considered the "rear" property line. (Page A1.1 of the plans)

In support of the request for the density bonus and required waivers, the applicant submitted a base plan that illustrates that under the requirements of the zoning code, the 0.83 parcel could accommodate eight duplexes for a total of 16 units. Because the project is 100% affordable, the project qualifies for a 35% density bonus for a total of 22 housing units pursuant to AMC Section 30-17 Density Bonus Ordinance.

To enable the 22 units to physically fit on the site and provide a pleasant appearance for the neighbors and a pleasant living environment for the residents, the Housing Authority is requesting waivers from the AMC sections that: 1) prohibit buildings with more than two units, 2) limit buildings height on this site to 30 feet, 3) require a 15-foot setback, and 4) require a 20-foot rear setback.

Table 1 summarizes project compliance with development standards established by the Zoning Ordinance.

Table 1. Project Compliance Summary

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
<b>Setbacks</b>			
Front	15 ft.	11 ft. 6 in.	<u>Waiver Requested</u>
Rear	20 ft.	10 ft.	<u>Waiver Requested</u>
Side (Street)	10 ft.	12 ft.	Complies
Side	5 ft.	26 ft.	Complies
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	30 ft.	34 ft. 4 in.	<u>Waiver Requested</u>
<b>Required Parking</b>	44 spaces	30 spaces	AMC 30-7.19 allows reduced parking for affordable housing developments.
<b>Required Bicycle Parking</b>	23 long term 6 short term	26 long term 6 short term	Complies
<b>Useable Open Space</b>	3,080 sf.	11,754 sf.	Complies

Justification for Waivers:

Staff believes that the waivers are justified. As shown in the base plan, it is not possible to meet all of the requirements of the AMC and still construct the 22 units on the site. The proposed plan allows for the construction of 22 units in a manner that reflects and supports the character of the adjacent neighborhood. Staff supports the requested waivers for the following reasons:

1. Multifamily Prohibition Waiver. By allowing more than two units to be included in each building, the project is able to provide 22 units in three structures instead of eleven structures. By reducing the number of structures, the architect was able to eliminate the many small spaces between buildings and consolidate these spaces into usable spaces for recreation and/or parking.
2. Everett Front Yard Setback Waiver. Although most observers consider the Eagle frontage to be the front of the project, the Zoning Ordinance treats Everett Street as the front of the project. The Zoning Ordinance requires a 15-foot front yard setback. The project is providing 11.5 feet. An 11.5-foot front yard setback is not uncommon in the neighborhood and allows for space for bicycle storage between buildings A and B and parking behind Building C.

3. Rear Yard Setback. The western property line of the property is technically the rear property line. This property line abuts the side yard of the adjacent residential property on Eagle Avenue. The side yard setback for the adjacent property is five feet. This project is providing a 10-foot setback from the property line. A 20-foot setback is required, but practically, a five-foot setback would be adequate. Furthermore, if the applicant subdivided the property into two or more parcels, this “rear” setback would become the “side” setback and a waiver would not be necessary since the proposed 10-foot setback would exceed the five-foot side yard requirement.
4. Height Limit. The proposed design includes two buildings with a third story. (A2.3). To accommodate the third story, the building heights are increased to just over 34 feet. Although the height limit is 30 feet in this district, several residential buildings in the immediate vicinity of the project also exceed the 30-foot height limit.

### Architectural Design

The proposed design is appropriate for the site, is compatible with adjacent and neighboring buildings and surroundings, and promotes harmonious transitions in scale and character in areas between different designated land uses. The project utilizes a court yard housing configuration with row house building architecture as recommended by the North Park Street Design Guidelines.

Design elements found in the surrounding neighborhood are incorporated into the building designs, including sheltered entry porches, tall articulated windows, and gabled roofs. The design utilizes varying roof lines and building separation to articulate and reduce the scale of the structures. A mix of balconies, porches, and patios provide private open space for the residents, and outdoor amenities and landscaped areas help provide gathering locations for the community. Pedestrian paths integrate the community and access walkways allows views into the site from the surrounding streets.

Fiber cement siding, panels, and board and batten, are used to emulate and accentuate the vertical proportions that are often displayed in Stick style architecture of the Victorian era. Columns of bay windows, the varying roof lines, and the composition of the façade materials are carefully designed to further break up the mass of each building and articulate the individual units. The materials, design, and scale of the buildings are compatible with the residential character of the adjacent properties.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, staff believes that the proposed project is well designed, is a positive improvement for the neighborhood, and a much-needed addition to the City of Alameda's supply of very-low and low-income housing.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS**

Property owners and residents within 300 feet of the project's boundaries were notified of the public hearing and given the opportunity to review and comment on the proposal. As of the writing of this report, no comments were received by staff.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Pursuant to Public Resource Code 21159.23 exemption for affordable low-income housing, the proposed housing project is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), because the project is 100 percent affordable to low-income households, the project is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, and the site was evaluated as a residential site in the North Park Street Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

In addition, this low-income housing project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 – Infill Development Projects. The project meets all requirements for the infill exemption, including the following:

- a) **The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.** The project meets this criterion because as proposed it is consistent with the Medium Density Residential General Plan designation and the NP-RD zoning district. The project complies with the requirements of the Density Bonus Ordinance for increased density and the requested waivers of zoning requirements. The proposed project with Density Bonus waivers is compliant with the development regulations of the NP-RD zone.
- b) **The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.** The project site is located within the North Park Street District, a heavily urbanized area within the city limits. The project site is designated as Medium Density Residential by the General Plan and is approximately 0.83 acres in size.
- c) **The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.** The area of the proposed development is currently a vacant lot within a heavily urbanized area of the North Park Street District. The site is surrounded by urban uses and is subject to high levels of disturbance from foot and vehicle traffic from the

surrounding city streets. The vacant site has no habitat value for any endangered, rare, or threatened wildlife species.

**d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.** The project is a residential development located within an urbanized area with sewer and water infrastructure to support the development. Construction noise and dust will be minimized by local regulations and proposed conditions of approval for the project. The proposed project will not result in any significant noise, air quality or water quality impacts. A letter from TJKM Transportation Consultants advises that the proposal will generate only twelve a.m. peak hour trips and fourteen p.m. peak hour trips (Exhibit 4, TJKM Letter).

**e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.** The project site is located within an urban district that already has the basic water, sewer, and other utility infrastructure necessary to support the proposed project. The site has access to all other public services provided by the City.

### RECOMMENDATION

Approve Density Bonus Application and Design Review PLN15-0179 with conditions in the draft resolution (Exhibit 5, Resolution).

Respectfully Submitted,



---

Henry Dong  
Planner I

### Exhibits:

1. Applicant's Statement of Design Intent
2. Project Plans
3. Density Bonus Application
4. TJKM Transportation Consultants Letter
5. Draft Resolution