

July 16, 2017

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

**Subject: Encinal Terminals Master Plan (Item 7-A on Planning Board's 7-17-17 agenda)**

Dear Boardmembers:

The Encinal Terminals Master Plan is proposing to increase the plan area's existing 60 foot height limit set forth in the General Plan to 90 feet on portions of the site. The Master Plan also proposes to allow up to 160 feet with design review in Subareas F, G, H and I based on a Planning Board finding that the architectural design is exceptional and that the proposed height exemption allows for a more attractive building and better overall architectural and urban design for the entire Encinal Terminals site. The apparent intent is to allow a building that is of "landmark" quality, or that is "iconic" and will "punctuate and improve the Alameda skyline".

**I urge you to recommend that the City Council retain the General Plan's existing 60 foot height limit.** The proposed height limit increases are inconsistent with Alameda's small-town character and set an undesirable precedent for future projects. 160 foot buildings will be overwhelming in scale relative to Alameda's existing neighborhoods, even from a distance, and be overly dominant visual elements.

The suggestion that taller buildings will be more attractive and improve the overall architectural and urban design of the project area is not convincing. Some of the world's most memorable cityscapes are low rise (less than 90'), such as many of those in Europe and portions of Washington DC. Low scale architectural elements such as spires, domes and turrets are often used to create "iconic" or "landmark quality" buildings. As noted in the staff report, it appears that the proposed 589 units can still be accommodated within the existing 60 foot height limit.

Note that 160' would be possible in Subareas F, G, H and I as per Master Plan Table 33 (Page 40), creating the potential for MULTIPLE buildings over 90' with Design Review approval. However, previous Planning Board discussion seemed to assume only ONE tall building and some of the Master Plan discussion implies this. For example, Figure 3.7 on Page 41 shows 160 foot buildings only in Subarea F, and the Page 62 discussion seems to indicate only one such building. But the Page 41 and 62 information appear to be only illustrative and Table 33 is the controlling regulation. **The Planning Board should ask staff to clarify this.**

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley

cc: Mayor and City Councilmembers (by electronic transmission)  
Allen, Tai, Andrew Thomas and Debbie Potter (by electronic transmission)