

# ITEM 7-B

To: Honorable President and  
Members of the Planning Board

From: Andrew Thomas  
Assistant Community Development Director

Date: September 11, 2017

Re: **Development Plan Application for a 66-Unit Affordable Housing Development. Applicant: Housing Authority of the City of Alameda.** A Development Plan application to construct 60 new and to retain six existing affordable, multi-family, rental units, on a 1.95 acre site within the R-5 Zoning District located at 727 Buena Vista Avenue. The project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to California Public Resources Code sections 21159.21, 21159.23 (Exemption for affordable housing) and 21159.24 (Exemption for infill affordable housing), as well as CEQA Guideline section 15332 (Infill development projects). Furthermore, the project does not trigger any of the exceptions in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 in that the project will not have any significant effects due to unusual circumstances or any cumulatively significant impacts and will not adversely impact any designated historic resources.

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## BACKGROUND

The Housing Authority of the City of Alameda is requesting Development Plan approval for a 66-unit affordable housing project. The Development Plan proposes to demolish 40 existing modular housing units, replace them with 60 new units and retain six existing stick-built units. The Housing Authority needs only a Development Plan entitlement at this time in order to apply for financing for the project. At such time as financing is secured, the Housing Authority will return to the Planning Board with a Design Review application that includes building materials, architecture and floor plans, as well as additional site plan details such as landscaping and storm water retention.

The project will provide 66 housing units for very low- and low-income households within walking distance to existing commercial and retail as well as transportation services. The Housing Authority will continue to own the land after it is redeveloped. The Housing Authority will retain the John Stewart Company to manage the 66 apartment units. The project plans and a statement of purpose for the project are included in Exhibit 1.

## ANALYSIS

Site Location: The site is a 1.95 acre parcel of land on Buena Vista Avenue approximately 100 feet east of Webster Street. The site is bounded by a Chevron station to the west, additional Housing Authority property and Constitution Way to the

east, Eagle Avenue to the north and residential uses across Buena Vista Avenue to the south. The location is ideal for affordable housing since it is within walking distance of all the retail, commercial and transportation amenities provided along Webster Street.

Site Plan: The site plan proposes to demolish 40 existing modular units on the eastern portion of the site and construct 60 new units in their place. Two existing triplex buildings in the southwest and northwest corners of the site will be retained and a new 16-space parking area would be constructed that separates the two. The new units would be housed in a U-shaped building that would wrap around an outdoor courtyard. A 50-space parking area would line the entire east end of the site adjacent to existing buildings located along Constitution Way. Primary access to the site would be provided from two driveways located along Buena Vista Avenue with an Emergency Vehicle Access onto Eagle Avenue in the north east corner of the site.

The project would provide a total of 66 affordable housing units, including one manager's unit. All the units will be rental apartments, with a mix of unit sizes. The project would include 36 one-bedroom units, 21 two-bedroom units and 9 three-bedroom units. The configuration of each unit will be provided in a subsequent Design Review application. The distribution and size of existing and proposed unit types is shown on the cover sheet of the plans (Exhibit 1).

Site amenities would include on-site vehicle and bicycle parking, a central courtyard, landscaped common open space, a recreation center, management offices and laundry facilities. The recreation center and outdoor courtyard will provide a focal point and gathering area for the project. A total of 66 parking spaces, 66 bike locker spaces and ten bike rack spaces will be provided on-site.

Along its southern edge, the project will face onto a 20-foot wide landscaped setback that adjoins the existing sidewalk on Buena Vista Avenue and provides pedestrian access to the commercial services on Webster Street and the surrounding neighborhood. This location maximizes the project's competitiveness to receive Tax Credit Financing, a major source of affordable housing funding in the State.

Zoning Density: The site is located within the R-5 zoning district. Pursuant to the Alameda City Charter, affordable housing constructed on land owned by the Alameda Housing Authority may be exempted from existing zoning densities established by Charter amendments regarding residential densities adopted in 1972 and 1990 ("Measure A"). Commonly referred to as the "Guyton Exemption", the Charter exemption preserves the pre-Measure A residential densities on Housing Authority owned lands. Prior to Measure A, the R-5 zoning designation allowed for one unit for every 1,000 square feet of land, which would allow for up to 85 units on the subject property. At 66 units, the proposed density is well within the City Charter and Municipal Code maximum allowable residential densities for this project.

Landscape and Open Space: The central courtyard and pedestrian paths are focal points of the project. The landscaping in these spaces will not be designed until project

financing is obtained. At that time, the Housing Authority will submit a detailed landscape plan and plant palette as part of a subsequent Design Review application. Landscaping will be drought-resistant and designed to provide residents with usable open spaces that are screened from neighbors. Native and Mediterranean species of trees, shrubs, and grasses will be used throughout the project. At least one shade tree will be planted for every four spaces in the parking areas. Site landscaping will be designed using Bay Friendly landscaping for durability and low water use. The draft resolution (Exhibit 2) includes a condition that requires these features as part of the subsequent Design Review application.

The 6,120 square foot courtyard is located immediately adjacent to the recreation center and will be designed to promote interaction among residents. As such, the courtyard will serve as an extension of the recreation center and provide an outdoor room for various activities. Together with the 1,400 square foot recreation center, the project will provide substantially more common open space than the 3,960 square feet required by the R-5 Zoning District.

Automobile and Bicycle Parking: The proposed site plan provides 66 on-site parking spaces for the tenants, staff and guests of the 66 rental units. The proposed 66 spaces for the 66 units would replace the existing 42 parking spaces for the existing 46 units. Staff and guest parking spaces will be designated with signage. The Zoning Ordinance typically requires two spaces per housing unit but provides for a reduction in the number of spaces if the Planning Board can demonstrate that parking demand will be reduced for the life of the project.

To that end, Housing Authority staff conducted a parking analysis of similar affordable housing projects in Alameda. Overall, other comparable Housing Authority projects provide a range between .36 and .68 spaces per bedroom. The proposed project provides 60 spaces for the 95 bedrooms within the proposed 60 new units and 6 spaces for the 12 bedrooms within the six existing units, yielding an average of .62 spaces per bedroom. This is more than the .55 spaces per bedroom in the Breakers at Bayport Apartments and is slightly less than the .67 spaces per bedroom in the recently occupied Stargell Commons project and the .69 spaces provided at the Shinsei Gardens project. The proposed .62 spaces per bedroom is within the range provided by other affordable housing projects in Alameda. Housing Authority projects typically provide about 1.5 spaces per unit overall. The proposed project would provide one space per unit, but the site is well-served by public transportation with two bus stops within .10 miles at Webster Street/Buena Vista Avenue and Webster/Ralph Appezzato Memorial Parkway. Bus routes at these stops include the 51A, 20, 96, 314, O, and W. All households in the new development will be provided with an AC Transit Easy Pass which will further reduce the demand for parking, will promote the use of public transportation, and will reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. The Housing Authority is also proposing to provide a resident bike-share program since the site is just one block north of the Cross-Alameda Trail.

Because the project would provide a number of parking spaces per bedroom that is similar to other Housing Authority projects and because the project is located near transit, the Cross-Alameda bike trail and commercial services, staff believes that the amount of parking is adequate for this project.

While tenants will not be assigned specific parking spaces and all the spaces will be shared, tenants will be required to register their vehicles in order to park on-site. All tenants will be notified of this restriction prior to signing a lease and signs will be posted throughout the project notifying other drivers of this restriction.

The site plan proposes 66 long-term bicycle lockers and ten short-term spaces within bike racks located on-site. The bike lockers will be located in two areas: immediately north of the recreation center and adjacent to the central courtyard. The bike racks will be located near the building entrance. The City standard for long-term bicycle parking is .5 bike spaces per bedroom with a minimum of one space per housing unit. The proposed project meets both of these standards. The City standard for short-term bicycle parking is .1 bike spaces per bedroom. The proposed project meets this standard. As a result, staff believes that the proposed number of bike lockers and racks is appropriate for this project.

Architectural Design: The proposed Development Plan application does not include architectural elevations or detailed floor plans. After the Development Plan is approved, the Housing Authority will seek financing for the project based on the approved site plan. Once financing is secured, the Housing Authority will submit a Design Review application including building elevations, sections, floor plans and landscape plans.

At this time, the project architects have included six illustrative architectural designs for consideration. The Housing Authority Board has reviewed the six designs and prefers the “Kottinger” elevations. The Planning Board may wish to review these illustrative designs and provide guidance to the applicant in anticipation of a subsequent Design Review submittal.

Universal Design: As described above, the Housing Authority has not prepared detailed architectural plans for the project. However, at this time, the Housing Authority is planning to ensure that 100% of the units are accessible and adaptable per the California Building Code (CBC Section 11A). Therefore, the Housing Authority believes that they will be able to meet or exceed the standards established by the draft Universal Design Ordinance recently recommended by the Planning Board. When the architectural plans are completed for the Design Review plans, the Housing Authority will be able to confirm their assumption with the Planning Board. If there are unforeseen inconsistencies or problems at that time, the problems may be discussed in the context of the Design Review plans review and any necessary waivers considered by the Planning Board at that time.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to California Public Resources Code sections 21159.21, 21159.23 (Exemption for affordable housing) and 21159.24 (Exemption for infill affordable housing), as well as CEQA Guideline section 15332 (Infill development projects). Furthermore, the project does not trigger any of the exceptions in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 in that the project will not have any significant effects due to unusual circumstances or any cumulatively significant impacts and will not adversely impact any designated historic resources.

### 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. No comments have been received as of August 31, 2017.

### RECOMMENDATION

Approve the draft resolution (Exhibit 2) approving the Development Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Thomas  
Assistant Community Development Director

Exhibits:

1. Rosefield Village Affordable Residential Project Development Plans
2. Draft Planning Board Development Plan Resolution