



September 8, 2019

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

Subject: Proposed objective design review standards for affordable multifamily housing projects (Item 7-D on Planning Board's 9-9-19 agenda) --Preliminary comments and request for continuance.

Dear Boardmembers:

It is good that staff is developing "objective design review standards" for eligible multifamily projects pursuant to SB 35. It is important that the City has such standards in place when the first projects seeking to use SB 35's streamlined "ministerial review process" submit applications.

However, given that properties eligible for the ministerial review process and using the objective standards could be developed citywide, the standards need to be crafted to ensure that the designs of the projects are consistent with the architectural character of the surrounding area. The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) is especially concerned about ensuring these projects' architectural compatibility with the older neighborhoods on the main island and the historic commercial districts—Park Street, Webster Street and the "Stations".

The draft standards are a good start. AAPS has preliminarily reviewed the draft and identified various provisions that we believe should be expanded or clarified. However, AAPS needs more time to complete our review and there has not been enough time for AAPS to provide complete comments before the September 9 Planning Board meeting. The draft standards first became available for public and Planning Board review on Thursday, August 30, which provided only an 11 day review period, including a holiday weekend. Eleven days is insufficient for an important document such as this.

AAPS therefore requests that the Planning Board continue its consideration of the proposal to a future meeting.

As drafted, the proposed standards do not appear sufficient to maintain the architectural compatibility recently obtained with new multifamily projects in Alameda's older neighborhoods. For example, the relatively high quality designs ultimately approved for the Mulberry project bounded by Eagle Avenue, Willow Street and Clement Avenue, and the Housing Authority's affordable housing project on the north side of Eagle Avenue between Park and Everett Street on the former Island High School site, would probably not have been possible under the standards as proposed. The final designs of these projects are major improvements over the initial designs as a result of comments from AAPS and neighbors submitted to the Planning Board and the Planning Board's responsiveness to these comments.

There are a number of issues that are not addressed by the proposed standards but should be. These issues include:

1. **Surface materials.** For example, vinyl siding should probably be prohibited and cement fiber and other imitation wood siding should be smooth surfaced rather than with imitation raised wood grain.
2. **Consistency with the surrounding architectural context, especially in historic areas,** such as was the case for the Mulberry and Island High School projects. “Context” could be defined by architectural features of neighboring buildings, such as those within the same block face within perhaps 300 feet, as well as those across the street.

Elements of context could include, among others:

- a. Roof type, pitch and form (symmetrical versus asymmetrical);
- b. Window type (single/double hung, casement, etc.), material and proportions (vertical vs. horizontal);
- c. Surface materials; and
- d. Architectural style (perhaps selected from a list, such as that which is already in the Citywide Design Review Manual)

If a specified proportion (e.g. 50%) of buildings within the context area reflect a particular treatment or range of treatments for any of the above context elements, a “context” is considered established for that element and applied to the proposed project. Other communities have developed systems for applying context in this manner for new construction and could be used as starting points for Alameda’s approach.

3. **Ensuring that the architectural detailing referred to in Sections 4B.iii and 4C.ii and all other detailing are well executed and do not look kitschy,** perhaps by requiring that they be derived from existing well-designed buildings that have the same architectural style. A list of such buildings could be developed and include all architecturally intact historic buildings (Historical Monuments and Study List buildings) plus well-designed newer buildings, such as 1925 Park Street and the Alameda Theatre Cineplex.

In addition:

- a. The window standards should be expanded to more fully reflect the criteria in the Guide to Residential Design and the Webster Street Design Review Manual.
- b. Provisions such as Section 4D’s requirement that there must be a door, window or other opening every 30 feet within a street-facing wall are insufficient. Every 6 feet would probably be about right, but the distance could also be a function of the total number of openings and their size (individual and cumulative) within a particular wall length.

- c. Some of the standards are not clear. For example Section 8D.ii. states, as one option, that storefront windows shall be supported by “a base treatment bottom frame element at least 4 inches in height”. Does this “bottom frame element” refer to the bottom rail of the sash or some other architectural feature? An illustration or diagram would be helpful.

The above comments are only preliminary. We plan to expand them after we have reviewed the standards in more detail.

AAPS is prepared to suggest specific language to improve the standards and can supply rudimentary graphics illustrating some of the standards. We would like to work with staff in developing this language and the graphics.

Because of the time needed to develop the improved language for the standards and the desirability for staff review prior to submittal of revised standards to the Planning Board, continuing consideration of the standards to at least the Planning Board’s October 14 meeting would be helpful.

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, Chair
Preservation Action Committee
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

cc: Andrew Thomas and Allen Tai (by electronic transmission)
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee (by electronic transmission)

September 6, 2019

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

Subject; Adoption of objective design review standards for multi-family residential development involving affordable housing (Item 7-D on Planning Board's 9-9-19 agenda)--REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCE

Dear Planning Board members:

The West Alameda business Association (WABA) and its Design Committee are active participants in the design review of projects within the Webster Street Business District and have worked closely with planning staff, project sponsors and the Planning Board on the design of these projects. We initiated and, working with our consultant, wrote most of the Webster Street Design Review Manual that was adopted by the Planning Board in 2001, updated in 2005 and is now part of the Citywide Design Review Manual.

We are therefore very interested in the subject design review standards, since they apply to mixed use projects and could significantly impact development within the Webster Street Business District.

We would like to give the proposed standards a thorough review, including solicitation of input from our members, but not enough time has been provided for us to do this prior to the Planning Board's September 9, 2019 meeting. The draft standards only became available for public and Planning Board review late on August 30 as part of the website posting of the Planning Board's September 9 agenda, allowing only an 11 day review period, including a holiday weekend. This is insufficient review time for such an important document.

We therefore request that the Planning Board continue its consideration of the proposal, preferably to no sooner than its October 14, 2019 meeting.

Sincerely,

Linda Asbury, Executive Director
West Alameda Business Association
linda@westalamedabusiness.com
510.523.5955

By electronic transmission:

cc: Andrew Thomas, Allen Tai, Nancy McPeak and Erin Garcia (Department of Planning, Building and Transportation)
Mayor and City Council Members
WABA Board and Design Committee

NANCY McPeak

From: pennycozad 1 <penny@cozad.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 07, 2019 7:02 AM
To: NANCY McPeak
Cc: Dorothy Freeman; Kate Pryor; stephbutler43@yahoo.com; wholebodies@msn.com; Christopher Buckley
Subject: Proposed streamlined review process for affordable housing projects to be considered at 9-9-19 Planning Board meeting

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I am requesting a continuance of the Planning Board's September 9, 2019, meeting agenda item for the adoption of "objective design review standards" for multi-family residential projects that provide 50% affordable housing and payment of prevailing wages, among other requirements. The proposed standard will have a big impact on the future image of projects built in Alameda.

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society and community members need more time to consider possible revisions to the proposed standards. Among the considerations would be: designs that fit in with the surrounding built environment, specification of materials for exterior walls, and the use of architectural detailing based on a list (to be developed) that includes architecturally intact historic buildings as well as recent construction that represents the historic quality of Alameda.

Alameda currently has a distinct architectural image that is a part of the city's desirability. Please remove item 7-D - 2019-7231 from the Sept 9 agenda items.

Penny Cozad
2049A Eagle Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501
Penny@cozad.com
cell: 510 499-3399

NANCY McPeak

From: Virginia Dofflemyer <wholebodies@msn.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 07, 2019 2:24 PM
To: NANCY McPeak
Subject: Continuance for Proposed Agenda Item (7-D - 2019-7231) on Alameda Planning Board Meeting (9-09-19_

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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The proposed meeting of the Planning Board on September 9, 2019 is scheduled to approve a streamlined review process for affordable housing projects. These projects tend to be larger in scope than those that may be less dedicated to affordable housing; and they are often folded into mixed use developments. Once completed, the anomalies and unconsidered design flaws (whether aesthetic or functional) are ultimately impossible to address even if there were a potential desire to do so. Careful design planning is perhaps one thing when addressing a single project, but to create a streamline review process for all affordable housing projects going forward within the city limits invites a careful study of the proposed plan, of the “failures” of projects already constructed, and community-wide input of the ways and means whereby such new housing entities might blend as seamlessly as possible with the architectural ambiance of the city; might functionally serve the communities who might potentially occupy them; and explore the optimal materials and standards for the safety and optimal interface of business and residential occupation.

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society and members of the Alameda community would like to be involved in a more considered review of the proposal in order to consider potential revisions to the proposed standards that might be needed. Of considerable significance are the following: (1) preservation of homogeneity within the built environment in which such projects are intended to be constructed; (2) the clear specification of materials for exterior walls incorporated into the proposed standards together with a “to be prepared list” of specific architectural "detailing" of historical and modern architectural designs in the city of Alameda that might better support a conscious effort to preserve the integrity of the city's history (past and present).

I am requesting that the proposed agenda Item (7-D - 2019-7231) for the Alameda Planning Board Meeting (9-09-19) be removed and the item be continued for a future time, allowing Alameda community members more time to thoughtfully review the proposal and potentially make useful suggestions.

Sincerely,

G. Dofflemyer

NANCY McPeak

From: Allen Tai
Sent: Monday, September 09, 2019 11:40 AM
To: NANCY McPeak
Subject: FW: Proposed streamlined review process for affordable housing projects

-----Original Message-----

From: Patsy Paul [mailto:patsypaul@comcast.net]
Sent: Saturday, September 7, 2019 5:45 PM
To: Ronald Curtis <rcurtis@alamedaca.gov>
Cc: ANDREW THOMAS <ATHOMAS@alamedaca.gov>; Allen Tai <ATai@alamedaca.gov>
Subject: RE: Proposed streamlined review process for affordable housing projects

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I'd like to request a continuance of this proposal so that AAPS will have adequate time for review and comment.

Thank you.

Patsy Paul—home owner
2426 Buena Vista Ave.

NANCY McPeak

From: Allen Tai
Sent: Monday, September 09, 2019 11:40 AM
To: NANCY McPeak
Subject: FW: Proposed streamlined review process for affordable housing projects to be considered at 9-9-19 Planning Board meeting

From: Melanie Wartenberg [mailto:mwartenberg@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, September 7, 2019 5:09 PM
To: Ronald Curtis <rcurtis@alamedaca.gov>; Jeffrey Cavanaugh <JCavanaugh@alamedaca.gov>; Alan Teague <ateague@alamedaca.gov>; Rona Rothenberg <RRothenberg@alamedaca.gov>; Asheshh Saheba <asaheba@alamedaca.gov>; Teresa Ruiz <truiz@alamedaca.gov>; Hanson Hom <hhom@alamedaca.gov>
Cc: ANDREW THOMAS <ATHOMAS@alamedaca.gov>; Allen Tai <ATai@alamedaca.gov>
Subject: RE: Proposed streamlined review process for affordable housing projects to be considered at 9-9-19 Planning Board meeting

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Dear Planning Board and staff,

I am requesting a continuance of this proposal so that AAPS and other residents all have adequate time for review and comment. As a neighbor directly across from the Housing Authority's affordable housing project on Eagle Avenue between Park and Everett Street on the former Island High School site, I am concerned about the standards as proposed. The final design of the Eagle housing I look at each and every day was a major improvement over the initial designs as a result of comments from AAPS and neighbors submitted to the Planning Board and the Planning Board's responsiveness to these comments. All future residents should have the same opportunity to participate and we need more time to fully understand the current proposal.

Thank you,

Melanie Wartenberg
2422 Eagle Ave