

APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CITY OF ALAMEDA HISTORICAL ADVISORY BOARD
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2021

1. CONVENE

Chair Thomas Saxby called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361, codified at Government Code Section 54953, Historical Advisory Board members can attend the meeting via teleconference.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Saxby, Board Members Jones, Lau, Sanchez, Wit.

Absent: None.

3. MINUTES

None

4. AGENDA CHANGES AND DISCUSSION

None

5. ORAL COMMUNICATION

None

6. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None

7. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

7-A 2021-1531

PLN21-0468/PLN21-0469 - Certificates of Approval - 2263 Santa Clara Avenue/950 West Mall Square - Applicant: City of Alameda. Public hearing to consider Certificate of Approval applications to allow the conversion of lawn to drought-tolerant landscaping at the grounds of City Hall and City Hall West. Pursuant to Alameda Municipal Code Section 13-21.5 a Certificate of Approval by the Historical Advisory Board is required for alterations to Historic Monuments including trees and plantings. This project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304(b) - Minor Alterations to Land, which consists of new gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing landscaping with water-efficient landscaping

Erin Smith, Director of Public Works, introduced this item. She also introduced Todd Ainsworth, Senior Associate with Gates & Associates, who gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5257047&GUID=CDE2C8D2-FE6F-4C1A-B097-E61E8B0664B5&FullText=1>.

Allen Tai, City Planner, explained the board's role in approving this item.

Chair Saxby opened the board clarifying questions.

Chair Saxby asked if there was any historic information regarding the character-defining features of the landscape for City Hall. He knew there was such information for City Hall West.

Staff Member Tai said unfortunately not and discussed the history of City Hall.

Chair Saxby wanted to know how this new landscaping would conform to the well-manicured character-defining feature described in the report.

Staff Member Tai explained the Cultural Landscape Report and how staff interpreted it. He also discussed other landscaping in Alameda.

Mr. Ainsworth also discussed what 'well-manicured' meant and the thought process behind plant choices.

Board Member Norman Sanchez asked what thought was behind the pathways. He wanted to see the formality to be maintained.

Mr. Ainsworth answered how they could accentuate the existing paths so they could be defined in a more traditional manner. He also discussed other ways to bring in a more geometric and linear look.

Director Smith added that none of the hardscapes at either site would be changing, so pathways would remain in their existing form.

Board Member Alvin Lau asked about using historical benches and lighting.

Director Smith said this project would not be dealing with lighting. For benches, they had only thought that they should have seating and not about the overall decor.

Mr. Ainsworth said that the next phase would address historically accurate seating.

Vice-Chair Lynn Jones asked about upkeep.

Director Smith said since Public Works would be maintaining everything they would be very familiar with what needed to be done.

Mr. Ainsworth said they would provide a Maintenance Manual.

Board Member Jen Wit asked about the durability of the plants. City Hall is a place for gatherings such as protests and people might walk or stand on plants and grass.

Mr. Ainsworth discussed options he had thought about.

Chair Saxby opened public comment.

Betsy Mathison discussed different ways to get the word out about the landscaping changes and why it was happening. She thought it looked great but noted that when something similar happened in the past the citizens of Alameda were very concerned.

Chair Saxby closed public comment and opened board discussion.

Chair Saxby liked the idea to modify the design to make more room for standing/gathering and having places for people to sit was important. He was more concerned for City Hall West due to the historical relevance of the area. He wanted to see a sense of belonging with the surrounding buildings.

Vice-Chair Jones was happy that there would be documentation to help with maintenance and upkeep. City Hall East and West represent Alameda and this would be a legacy to leave for the future.

Board Member Sanchez thought this was a wonderful project and looked forward to the new tone and direction that City Hall West would receive. He also believed that conserving water was a great aim.

Board Member Wit asked about the surrounding areas at City Hall West.

Director Smith and Staff Member Tai discussed what areas were owned by the city and what development plans had been discussed.

Board Member Lau also was excited to see the final project.

Staff Member Tai explained the next steps in the design process and how the board would like to stay involved. Director Smith explained the Public Works's timeline.

There was a discussion on what was needed for City Hall and how to address the area around City Hall West.

Chair Saxby made a motion to approve the landscaping for City Hall to be converted to drought-tolerant per the design as was presented tonight with the amendments to make more standing room around the entry plaza, consider additional sitting in the landscape, and for it to be maintained properly. Board Member Lau seconded the motion, a vote was taken and the motion passed 5-0.

**For City Hall West the board wanted to see a development of the design to get a better idea of how the design would work with this very important historic site.*

7-B 2021-1532

PLN21-0527 - Certificate of Approval - Citywide - Applicant: City of Alameda. Public hearing to consider a Certificate of Approval to allow rehabilitation and retrofit of historic streetlights throughout the City. This project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15331 - Historic Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation, which applies to maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Director Smith introduced the item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5257048&GUID=9E7A137F-4FF4-4DED-A143-A4AD39CD054C&FullText=1>.

Chair Saxby opened the board clarifying questions.

Board Member Sanchez asked about design choices to achieve the historic look.

Director Smith said they had created this design specifically for that purpose, there was no off-the-shelf option that worked.

Vice-Chair Jones asked about the color choice to mimic the historical green color.

Director Smith discussed what information had been available from AMP (Alameda Munciple Power).

Staff Member Tai discussed the historical color choices.

Board Member Lau asked if they would ever paint them to color match.

Director Smith explained that the streetlights were powder coated and would never be painted.

Chair Saxby opened public comment.

There were no public speakers.

Chair Saxby closed public comment and opened board discussion and comment.

Vice-Chair Jones was excited to see the streetlights changed to be more energy-efficient and appreciated the historical appearance and charm of these streetlights. She did wish the wires attached to the poles were not there.

Board Member Lau wanted to see consistency among the lights especially since the new ones would be LED lights.

Director Smith discussed the plan for replacing the older lights bulbs.

Chair Saxby wanted to know if any of the historic streetlights being replaced could be preserved and adapted.

Director Smith explained how the LED light project had worked and how many of the lights were beyond repair. They would only be replacing the ones that required replacement.

Chair Saxby made a motion to approve this resolution with the additional condition that there be documentation of the damage to the streetlights showing that they were damaged beyond repair and there needed to be every attempt to preserve the existing streetlights. Vice-Chair Jones seconded the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

7-C 2021-1533

A Public Workshop to Review and Comment on the Draft Housing Element Update to accommodate the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for the Period 2023-2031 in Compliance with State Law.

Staff Member Tai introduced the item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5257049&GUID=85489B65-CAF6-4293-B394-9ED1EF4440AC&FullText=1>.

Chair Saxby opened the board clarifying questions.

Board Member Wit wanted to know more about how the housing allocation numbers were determined.

Staff Member Tai explained the RHNA (Reginal Housing Needs Allocation) Methodology and models that ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) used.

Board Member Lau wanted to know if the RHNA also had requirements on the size of the housing or how many rooms and bedrooms a home had.

Staff Member Tai answered that the Housing Element would not get that specific but they would look at the analysis and see what type of housing was the most needed. He agreed that they would need to create housing for all types of needs.

Board Member Sanchez asked about zoning changes and what was allowed under the R1 changes and SB-9.

Staff Member Tai explained the R1 zoning changes under SB-9 and what California State Law would allow.

Board Member Sanchez asked other technical questions pertaining to lot size under SB-9. He also wanted to know more about how SB-9 would impact how the board would make rulings.

Staff Member Tai explained SB-9 in detail and gave different examples of what was allowed. He discussed how SB-9 would affect neighborhood character, how everything would come down to design, and when designs would need to come before the historical board.

Chair Saxby asked if SB-9 established a minimum lot coverage.

Staff Member Tai believed that SB-9 would defer to local jurisdictions to set lot coverage standards. He also discussed what was already allowed under the ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) Law. He added the importance of setting design standards that would help with the increase in additional units in neighborhoods.

Henry Dong, Planner III, also gave information on unit size and setbacks.

Board Member Lau wanted to know if there was a limit to the ADUs someone could have.

Staff Member Tai answered that staff was putting together a draft that would have four at the maximum. That would be four including ADUs, Jr. ADUs, or units under SB-9.

Chair Saxby opened public comment.

Betsy Mathieson summarized comments from her November 16, 2021 letter to the City Council that were pertinent to historic buildings. She said she believed that all of the neighborhoods in Alameda needed to accommodate new neighbors, including the ones built in compliance with Article 26. She agreed with a comment made by Planning Board Member Alan Teague that the “reuse of existing buildings is how we would move forward.” She thought that approach would be how the City avoids displacing low income residents,

increasing our carbon footprint and converting Alameda to any town USA. She stated that without carefully crafted specifications, upzoning will provide an incentive for demolition, and found it concerning that the purpose of the annual review of the Design Review Ordinance is to confirm the standards do not constrain the development of housing. She felt developers will use that to argue that existing buildings themselves constrain the development of housing. And felt this logic will result in displacement of low income residents and may also result in the loss of the very buildings shown in the "Spotlights." She points out that the Housing Element gives what amounts to density bonuses for the rehabilitation and adaptation of existing buildings with no increase in floor area. She then suggests that "no increase in floor area" be changed to say "no change to the building envelope." She concludes this change will allow new finished floor area in basements and attics to accommodate more dwelling units in addition to the existing residents. She said she looks forward to following the progress of the Housing Element.

Chris Buckley, AAPS, discussed a letter the society had sent. AAPS was very concerned about the massive proposed upzoning, the society believed this was overkill. He discussed what these changes meant for each zoning and suggested different strategies for upzoning.

Chair Saxby closed public comment and opened board discussion.

Board Member Sanchez wanted to know about the increase and demand for ADUs.

Staff Member Tai believed it was still too early to establish a trend and then discussed how they had established the average based on the last 4 years. He did note that 2021 had the most ADU applications.

Board Member Sanchez discussed his concerns about relying on ADUs, such as homeowners building ADUs with no intention of renting them out. He wanted to know how many of the completed ADUs were actually being used as rental properties.

Chair Saxby asked if that was something the state would want to be verified.

Staff Member Tai discussed that the HCD (Housing and Community Development) considered the ADU a housing opportunity even if it wasn't rented to anyone outside of the family.

Board Member Lau asked about the Navy Cap at Alameda Point and suggested different ways the city or potential developers could work around it.

Chair Saxby agreed with Mr. Buckley about the blanket upzoning of Alameda and he also agreed with Ms. Mathieson about looking to the existing housing stock as a method of solving the housing crisis. He also agreed with the proposed mixed-use for Park and

Webster Street. He felt that there needed to be more conversation in the Housing Element about protecting the historic older neighborhoods.

Board Member Sanchez asked if student housing counted toward the RHNA. He also asked about focusing housing on vacant properties and wanted an idea of the open parcels in the R zone.

Staff Member Tai said it was a need but those would be addressed on a case by case basis. He then discussed what open parcels had potential development.

Board Member Sanchez felt that most residential neighborhoods had the potential for more housing and mixed-use spaces. He discussed the importance of finding balance for the R1 neighborhoods.

Board Member Lau discussed the potential of Lincoln Ave and if the zoning would change.

Staff Member Tai discussed what had been discussed.

Board Member Witt asked about the Golf Course.

Staff Member Tai clarified that it was owned by the city and was designated as Public Open Space.

Chair Saxby took a moment to clarify what the primary purpose of the Mills Act was for and thought the section about it needed to be reworded or struck entirely.

Staff Member Tai said that portion had been flagged. He then discussed all the notes he had received and thanked the board for their input.

8. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

None

9. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

None

10. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Saxby adjourned the meeting at 9:38 pm.