

APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CITY OF ALAMEDA PLANNING BOARD
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2021

1. CONVENE

President Alan Teague convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was via Zoom.

2. FLAG SALUTE

Board Member Rona Rothenberg led the flag salute.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Board Members Curtis, Hom, Rothenberg, Ruiz, Cisneros, Saheba, and Teague.
Absent: None.

4. AGENDA CHANGES AND DISCUSSION

None.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

7-A 2021-663

Public Hearing for the Planning Board to Review and Comment on the City of Alameda's Draft COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan.

Amanda Gehrke, Community Development Department Development Manager, introduced the item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4795897&GUID=D9C61041-FC33-44AB-B828-25C0B3A9776D&FullText=1>.

President Teague opened public comments.

There were no public comments.

President Teague closed public comments and opened board questions and comments.

Board Member Hanson Hom found the Covid response to be very thorough and had addressed a number of issues. He did think that the list of items should be prioritized due to limited resources and manpower. He thought there should be a focus on low-income earners and small businesses. He was very interested in the slow street options and the quick build options.

Board Member Rona Rothenberg agreed with Board Member Hom's comments. She also believed that the document could go further in addressing equity and diversity, she pointed to page 6 under "information sharing" that section could go broader, she described and enumerated diverse houses of worship across all faiths as a forum for inclusive programs. She recommended rereading the document and find places where they could really push equitable diversity to enhance the message. She believed it was a good piece of work.

Vice President Asheshh Saheba said his main focus was on transportation. He was happy to see AC Transit in the focus groups to help guide what would be happening. He wanted to know more about the strategy to get people to re-engage with transportation services. He recommended putting the focus on that since it would also help the business communities.

Board Member Teresa Ruiz said in concept she supported making the slow streets permanent but that the board would need to review it case by case. They would need to look at what the data said before making that decision. For pilot programs, since the arts and entertainment sectors had been hurt significantly perhaps they could incorporate entertainment activities into city-owned parks. She recommended increasing waste collection in parks due to increased demand and people in these areas. She then made recommendations on how the document could be more clear and relevant to Alameda.

Board Member Xiomara Cisneros was very supportive of the strategies outlined for land use. She agreed about the need for evaluation and reviewing the data for those findings. She discussed how the theme of "public health" could be addressed more. She was also very supportive of rent relief for tenants and on the remarks about supporting small businesses. She brought up the question about hazard pay and if that was something that could help larger businesses.

Board Member Ron Curtis believed that a lot of the solutions that had been given were short-term solutions and had trepidation about making them permanent. Mainly the reconfiguration of Park and Webster Street and its impact. He also wondered who was going to maintain this in the long run, he also had other concerns about funding. He also had questions about crowdfunding for rentals and how it would help individuals and their businesses. He said the short-term solutions and direction of this were really good.

President Teague first clarified that an example of crowdfunding was GoFundMe and that at the next City Council Meeting there would be a council referral item to introduce hazard pay. He agreed with Board Member Rothenberg that there should be some mention about

the various houses of worship throughout the city. Also, he noted that the housing providers were not included. They should be included to ensure a smooth transition, by helping them they help the tenants. He thought the short-term actions had been great in helping businesses. He agreed that they need to evaluate the slow streets and reconfiguration of Park and Webster Street. Overall he thought the plan was amazing and that trying things out is the best way to see if it works.

7-B 2021-664

Adoption of Amended and Restated Objective Design Review Standards. The revised Objective Design Review Standards (Objective Standards) consist of a checklist of architectural and site design standards that apply to residential development projects. Adoption of the revised Objective Standards is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the common-sense exception that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and Section 15183, projects consistent with a community plan, general plan or zoning.

Allen Tai, City Planner, introduced the item, and Heather Coleman, Urban Planning Consultant, and David Sablan, Planner III, gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4795898&GUID=431C9BF9-FF27-4002-8B78-971861EC1108&FullText=1>.

President Teague opened the board clarifying questions.

Board Member Rothenberg asked if they thought they fulfilled the last statement “obtained stakeholder input regarding good design vs. containing cost” and how they fulfilled it. She also suggested providing a red line copy and a clean copy in the future.

Staff Member Tai apologized for not providing a red line copy. He continued by saying this had been a very difficult process. He felt that the draft they had presented hit on the most important design principles and was a good faith effort from the staff as well as Board Member Ruiz and Vice President Saheba.

Board Member Rothenberg asked if this document could have been written in a less prescriptive manner.

Staff Member Tai said absolutely and added that the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) had submitted letters asking for more specificity. He said after reading their letters they decided against adding too many prescriptive requirements.

Board Member Ruiz asked about item 2B - limitation on blank walls - she asked for clarification on the requirements, she thought it was a bit confusing.

Ms. Coleman explained the requirements more clearly and agreed it could be formatted better.

Board Member Curtis wanted to know the difference between a prescriptive and a performance document.

Board Member Rothenberg explained that a performance document would have less detail but still describe what you wanted to accomplish in broad terms. She suggested that the Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (CARP) be referenced in appropriate sections and include General Plan climate action goals.

Board Member Cisneros asked if there were examples of performative design objective standards.

Staff Member Tai said performance standards were more results-driven. The current approach was a bit of a hybrid but they do mostly explain how to get there. He then gave examples of each. He said they want to address poor design standards they don't want to see.

President Teague asked about roof-mounted equipment and visibility, he found the language to be very vague.

Ms. Coleman explained the intent more.

President Teague opened public comments.

Daniel Hoy, WABA (West Alameda Business Association) design committee, said he felt that the TDA (Traditional Design Area) left out half of the community. He felt that it goes against what the community wanted and what they had envisioned. He added that WABA is more than a business association; it's a community and the TDA map disregards all their hard work and efforts in bringing the community together.

Brenden Sullivan also wanted to address the TDA map and that it should include all of Webster Street business district and all of the North Park Street Area. He also felt that the residential part East of Park Street and North of Tilden be included in the TDA design to help ensure future development maintains the same character. He ended by talking about the architectural pedigree of Alameda.

Sylvia Martinez, Director of the Housing Authority of Alameda, discussed how the list of standards did not serve affordable housing for two reasons. First, it has too many costly requirements, requirements that add cost without benefits to the residents, and it places restrictions on the ability to build at the density required for affordable housing.

Doree Miles wanted to add on to what Mr. Sullivan had been saying since she felt the same way. She was very familiar with the North Park St neighborhood and felt that area had been overlooked. She would like to see this area looked at more and be included in the design element. She also supported the letter sent by AAPS on February 19th.

Chris Buckley, AAPS, wanted to discuss and go over the two letters sent from the AAPS. He did feel that the current draft standards were a major improvement from the ones adopted by the Planning Board last February. He felt that there were still some loose ends that needed to be addressed. He wanted the board to consider these issues for a future meeting giving time to work these issues out. He wanted a statement in the document saying that public notice will still be given and he wanted to know if staff decisions made under the Objective Standards still would be appealable. He also suggested a two-tiered system for affordable housing and market-rate housing.

President Teague closed public comments. Before moving on he did ask that staff elaborate on the applicability of these objective standards and what projects were allowed to have just a ministerial design review.

Ms. Coleman explained the process and what was required by state law.

Celena Chen, from the City's Attorney Office and Staff Counsel, further explained the Housing Accountability Act and Senate Bill 35.

President Teague asked a hypothetical question about how a ministerial review could be requested for all market-rate housing.

Staff Counsel Chen said that a ministerial review only applies to projects that qualify under SB-35, she then added what those requirements were.

Staff Member Tai added that the board could set different design standards for affordable housing and market-rate housing.

President Teague opened the board's comments and discussion.

Board Member Hom agreed with taking another look at the TDA map for the Park Street area. He appreciated how the staff tried to balance the performance base with principles and had standards in place. He also liked how flexibility had been built into the standards and he was interested to see how that would work. He gave his thoughts on Affordable Housing and how he liked to see Affordable Housing blend in with the character of the neighborhood and not stand out. He also gave his thoughts on design choices.

Board Member Rothenberg felt that as long the board and the staff had mindfully addressed the comments from the AAPS, WABA, and the Housing Authority she felt the Objective Design Review Standards merited approval. She also believed the TDA map

could be revisited either as a condition or have the issue continued. She suggested that a paragraph about sustainability features should be added to the Objective Design features since they are metric and measurable.

Vice President Saheba described the types of buildings he sees in a city and how the objective standards can establish a baseline. Not to make future work challenging but to ensure a certain quality of work. He saw these standards as a good way to establish a streamline but if everything doesn't fit into these standards it shouldn't be seen as a challenge to move that project forward.

Board Member Ruiz echoed what Vice President Saheba said, the goal of these objective standards was not to be a "holy grail" that solves all the design problems but just to establish a baseline. She said given the state mandate it was very difficult to do the standards in a checklist form and that is why it needed to be more prescriptive. She agreed with AAPS's comment that a public notice requirement will still be given and should be addressed in this document.

Board Member Cisneros said she was not fully comfortable with the TDA map, she felt that it was almost all of Alameda and kept it frozen in a 1940s style. She was not supportive of expanding it further. She believed the main objective was to support Affordable Housing developments in the community and suggested an amendment for Affordable Housing.

Board Member Curtis said from his perspective what was important was adequate design, durable design, and something that was cost-effective. These three things would accomplish the point of having the Objective Design Standards. He also suggested a way to appeal if your development does not meet all the listed requirements.

President Teague discussed the requirements for SB-35 and Bonus Density and gave examples of how they could waive requirements. He had expected to see more polish and removal (requirements that increase cost) but there were things added that he was surprised by but understood. He thought that expanding the TDA map to include all of Webster Street and Park Street made sense to maintain the fabric of those areas. He did want to change the roof-mounted equipment item, and he gave a suggestion for wording for better clarity. He said with SB-35 they didn't need to add anything for Affordable Housing Projects.

Staff Member Tai clarified that an amendment was not needed and further explained ministerial review and that the staff would be adding information clarifying the process.

President Teague asked if anyone wanted to extend the TDA map.

Board Member Hom said he was not supportive of amending it now but that the staff should take some time to look at it. It could be a future amendment after some analysis from the staff.

Board Member Curtis made a motion to approve the motion as written and Vice President Saheba seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 7-0.

7-C 2021-666

PLN21-0009 - Zoning Text Amendments - Citywide - Applicant: City of Alameda. Public Hearing to Consider Recommending City Council Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Alameda Municipal Code Chapter 30 (Development Regulations) to Streamline Residential Open Space Requirements and Remove Utility Requirements for Multiple Houses (Condominiums). The proposed zoning text amendments are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), where it can be seen with certainty that the proposed text amendments will not have a significant effect on the environment, and 15183, projects consistent with a community plan, General Plan or zoning.

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

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4795899&GUID=1F996EDF-42CD-4F86-9079-E5D3A488CF87&FullText=1>.

President Teague opened the board's clarifying questions.

Board Member Hom asked if the city has a park dedication in lieu requirement.

Staff Member Tia said that the City of Alameda does not have a Parkland Dedication Ordinance, but they did have a Development Impact Fees. He then gave an example using Jean Sweeney Park. He then clarified that this is just offering another option if the project wants to give funds to improvement at a neighborhood park that could be done in lieu of the open space.

Board Member Hom clarified it couldn't be combined for a double benefit and it's on top of the in-lieu fee.

Staff Member Tai said that was correct, developers could not mix the two together. Onsite open space is onsite open space, this is just an opportunity where if there is a park across the street from the project they can give money to that.

Board Member Rothenberg wanted to know about the merit of eliminating the utility metering requirement.

Staff Member Tai said when this requirement was passed in 1975 there was some concern about multifamily housing. The staff felt that this was now unnecessary.

Vice President Saheba asked about the open space and gradation in zoning. He wanted to know if a project like that where they would want that type of scale that had come in or could it be even more simplified.

Staff Member Tai said yes they had seen projects that follow this standard and he gave an example of a project on Santa Clara. He added that other cities had this type of breakdown and it could be a topic that can be revisited.

Vice President Saheba was curious about where the numbers for the open space were coming from.

Staff member Tai said those numbers were already in the code and further explained how they anticipate certain building types. He added that with the housing element update and future housing sites they may want to further refine this table.

Board Member Ruiz asked for further clarification on page 9 #C.

Staff Member Tia said the paragraph was existing text and what the staff had done was left the existing standards alone if developers choose to provide private open space.

Board Member Ruiz suggested adding “private” to the beginning of the paragraph.

Board Member Cisneros asked if it was typical for cities, in general, to require common laundry facilities in the buildings.

Staff Member Tai explained that the current standard is a requirement for each unit. The staff had proposed to leave it up to the developer. He saw this as a policy question.

President Teague asked when the staff talked about the General Plan Housing element policy that is to reduce the cost of development which policy is that.

Staff Member Tai said it was more about government constraint, and how they plan on examining governmental constraint.

President Teague recommended combining AG 1 and 5 to justify it.

President Teague opened public comments.

There were no speakers.

President Teague closed public comments and opened the board’s comments and discussions.

Board Member Hom was in full support of the zoning code amendments, eliminating the utility meters, and eliminating the requirements for closets and laundry facilities. He believed allowing these things to be market-driven was a good approach and could be revisited down the road if it becomes problematic. He saw these amendments as a step in the right direction.

Board Member Rothenberg was in support of the added edit suggested by Board Member Ruiz. She did suggest an edit on some items that had been struck out that would be better for clarity. She believed it was an excellent set of revisions and meritorious to be approved.

Vice President Saheba agreed with his fellow board members and that market conditions would dictate some of the things that were being removed from the text. He was in full support.

Board Member Ruiz made a recommendation regarding the “two-block” definition for the in lieu of open space. She thought that it was a bit unclear and preferred to see a specific distance. She advised using a 500ft radius.

Board Member Cisneros agreed with her fellow board member’s comments, staff’s recommendations, and seconded Board Member Ruiz’s suggestion of specifying a 500 ft radius.

Board Member Curtis agreed with all the changes except with the open space. He believed that private open spaces should be given priority and should be mentioned. He thought it was unhealthy for a high-density unit to not have at least a balcony and a private patio. He gave a suggestion on required open space footage per total square footage. He was not in favor of taking away the private open space.

President Teague said the 500ft was far less than two blocks, two blocks was about a quarter-mile. He saw the table for open space as a barrier to development, it had been used in the past as barriers to building houses. He did see the need for open space but didn’t agree with the tiered system. He was also in favor of everything being removed. He also talked about how he would be supportive of making all 120ft for all zones.

Vice President Saheba believed that the market should drive whether open space is private or common.

Board Member Curtis appreciated what Vice President Saheba said but was still concerned about those units that were not market-driven. Specifically, the many low-cost units that were being built to keep costs down with people in small quarters and no access to the outside.

Vice President Saheba wanted clarification that for a public open space to be utilized it would be at the discretion of the staff.

Staff Member Tai said currently it is the Planning Board's decision based on findings such as distance and that the public space would be beneficial to the occupants of the development project.

Board Member Ruiz also wanted to address Board Member Curtis's concern on Affordable Housing. She said that the state does mandate that Affordable Housing had to have open space, each of the units had to have private open space in order to meet state funding requirements. This would be a given regardless of what the local zoning ordinance said.

Board Member Curtis said that information from Board Member Ruiz solved his issue.

Staff Member Tai clarified the standardized amount of open space across districts. He shared information about the North Park District and what the open space requirements were.

Board Member Hom said he was supportive of the uniform open space across the board. He saw the main constraint was the high density. He made sense that open space should correlate with density.

Board Member Rothenberg made a motion to approve the resolution adopting amended and restated objective design review standards subject to the revisions that were put forth by President Teague and Board Member Ruiz, Board Member Curtis seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 6-1, Board Member Hom voted against.

8. MINUTES

8-A 2021-669

Draft Meeting Minutes – January 25, 2021

Board Member Ruiz made a motion to approve the minutes and Board Member Hom seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 7-0.

9. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

9-A 2021-667

Planning, Building and Transportation Department Recent Actions and Decisions

Staff report and actions can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4795900&GUID=004F8381-B630-4F25-923D-730209A3E105&FullText=1>.

Board Member Rothenberg wanted to pull item PLN20-0538, 1215 Peach Street. She also wanted to know if the Nason Street Project had come back as the minutes had said it would be.

Staff Member Tai said no due to public comments that addressed project conditions of approval at the staff level. He said they would make a modification in the minutes that the Nason Street project would not be coming back.

President Teague wanted clarification that 1214 Peach St was not a ministerial approval ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit)

Staff Member Tai said that was correct, it was a code enforcement case and the staff would schedule it at an upcoming meeting before the board. They would also notify the applicant that it had been pulled for a review.

9-B 2021-668

Oral Report - Future Public Meetings and Upcoming Planning, Building and Transportation Department Projects

Staff Member Tai announced that at the next meeting on March 8, 2021, they would be bringing forward the Housing Element Annual Report and they would discuss with the board about the upcoming year's events. He added that the Encinal Terminal Master Plan and Development Agreement would be coming back to the Planning Board. Also if there was time they would discuss the Parking Ordinance.

Board Member Ruiz reminded everyone that she would need to recuse herself from the Encinal Terminal discussion.

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

11. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

President Teague said he had been asked about potentially forming a sub-committee for the Housing Element. He wanted to know what his fellow board members thought, they would need 3 board members to form the sub-committee.

Staff Member Tai said what the staff was hoping a sub-committee could focus on was prioritizing items. Prioritize topics and when the board wants to see items, guidance for when they do the Housing Element update, and the Zoning Text Amendment.

After discussion, it was decided that President Teague and Board Members Hom and Cisneros would be on the sub-committee for the Housing Element.

Board Member Rothenberg wanted to share that she had been working with the Sustainability Group to support the development of an all-electric Reach Ordinance for new construction. It would be going to the City Council for a first read in the coming months

and that the American Institute of Architects East Bay and the American Institute of Architects California would be writing letters of support.

12. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

13. ADJOURNMENT

President Teague adjourned the meeting at 10:03 p.m.