



December 13, 2021

City of Alameda Planning Board
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190
Alameda, CA 94501

Subject: Draft Objective Design Review Standards for One and Two Family Residences pursuant to SB 9- -Item 7-B on Planning Board's 12-13-21 Agenda - -Supplemental AAPS comments

Dear Planning Board members:

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS)

Intended to recommend the following additional standard in our December 12, 2021 letter sent to you last night, but it slipped through the cracks in our haste to send the letter to you:

Limit new porch railing heights to 36 inches or the same floor's predominant window sill height, whichever is lower, and limit stair rail heights so that their height at the top of the stairs does not exceed the porch rail height. If greater height is required to meet building code requirements (where the building is not eligible for the California Historical Building Code) or is otherwise desired, use inconspicuous elements to obtain this height, such as adding a simple pipe rail above the "architectural" railing. Retain any existing original or historic railings or, if they must be replaced (due for, example, to deterioration), install new railings that match the original or historic designs. Supplement the new railings as set forth above to obtain any necessary or desired height increase.

The above language is based on that on pages 29–30 of the Guide to Residential Design.

The building code now normally requires porch guardrails 42 inches in height which can look awkward on older buildings and compromise the compositional geometry of many older buildings where the porch rail height horizontally aligns with the window sills and, on Victorians, has a strong design relationship with porch column bases. Alameda's Building Official typically allows exceptions to the 42 inch height using the California Historical Building Code. Planning staff has indicated to AAPS preliminary support for including this provision in the standards.

Photos of supplemental rails to conform of the building code height are attached.

In addition, staff this morning provided AAPS helpful clarifications responding to the concerns in the first part of our December 12 letter. We, and perhaps staff, plan to present these clarifications at tonight's Planning Board meeting.

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

Attachments: Photos of supplemental porch rails to meet Building Code height.

cc: Mayor and City Councilmembers (by electronic transmission)
Historical Advisory Board (by electronic transmission)
Andrew Thomas and Allen Tai, Planning, Building and Transportation Department (by electronic transmission)
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee (by electronic transmission)