



January 23, 2022

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

**Subject: Housing Element – Proposed zoning amendments regarding definitions and regulations for residential and related land uses (Item 7-B on 1-24-22 Planning Board agenda)**

Dear Planning Board members:

The proposed amendments would permit “multifamily dwellings” by right everywhere except in R-1. **The question of where multifamily is allowed by right should be deferred until the Housing Element strategy for residential zones is holistically considered and after more definitive estimates of how many RHNA units can be provided in nonresidential areas.** We believe that the Planning Board will be considering the residential areas in the next six weeks or so. Better estimates of RHNA units in nonresidential areas will hopefully be available by then. Proposing multifamily dwellings in R-2 through R-6 now before a more definitive estimate of how many RHNA units are needed in residential areas is jumping the gun.

In addition, allowing multifamily by right in R-2 through R-6, is in direct conflict with Article 26. **The Article 26 strategy would best involve the use of the multifamily overlay zone with the understanding that the overlay zone is mapped only to the degree necessary to achieve a compliant Housing Element as mandated by state law through the use of targeted preemptions of Article 26 as has been the City’s practice to date.** The multifamily overlay would also be better suited for identifying specific areas to be upzoned, since the overlay could overlap the base zone boundaries. It should not be assumed that the base zone boundaries necessarily correspond to areas that would be more or less appropriate for multifamily. The base zone boundaries are at least 50 years old. What might have been appropriate boundaries 50 years ago may not be the case today.

**Proposing now to allow multifamily in R-2 through R-6 is also an inappropriately piecemeal approach.** In addition to knowing how many RHNA units are needed in residential areas, any discussion of which residential areas, if any, should be upzoned to multifamily also needs to consider the specific areas to be upzoned, the intended residential density, the estimated number of units that can be obtained in each specific area and the mechanism to obtain these additional units, e.g. allowing a significant and perhaps an unlimited number of residential units within existing building envelopes as has been previously discussed vs. looking to additions and/or new construction to obtain these units. The identified specific areas should, among other things, be those where possible adverse impacts of upzoning on parking, infrastructure and historic buildings would be relatively minimal.

Related to the above, 79 permits for ADUs were issued in 2021, well above what was issued in 2020 and continuing an upward trajectory. In addition, staff estimates six additional SB9 units will be produced per year in the R-1 Zone, **which would result in a total of 85 RHNA units per year in the residential zones, or 680 units for the eight year RHNA period, well above the 480 units shown in staff's January 18 City Council Encinal Terminals presentation.** ADUs should steadily increase in 2022 and subsequent years as property owners, contractors, and architects get more familiar with ADU possibilities. The City should monitor monthly ADU production in 2022 and adjust the estimates (likely upward) as the Housing Element progresses based on the actual production. **Note that 680 ADU/SB9 units, rather than the 480 units shown in the January 18 presentation, would reduce the presentation's 450 units called for on other residential district sites to 250.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (510) 523-0411 or [cbuckleyAICP@att.net](mailto:cbuckleyAICP@att.net) if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley, Chair  
Preservation Action Committee  
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

cc: Mayor and City Councilmembers (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)