

..... LECTURE .....

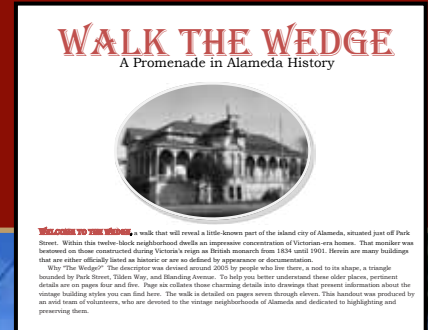
# A Beleaguered Hunk of History

## Sunday, October 23, 2022

Doors open at 6:00 pm. Slide show starts at 6:30 pm.

**First Congregational Church of Alameda**  
**1912 Central Avenue, Alameda CA**

*Admissions underwritten by the Wedge Team.*



About twenty years ago, residents off Park Street asked for city help to protect their small neighborhood, which even then was susceptible to encroachment from commercial and residential developments.

This twelve-block section—named the Wedge—nestles within the triangle of Park Street, Tilden Way, and Blanding Avenue. The City Historical Advisory Board (HAB) investigated; their 2003 report documented a substantial number of antique structures, many from the 1870s and '80s. The report ended on an ominous note; titled "History at Risk: Of some 114 buildings deemed historic, only half are on the officially documented 'Historic Buildings Study List.'" The HAB listed the unheralded 57 places individually and recommended they be added to the list as both recognition of vintage worth and a minute measure of protection. That status was never afforded those antique structures.

Two decades later, the menace is even more potent because of current and planned City Council-Planning Board, State-sanctioned increases in dwelling units allowed, increased height limits and more. As a Wedge resident recently pleaded in the *Alameda Sun* "We do not want to be overpowered by rectangular six story buildings. . . We do not want to suffer tomorrow for poor decisions made today."

Galvanized by the potential for depredation of this significant slice of history, in 2020 two dozen volunteers rallied to alert residents, city staff, and preservationists to its potential fate. The "Team" conducted thorough visual analysis to photograph and document every block and structure Wedgeward. They investigated U.S. Census tract data, Sanborn maps, City Directories, oral histories, and other resources, including contemporary and archival images.

Besides many of the oldest buildings on the Island, the Team found four other treasures: Three of them are structures, Rhythmix Cultural Works, the Marketplace rekindled Ford showroom, and an exemplary low-income housing project. In addition, artists affiliated with nearby Jingtletown collaborated on entire walls of tile mosaics that enliven the Wedge.



*The walk detailed in the souvenir booklet highlights concentrations of attractive examples of vintage homes. These on Buena Vista exemplify the 1890s; note the unusual bracketed corner on the second floor of the place on the left. Image: Valerie Turpen.*

These intensive endeavors are consolidated into Walk the Wedge souvenir booklet and a Powerpoint show now on tour. At the Team's inaugural presentation for the Preservation Society October 23, the booklet and the usual admission fee for non-AAPS member guests will all be underwritten by an anonymous donor. For a preview, mosey around the section and marvel at how many vintage properties remain, some pristine and others well-camouflaged but still salvageable.

**Help us preserve the Wedge and other Alameda historic districts. Review and respond to the "Alert" on the back and thank you!**

*continued on page 2...*



Italianates abound in the study area. Some are simple one-story flat-front versions of the style popular during the 1870s and later; this Wedge example was completed in 1884. Image: Richard Knight.

## IN THE WEDGE

Elsewhere in the Wedge, this more elaborate Italianate sports the slanted bay window that characterized more expensive versions of the style. According to Woody Minor, it dates from 1870! Image: Adele Aced.



## ALERT

The Wedge and other historic places in Alameda are threatened by major changes in the City Housing Element. These revisions to current zoning provisions would drastically increase height limits and allow an unlimited number of housing units on a parcel of land. These changes could encourage demolition and replacement of historic buildings and prompt architecturally incompatible new structures, as well as boost unfortunate alterations to existing properties.

### Please Take Action:

City Council is expected to consider the Housing Element on November 15. Send them comments soon so your opinion can be considered in time. Email the City Council, addresses below. Write individual letters and drop them off to the City Clerk. Offer to speak at the meeting. Whether email, personal letter, or speaking, ask the Council to:

### 1. Density:

Keep the existing provision for one dwelling unit per 2000 square feet of lot area.

### 2. Height Limits:

Retain existing height limits. In addition, to protect historic buildings on Park Street, reduce current limit to 40' on the west side between Lincoln and Buena Vista.

### Mayor and City Council emails:

mezzyashcraft@alamedaca.gov  
jknoxwhite@alamedaca.gov • tdaysog@alamedaca.gov  
mvella@alamedaca.gov • tspencer@alamedaca.gov  
City Clerk: lweisiger@alamedaca.gov

For more updates please join the Preservation Action Committee Google Group of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) at 510-479-6489 or [alameda-preservation.org/get-involved/joindonate](http://alameda-preservation.org/get-involved/joindonate)



Transportation was an early theme on this Wedge segment of Park Street; the nearby Alameda Livery Stable hosted horses at 1600 from 1875 until 1907, when a fire caused its replacement by a car garage. In 1930 the current structure opened as an auto showroom, replete with arched windows in attractive red bricks; in 2002 it was revamped as the Marketplace. Continuing the motif, for more than 25 years, the Park Street Business Association has welcomed hundreds of showpiece vehicles in the Annual Classic Car show. Image: Woody Minor.

ALAMEDA  
ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY

For more information about AAPS events visit  
[alameda-preservation.org](http://alameda-preservation.org)