

# Greening Alameda Point

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## Introduction

The city of Alameda, California lies off of Oakland's shores, just across the Bay from San Francisco. The city covers 12.4 square miles, comprised of roughly 11 square miles of 'mainland' Alameda, which is an island, and, near the Oakland International Airport, of the 1.4 square miles of Bay Farm Island, which is not an island. This contradiction of terms speaks to the unique character of the city of Alameda.

From Alameda, there are five motor vehicle access points to Oakland: four draw or lift bridges and a pair of adjacent underwater tubes, one eastbound, one westbound. There are two ferry terminals, one at the west end of Alameda, and one at the southeast end, on Bay Farm Island. As of the year 2000 census, Alameda's population was 72,259. There are just over 30,000 households within Alameda, and per capita income is \$30,982/year. The median household income is \$56,285 and 8.2% of residents live below the poverty line. 52% of Alameda's dwellings are renter occupied, and 48% are owner-occupied. Alameda has 6,693 persons per square mile of land, compared to Oakland at 7,127 persons per square mile.<sup>1</sup>

Alameda Point lies at the western tip of the island of Alameda and consists of 2,842 acres of dry and submerged lands, and is bordered by the Oakland Inner Harbor to the north, San Francisco Bay to the south and west, and the rest of the city of Alameda to the east.<sup>2</sup> Alameda Point encompasses one-third of 'mainland' Alameda's land mass.

The discussion about Alameda Point has turned into a polarized, volatile, debate about Measure A. But what's been lost in the debate is the question of what kind of community we want. Measure A was never a means unto itself. Rather, it has always been a means to an end – legislation to help shape the resulting community as it grows. This paper is intended to re-focus the discussion on the type of community we want in Alameda and present some considerations and suggestions for the development of Alameda Point. Decades of Navy use have left the former air station as a 'brown field' toxic federal superfund site. How to turn 'brown' into 'green' at Alameda Point?

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<sup>1</sup> City of Alameda website, [www.ci.alameda.ca.us](http://www.ci.alameda.ca.us) and U.S. Census Bureau 1999 and 2000 data. See [quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov).

<sup>2</sup> NAS Alameda Community Reuse Plan, January 1996 available from City of Alameda Planning Department.

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## Neighborhoods and Community

- Growth and change in Alameda should not disrupt or negatively impact existing neighborhoods. We should strive to keep our crime rate low as it has traditionally been, and our services, particularly fire-life-safety services, high, for both existing and new neighborhoods.
- We should strive to preserve and promote Alameda as a pedestrian-friendly city and we should remember that even when we drive, we are pedestrians once we park our car, so our retail centers and public spaces need proper and safe sidewalks as well.
- We should give preference to locally-owned and operated businesses where employees and owners are familiar to customers, and profits are directly returned to the community, over anonymous national chain stores.
- New neighborhoods on Alameda Point should include neighborhood “pocket” retail consistent with the existing “stations” retail currently on the Lincoln, Central and Encinal corridors.<sup>3</sup> Preference for occupancy of these pocket retail centers should be given to small and locally owned business.
- We should work to preserve our small city feel and the character of Alameda as an oasis of calm in the center of a concrete-and-steel major metropolitan area.
- We should avoid development that drives excessive motor-vehicle traffic through existing neighborhoods, thereby breaking them in two. Once traffic thresholds are breached, neighborhoods fall apart.
- We will need to seek new and secure existing social services to support our existing low-income and homeless housing facilities as well as the new low-income housing on Alameda Point. It’s not enough to simply house the homeless.
- We should aim to provide a ‘leg-up’ to the most economically disadvantaged members of our community and not take actions that result in locking them into their place on the socio-economic ladder.
- Alameda Point should include community spaces and public commons to foster the development and maintenance of neighborhood associations.

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<sup>3</sup> At the October 2007 Rotary Club Measure A debate, Barbara Kerr asserted that while she was on City Council, Catellus promised to put in a small business district into the Bayport development “which they failed to do.”

- New development should minimize the inclusion of high-priced recreational development which will be of interest mainly to non-residents at the expense of better uses that would benefit a broad majority of Alameda residents. For instance, the Mariner Square Athletic Center, a private-membership club is the only facility in Alameda that has an indoor heated pool. Why can't we have a city-owned recreation facility with an indoor pool open to all Alameda residents, across the entire income spectrum?
- We should look to cities like Sausalito to understand how they have built tightly-knit communities around live-aboard housing on their waterfront.<sup>4</sup> We should look for opportunities to do the same given the access to the Bay provided by Alameda Point.

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<sup>4</sup> Carol Lloyd, [Although Sausalito is no longer a bohemian getaway, its houseboat residents are blissed out on community](#), San Francisco Chronicle, October 5, 2004.

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## Open Space and the Outdoors

- 38% of Alameda Point is land submerged under water – Alameda Point is actually a part of San Francisco Bay and should be treated as such. (1,108 acres of water area, and 1,734 acres of land.)<sup>5</sup>
- We should make the most use of our access to the Bay – Shoreline Park on Bay Farm Island is a good example of preserving open space at our waters edge. Bay Farm Island abounds with pocket parks and access to the shoreline through residential areas.
- To conserve water, we should engage the East Bay Municipal Utility District to help us develop new city parks as centerpieces of native, drought-tolerant plant species, leveraging what has been learned from the Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek.<sup>6</sup>
- We should strive to eliminate non-native plant species<sup>7</sup> and ensure that existing non-native species don't propagate further, and we should plant only native plant species.
- Planning should include consideration of wildlife and wildlife habitats and should aim to maintain existing habitats while also working to restore portions of the land to natural states.
- We should provide space for bicycles on all our roads in Alameda Point and design new commercial and retail centers with bicycle paths and sidewalks that connect to the roadway paths and sidewalks to encourage cycling and walking.
- The Bay Trail around Alameda Point<sup>8</sup> should be implemented and considered the beginning of an opportunity to create a Bay Trail around the circumference of Alameda – including Bay Farm Island – and accommodation for this trail should be included in plans for Northern Waterfront development.
- Because of its unique location and its awesome spacious beauty, every effort should be made to preserve access to the Bay through Alameda Point for public enjoyment.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> [www.ruthbancroftgarden.org](http://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org)

<sup>7</sup> As an example of the dangers of non-native species that have been introduced to Alameda, see the San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Project [www.spartina.org](http://www.spartina.org)

<sup>8</sup> Charles Burrell, [Alameda Point groundbreaking – big plans for old Naval Air Station](#), San Francisco Chronicle, August 20, 2007



## **An Educational Environment**

- We should capitalize on the CleanTech movement by drawing such industries to Alameda Point. CleanTech refers to technologies aimed at using natural resources more judiciously, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and developing alternatives to fossil-fuel-based economies. Nearly \$3.8 billion of venture capital investment flowed into CleanTech in 2006.<sup>9</sup> We have a unique opportunity to make Alameda Point a CleanTech center of research, development and finance – we should tap that flow of venture capital.
- We should not only entice the CleanTech industry to locate at Alameda Point, but put the technology to work in the development itself, to create a holistic showcase of sustainable development and technology encompassing several hundred acres of land.
- The location of Alameda Point and its history as a federal superfund site make it particularly well-suited as a bio-tech or CleanTech center of research. How better to reverse the course of environmental damage inflicted on the area? A bio-tech or CleanTech campus or laboratory located on Alameda Point may be able to offer internships or co-operative work programs for our high-school through college aged children, leading to jobs and careers upon graduation.
- If our children today want to be able to live in Alameda ten to fifteen years from now when they are college-aged, then we really should have a world-class educational facility located on Alameda Point. Lacking such an institute, when our children of today grow up, they are likely to move away to go to college at Berkeley, Stanford or in San Francisco. We should investigate efforts to draw a university campus with a CleanTech focus to Alameda Point.
- We should encourage private sector partnership between the master developer and CleanTech technology providers to provide a sustainable-building elementary school at Alameda Point to foster awareness of environmental issues among our young people. Instead of Alameda Unified School District having to float bonds to fund a new school, we should identify a CleanTech innovator company to provide funding to build new schools in return for allowing them to make those schools a global centerpiece of their technology.
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partners with communities across the nation to deliver education programs with support for early learning, high-school students and college

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<sup>9</sup> Silicon Valley Association of Software Entrepreneurs, September, 2007

scholarships.<sup>10</sup> We should be courting this agency as part of a comprehensive education and young-people development program, centered on Alameda Point.

- Alameda residents deserve a comprehensive public youth recreation facility, including an aquatic center, weight training facility, gymnasiums and athletic fields, to channel our young people's energy into positive endeavors. Such a facility could be attached to a public university campus and draw on the very best trainers and coaches from around the world. And why shouldn't our children have the opportunity and facilities to compete on the world athletic stage?
- We should investigate the opportunity to implement grey water recycling<sup>11</sup> for major facilities on Alameda Point and be ready to lobby Sacramento as needed to ensure such systems are permissible and safe by law.
- We should investigate how sustainable infrastructure like onsite sewage treatment, co-generation facilities for Alameda Point might also serve the rest of Alameda. Given that Alameda point represents one-third of the island's land mass, and such infrastructure requires "economies of scale,"<sup>12</sup> shouldn't we attempt to leverage the existing 30,000 homes in Alameda to make this option viable, and allow the rest of Alameda to benefit from this sustainability infrastructure?

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<sup>10</sup> [www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/)

<sup>11</sup> See [www.greywater.com](http://www.greywater.com) and [www.oasisdesign.net/greywater](http://www.oasisdesign.net/greywater)

<sup>12</sup> New urbanist designer Peter Calthorpe, addressing City of Alameda Planning Board, Monday, October 22, 2007. See City of Alameda webcast center <http://www.ci.alameda.ca.us/webcast/moreinfo.html>

## Disaster Management

- Alameda Point sits in an earthquake zone and a flood plain and much of the land is bay fill which tends to liquefy during intense shaking – witness what happened in the Marina District in San Francisco during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Care needs to be taken with regards to building residential housing in this sensitive area – when the big one comes, we don’t want Alameda Point to be our own “Ninth Ward” like New Orleans had after Katrina.
- In 2005, during the lead-up to Hurricane Katrina, low-income New Orleans residents, many of whom were minorities, had no transportation away from the approaching hurricane, because they did not own automobiles and were left to literally weather the storm.<sup>13</sup> Here in Alameda, we tend to worry about earthquakes and flooding, but what if the threat of a terrorist attack – or worse, an actual attack – in San Francisco or at the Port of Oakland necessitates the evacuation of the East Bay?

See below for an excerpt from the footnoted Berube-Raphael article.

The devastation wrought by hurricane Katrina has laid bare many of the disparities that continue to separate Americans by race and class. One disparity that was immediately apparent in Katrina’s aftermath concerned the size and composition of the area’s population that lacked access to an automobile. These households, largely dependent on the limited emergency public transportation available to evacuate the city in advance of the storm, were those most likely to be left behind. In New Orleans, this population seemed quite large in size—and overwhelmingly black.

- We should plan for a sea water pumping fire station that is ‘off the grid’ from both the electrical network and water mains. Such a station, backed up by generators and a solar-charged battery station could be critical for fighting fires on Alameda Point in the event of a major earthquake. It should be investigated whether or not such a station would also be required to pump water *out* of the Alameda Point flood plain in the event of high water.
- California Senate Bill 976 (SB976) transfers control of Alameda’s ferry services out of local control, and into the hands of the Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority. In the event of a disaster that cuts off our bridge and tube access, and leaves only the waterways, will we have local influence and control over the use of these ferries to rescue our residents?

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Berube and Stephen Raphael, [Access to Cars in New Orleans](#). Also see other works by Stephen Raphael of the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. [gspp.berkeley.edu](http://gspp.berkeley.edu)

## Jobs and Finance

- Sales-tax revenue generated from retail sales is linear – more people are required to drive more sales to drive more sales-tax revenue. However, sales-tax from business-to-business sales has the potential to be exponential, driving sales-tax revenues to the city higher without commensurate traffic congestion and intense land-use that restricts access to the Bay. More retail is not the answer to Alameda’s general fund problem – the biggest contributor of sales-tax revenue to Alameda’s general fund has traditionally been the auto dealers on Park Street. Another 20 mega-chain coffee shoppes won’t come close to replacing the revenue we are losing.
- Retail jobs tend to pay at the bottom end of the pay scale, close to minimum wage, while, on the other hand, if we can attract and retain existing light industrial and commercial tenants to Alameda Point, we can realize higher paying jobs that might draw people to both live and work in Alameda. People that earn more can spend more money on existing retail.
- *But...how will we ever build another Park Street in Alameda?* Do we really need another Park Street? Actually, we already have another ‘Park Street’ – it’s called Webster Street, and since “Naval Air Station Alameda closed in 1997, Webster Street has struggled to regain its momentum.”<sup>14</sup> We should not abandon Webster Street as if it were some un-loved second child to run off and embrace Alameda Point like a newborn. Rather than creating a third ‘Park Street,’ let’s focus on re-building the momentum under Webster Street. Additionally, the introduction of big-box retail to the west end of Alameda could stifle Webster Street’s rebound, and imperil the livelihoods of independent retailers and cause the loss of jobs.
- Take a drive through Oakland around the Amtrak station a few blocks from Jack London Square. That area is filled with high density loft and condo conversions (from warehouses) and see if that is a thriving, bustling, mixed-use residential and retail development. It’s not.
- Many retail uses, such as big-box stores, rely on acres of automobile parking and automobile access to and from the store. Such retail which relies on customers arriving by automobile is contrary to the spirit of reducing carbon emissions and effective use of public transit. Other environmental problems stem from such retail uses as well.<sup>15</sup> We should work to minimize or exclude big-box retail from Alameda Point.

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<sup>14</sup> Stephanie Wright Hession, [Street Date: Webster Street, Alameda](#), San Francisco Chronicle, September 27, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Stacy Mitchell, [Big Box Swindle](#). Available through the Alameda Free Public Library courtesy of Action Alameda.

- Clif Bar represents one positive model of employers we should encourage to locate to Alameda, with their employee ‘volunteer day’ program. On Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup> 2007, the company shut down operations for employees to contribute time to work on the Ploughshares Nursery at Alameda Point. We should strive to bring more community-involved businesses to Alameda.
- The deep water piers at Alameda Point are used by the Maritime Administration and generate substantial revenue for the City. There has also been a proposal to use this same deepwater port as an embarkation point for cruise lines which have been turned away from San Francisco piers. Bayonne, New Jersey has in recent years successfully implemented a similar strategy vis-à-vis New York based cruise lines, luring them to the former Bayonne Military Ocean Terminal, creating jobs and stimulating the economy.<sup>16</sup> We should investigate if a cruise ship terminal at Alameda Point provides an appropriate balance of economic and job stimulation against environmental sustainability.
- In March of 2007, Alameda Power & Telecom (AP&T) and the City of Alameda Public Utilities Board established two new services designed for AP&T commercial customers.<sup>17</sup> We should be looking at Alameda Point as an opportunity to draw more commercial customers to town who may benefit from these new services, and, as noted in the press release announcing these services “provide additional revenue to an enterprise fund of the City.”
- Alameda Point is part of the Alameda Point Improvement Project (APIP), a redevelopment fund separate from the City’s general fund and controlled by the Alameda Reuse and Redevelopment Authority. New property taxes (called the ‘tax increment’ in redevelopment speak) resulting from development within a project area such as APIP do not go into the City’s general fund but instead back to the redevelopment fund and are unavailable for general city services.<sup>18</sup> These redevelopment funds should be allocated to pay for social services for the new residents, 25% of whom will be low-income, and to support base level infrastructure services – police and fire services, infrastructure (roadways, sidewalks, sewers) maintenance and so on.

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<sup>16</sup> See [A Blue Print for What is and What Can Be](#) by Alameda resident Eugenie Young.

<sup>17</sup> AP&T, [Commercial Services Added to Alameda P&T Internet Offerings](#), March 27, 2007. [www.alamedaapt.com](http://www.alamedaapt.com)

<sup>18</sup> Municipal Officials for Redevelopment Reform (MORR), [Redevelopment: The Unknown Government](#), September, 2002. [www.coalitionforredevelopmentreform.org](http://www.coalitionforredevelopmentreform.org)

## Affordable Housing

- The San Francisco Bay Area has a sad history of using redevelopment projects to push low-income and minority people out of neighborhoods and further inland. It began last century in The Fillmore district in San Francisco, under urban renewal, when the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA), under Justin Herman<sup>19</sup> considered occupancy by African-Americans a contributing factor to structures being designated as ‘blight.’<sup>20</sup> Because it was ‘blighted,’ the Fillmore district was ‘redeveloped’ and the low-income residents and minorities pushed out. (Whereupon many re-located to the Bayview-Hunters Point district.) The San Francisco redevelopment agency and re-location agency promised that the new development would have places for the dislocated to return to, but this never materialized.

The momentum behind the The Fillmore redevelopment carried forward into the downtown San Francisco Yerba Buena Redevelopment project when that project displaced low-income and minority residents, small businesses and retirees. A community group called TOOR (Tenants and Owners Opposed to Redevelopment) sued<sup>21</sup> to secure an injunction against the SFRA to halt the project.<sup>22</sup> Through the suit, TOOR was able to force the SFRA to build new housing to replace demolished low-income residential hotels.

This unfortunate spirit continues in San Francisco, with the ongoing fight in Bayview-Hunters Point,<sup>23</sup> where redevelopment threatens to squeeze out the last bastion of low-income, predominantly African-American residents.<sup>24</sup> African-Americans, having been chased away from The Fillmore, will presumably now be chased out of Bayview-Hunters Point.

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<sup>19</sup> Ocean Howell, The Poetics of Security, Transworld Business, January 9, 2003. Also Google for ‘justin herman blight the fillmore’

<sup>20</sup> See the PBS documentary ‘The Fillmore’ and the accompanying website [www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore](http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore)

<sup>21</sup> *TOOR v. HUD*, United States District Court, Northern District of California, Case No. C-69 324 SAW

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.todco.org/timeline.html>

<sup>23</sup> Casey Mills, Bayview-Hunters Point Turns Out in Force Against Redevelopment, BeyondChron, March 8, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Jaimal Yogis, What happened to black San Francisco?, San Francisco Magazine, September, 2006

[http://www.sanfran.com/home/view\\_story/1394/](http://www.sanfran.com/home/view_story/1394/) Also see [www.sfbayview.com](http://www.sfbayview.com)

- Here in Alameda, we have our own history of similar actions. The spurt of development in the late 1960's saw developers buying up not the most expensive properties in the best neighborhoods, but the cheapest – and most affordable for residents – properties wherever they could find them.

In 2004 owners of the Alameda Harbor Island Apartments, who had owned the property since 1996, evicted all of the residents of that apartment complex, the majority of whom were low-income residents and minorities, many on Section 8 housing subsidies, to renovate the complex. The complex is now known as Summerhouse and is marketed as recapturing ‘the easy elegance and breezy fun’ of Alameda’s ‘bygone days’ as a popular resort destination.<sup>25</sup> Since the renovation, rental prices have risen substantially – the smallest units start above \$1,200/month – and the people who were evicted cannot afford to move back in to Summerhouse.<sup>26</sup> As the SFRA did with The Fillmore for twenty years before declaring the area blighted,<sup>27</sup> Alameda too allowed Harbor Island Apartments to lie fallow for several years, falling into such a state of disrepair as to leave no other option but mass dislocation for low-income and minorities people.<sup>28</sup> Authorities did not attempt to enforce health and safety regulations until the property owner evicted all tenants upon which the City suddenly began a rigorous code-compliance inspection program.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, the East Naval Housing complex, consisting of 590 homes, was demolished instead of re-purposed for affordable housing. Renewed Hope Housing Advocates and Arc Ecology sued the City of Alameda over this development in April, 2000.<sup>30</sup> The Alameda Bayport Homes community stands there now, where, as of Fall 2007, market-rate three-bedroom homes sell for \$800,000. (The suit was settled with the City of Alameda agreeing that 25% of new units built at Alameda Point will be available to and occupied by very-low, low and moderate income

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<sup>25</sup> See [www.alamedareport.org/local/harborisle040731](http://www.alamedareport.org/local/harborisle040731) and [www.summerhouseapts.com](http://www.summerhouseapts.com)

<sup>26</sup> Marc Albert, [Troubled Apartment Complex Getting Major Facelift](#), Alameda Sun, March 2, 2007

<sup>27</sup> [www.thestreetspirit.org/Nov2006/videotape.htm](http://www.thestreetspirit.org/Nov2006/videotape.htm)

<sup>28</sup> Editorial, [Exploited, then Evicted](#), San Francisco Chronicle, August 19, 2004

<sup>29</sup> Former City Councilmember Barbara Kerr asserts that “for two years” before the evictions, she “urged the application of local and state landlord-tenant laws to the out-of-state owners.” of Harbor Island Apartments.

<sup>30</sup> See [www.cpeo.org/lists/military/2000/msg00182.html](http://www.cpeo.org/lists/military/2000/msg00182.html)

families.<sup>31</sup> In addition 52 low-income rental housing units and 10 owner-occupied townhouses were built at Bayport in The Breakers<sup>32</sup> and 48 low-income duplexes built in The Landing.)

- Put into perspective, the 615 units at Harbor Island Apartments, and the 590 units of East Naval Housing, after development, translated into 110 affordable housing homes.
- There are hundreds of people currently housed on Alameda Point in Operation Dignity and Alameda Point Collaborative. We should be on alert for attempts by actors in the Alameda Point process to displace these residents in the name of ‘redevelopment’ out of fear their proximity to new homes will lower the selling prices.
- Caution must be used when attempting to understand the definition of housing labeled as ‘affordable.’ Eligibility for affordable housing is based on income levels of the occupants. Normally the term ‘affordable housing’ refers to housing specifically targeted at people in the very-low, low and moderate income categories, as measured relative to area median income, as defined by the federal Housing and Urban Development department (HUD.)<sup>33</sup> There are groups in Alameda who use the term ‘affordable housing’ when what they actually mean is housing intended for residents at the next higher rung of income, above the moderate-income category. This is properly referred to as ‘missing rung’ housing.

The table below illustrates the three official affordable housing categories as defined by HUD, relative to Median Income and provides examples of household income levels within those categories.

Persons in Household	'Affordable' Housing Based on HUD				'Missing Rung' Housing	
	Median Income	≤ 50% Very Low Income	≤ 80% Low Income/Lower Income	≤ 120% Moderate Income	≤ 170%	≤ 220%
1	\$58,000	\$29,000	\$46,350	\$69,050	\$98,600	\$127,600
2	\$66,200	\$33,100	\$53,000	\$78,900	\$112,540	\$145,640
3	\$74,500	\$37,250	\$59,600	\$88,800	\$126,650	\$163,900
4	\$82,800	\$41,400	\$66,250	\$98,650	\$140,760	\$182,160
5	\$89,400	\$44,700	\$71,550	\$106,550	\$151,980	\$196,680
6	\$96,000	\$48,000	\$76,850	\$114,440	\$163,200	\$211,200
7	\$102,700	\$51,350	\$82,150	\$122,350	\$174,590	\$225,940
8	\$109,300	\$54,650	\$87,450	\$130,200	\$185,810	\$240,460

<sup>31</sup> Alameda Reuse and Redevelopment Authority, [Alameda Point Preliminary Development Concept](#), February 1, 2006

<sup>32</sup> Resources for Community Development [www.rcdev.org/what\\_development\\_breakers.html](http://www.rcdev.org/what_development_breakers.html)

<sup>33</sup> See Homes & Communities on [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov). Also see California Health & Safety Code section 33413(b)(2) Section 50105(a) and Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937.



For example, a household of one person earning \$29,000 per year or less – less than or equal to 50% of median income – would fit into the ‘very low income’ category. The Median Income column lists the various median income estimates for Alameda per the recent U.S. census.

We have extrapolated the HUD income categories to create two new income categories of ‘missing rung’ housing – housing for those households that earn less-than-or-equal-to 170% and 220% of median income. ‘Missing rung’ housing is not ‘affordable’ housing and is not aimed at the very-low, low and moderate income categories. It is aimed at higher income level occupants.

As an example, if you were part of a two-person household in Alameda, earning \$78,900 per year in household income, you would qualify for affordable housing in the ‘Moderate Income’ category. If your two-person household earned \$145,640 per year, you would not qualify for ‘affordable housing’ but you would land in the ‘missing rung’ category of less-than-or-equal-to 220% of median income.

People who speak about building ‘affordable housing’ should be honest about what they mean by that term. If they want to build ‘missing rung’ housing, they should say that. We should not be persuaded to build ‘missing rung’ housing under the guise of ‘affordable’ housing, deluded into believing we are building housing for the lowest income classes when we are not.

- Advocates who say ‘affordable housing’ when they mean ‘missing-rung housing’ are usually speaking of multi-unit apartment or condominium blocks. But missing-rung housing is not necessarily affordable. As of July 2007, there were condominium studio rentals available in Oakland for \$1895/month, and two-bedrooms available for \$2500/month. At Harbor Walk in Oakland condominiums were starting at \$595,000 – less expensive than a renovated classic Victorian on a large lot in Alameda or an \$800,000 home in Bayport, but hardly ‘affordable.’
- Housing intended as ‘missing-rung’ housing when built can easily become ultra-expensive on re-sale – especially if it has views of San Francisco Bay – and is no longer less-expensive nor affordable in any sense of the word. However, deed restrictions on genuine affordable housing for the very-low, low and moderate income categories, limiting re-sale to buyers within the same income category, could be extended up the income category ladder to maintain missing-rung housing, implementing these restrictions by local ordinance. We need only the local political will.

- Limiting growth doesn't necessarily push up housing prices. Cities with strong growth controls can also have affordable housing *if* they have active low-cost housing programs.<sup>34</sup> A 2006 report<sup>35</sup> by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – contested by attorney's representing the City of Alameda – found from “former City staff, non-profit housing program managers and affordable housing developers that the City has had several opportunities to develop such [*affordable housing*] but has elected not to do so.”<sup>36</sup> However, the City of Alameda does have a Housing Assistance Program providing free home buyer workshops, a down payment assistance program and an Alameda County Mortgage Credit Certificate.<sup>37</sup> Is this housing assistance program sufficiently promoted by the City of Alameda?
- We should be wary also of dictates from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).<sup>38</sup> With the exception of Contra Costa County, all nine Bay area counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma) came up short on a 1999-2006 measurement of meeting housing needs.<sup>39</sup> But wealthy cities within ABAG that don't want low-income, genuinely affordable housing also know how to use the organization to put pressure on *other* cities to ‘step up to the plate’ with more affordable housing, while they themselves stall or do nothing. To be sure, higher-income homeowners resist close proximity of low-income housing for fear of crime or lower property values – the 1996 NAS Alameda Community Reuse Plan acknowledged and spoke to this issue.<sup>40</sup> Even the children currently living in the Breakers at Bayport, the low-income housing in the Bayport development, know that “the rich people in the regular homes don't like us...”<sup>41</sup> for bringing down property values.
- In a settlement agreement with Harbor Bay Isle Associates on Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> 2007, the City of Alameda agreed that the builder would not have to build affordable dwellings as part of a planned 104-home subdivision on Bay Farm Island.<sup>42</sup> *Why did the City of Alameda concede this point?*

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<sup>34</sup> Eben Fodor, Better, Not Bigger and Donella Meadows. [www.sustainabilityinstitute.org/meadows](http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.org/meadows)

<sup>35</sup> See the HUD document at [http://www.actionalameda.org/Media/hud\\_prelim\\_findings\\_sept\\_2006.pdf](http://www.actionalameda.org/Media/hud_prelim_findings_sept_2006.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Alameda Sun, Affordable Housing Stock Investigated by HUD, September 20, 2007

<sup>37</sup> [www.alamedahousing.com](http://www.alamedahousing.com)

<sup>38</sup> [www.abag.ca.gov](http://www.abag.ca.gov)

<sup>39</sup> Association of Bay Area Governments, A Place to Call Home, 2007

<sup>40</sup> See ‘Community Impacts’ in the Homeless Assistance Element, page 9-41.

<sup>41</sup> Anecdotal to the authors.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Lopez, Bay Farm builder, city strike a deal, Alameda Journal, Friday, October 12, 2007.

## Transportation and Traffic

- The existing commuter ferry service is used primarily to get workers into San Francisco in the morning and get them back home at the end of the day – the ferries are mostly empty on the return trips. We should look to fill these ‘dead head’ runs with passengers coming to Alameda to work, or expanding on the number of San Francisco residents that already take the ferry from the SF ferry building into Alameda for attractions such as Rosenblum Cellars.
- We should implement a water taxi service with service to downtown San Francisco and Oakland’s Jack London Square to fill in the gaps between the peak commuter ferry runs and encourage the use of our waterways rather than our roadways for getting on and off the island. Such water taxis would need to support both pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- We should not build Alameda Point with the expectation that low-income families have to rely on public transit to get to work. There is mounting evidence that car ownership (LICO – low-income car ownership) provides a step-up for low income families, because they can more readily take better paying jobs that aren’t served by public transit.<sup>43</sup> Highly efficient hybrid gas-electric cars such as the Toyota Prius and the Honda Civic Hybrid are a fair compromise between the constraints of fixed schedules and routes of public transit and the carbon emissions of traditional gasoline powered automobiles.
- We should demand that the master developer set aside funds to launch a low-income car ownership program similar to the Working Wheels<sup>44</sup> program in Seattle, Washington, but focused on funding the purchase of only low-emission hybrid gas-electric automobiles. 25% of the housing at Alameda Point is intended for low-income occupants, not to mention that due to federal base closure and re-use laws<sup>45</sup>, non-profit organizations focused on providing affordable housing for low-income occupants may have options to take over and occupy parts of the former base. There will be a great number of low-income households on Alameda Point that might benefit from ownership of a low-emission automobile.
- We want streets with bicycle paths that encourage cyclists to stay on the road, where they belong, and not on the sidewalks which are for pedestrians. We want sidewalks which encourage

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<sup>43</sup> See The Brookings Institution Policy Brief, Center on Children & Families #35, December 2005. Also see other works by Margy Waller who authored this brief. [www.brook.edu](http://www.brook.edu)

<sup>44</sup> See [www.working-wheels.org](http://www.working-wheels.org) and also see [www.waystowork.com](http://www.waystowork.com) and [www.nedlc.org](http://www.nedlc.org)

<sup>45</sup> United States Federal Base Closure Community Redevelopment and Homeless Assistance Act of 1994

walking, and which are reserved for pedestrians and the disabled and for children too young to ride their bicycles on the road.

- We should teach young people in our schools how to safely cycle on the road and on bicycle paths, how to use hand signals, and to respect pedestrians. We should ask our police to equally enforce infractions for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike. The rules of the road apply to all.
- No planner or developer can guarantee 100% transit use for any project. Public transit use in Alameda today is less than 20%. Even in environmentally conscious Berkeley, public transit use is no more than 40%. More people and more housing brings more cars and more strain on our roadway infrastructure. We should be most permissive of automobile use for our lowest income class residents, and strive to minimize the overall number of households built at Alameda Point.
- Development at Alameda Point will undoubtedly create additional motor vehicle traffic for the Webster and Posey Tubes, which are the closest access point to the freeways. The next access point is the Park Street, roughly three miles away through a residential district.
- A ‘car-free’ commercial and residential zone<sup>46</sup> is a noble ideal for the development of Alameda Point, but is it practical, and does it make for a financially viable development? Is there a big enough market for housing that provides for no automobile access? And while those people rely on public transit during their Monday to Friday commute, how will they gain access to automobiles on the weekends to travel or sight-see? Does a car-free zone prevent low-income residents from improving their financial well-being by taking jobs that require a car?
- The notion of justifying higher density housing on the basis of precluding residents from owning automobiles falls apart fairly quickly – the more homes the developer builds whose owners are not permitted to have cars, the harder it is to identify enough people who are willing to buy those homes – at a price profitable for the builder – and live by relying on public transit.
- Transit agencies rarely, if ever, fund their operations entirely from the fare box. Only 16% of AC Transit’s revenue comes from the fare box.<sup>47</sup> SF Muni in San Francisco collects about 20% of their revenue from the fare box, well below the national average of 34%.<sup>48</sup> While home builders may benefit from developing highly profitable high-density apartment and condominium blocks which they justify with the promise of intensive mass transit use, after the developers are gone

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<sup>46</sup> Author’s conversation with Cybertran employee, March 29 2007, Mastick Center. See [www.cybertran.com](http://www.cybertran.com)

<sup>47</sup> AC Transit Budget 2007 presentation. [www.actransit.org](http://www.actransit.org)

<sup>48</sup> Rachel Gorden, [Muni officials thinking outside the fare box](#), San Francisco Chronicle, September 7, 2007

the taxpayers are left subsidizing the mass transit system forever. We need to weigh this issue of density versus public transit very carefully.

- Transit villages are not necessarily a panacea. Look at how Fruitvale Village just across the estuary has been struggling for years to become a thriving transit hub. Not long ago, Berkeley residents shut down a planned transit village for the Ashby BART station.<sup>49</sup>
- Short of extending BART to Alameda, for which there are no realistic plans on the horizon, mass transit in Alameda will be based primarily on the water-based ferry system and buses. Does Oakland's Chinatown community want a massive increase in the number of buses exiting the Posey tube into their neighborhood?<sup>50</sup>
- Transit agencies are obligated to maximize use of their systems to realize the most benefit from this capital intensive infrastructure – that's why transit villages are so popular among BART planners. But the ideas that transit agencies have for maximizing utility of their network may or may not coincide with the best interests of residents in the community they serve. And wholesale textbook application of branded themes like 'smart growth'<sup>51</sup> may work in some places but not others. We should be wary of intense promotion of the 'smart growth' brand, which, like any brand, is intended to generate mass consumption among consumers.
- Planners and builders typically measure density for a project by the ratio of housing units to acre of land – dwelling units per acre. A dwelling unit is a place for one household to occupy. The WRT Solomon E.T.C. presentation hosted by the city of Alameda Planning Department in March 2007 explained that public transit begins to be viable at housing density of 12 to 15 dwelling units per acre (du/ac).<sup>52</sup> Current restrictions without a density bonus for genuine affordable housing (see below) for Alameda Point support a density of 22 dwelling units per acre. **According to the City of Alameda's own hired experts, the current density restrictions for Alameda Point support public transit.**<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See the website: [www.sunwayco.com/fruitvale.html](http://www.sunwayco.com/fruitvale.html)

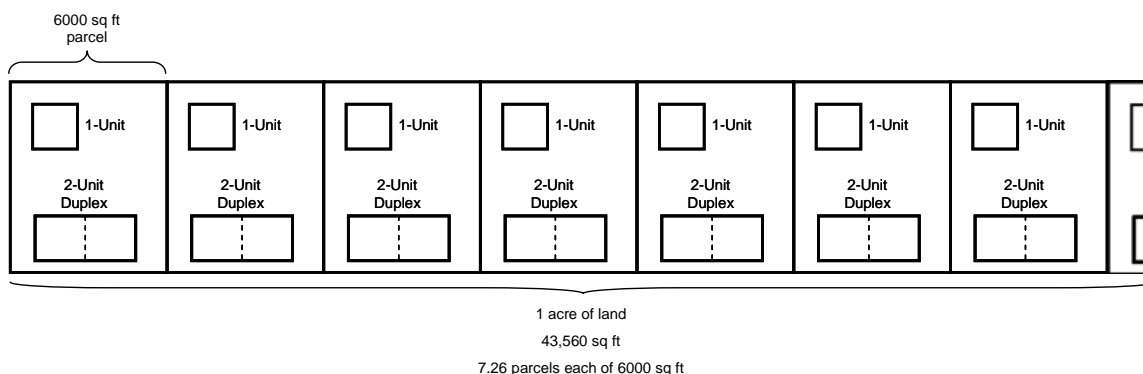
<sup>50</sup> Read the settlement agreement between the City of Alameda and the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce and Asian Health Services, dated April 19, 2004, available from the City of Alameda.

<sup>51</sup> See [The Smart Growth Brand and Alameda](#), available from Action Alameda. Email [info@actionalameda.org](mailto:info@actionalameda.org).

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.alameda-point.com/pdf/presos/3-29preso.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Presentation of the Alameda Point Land Use and Transportation Alternatives, March 29, 2007, Mastick Senior Center. WRT Solomon E.T.C. [www.solomonetc-wrt.com](http://www.solomonetc-wrt.com) and Alameda League of Women Voters, [Alameda Voter Vol. 38 Num. 2, March 2005](#), [alameda.ca.lwvnet.org](http://alameda.ca.lwvnet.org)

- You can calculate this figure yourself. There are 43,560 square feet in an acre. Current restrictions allow 3 dwelling units per 6000 square feet.  $43,560 \div 6000 = 7.26 \times 3 = 21.78$  du/ac. The illustration below should help to understand this math – you can simply count the number of 6000 sq ft parcels, and dwelling units permissible on one acre of land.



- Additionally, in accordance with state law,<sup>54</sup> the City of Alameda’s general plan<sup>55</sup> provides for a density bonus when 20% of the units are affordable to lower-income households, (‘affordable’ according to HUD definitions, not ‘missing-rung’), increasing the permissible density from 22 du/ac to 26.1 du/ac. The section of the plan reads as follows:

**Medium-Density Residential:** Two family or one family units.. Medium-density residential development will provide at least 2,000 square feet of site area per unit. Existing densities range up to 70 units per net acre on blocks with mixed single- and units. Density range for additional units: 8.8 to 21.8 units per net acre. Projects of five or more units with 20 percent of the units affordable to lower-income households earn a state-mandated density bonus permitting up to 26.1 units per net acre.

The 1996 NAS Alameda Community Reuse Plan references this density bonus as well.<sup>56</sup>

Further still, changes to the state law in 2004, sponsored by builders’, trades and realtors associations provide for increased density bonuses on a sliding scale, which would increase the allowed density to as much as 30 du/ac, based on a maximum 35% density bonus. Here’s how that works in practice – for an original project planned to provide for 100 homes, the builder

<sup>54</sup> Government Code section 65915 – 65918. Also see Barbara E. Kautz, A Public Agency Guide to California Density Bonus Law, Goldfarb & Lipman LPP, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> City of Alameda General Plan, Chapter 2, Land-Use Element available on the City’s website.

<sup>56</sup> See ‘Land Use Classification/Definitions’ in the Land-Use Element section, page 2-6.

could build 135 homes if they provided the right mix of very-low, low and moderate-income units in addition to market-rate homes. **Putting aside the math, what this density bonus means is this – existing land-use restrictions provide for low-income housing at a density of twice the minimum required density that the City’s experts say is required to make public transit viable. (30 du/ac v. 15 du/ac)**

- To illustrate a range of housing densities drawn upon these rules, laws, rules of thumb and existing structures in Alameda, it may be helpful to look at a table – see the next page.

Housing density for Alameda Point on the order of 916 Union Street or 716 Santa Clara would in all likelihood overwhelm the Posey and Webster Tubes and Downtown Oakland and Chinatown with automobiles and buses. Density at 30 du/ac in accordance with state law requiring the Low-Income Density Bonus would strain our infrastructure too, but would provide additional density to support low income housing in accordance with local and state law.

Public transit hasn’t worked on Bay Farm Island because it was largely zoned in accordance with R1 zoning, yielding 5,000 square foot lots and 8.7 du/ac<sup>57</sup> – below the minimum threshold at which the City of Alameda’s hired experts says that public transit begins to be viable.

If zoning laws are adjusted, building Alameda Point to the current restricted density of 22 du/ac or 30 du/ac (current restrictions plus density bonus for genuine affordable housing) would provide a viable public transit community without changing our city’s Charter.<sup>58</sup>

**If we want to build to 22 du/ac or 30 du/ac at selected sites on Alameda Point, we should review zoning regulations to permit this use and cap the number of homes built to the quantity provided for in the current Alameda Point Preliminary Development Concept (PDC) – 1800 homes or fewer.<sup>59</sup>**

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<sup>57</sup> Alameda League of Women Voters, [Alameda Voter Vol. 38 Num. 2, March 2005](#), [alameda.ca.lwvnet.org](http://alameda.ca.lwvnet.org)

<sup>58</sup> It is the authors’ understanding that the California State density bonus law provides that if multi-family units are required to achieve the higher density, the local municipality must implement an ordinance to provide for that.

<sup>59</sup> Alameda Reuse and Redevelopment Authority, [Alameda Point Preliminary Development Concept](#), February 1, 2006

Description	Density as Measured by Dwelling Units/Acre of Land (du/ac)
916 Union Street, Alameda, 37 units <sup>60</sup>	109 du/ac
716 Santa Clara, Alameda, 24 units <sup>61</sup>	98 du/ac
Permissible Density for Alameda Point Measure A Compliant with Low-Income Density Bonus	30 du/ac
City of Alameda Housing Authority Parrot Gardens Acquired in 1976 <sup>62</sup>	22.7 du/ac
Permissible Density for Alameda Point Measure A Compliant	22 du/ac
City of Alameda Housing Authority Eagle Village Built 1983, post Measure A, 42 units <sup>63</sup>	20 du/ac
Stone Leigh on Santa Clara, Alameda, 12 units <sup>64</sup>	20 du/ac
Density at which Public Transit is viable per City of Alameda Hired Experts (High end of Range) <sup>65</sup>	15 du/ac
Density at which Public Transit is viable per City of Alameda Hired Experts (Low end of Range) <sup>66</sup>	12 du/ac
Density of Garden Isle on Bay Farm Island <sup>67</sup>	8.2 du/ac
Density of Islandia Complex on Bay Farm Island <sup>68</sup>	8.0 du/ac

<sup>60</sup> Handout from WRT Solomon E.T.C., March 29, 2007, Mastick Senior Center.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> City of Alameda Housing Authority [www.alamedahsg.org](http://www.alamedahsg.org)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Handout from WRT Solomon E.T.C., March 29, 2007, Mastick Senior Center.

<sup>65</sup> Presentation of the Alameda Point Land Use and Transportation Alternatives, March 29, 2007, Mastick Senior Center. WRT Solomon E.T.C. [www.solomonetc-wrt.com](http://www.solomonetc-wrt.com) and <http://www.alameda-point.com/pdf/presos/3-29preso.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

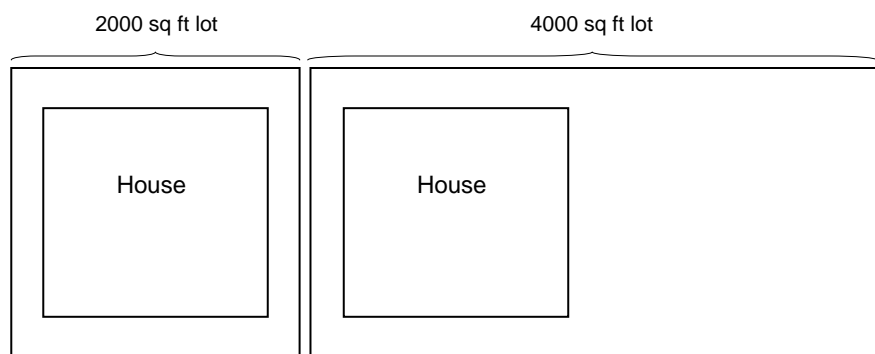
<sup>67</sup> Alameda League of Women Voters, *Alameda Voter Vol. 38 Num. 2, March 2005*, [alameda.ca.lwvnet.org](http://alameda.ca.lwvnet.org)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



## Design

- Some people in Alameda have complained about the Bayport development, which is “Measure A” compliant, either in regards to the aesthetics or the “humongous houses built on postage stamps.”<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that Bayport was planned and developed at a time when house prices in the Bay area were peaking, and it was in the builder’s interest to pack as many market-rate houses into the development as possible. If anything, a stronger “Measure A” – one that demands one dwelling unit per 4000 sq ft instead of 2000 sq ft, might have prevented the poor ratio of house footprint to lot size that we see in Bayport. See the illustration below.



- Further, the City of Alameda Planning Board passed approval on the Bayport development and had a significant role in the final appearance of the project. We should not allow short-term market trends to affect design choices they way the housing price bubble did with Bayport.
- Not far away from Bayport sits Marina Village, which won an award for *design* in 1991 from the Urban Land Institute.<sup>70</sup> In 2005, the Bayport development won *marketing* awards at the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Major Achievement in Marketing Excellence Awards for “Best Signage; Best Brochure; Best Sale/Information Center for a Masterplanned Community; Best Interior Merchandising; Best Architectural Design for The Cove and The Pointe; and Masterplanned Community of the Year.”<sup>71</sup> Both Bayport and Marina Village<sup>72</sup> are “Measure A” compliant – Alameda residents should drive through both to contrast the different designs possible within Measure A.

<sup>69</sup> Quote from Jerry Healy, speaking at the October 2007 Rotary Club Measure A debate.

<sup>70</sup> See the award archives on the Urban Land Institute web page, [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.bayportalameda.com/news\\_mame.html](http://www.bayportalameda.com/news_mame.html)

<sup>72</sup> Drive, walk or bike to Marina Village Parkway and Independence Drive, just off of Constitution Way.

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## Contamination

- Decades of Navy use have left Alameda Point as a federal toxic superfund site. Contaminants include benzene, naphthalene, radium and other radioactive elements such as cesium-137, plutonium-239 and others. In addition, there are drums containing some of these same chemical wastes buried at various locations on the grounds. There are also plumes of contaminants under much of this land. The plumes are a mix of contaminants that move around in pockets within and under the surface land fill as water currents shift. The fact that the plumes can shift location makes them difficult to track and treat.
- On the north-west corner of Alameda Point, 78 acres of land was designated for landfill and waste disposal for the air station, from 1943 to 1956. Rather than hauling the chemical wastes to an off-site, public, regulated landfill, the Navy dumped waste materials into this unregulated waste disposal pit. The pit was trenched down to ground water depth, then covered with sandy soil. There are no records of what was dumped in that site, but it is known that much of this waste was hazardous and toxic.
- Alameda Point has been divided into more than 30 rehabilitation sites. Extensive examination of these sites has been ongoing, in order to determine the most effective means of restoring the land. A Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Committee of citizens, many of them experts in this field, has been established to oversee the restoration. The effects of military use on Alameda Point have taken their toll, and the rehabilitation continues.
- Can this land truly be rehabilitated, and how long and how much money will be required to bring this land to habitable standards? Proponents of high-density housing for Alameda Point have floated proposals for a number of houses far in excess of the current figures in the PDC while ignoring the contaminants in the ground. Before anything is built on Alameda Point, we must be assured the land is safe for habitation. And we must not jeopardize the health and safety of our future citizens by trying to build thousands and thousands of homes on that land.

## Conclusion

It should be clear to the reader at this point that the question of how best to develop and green Alameda Point is not a simple one. To take one issue, the ‘solution’ of providing affordable housing through high-density development centered on public transit is muddied by benefits of automobile ownership for low-income people and the building industry’s demands to build higher and denser in order to pay for that mandated housing and remain profitable. And it is a complex alchemy that allows one-third of a island city’s land mass to be shut down from military use, cleaned up and re-born as a thriving new neighborhood that doesn’t negatively impact existing residents and contributes to the overall well-being of the community.

But there should be no doubt that the direction of the former Naval Air Station Alameda can be reversed from a ‘brown field’ federal superfund site to a clean and safe center of sustainable living and commerce, if only we have the collective will to do it. In this document, you’ve seen the phrase ‘we should’ many times, and the ‘we’ is all of us – residents, politicians, community groups, religious organizations, community publications and anyone who may benefit or feel an impact from the redevelopment of Alameda Point.

As residents, we must become educated on sometimes complex issues, we must speak out to our community leaders and on occasion challenge our own and other’s conventional wisdom with well-founded protestations. Our politicians must give thoughtful, in-depth deliberation to issues, and genuinely listen to all sides before casting their vote. Our newspapers must be fair and balanced, publishing both ‘for’ and ‘against’ opinions and they must also disclose any affiliations to actors in the process who are biased or pushing self-serving agendas.

We encourage you to read and re-read this paper, making notes in the white space, perhaps jotting down questions to ask at the next public forum or city hall meeting. Also read as many of the footnoted references as you can.<sup>73</sup> Share and distribute it to friends and neighbors. Our goal is to have all members of the community involved, not just an active few.

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<sup>73</sup> Send e-mail to [info@actionalameda.org](mailto:info@actionalameda.org) for assistance in locating the footnoted documents.

*Use this space to make your own notes or jot down thoughts and questions...*

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