

# ITEM 7-A

## CITY OF ALAMEDA

### Memorandum

To: Honorable President and  
Members of the Planning Board

From: Andrew Thomas  
City Planner

Jennifer Ott  
Chief Operating Officer – Alameda Point

Date: February 25, 2013

Re: Hold a Public Scoping Meeting for the Environmental Impact Report for the  
Alameda Point Project

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## BACKGROUND

In June 2012, the City Council directed staff to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) required for approval of future planning approvals for the Alameda Point Project (Project), including General Plan and zoning amendments, the Master Infrastructure Plan (MIP), and Town Center and Waterfront Precise Plan (Precise Plan).

The Notice of Preparation of an EIR for the Project was issued on January 10, 2013 (see Exhibit 1). After release of the Notice of Preparation, the City extended the comment period for the public to March 1, 2013. On January 28, 2013, the Planning Board held a public scoping session to provide an opportunity for the public to submit comments on the scope of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that the City will prepare. The comments received from the public, public agencies, and the Planning Board to date is attached as Exhibit 2. Given that the deadline for comments is March 1, 2013 and given that due to technical difficulties the January 28<sup>th</sup> meeting was not recorded, staff is recommending that the Planning Board provide a second opportunity for the public to provide comments or augment their January 28<sup>th</sup> comments in the event that Exhibit 2 is not quite correct at the meeting of February 25, 2013 to ensure the public's comments are recorded properly.

## DISCUSSION

### **EIR Project Description and Scope**

The DEIR will inform the community and City decision makers about the potential environmental impacts of the reuse and development of Alameda Point consistent with the proposed zoning and General Plan amendments, MIP, and Precise Plan. City staff and its EIR consultant, Environmental Science Associates (ESA), will prepare a

comprehensive evaluation of all the potential environmental impacts of all aspects of the Project and Project alternatives.

Specifically, the DEIR will address:

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Transportation/Traffic         | 9. Hydrology and Water Quality          |
| 2. Aesthetics                     | 10. Land Use Planning                   |
| 3. Air Quality                    | 11. Recreation                          |
| 4. Biological Resources           | 12. Noise                               |
| 5. Cultural Resources             | 13. Population, Employment, and Housing |
| 6. Geology, Soils, and Seismicity | 14. Public Services                     |
| 7. Greenhouse Gas Emissions       | 15. Utilities and Service Systems       |
| 8. Hazardous Materials            | 16. Alternatives                        |

### **Project Description**

The proposed “project” for evaluation in the EIR includes:

1. Site Wide Zoning Amendments: The zoning amendments are designed to bring the zoning into compliance with the General Plan. Currently, Alameda Point is zoned M-2/G (General Industry/Government Overlay) to reflect the Navy’s prior industrial uses at Alameda Point. Once the land is conveyed to the City, reuse and development of Alameda Point will require that the City amend the zoning for the property in a manner that implements the 1996 Community Reuse Plan and General Plan. The zoning ordinance amendment will establish the development standards and options for various sub-districts within Alameda Point.
2. Associated General Plan Amendments: The General Plan Amendments are necessary to ensure internal consistency and/or consistency with the draft Zoning.
3. Town Center and Waterfront Precise Plan: The Precise Plan will provide detailed development standards and requirements for a transit-oriented town center at Alameda Point. The purpose of the Precise Plan is to adopt form based, transit supportive standards and regulations for the arrangement of public and private street streets, public open space and parks, infrastructure, and associated private development consistent with City’s goals and expectations for a transit-oriented, waterfront, visitor serving mixed-use community. The Precise Plan will also address the phasing of development within the Town Center and Waterfront Area, which must allow for interim uses, changes of uses in existing buildings, and integration of near-term projects with long-term goals. The Precise Plan will contain all of the components of a Specific Plan under State law.
4. Master Infrastructure Plan: The MIP will provide infrastructure requirements for the reuse and development of the former NAS Alameda property consistent with the General Plan and zoning. The MIP will establish the requirements and

standards necessary to ensure the replacement and/or rehabilitation of the existing utility systems, streets, and open spaces at Alameda Point to support the uses and activities envisioned in the Reuse Plan and General Plan. More specifically, the MIP will determine the street, wastewater, storm drain, electrical, water, and telecom requirements for sub-areas, consisting of a program of major infrastructure and site improvements, including grading and shoreline stabilization to address sea level rise, to support the reuse and development of Alameda Point. All streets within Alameda Point will be designed as complete streets to support all modes of transportation.

The proposed project is designed to accommodate a mix of land uses, including approximately 5.5 million square feet of employment uses in existing and newly constructed buildings. Employment uses will include a mix of retail; commercial recreation; commercial office; business park; industrial; institutional; maritime; and marina uses. Residential uses will include 1,425 residential units including 260 existing single family and multifamily housing units. The 1,165 new units will be distributed within existing vacant and newly constructed multi-family and single-family buildings. In addition to the 200 existing supportive housing units at Alameda Point, approximately 25 percent of the newly constructed residential units will be made available for lower income households. It is anticipated that Alameda Point will be developed in phases between 2014 and approximately 2035. The pace of redevelopment will depend on economic conditions, completion of remaining environmental remediation activities, property conveyance, and other factors.

#### Alternatives:

At the January 28, 2013 Public Scoping Session, a number of speakers asked about the alternatives that might be considered in the draft EIR. As required by the CEQA, the EIR will include an analysis of alternatives to the project that will *“avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project”*. The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to “foster informed decision making and public participation”. (Section 15126.6 CEQA Guidelines).

To meet the minimum requirements of CEQA, staff is proposing to consider the following alternatives in the EIR:

1. A “No Project” alternative. This alternative will compare the environmental conditions associated with a scenario in which the City does not approve any zoning amendments, general plan amendments, town center plan, or master infrastructure plan. This analysis will consider:
  - Whether no action might avoid or minimize potential environmental impacts associated with the “project” (e.g., traffic, air quality, etc.)
  - Whether no action might create new potential environmental impacts that are not associated with the “project” (e.g., historic resources, water quality, etc.)

- Whether the project objectives can be feasibly met with a no project alternative.
2. An “Environmentally Superior” Alternative. This Alternative will be crafted to specifically avoid or reduce environmental impacts associated with the Project. Because building the Project at an alternative location is not a feasible alternative, the environmentally superior alternative will examine how the proposed zoning, Precise Plan, and MIP might be amended or adjusted to reduce or avoid impacts identified in the EIR from the proposed project. Typically, this Alternative is a “reduced density alternative” that results in less development and therefore less automobile traffic as compared to the Project. This analysis will consider:
- How the proposed zoning and plans might be adjusted to avoid or minimize the specific potential environmental impacts associated with the Project (e.g., traffic, air quality, etc.)
  - Whether the “environmentally superior” alternative create new potential environmental impacts that are not associated with the Project (e.g., increased pressure to develop in other areas, urban sprawl, increased regional traffic and air quality impacts from longer commutes, etc.)
  - Whether the project objectives can be feasibly met with the “environmentally superior” alternative.

In addition, to extend the utility and "shelf life" of the EIR, staff is proposing to include an expanded analysis of alternatives. Given the uncertainty of the economic climate and City's need to be able to consider a wide range of potential future uses (everything from a major research institution like the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and universities, to manufacturing businesses, to commercial offices, to major retailers, to small scale breweries and wine makers, to single family homes to multifamily homes and senior housing facilities) the EIR will be designed to provide the City Council and future decision makers the ability to consider a wide variety and quantity of different uses without the need to fund a new EIR or major new environmental studies. From staff's perspective, the EIR for Alameda Point should attempt to be as broad and informative as possible to accommodate a wide range of possible decisions by the current and future City Councils over the life of the project at Alameda Point.

For example, the EIR can provide information about the environmental impacts of a variety of potential alterations to the plan for Alameda Point that might include:

1. A higher percentage of retail use within the 5.5 million square feet of non-residential development. Retail use typically generates less commute trips, but more “visitor” trips during the PM Peak hour. Increased on-site retail opportunities may not reduce the number of “off-site” shopping trips as more Alameda residents and employees are able to shop at Alameda Point.

2. A higher percentage of multi-family housing to single family housing within the 1,425 total units. Studies have shown that the automobile trips generated by multifamily housing are generally less than single family housing and that multifamily households are typically more likely to use transit.
3. The relative environmental benefits in terms of transportation impacts of relocating the ferry terminal from the existing Main Street terminal to the Seaplane Lagoon.

At the January 28, 2013 Planning Board Scoping Session, a number of speakers expressed their desire to see a project consisting of more housing units. Staff is not proposing to analyze the environmental impacts of more housing units in the EIR for the following reasons:

1. Alameda Point will be built in phases over the course of 25 to 30 years. Staff anticipates that to build and occupy 1,425 housing units will take between 10 and 15 years assuming a strong housing market over the course of the next 10 to 15 years. For comparison purposes, the build out of approximately 500 units at Bayport took approximately nine years. If the City decides to add additional units in 10 or 15 years, a supplemental or new EIR may be prepared at that time. That future EIR might be funded by the City or by a housing developer interested in pursuing entitlements for the additional units.
2. The Economic Development Conveyance Memorandum of Agreement (EDC MOA) between the City and the United States Navy limits the number of housing units at Alameda Point to 1,425. The agreement includes a \$50,000 penalty for each additional Market rate unit (beyond 1,425) built at Alameda Point. Given this "penalty", staff believes that it is unlikely that the City (or a future developer) will be seriously considering a proposal within the time frame relevant to the "shelf life" of an EIR, to build additional units beyond the 1,425 allowed by the EDC MOA. If the City were to change its policy direction in the future or if market conditions change dramatically so as to render more housing units (beyond 1,425) possible, a future developer would pay for the new EIR or necessary supplements to this EIR at that time.
3. This EIR is being funded with limited lease revenues from Alameda Point. Staff is interested in maximizing the efficiency of of this EIR while complying with the mandates of CEQA, thus preserving lease revenues for much needed physical improvements at Alameda Point.

#### Hazardous Materials:

At the public scoping session a number of speakers raised questions or made statements about the status of the hazardous materials and the Navy's remediation efforts at Alameda Point. For the purpose of clarifying some of the issues that came up at the meeting, staff decided it would be important to provide the following answers to some of the questions raised at the meeting:

**1. Is the Seaplane Lagoon safe for human activity?**

**Yes.** The Navy's remediation of the Seaplane Lagoon is nearing completion. The Navy's work will be done only after the environmental regulatory agencies (US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region (Water Board) conclude that the Navy has achieved the clean-up goals to allow unrestricted use of Seaplane Lagoon.

**2. Is the Navy only cleaning up to industrial standards in the Town Center area? Does that mean we cannot build any housing in this area?**

**No.** Most of the Town Center area is being cleaned for unrestricted use. The only portion of the Town Center area that likely will have land use restrictions is the portion that is east of Seaplane Lagoon and south of Atlantic Avenue. The environmental regulatory agencies may permit residential land use in this portion of the Town Center area, provided vapor barriers are installed and maintained.

**3. Are there concerns about the long-term effects of contamination on residents and employees at Alameda Point?**

All of the Navy's clean-up activities are actively overseen by environmental experts at least three regulatory agencies: EPA, DTSC, and the Water Board. Their foremost concern is protection of human health and the environment. Whenever feasible, they ensure that the Navy remediates Alameda Point for unrestricted land use. In the limited areas where cleanup to unrestricted use does not occur, land-use restrictions are enforced to prevent future residents and employees at Alameda Point from exposure to unsafe conditions. In making remedial decisions, the environmental regulatory agencies and the Navy specifically evaluate long-term effects.

**4. Are the Navy clean-up efforts adequate to protect human health and the environment?**

**Yes.** EPA, DTSC, and the Water Board engage the appropriate experts, including environmental engineers, toxicologists, groundwater hydrologists, ecologists, and risk assessors, to actively review the Navy's cleanup. Their foremost concern is protection of human health and the environment, and they make sure clean-up decisions are made accordingly.

**5. Will the City be using something similar to the Environmental Issues Management Plan that was used for the former Moffett Field? If so, what does it accomplish?**

**Yes.** The Alameda Point Site Management Plan (SMP) is analogous to Moffett Field's Environmental Issues Management Plan. Both documents describe procedures to address the known remaining environmental conditions. These plans also describe contingency actions to be taken in the event that previously unknown environmental conditions are encountered during development. The Alameda Point SMP will be closely patterned after existing SMPs that have been developed for FISCA (Alameda Landing) and the portion of Alameda Point that was proposed for the LBNL second campus, both of which received regulatory approval. The SMP must be reviewed and approved by EPA, DTSC, and the Water Board.

### RECOMMENDATION

Hold a Public Scoping Meeting for the Environmental Impact Report for the Alameda Point Project.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Thomas  
City Planner

Jennifer Ott  
Chief Operating Officer – Alameda Point

### Exhibits:

1. Notice of Preparation of EIR for Alameda Point Project
2. January 28, 2012 Scoping Meeting Draft Minutes (Please see the draft minutes under item 8)