

Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

ARTICLE XXVI From Measure A to Measure Z

On March 13, 1973 a total of 9,205 Alameda residents voted in favor of initiative "Measure A" to amend the City Charter:

Article XXVI. Multiple Dwelling Units.

Sec. 26-1. There shall be no multiple dwelling units built in the City of Alameda.

Sec. 26-2. Exception being the Alameda Housing Authority replacement of existing low cost housing and the proposed Senior Citizens low cost housing complex, pursuant to Article XXV Charter of the City of Alameda."

And on March 5, 1991, a total of 8,987 Alameda residents voted for a second "Measure A" initiative, which added Section 26-3 to the Charter:

Section 26-3: "The maximum density for any residential development within the City of Alameda shall be one housing unit per 2,000 square feet of land.

The ballot argument read as follows and in retrospect it still holds true today: "We . . . ask the voters of Alameda to add this measure for additional protection for the goals of 1973 Measure A to prevent overcrowding, minimize traffic congestion and parking problems and preserve the character of residential neighborhoods. Inasmuch as our City is almost built out, we are proposing to require that any dwelling unit have a minimum of 2,000 square feet of area and a duplex have a minimum of 4,000 square feet of area, which should have been done in 1973. This reinforces the original intent of Measure A. Most importantly, it also means that no three members of the Council can ever change the residential density set forth in this Ballot Measure. With the passage of this measure, only you, the voters, can do this."

The adoption of Article 26 was just one of many changes in City and State regulations related to development review, including Historic Preservation, Design Review, the California Environmental Quality Act (which established new requirements for public review of the potential environmental impacts, including traffic, from any new development); and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

However, since 2009, several projects have utilized the Density Bonus ordinance to qualify for density bonuses above 21 units per acre and waivers regardless of Article 26. These projects include:

- 800 planned multifamily apartments and townhomes currently under construction at the 68 acre Site A in Alameda Point (12 units/acre), Site B and C to be developed in coming years to add up to a total of 4,000 units.
- 101 occupied multifamily units in the 285 unit "TRI Pointe" Alameda Landing project (12.5 units/acre),
- 52 occupied multifamily townhomes on Clement Avenue at Willow (20 units/acre),
- 9 planned multifamily units above retail on Webster Street at Taylor (26 units/acre), and
- 21 occupied multifamily units at Everett and Eagle (29 units/acre).

Since 2012 and the adoption of the Multi-family Residential Combining Zone, several projects with the MF District zoning designation have utilized the Density Bonus Ordinance to achieve residential densities between 29 and 36 units per acre, regardless of Article 26:

- 327 planned multifamily units on the Alameda Landing Waterfront site (29 units/acre).
- 380 planned multifamily units on the Del Monte Warehouse site (33 units/acre)
- 589 planned multifamily units on the Encinal Terminals site (35 units/acre)
- 760 planned units at the Alameda Marina project (36 units/acre)

And yet, City Council says Article 26 stands in the way of new development!

Source: Alameda Planning Staff Evaluation of City Charter, December 2019

Measure A...continued from page 1.

City Council Approves Placing Repeal of Article 26 on the November 2020 Ballot

At its July 7, 2020 meeting, the City Council voted 4-1 (Daysog opposed) to place full repeal of Article 26 on the November 2020 ballot. The measure – to repeal Article 26 – will appear on the ballot as “Measure Z”. Measure Z is the culmination of a series of meetings by the City Council’s Charter Review Subcommittee, the Planning Board and the full Council on whether any changes to Article 26 would be submitted to the voters for the November 2020 election.

In public discussions and letters throughout this year AAPS has expressed an openness to modify Article 26, but insisted that any modifications should be thought of in the larger context for development rules to meet Alameda’s evolving goals and objectives. Article 26 is only one piece of this larger framework. On June 2nd, the Council voted 4-1 (Daysog opposed) to not include Section 26-3 on the 2020 ballot, which seemed a reasonable compromise. So the July 7th Council vote to repeal all of Article 26 was surprising. The rationale for repealing Section 26-3, was based on the release of the Bay Area’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). According to the staff report, it was “very likely” that Alameda’s RHNA “will also increase by 200%”, just as it had for the Bay Area’s new RHNA. Staff was concerned that the need to rezone additional areas outside existing residential neighborhoods to accommodate the RHNA-triggered ca. 1500-2000 additional housing units might further intensify possible conflicts with Section 26-3. But the staff rationale was tenuous, since a substantial increase in the RHNA allocation was expected before the City Council’s June 2 vote and the conflict that staff referred to “arguably” (according to staff) existed since previous RHNA-triggered zoning changes in 2012.

CALL TO ACTION!

Although Alameda’s zoning ordinance and General Plan now have provisions that implement the intent of Article 26 and the City now has a very good historic preservation ordinance and design review program that help protect historic properties and architectural quality, all of these provisions can be repealed by a simple majority of the City Council. Article 26 is a firewall against an out of control City Council.

AAPS remains open to possible modification of Article 26 to help address the City’s housing goals and other reasonable objectives.

But the City Council’s precipitous action to put full repeal of Article 26 on the November 2020 ballot without a carefully considered public discussion of the City’s long-term vision and a consensus on the City’s future was reckless and destructive.

VOTE NO ON MEASURE Z!



Picture this: Park and Webster streets without Article 26. Preserve Alameda, Vote NO on Z!

RE: ALAMEDA, TODAY AND TOMORROW Mark Greenside

Article 26 of Alameda’s City Charter, also known as Measure A, protects us from super high-density, 12 story, million-dollar condos being built in our neighborhoods and shoreline. Article 26 places limits on otherwise unlimited market-price development. Get rid of 26 and the floodgate is open for developers. Article 26 does NOT prohibit or inhibit the building of affordable housing, because state laws supersede Article 26. State law requires Alameda to identify enough land to build the designated number of market-rate, moderate, low, and very low income housing units assigned by the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, RHNA.

Article 26 prohibits City Council from increasing residential density above 21 units/acre and more than two units on a standard fifty by hundred foot parcel—except for the RHNA designated units. State law raises the density to 36 units/acre to meet the RHNA numbers. If Article 26 is repealed, the City Council can change zoning rules so that there will be NO limits on what can be built or where. Your neighbor’s house could be bought and replaced by a six story million-dollar condo unit. Any City Council majority of three will have the power to approve any zoning changes in neighborhoods, including density, height, parking, and design. 85-90% of all new units in Alameda are market-rate. Take away Article 26, and the result could be double and triple the number of super high-density million dollar condos, making Alameda one of the most gentrified cities in the Bay Area.

One of the intended consequences of Article 26 was to save Alameda’s Victorians; one of the unintended consequences is that those Victorians provide much of the affordable housing in Alameda. Another unintended consequence is the prevention of unlimited, super high-density, million dollar condo towers. Alameda doesn’t need thousands more market-rate units. We need REAL affordable housing that people who currently live in Alameda can afford. Keep Article 26 and vote no on Z.

Measure A...continued from page 2.

Article 26 saved these two Victorians from their neighbors' fates.



RE: WHY I VOTED FOR ARTICLE 26

Ellen Paisal, Alameda resident since the early 70s

The Measure A I supported as my first political act was purely to protect Victorians. We lived in a little rental apartment at Central & Grand when husband was in college on the GI Bill. We had one car, one baby, one stroller. Everyday we walked the neighborhood and too often a huge, gaping hole was the only evidence of the gorgeous old building gone suddenly, shockingly. Unintended consequences are often the result of legislation. I submit that we were right to unite to save the Victorians. We are a unique space in the Bay Area—one to be treasured, appreciated and worthy of continued protection.

Alameda can build, Alameda IS building housing... if the price is wrong, attend the public hearings and make your ideas heard. Protect the Irreplaceable! Let Good Taste and Good Design Guide Future Projects.

RE: EXCLUSIONARY ZONING AND DENSITY

Karen Miller, Alameda resident since 1982

Exclusionary zoning is a practice that I abhor and it is not what Measure A was about. It was about density, traffic and the demolition of Victorians. Redlining and deed restrictions were not limited to Alameda. Most of the East Bay cities had their own versions. What makes Alameda unique is the number of Victorians we had. I believe that we were only 2nd to SF. Before Article 26, the developers were allowed to buy up these homes and build the big box apartments that we have now. If you haven't done so, please take a drive on Santa Clara and Clinton and many other streets and you can see the architectural damage that was done. By enacting Article 26 there was no money in building duplexes and the developers moved on.

The other main argument presented for Article 26 was traffic, something that we are still arguing about today with the same number of bridges and the tubes. Being an island does make us unique among the East Bay cities in that we have a limited number of ways on and off the island. No other Bay Area city that is being asked to provide great numbers of housing units has these challenges. Please stop making this a racial issue unique to Alameda with Article 26. How diverse is Castro Valley? San Leandro? Oakland is becoming extremely gentrified with more and more African Americans leaving due to its un-affordability. None of these cities have Article 26. What we do need is more affordable housing and that is not achieved by getting rid of Article 26.

RE: WHO'S BEHIND THE HISTORICAL ADVISORY BOARD'S POWER

Karen Lithgow, Realtor, Landlord and Alameda resident since 1990

The claim that the Historical Advisory Board and City zoning ordinances are sufficient to protect historic structures in Alameda is misleading. Although the HAB was created with Article 28 of the City Charter to "preserve and protect structures of historical significance", its powers and duties reside in the Alameda Municipal code. These ordinances currently state that "any building that was constructed prior to 1942 shall not be demolished or removed without a certificate of approval issued by the HAB". As many of us have seen, however, city ordinances can be eliminated or changed by a simple three member majority vote of the Council. Because the HAB and zoning regulations exist as ordinances subject to the whims of Council, the power to significantly damage Alameda's neighborhoods will lie in the hands of just any three members of the Council if Article 26 is repealed. This is in contrast to Article 26 itself which is protected from the council by virtue of its existing in the Charter where it would take a majority vote of all of the people if it is to be changed by anyone.

Since Article 26 prevents developers from replacing most existing residential buildings with something larger, there is no incentive to demolish the existing buildings for more residential density. As a result, there have not been many applications to do this for the HAB to consider. If Article 26 is repealed, it is likely that there will be an increase in these kinds of applications. There is an appeal process to HAB decisions now that states that "the City Council shall reverse the decision of the Board only if it finds, upon the evidence of qualified sources, that the historical resource is incapable of earning an economic return on its value. If the Council so find, it may grant the appeal". That appeal process has been used before to overturn HAB recommendations to keep buildings from being demolished and it may very well be used again. Disturbingly, the update to the Alameda General Plan now being proposed by City officials states that we should "consider amending the Municipal Code to prohibit the demolition of residential buildings constructed prior to 1942 for the purpose of increasing the number of housing units on the property, unless the property is designated in the Housing Element as a Housing Opportunity Site necessary to meet the City's regional housing needs allocation or the structure lacks architectural merit. Who gets to decide if a structure lacks architectural merit? Clearly, it is imperative that Article 26 be kept in the charter to protect our neighborhoods from the whims of the City Council.

Continued on page 4 . .

Measure A...continued from page 3.

RE: DENSITY

JD, Alameda resident since 2007

The question to ask if you live here, raise your kids here or bought a home in Alameda is... Why would we want to increase the population and the density when many of us escaped more dense areas like the city to move to quiet Alameda? I don't miss for a second driving around my neighborhood in the city for 90 minutes with groceries in the car looking for parking, getting a ticket per week for parking, fighting for space everywhere, on the bus, at home, at the beach, in the park, waiting in long lines for everything and being exhausted at the end. If you look at Alameda and San Francisco we've actually had more % growth from the 1950s to 2010.

RE: HOUSING CRISIS VS DEVELOPERS

Stephanie Brown, Central Alameda resident

So far I've seen a ton of condos starting in the "low \$900ks" and a measly 32 affordable apartments that nearly 12k people applied to live in. On the Housing Authority site I see ONE 78-unit under development and another 489 market rate units of which only 90 will be set aside for transitional/supportive housing for the homeless. A couple hundred units don't help many, and none of this helps working people who are caught in the vanishing middle class – too much [income] to qualify for assistance, not enough to actually buy. So if we are going to talk about the housing crisis, let's just be honest with ourselves and admit that 100% of the new housing being built would need to be affordable to even put a dent in this issue.

I've heard the line that if you build more market rate housing all those rich folks will leave the older housing stock to the rest of us, but so far this has not played out in any of the cities where there has been extensive development over the last several years (see: SF). In the Bay Area there will always be someone with more money and a better job to swoop in and outbid you. So I'm just wondering when the trickle-down housing policy sham will be revealed? I'm no NIMBY, but it's plain to see that a lot of YIMBY goals are pretty darn close to the same as the developers. By the time the results are clear, they've made their money and the rest of us still don't have anywhere to go. I grew up here and want to stay here too. But I also don't think YES BUILD ANYTHING is a solution. (Edited to add that I am 100% not a NIMBY because I don't even have a backyard, or own one square inch of land in Alameda, which really sucks during a pandemic.)



RE: CITY COUNCIL'S POWER

Bill Meakin, Alameda resident since 1997

Article 26 is not superfluous. Article 26 puts a substantial limit on the City Council's power. Repealing Article 26 causes a huge shift in power from the people to the Council, and it is highly improbable that the current position could ever be restored. Now you may consider the current Council to be pure as the driven snow, wise beyond their years, taking only expert and impartial advice, and unswayed by lobbyists for special interests; but could you say the same for the Council that will be 5 years into the future? 10? 15? I've been around in this area long enough to watch such bodies hijacked by special interests and which then immediately reversed the decisions of their predecessors and implemented exactly what the special interests wanted. It only takes one thoroughly bought election with an uninvolved electorate to do it. I therefore firmly believe that if, as here, you have a situation which limits the powers of a government body, KEEP IT LIKE THAT.

RE: BLUE COLLAR COMMUNITY

Ro Leaphart, Bronze Coast Alameda resident

Alamedans have been fighting developers since the 1800s when the island became the summer destination of SF middle class, since the fight to keep the Bay from being filled in. And since the days when bulldozing Pattiani's house at the corner of Central and Grand was a golden opportunity. Think about it. California developers wanted to fill in the Bay. Developers wanted to bulldoze Victorians. Why? Duh. Money. They want money. They do not give one cent for you or yours.

Look at history.... only a handful of vocal women stopped the golden strategy to fill in the Bay. And the residents of Alameda who were primarily blue collar workers... begged with their vote to stop the bulldozing. Most of us have a home, an apartment, a bungalow, a Victorian, a craftsman, because of these women and men. And their determination and gumption. Rents are astronomical in multi-family units ... building more won't reduce rents to affordability as market rate is not affordable to the regular person. I'm sorry California taxes are high. I wish our elected leaders would insist on building infrastructure to match development they are so insistent on approving. But that would mean cost to developers and taxpayers. Repealing Article 26 would be a big eviction notice for those who have worked so hard and so long to own a two bedroom bungalow. May 2021 be a time of sound minds and bodies. May you find not only shelter, but a place of comfort and beauty.

A large apartment building dwarfs the neighboring Craftsman home along Central Avenue. Images: Conchita Perales.

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Measure A...continued from page 4.



Late 1890s photograph of the 1700 block of Central Avenue. By 1969 two of the Victorians had been demolished for apartments. The yellow house was spared because it had already been subdivided into apartments in the late 1940s. Images: Alameda Museum & Conchita Perales.

RE: THE TRUTH BEHIND MEASURE Z Conchita Perales, Member AAPS

Let's be clear, Alameda citizens did not ask to repeal Article 26. They did not rally and gather thousands of signatures to place Measure Z on the ballot this November 3rd. Why would Alamedans want more traffic, more condos and overcrowding?

Listen to Mayor Ashcraft confess during the Democratic Club meeting on July 15, 2020 the exact moment she realized it would be her mission to repeal Article 26. She recalls, "In 2006 as a newbie planning board member, I didn't know better. . . we were discussing some project proposal . . . but I, the new one, blurted out: 'Wouldn't this be so much simpler if Measure A didn't exist and we didn't have to work around it. . . everyone just went dead silent, you could see they look at each other. . . 'she said the M word in public.' So that was then, this is now. [Repealing Article 26] will allow developers to come in and build multi-family units at less cost because they're not spending as much time in the planning process and having to go through all these iterations. . . "

Voters should question the ballot arguments supporting Measure Z calling Article 26 "a relic of racist land-use" that "prevents achieving affordable housing goals". These arguments deceive unsuspecting voters into believing it's all about social justice and affordable housing, disguising their true motivation of a long held desire to upzone residential neighborhoods.

Ashcraft calls Article 26 "a 47-year mistake" (*East Bay Citizen*, July 9, 2020). Imagine our streets after 47 years of uncontrolled development. Row after row of cheaply built, nondescript apartments, and gone would be the historic character and small town feel of Alameda.

Measure Z's real intent is to fast-track permit approvals and allow the flow of money that development generates in tax revenues and campaign contributions. If approved, Alameda will become the next "Apartmentville", crowded and traffic ridden, where its history is reduced to a few old pictures and a lame historic exhibit at City Hall. It's 1973 all over again folks, and once again we must stand up and wrestle Alameda away from the politicians and the developers who support them. Vote No on Z!

RE: UPZONING Paul Foreman, member Alameda Citizens Task Force

What will change if Article 26 is repealed? Initially, nothing will change because our current zoning ordinances are all Article 26 compliant.

Perhaps the biggest loss will be that with Article 26 in place, the City cannot allow a density greater than 30 units per acre (plus density bonus, which in most cases increases density to 36 units per acre), because that is the minimum density required by the State Housing Element Law (Regional Housing Needs Assessment, or RHNA). In addition they can only raise it on sufficient parcels to meet their low income RHNA. With Article 26 repealed Council can set density as high as they wish and upzone as many parcels as they wish.

The most likely area will be on Park and Webster commercial zoned areas. Our commercial zoning already allows residential use above the first floor so the only big change would be increasing the density and height restrictions.

The next area eventually coming under threat of upzoning will be our current residentially zoned areas. As our inventory of vacant land dwindles, the next target will be allowing developers to try to buy out owners of existing low density dwellings and replace them with high density structures. This may not happen in R-1 because Council will not want to suffer the wrath of the high income people that they need on their side in order to retain their offices, but I think anything below that is under threat. This may be many years away but I do believe it will happen.

The biggest threat is that, as our supply of vacant land on which to build high density housing dwindles, it will put pressure on City Council to upzone low density existing neighborhoods.

With Article 26 repealed, Council can set density as high as they wish and upzone as many parcels as they wish.

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Measure A...continued from page 5.

RE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Margie Siegal, former Oakland resident now living in Alameda

I would be inclined to favor repeal if in fact affordable apartments would be built in Alameda. However, my research shows that even so-called "affordable" new construction will be a minimum of \$1500 per month and probably quite a bit more. We do not need more luxury housing for the wealthy. The following proposals will provide affordable housing without wrecking existing neighborhoods:

- Expanding the Section 8 program
- Turning the many empty storefronts into housing
- If the "work from home" trend survives the pandemic, there will be many empty office suites that will make very nice apartments with a minimum of rehab

RE: DENSITY

Ingrid C.L., Alameda neighbor since 2007

... this small island can't sustain more traffic without additional in/egresses, can't sustain more cars w/o more parking (downtown and neighborhoods are chock full), can't sustain more people, more kids w/o building more soccer and baseball fields, more basketball courts, pools (Alameda leagues often need to go off island to find fields/courts to play on) ... Putting Article 26 on the ballot has divided our town! You can be liberal and anti-Trump and still take issue with how crowded the island is becoming, how difficult the traffic makes things, upset with the increase in crime... These things are not mutually exclusive and I don't think it's helpful to draw big lines in the sand to divide our community as our country is divided.

RE: MONEY AND SPECIAL INTERESTS

Jay Garfinkle, Alameda resident since 1943

Article 26 has not impeded the construction of needed housing, it has only impeded the Alameda Planning Department from allowing investors and developers to destroy existing housing for the purpose of replacing single family homes with multi-unit apartment buildings. These investors and developers appear to be indifferent to the negative consequences of their actions – destroying neighborhoods and Alameda's historical heritage – and accomplishing this by funding political campaigns. Follow the money, not only during the current cycle, but look back at the 2018 Council election. Money poured in from outside of the City and has already begun to tip the scales for the coming election (lvvalameda.org/alameda-campaign-finance-review). Developers quite understandably and legitimately desire to make money and have applied what many honest citizens would consider to be the questionably ethical tactic of financing election campaigns of receptive politicians, only because they've acknowledged a willingness to create and promote legislation designed to aid their benefactors in their quest.

Now, while I'm sure that no respectable legislator would ever engage in quid pro quo transactions, I'm not sure how else to describe what they've been doing. I certainly never ascribed demand for housing to developer greed nor to their financing campaigns. The demand for affordable housing is real and legitimate, but developers can't *afford* to just build affordable housing, there's no money in it, nor tax revenue for the City. Here's the real reason for the Council to place the repeal of Article 26 in the ballot, to remove the only obstacle to rezoning and approve indiscriminate building. If Alamedans don't want increasing congestion and deterioration of the lifestyle they want to preserve, they will vote no on Z!



Early radical preservationism: Anti-Utah political cartoon by the Civil League of Alameda from the 1955 battle over South Shore.

In 1955, after a bitter battle, The Utah Construction Company dredged and filled more than 300 acres in Alameda's South Shore, in the process creating lagoons, a shopping center, "beach" apartment buildings and ranch styles homes. "Progress" was the constant watchword used to bludgeon opponents.

Bay fill was seen as a way to increase buildable land on the island and as a way to encourage commercial and residential development. Then again in the 1960s Utah proposed to "reclaim" 908 acres of Bay Farm Island tidelands. The construction company proposed thousands of units for 30,000 new residents . . . at a time when Alameda's population was about 60,000.

Around this time people had begun to realize that 800 vintage buildings had been demolished, many replaced with those unfortunate "dingbat" apartments like a spear in the heart of a Victorian block. Scarring lovely neighborhoods, increasing density, creating traffic and destroying the wetlands. Alarmed by both the loss of older buildings and the proposed housing on Bay Farm, yet another bitter fight between pro-development and pro-history resulted in the passage in 1973 of Measure A.

Judith Lynch [Compiled from Imelda Merlin's Alameda A Geographical History, newspaper articles by Woody Minor, oral histories, and clipping files in the Reference Department, Main Library]

PRESENTED BY THE ALAMEDA ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY & THE LEGACY HOME TOUR

Bay Station Heritage Area

A self-guided Woody Walk in the heartland of Marcuse & Remmel



Opens Sunday September 27th
available on the app through 10/26/20

Join Woody Minor and Judith Lynch on a first of its kind self-guided virtual walk through one of Alameda's most interesting heritage neighborhoods.

Available on your smartphone or iPad,
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keepsake printed booklet.

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alameda-legacy-home-tour.org

ALAMEDA ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY
Online Community Art Fair

1. CHOOSE ANY HOUSE ON THE THIS YEAR'S SELF GUIDED WALKING TOUR.
2. SHOW US YOUR VERSION OF THAT HOUSE USING PENCIL, PAINT, MARKERS, FABRIC, FOOD, WOOD, METAL... ANY MATERIAL YOU WANT. BE CREATIVE!
3. TEXT A PHOTO OF YOUR ARTWORK TO 206-450-8097 BY 10/23/2020
4. ALL SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ENTERED INTO A RANDOM DRAWING FOR LIMITED EDITION ALAMEDA MUGS, PENS, BUMPER STICKER AND MORE.
5. BY TEXTING YOUR ARTWORK TO THE NUMBER ABOVE YOU ARE GIVING AAPS PERMISSION TO SHOW, DISPLAY AND USE YOUR ART ON OUR WEBSITE. OR OTHER FUNDRAISING WAYS - WITH YOUR NAME OF COURSE!



Clockwise from top: Bronwynn Caffrey and her marker drawing, digital art by Gabriel Caffrey, embroidery by Rosanna Diggs, ink drawing by Meg Adler, graphite sketch by Candace Rowe

SCAVENGER HUNT:

Detecting Delectable Detail

As a warm up for the **September 27** “home tour,” use our **Scavenger Hunt** to take a gander at some of the sights you have in store before you use the AAPS app to walk **Bay Station** as narrated by Woody Minor. Youngsters, scouts, and school groups will enjoy the Hunt, it will alert them to the history with which older houses are imbued. We hope to enlist them as AAPS members in the preservation movement.

For your advance copy of the Scavenger Hunt, please email **judithlynych7@gmail.com**. Then eyeball the illustrations from bay windows to witch's caps and jot down the addresses in the spaces provided. Search for potential restoration projects, such as homes disguised with asbestos siding or sullied with stucco. For a future Preservation Press story, please send a paragraph about your experience on the Hunt to the email above.

HISTORY CAN BE FUN!

Vivid art glass windows enliven vintage homes throughout Alameda; some fetching examples brighten many within the Scavenger Hunt neighborhood. Image: Ken Matthias.



TRAVELOGUE



An illustrated architectural travel story inspired by places visited and experiences encountered.

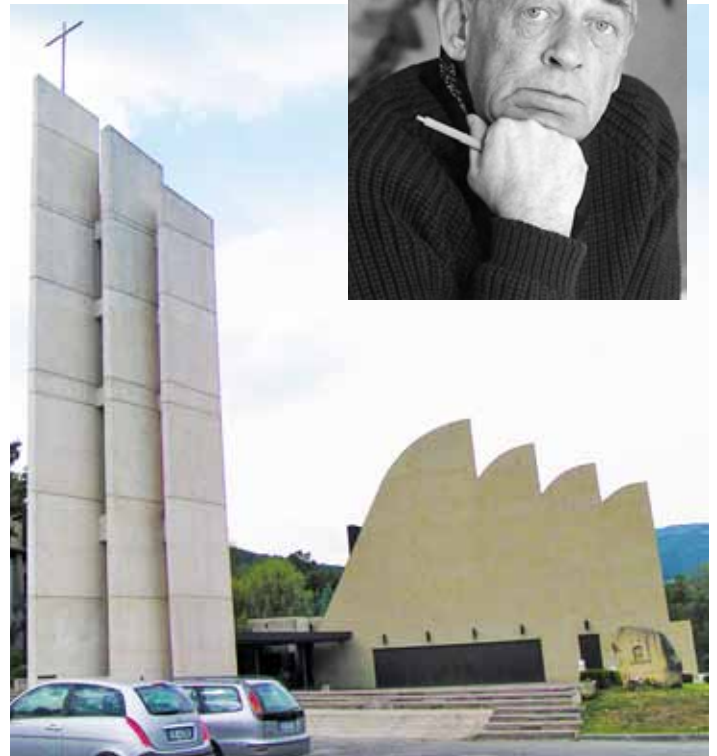
Alvar Aalto Goes to Italy

by Pierluigi Serraino

During my college years I spent two weeks traveling in Finland to visit the masterpieces of this remarkable architect. I became intimately familiar with his design language, his transitions from the public realm to private areas and his relationship with the landscape. His projects, invariably, were an homage to the specificity of the site and were intended exclusively for a particular program. In essence, they were the quintessential opposite of a prototype. What turned out to be even more revealing was that his works, whether large or small, and for public or private clients, were always intimate, deeply personal, and calming.

So it came as a surprise, it was to me at least, to learn that Aalto had designed the Church of Santa Maria Assunta in Riola di Vergato, a small village a few miles out of Bologna, Italy. It was a project that had a long gestation starting in 1966 and was completed after his death

Alvar Aalto (1898 – 1976)
Finnish born architect and
designer. Images: Wikipedia.org.



The east facade of the Church of Santa Maria Assunta with bell tower. The exterior profile was inspired by the mountains that surround Riola.



Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Riola di Vergato, Italy (completed in 1978). Alvar Aalto, architect. Images: Pierluigi Serraino.

in 1978. As an Italian native, I was beyond intrigued to learn how an architect who had put the humanity of the individual at the center of his architecture could translate his design principles on foreign soil, and especially Italy, which has a robust modernist tradition, known as Rationalism.

On a late spring weekday 2017, I traveled by car with family from Bologna through a fairly unspoiled landscape to arrive at a small village with just a few houses. It was a wooded area with generous greenery. In a matter of minutes I spotted the church, whose appearance was both majestic and friendly. I noticed that the project was on a lower elevation than the road, depressed on the ground plane. There was the Reno river on one side and a hilly topography on the opposite side. The perimeter of the sacred precinct was suggested through variations in paving, without any physical barrier. It was welcoming. As a matter of

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TRAVELOGUE...*continued from page 8.*

fact, the space invited you in. The freestanding belfry is a vertical spike visible from miles away.

It was around noon time with no one in sight. This was a building of authority, but without instilling any intimidation in the visitor, a modern temple of distinction. From the open plaza, you could appreciate the silhouette of its facade resulting from four longitudinal skylights running on the long side of the church. The front entrance was closed, but the side doors were open and we went in. The exterior door handles in brass are an essay in organic form, ideal for the hand and a conduit for an effortless opening.

The interior was bathed in natural indirect light. It was us in church and no one else. The most commanding features were the double custom-made arches in concrete tapering toward the altar. Their distinct shape were highlighted with an off-white color, ideal to receive the shadows coming from the skylights. In their presence all the movement in the interior supports their dominant role in the

architectural experience. The luminosity of the space, glowing in reverberation of that light was truly memorable. This was a skillful handling of shading of surfaces, disciplined in its articulation and always different to the eye.

The space was unadorned, proud of its nakedness, and impactful on the emotions, while remaining fully functional. A stair run on a segmented axis leads to the upper balcony from where to enjoy unusual viewpoints of that void. The moral strength of Aalto's work was everywhere, without being cumbersome to the occupants. There was plenty of space for a personal connection with the building and the notion of the sacred. Anywhere I could lay my eyes on revealed another unexpected moment in the church: the topography of the different elevations in the interior floors; its meandering circulation around the grand space filled with the pews; the unique outline of the skylights; the telescoping of the space toward the altar. It was a masterful synthesis of the sacred program designed for this singular setting.

And it was for me a transformational experience.



*Left to right:
Detail of the brass
door handle on the
side doors.*

*Side view of the pews
in the main space.*

*Close-up view of the
material changes
from the main space
to the altar taken
from the balcony.*

*Images: Pierluigi
Serraino.*

MASTICK FALL CLASS

Reading the Street: Visual Analysis of History

Four Wednesdays, October 7 - 28
1:00 -2:00 pm via Zoom.

Free for Mastick Members

Strolling can be a valuable lesson in understanding Alameda Island heritage. Using Zoom for narration and graphics, writer and teacher Judith Lynch will present 60-minute-video-slide shows and share printable handouts. Topics include:

- Overview
- Details and Victorian-Edwardian styles
- Bay Station neighborhood, Bungalows, and Storybook Homes
- Fernside

- ① To register call 510-747-7511 or visit apm.activecommunities.com/alamedarecreation/home click on ACTIVITIES and sign up for CLASS #9638.
- ② Email judithlynch7@gmail.com for introductory material before class.
- ③ Zoom login and passcode information will be sent via email, following registration.



After 50 years of deferred maintenance, 40 feet of siding and 8 windows were replaced. The plumbing was updated and moved inside the wall. A new paint scheme transformed the west side of this Marcuse & Remmel house. Images: Joyce Boyd.

Lessons Learned During the Restoration of a Historic Home *by Joyce Boyd*

My husband and I own a Queen Anne Victorian cottage. When we purchased the house five years ago, there was 50 years of deferred maintenance and muddled repairs. Restoring a Victorian – my eternal optimism said “How hard could that be?” – a phrase that has gotten me in many predicaments in my life. We have paid for an expensive education in the school of restoration hard knocks. I hope this article gives you some tips that will save you from our mistakes.

Before our latest project, we restored the stained glass, replaced the foundation, remodeled two ground floor apartments for rentals, and replaced the roof and gutters. We had planned to restore the entire outside of the house next, but when estimates came in at \$200,000 and we did not have that much money, we decided to focus on the most damaged side of the house – the sunny south side which is 60-feet long and two stories.

We replaced 40 feet of damaged siding, replaced eight windows (creating a missing stained-glass window from scratch), moved all the plumbing that was on the outside of the walls to the inside of the walls, and painted the

exterior. Our final costs were \$75,162 and the project took about five weeks.

Lesson One: Everything costs twice as much, takes twice as long, and you are not an exception. Do not underestimate what you will find when you open the walls of an old house. It can be terrifying. We once had a contractor take pictures of an electrical junction box to send to all his contractor friends because he had never seen one so bad. Also, everything not included in the estimate is extra. That dry rot, extra; that missing header on the window frame, extra; the electrical wires where you do not expect them, extra. Control what you can control. Get full detailed estimates for the whole project before you begin. There will be extras so have a healthy contingency. Make it your goal to come in on time and on budget.

Lesson Two: Budget, budget, budget. Unless you have the money to do the entire restoration all at once, you must decide what to do in each phase, which is difficult when all the parts are connected and hard to separate. We wanted to just repair and paint the outside of the house because it looked so bad, but since we had to remove 40 feet of siding, that was the time to

put the plumbing in the wall and replace the windows on that side of the house.

We love our old house and want to be purists, but the budget dictated some of our decisions. For example, we would have liked to replace the damaged redwood siding with redwood, but that would need to be custom milled (expensive) and we could purchase off the shelf high quality primed red cedar siding that was almost as good as redwood.

Lesson Three: Have a contract and check licenses and insurance. Oh, the embarrassment to tell you how dumb we were on our first project. First, there was not a contract, only a quote. Second, I had an electrician referred to me by a contractor who thought the electrician was licensed. I mean he was such a nice guy. The electrician was not licensed, screwed up the work, delayed the project and we ended up suing him. We now insist on a contract, read every word, request changes to the contract. Check the State of California website for contractor's license status and require copies of liability and workers compensation insurance. Until you do all this, do not let anyone touch your house.

Continued on page 11...

Lessons Learned...*continued from page 10.*

Lesson Four: Hire the right people and a big chunk of your problems will disappear. A corollary is that the group of people you hire, need to work together as a team. Since we purchased the house, we have wanted to work with a certain colorist to select the paint colors. In interviewing and talking to several contractors, we decided on Pacific Northwest Contractors & Painters (PNPC). It turns out that PNPC does not like to work with this colorist. I knew from my first project where the architect and the contractor did not get along, (what a headache that was and an entire separate article) that I needed to choose either the contractor or the colorist, I could not have two team members who did not work well together. I choose the contractor and his wife, Cornelia Grunseth – The Color Lady – as our colorist. We selected AT Weber to do the plumbing and Russo Windows to build the wood windows.

Lesson Five: Spend a lot of time on the preparation and planning. Do a lot of research. Read the building code and talk to the planning department. The actual work should be just a small part of the time you invest. In doing the south side of the house, we missed several items we should have planned for. For example, we assumed that the outside window moldings would be common, and the contractor could purchase them. Wrong. His crew fabricated them (extra cost) and they did not exactly match what is on the rest of the house. If we had sourced the window trim, it would have cost less and we would have had an exact match. With an old house, source your materials and take your time. We chose a wonderful artisan, Ken Shelby of Piggery Panes to recreate a stained-glass window, but rushed through the



A missing stained glass window in the dining room was created from scratch by Ken Shelby of Piggery Panes. Image: Joyce Boyd.

color placement (no one's fault but ours) and then after the window was made, realized we would have preferred another color placement, but too late. There will be hundreds of decisions to make. Be ready for decision fatigue and let yourself take a break.

Lesson Six: When the work is being done, be available every day and spend as much time as possible on the job site. This is your top priority. Have no life other than your paid job (which pays for the restoration) and the work on the house. Something new will arise every day. Why is the vent pipe making a 90 degree turn through the decorative water table? Why is the new wood window not opening properly? Just how do you want the salvaged interior window trim arranged? See Lesson Four. If you are not there, someone else will make the decision, as the job needs to move forward.

Lesson Seven: Communicate, communicate, communicate. One of the reasons we chose PNPC was because Eric Grunseth, the owner, is a master communicator, lover of old homes, and a fine builder. In addition to talking to us, he sent us an email everyday of what had been accomplished that day and what to expect in

the next day or two. He directed his crew and knew what they were doing. Not all contractors and trade people do this. Sometimes a crew is left to figure things out on their own and you do not know what is going on.

Lesson Eight: Do not be your own general contractor. It will not save you money in the end. More embarrassment. We have been our own general contractor on every project, hiring the subcontractor directly to save the 15% a general contractor would charge. In each case, we have made mistakes that cost us the money we would have saved. There was the unlicensed electrician mentioned earlier. There was also the misread kitchen layout that ended up with the kitchen cabinets in the wrong place. We are terrible general contractors.

Lesson Nine: Before you make the final payment to a contractor, make sure you get the signed permit and check that the permit is on the City of Alameda epermit website as finalized. Even PNPC who had a permit signed off by the inspector, did not check the website. We did and the permit was not there. We learned this the hard way when we replaced the foundation. When we were starting the next project, we noticed that the foundation permit was not finalized. We called our prior contractor (not PNPC) and no one could locate the signed permit. We finally had to open the wall, which had already been drywalled and painted, at our cost, and get the foundation and shear walling inspected again.

I hope sharing our experiences and lessons learned will save you some time and money. We have found that we love old houses and restoring old houses. We are caretakers of history. You can be too. As we like to say – "How hard can that be?"

AAPS Board Members 2020

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Restoration of a Historic Home

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AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2020

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OPENS SEPTEMBER 27

available on the app until 10/26/20

Bay Station Heritage Area
Self-Guided Tour

*Narrated by Woody Minor
& Judith Lynch*

Activities include an architectural
scavenger hunt and a drawing game.

On 9/27 costumed masked docents will
create ambience during the tour.

Reserve your tour at
Alameda-Legacy-Home-Tour.org

Preservation Award Plaque Recipients

This year's preservation award winners were very much deserving of public praise for their fine work but had to settle with these pics receiving their plaques and certificates. You can see by their big smiles in front of their now-gorgeous properties that they are enjoying their recognition and will be proudly displaying their plaques. Be sure to stop by these properties at some point on your walks about town to admire their accomplishments. Next year we hope to resume the party and presentations we normally do for our award winners.



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