



Opponents of a Measure A exemption point to the proposed Oak to 9th project along the Estuary in Oakland as an example of overdevelopment. *Image courtesy of waterfrontaction.org*

## Measure A Debate Dominates Planning Board Meeting

By Dan Abbott

The latest round of the debate over the redevelopment of Alameda Point came during the planning board meeting July 10, when over a dozen citizens addressed the board about a controversial proposal to amend Measure A. Though Measure A was not on the agenda, the opening hour of the board's first meeting since May 22 was dominated by the 14 speakers who addressed the board.

The debate, which has played out in letters to newspapers and at the city council meeting July 5, centers on whether an exemption to Measure A, a 1973 Alameda Charter amendment which limits new developments to two units per structure, should be placed on the ballot in November. In order for the issue to get on the ballot, proponents either need to collect 3,000 signatures, or convince the city council to add it to the ballot.

Proponents hope that a recommendation from the planning board might sway the city council, which "is not of one mind about this issue," said Diane Lichtenstein, vice president of Housing Opportunities Make Economic Sense (HOMES), a group which has argued for an exemption.

Helen Sause, president of HOMES, told the board that since the Naval

base was not under the city's jurisdiction in 1973, new developments there should not be subject to Measure A's restrictions.

"Those of us in favor (of the exemption) feel such an oppressive law is not appropriate on Alameda Point," Sause said. Sause is also a prominent member of the Alameda League of Women Voters (LWV), which recently sent a letter to the city council urging the body to place the issue on the ballot.

Fellow LWV member Gretchen Lipow spoke out against the exemption, arguing that it should only be placed on the ballot if proponents can gather the necessary signatures.

"Measure A was put on the ballot by a massive grassroots project," Lipow said. "If you want to get it on the ballot again you've got to go through the process again."

Lipow also said the impact of unfettered development at Oakland's Oak to 9th waterfront project, where over 3,000 units are being built, needs to be taken into account. Lipow said the increased traffic from the Oakland development will make exiting Alameda a difficult proposition, which she said further highlights the need to limit development in Alameda.

"It looks like we're going to be boxed in by our neighbors across the estuary," Lipow told the board.

Others argued that the limitations of Measure A, which was passed partly to protect historic Victorian architecture, keep large swaths of Alamedans from owning their own homes. Allegra O'Donoghue, a 19-year-old student, said the next generation of Alameda residents will need affordable housing, and the developments on Alameda Point offer a unique opportunity.

"When I get out of college, I'd like to come back to Alameda and maybe buy my own house," O'Donoghue said. "If we don't look at this base, we're going to lose Alamedans."

O'Donoghue's mother, Laura Thomas, concurred, adding that Measure A "was voted on 33 years ago under different circumstances. What we're facing now is that people who provide us with essential services can't afford to live here."

"We need multi-family homes," Thomas said. "If you can't provide for the next generation, you've lost whatever you're trying to preserve."

Local activist David Kirwin said allowing an exemption now would open the door to developers.

"Now more than ever we need Measure A to protect us against overdevelopment," Kirwin said. Kirwin also accused pro-exemption advocates of attempting an end-run around the regular initiative process.

Said Kirwin: "They're doing this last minute push because they don't have public support."

## Building Inspector Pleads Not Guilty