



Richard Bangert

Partial view of the 22-acre commercial and light industrial parcel, shown in full in the map at right as Site B. The white stacks in the background are at the former Navy jet engine test facility that is now used by Astra to test its rocket engines.



City of Alameda

New Law Hampers Point Development

Richard Bangert

A new state law that took effect in January has stymied the city's plan for commercial development on a plot of land at Alameda Point. Assembly Bill No. 1486 requires cities, counties, special districts and the state to first offer any and all surplus land to affordable housing developers before it can be leased for more than one year or sold.

This legislation amended the Surplus Lands Act and, unbeknownst to the city when it supported the bill, swept in former military bases.

The city had received proposals from 10 commercial developers as a result of its marketing campaign in 2019. Each applicant was willing to pay at least the minimum listing price of \$36.5 million for 22 acres in the Enterprise District and provide a construction timeline.

The acreage is within the larger commercial and light industrial zone adjacent to Main Street and includes the self-storage facilities. This new law means that the City was unable to proceed with the selection process.

"It's ironic," said Nanette Mocanu, assistant director of Base Reuse & Community Development. "The city is a proponent for affordable housing and supported this legislation. We and many other

communities were caught off guard when the legislation was applied to leasing and base reuse properties. Cities across the state are working to find solutions to the unintended consequences of this legislation."

Soon after the new law took effect, the city hired a lobbyist to work with other base closure communities on a legislative solution. "We focused on working with the author of the legislation, Assemblymember Phil Ting," said Mocanu. "We failed."

Alameda Point is one of the few closed military bases that welcomed a homeless services provider that is now successfully operating. It is also one of the few redevelopment areas in California with a requirement of 25 percent affordable housing in new construction.

"We argued all of those things," said Mocanu.

Rocket manufacturer Astra, located in the Enterprise District, is also affected by the legislation. Astra recently secured a new investment partner and will be listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange as a publicly traded company.

The company is flush with orders and poised for expansion. However, no long-term lease or option to buy the buildings it occupies or additional surrounding land is allowed until after the city lists the property on the state clearing-

house for affordable housing and receives no takers.

Nevertheless, Astra is willing to take the risk, with minimal site control, of investing in outfitting the rest of Building 360 where it now assembles rockets. Astra is aiming to produce one rocket per day in the coming years.

The small rockets will carry satellites that are about the size of a small microwave oven into low earth orbit. One of the first contracts for launching the so-called cube satellites is with NASA.

"Astra will carry out three launches in 2022 to deliver NASA CubeSat satellites that will allow scientists to better measure the temperature, pressure and humidity of hurricanes," states CEO Chris Kemp on the company's website. Kemp previously served as Chief Technology Officer for NASA.

The Surplus Lands Act targets land that was acquired for government purposes and is no longer needed. At Alameda Point, however, the land was surplus for the Navy, not the city.

The city never acquired the land for government purposes. Rather, the City acquired the land to implement the 1996 base reuse plan.

The Navy is giving land to the city for free under an Economic **POINT: Page 7**

City Breaks Ground on New Housing Project

Sun Staff Reports

The Housing Authority of the City of Alameda (AHA) is breaking ground on a redevelopment project at Rosefield Village. AHA has owned Rosefield Village since 1956 and will oversee all aspects of the redevelopment. When construction is completed in mid-2022, the site density will have increased from 53 units to 92 units.

Located at 727 Buena Vista Ave., with convenient access to services and public transportation, Rosefield Village, is a mixed income family housing development that offers affordable housing options for Alameda's low-income residents. In addition, Alameda Unified

School District (AUSD) employees who earn 20% to 80% of the area's median income will be eligible to apply to live in the apartments.

"By increasing site density at Rosefield Village, the Housing Authority can continue its mission of providing affordable housing options for Alameda's low-income residents," stated Vanessa Cooper AHA Executive Director. "The synergy with AUSD makes this project even more impactful for Alamedans."

City of Alameda Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft and Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan virtually celebrated the groundbreaking of **CITY: Page 2**



Courtesy Bob Fish

The Hornet's resident spaceman encourages visitors' safety by reminding them to wear a mask.

Hornet Inspires Us to Endure

Juan Cobo

Part 2 of 3

As reported on in last week's Sun, ("Hornet Practices Social Distancing with President") USS Hornet chief historian Bob Fish, author of *Hornet Plus Three*, and filmmaker Todd Douglas Miller, director of "Apollo: Quarantine," see significant similarities between NASA and the Navy's joint 1969 endeavor aboard USS Hornet.

The Hornet's mission was to quickly rescue and sequester the astronauts of Apollo 11 in anticipation of possible lunar contaminants, hypothetically dubbed "Moon Germs" and the modern effort to halt the current global pandemic.

"The Hornet helped lead the way for the Bay Area in masking up by making the connection between the most famous modern quarantine with the COVID lockdown quarantine," said Fish.

Alamedans are lucky to visit the ship, according to director Miller, "Standing in the same place where the astronauts that took humanity's first steps onto another world was an experience I will never forget."

"The USS Hornet Museum is a national treasure and I hope everyone gets a chance to see this incredible piece of living history." Miller's film is currently available on Amazon and other streaming services.

The Hornet's permanent exhibit allows visitors to literally retrace the steps of the astronauts upon their return from space. From Miller's perspective, "Apollo 11 is the single greatest achievement in human history. A vital part of the success of that mission is due to the efforts of USS Hornet."

Although pioneers of quarantining aboard the Hornet, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Michael Collins and

The USS Hornet Museum is now open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 707 West Hornet Ave. Visit the website and donate to help at www.uss-hornet.org.

Neil Armstrong could not initially practice social distancing. They were strapped together side-by-side aboard the tiny landing splashdown capsule on their long, three day return to Earth, then sealed together in a custom-built Airstream mobile home onboard the Hornet for three weeks.

When no "Moon Germs" were detected after 21 days, the men were given a clean bill of health and released. Quarantine conditions were loosened slightly for the Apollo 12 retrieval.

As the Hornet welcomes back visitors, it's easy to see parallels between the lunar missions and the social distancing and quarantining practices we see now.

"The quarantine had a purpose in preserving human health, but this too will end. Apollo 11 inspires Americans to see it through," said Fish.

The USS Hornet Museum is now open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 707 West Hornet Ave. When visiting, tell Bill Griffith at the front desk to ask for Bob Fish.

Next week: In the conclusion to our three-part story, the Alameda Sun finally reveals the electrifying truth about Moon Germs. Stay tuned.

Council Approves Hazard Pay Raise

Ekene Ikeme

Employers of large grocery store chains will be required to pay their employees an extra \$5 an hour after City Council adopted the grocery worker hazard pay ordinance at its March 16 meeting.

The ordinance passed with a 3-2 vote. Councilmembers Trish Herrera-Spencer and Tony Daysog voted against the pay increase. Spencer was concerned that the ordinance gets involved in negotiated contracts between grocery store unions and grocery store retail chains. Daysog believed more environmental analysis needed to be done because the adoption of the ordinance could cause stores to close, which will leave big box stores unoccupied and lead to urban decay.

Similar ordinances have been adopted in Berkeley, San Leandro, Emeryville, Santa Monica, Oakland, Long Beach and Los Angeles. The Long Beach City Council passed a \$4 "hazard pay" increase in January,

As a result, Kroger, a supermarket retail company, decided it will shut down two of its Long Beach stores, a Ralphs and a Food 4 Less, in April. Kroger also decided to shut down three stores in Los Angeles after its City Council approved its "hazard pay" ordinance on March 3.

Vice Mayor Malia Vella pushed back on the notion that the ordinance caused stores to close.

"The heads of those companies decided to close those stores," said Vella. "Even though they're recording record profits."

Vella also pointed out the ordinance is for a limited duration. The ordinance will last until the city is under the Minimal (yellow) risk level — the lowest of the four tiers — under State Health Orders.

Vella initially petitioned for the ordinance to pass under the urgency distinction, which would have put the ordinance into effect immediately. However, rules state that urgency ordinances can only pass with a 4-1 vote. As a result,

Councilmember John Knox-White set a motion for the ordinance to pass under the regular distinction. This means the ordinance will take effect 30 days after the ordinance is adopted.

The city defines large grocery stores as a store that employs more than 500 employees nationwide and its store is more than 15,000 square feet in size. The ordinance will impact employees at Nob Hill in the Bridgeside Shopping Center, Albertsons in Marina Village, and the Safeway stores at Alameda Landing, Bay Farm Island and South Shore Center. This will not affect small local grocery stores.

Grocery store employees have been regarded as frontline workers since the pandemic began. Becky Rhodes, the political director for the Alameda Labor Council, said at the meeting grocery store workers had a one in five chance of contracting the coronavirus compared to one in 100 from the average citizen.



Newsom Pays Visit

Photo and story by Maurice Ramirez

Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft shares an elbow bump with Gov. Gavin Newsom at Ruby Bridges Elementary School on Tuesday, March 16. The governor was in town to give a press conference that addressed the reopening of schools for in-person instruction after almost exactly of year of closure.

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