



**ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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Alameda County Planning Commissioners  
Alameda County Planning Department  
224 West Winton Avenue, Room 111  
Hayward, Ca. 94544

Re: Ashland Cherryland Business District Plan

Dear Chair Ken Carbone and the Alameda County Planning Commissioners,

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is committed to improving and promoting health among the people we serve. Despite improvements in health status across all groups in Alameda County, we continue to observe large and persistent disparities in health based on race, income, and neighborhood. The root causes of health disparities are complex and closely tied to similar persistent racial and class disparities in access to affordable transportation and housing, quality education and employment, a fair criminal justice system, and healthy neighborhoods, to name just a few. In order to eliminate health disparities, we are committed to working with other sectors to support health-promoting policies and practices. For instance, my Department is increasingly working in collaboration with Planning Departments across the County to identify potential health impacts of planning decisions.

It is our pursuit of such health-promoting policies that leads us to write to you regarding the proposed changes to the Ashland Cherryland Business District (ABCD) Plan. ACPHD received a request from Ashland Cherryland Network look at the potential health impacts of modifying the ABCD plan, especially with regards to the changes to parking. Please consider the potential health impacts described below as you make your decision.

The Ashland Cherryland Business District Plan, although developed over 15 years ago, was advanced for its time, as it addressed the current goals of AB 32 and SB 375 to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and create a more walkable, bikable and public transit oriented community. The recommendation to modify the ACBD Plan by allowing Conditional Use Permits could have negative consequences on the health of the local community residents by increasing parking, which in turn, will potentially increase traffic in the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> Along with additional traffic comes an increase in GHG emissions as well as increased risk for pedestrian and cyclist injuries. The increase in traffic may reduce community member's ability and comfort level to walk and/or bike in their neighborhood, reducing physical activity.<sup>2</sup>

These potential health impacts are significant, given that Ashland and Cherryland already have poor health outcomes as compared to the rest of the County, specifically among diseases related to air quality and physical activity. Cherryland and Ashland also had the highest rates of death from unintentional injury (49.1 and 45 per 100,000 respectively) in the County (26.9 per 100,000), which includes pedestrian and bicyclist collisions with motor vehicles. Cherryland had the highest rate of lung cancer deaths (60.7 per 100,000), while Ashland

<sup>1</sup> Shoup D. Evaluating the effects of cashing out employer-paid parking: eight case studies. *Transport Policy*. 1997;4(4):201-216

<sup>2</sup> Life and Death from Unnatural Causes (<http://www.acphd.org/media/53628/unnatcs2008.pdf>)

(43.2 per 100,000 respectively) had higher rates than the County (35.6 per 100,000).<sup>3</sup>(The Health of Alameda Cities and Places, 2010, Alameda County Public Health Department)

According to the staff report, the intention of the proposal is to spur economic development. As you know, this area could greatly benefit from economic development. In Cherryland and Ashland have long suffered from higher rates of unemployment (15.4% and 12.3% respectively vs. 10.7% for the County as a whole), but the situation is currently more acute due to the current recession.<sup>4</sup> (The Health of Alameda Cities and Places, 2010, Alameda County Public Health Department) Good jobs and thriving businesses are essential to health. The populations suffering from the worst health outcomes in Alameda County, like those in Ashland and Cherrlyand, also suffer from the highest un- and under-employment rates. These same populations also face barriers to employment, such as a lack of a high-school degree and/or a criminal record. Research clearly indicates that one of the best ways to improve health outcomes is to increase income levels or reduce poverty. Economic development in Ashland and Cherryland is important for improving community health, specifically economic development that sets targets for local hire from the communities most impacted by health inequities – low income communities and communities of color.

Good jobs, clean air, and safe spaces for physical activity are all important for individual and community health. **As you move forward, please include plans to mitigate any negative impacts of the process, including GHG reduction measures, and traffic calming measures to address community health impacts. Additionally, please target benefits to those most impacted by health inequities, through policies such as local hire.**

Finally, as you make your decision, please consider the importance of roust community processes. The historical exclusion of public participation from decision-making venues has resulted in communities of color and low income communities that are disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards and the associated adverse health outcomes. Furthermore, the impacts of marginalization affect a community's sense of wellbeing and hopefulness for the future. We believe that decision makers can counter and begin to correct the ill health effects of systematic injustice by creating a truly empowering public process. **Lurge the Planning Commission to ensure that the local community has opportunity to participate in decisions that impact their well being and that an appropriate process is developed to ensure community input before making any decisions.**

Thank you for considering my feedback. ACPHD is available to consult with you further if needed, so please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Anita Siegel, RN, MPH  
Director  
Alameda County Public Health Department

Cc:  
Alex Briscoe, Director, Health Care Services Agency  
Wilma Chan, Board of Supervisors  
Albert Lopez, the Director of the Planning  
Nate Miley, Board of Supervisors

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<sup>3</sup> The Health of Alameda Cities and Places, 2010, Alameda County Public Health Department  
(<http://www.acphd.org/media/52883/ac2010.pdf>)

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(<http://www.acphd.org/media/52883/ac2010.pdf>)