

June 27, 2011  
Laney Bistro, Laney College Campus  
900 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA 94607  
5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

**LAKE MERRITT STATION AREA PLAN**  
**COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS GROUP (CSG) MEETING #8**  
**Land Use: Buildings and Public Spaces**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

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Members of the Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) attended the meeting on June 27, 2011 at the Laney Bistro. The meeting started with an open house to review graphics from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m., followed by a formal presentation of the work to date, and a discussion of the proposals by the group until 8:00 p.m. CSG members will have until July 5<sup>th</sup> (or July 12<sup>th</sup> at the latest) to provide additional comments for incorporation into the Emerging Plan.

Many of the land use proposals related to buildings and public spaces were seen positively. However the focus of the meeting is on what needs to be changed.

**CSG DISCUSSION**

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CSG members provided comments throughout the presentation of the proposed Land Uses. The presentation with proposals is available in the meeting materials (available on the project website). CSG members offered several suggestions and comments to build on and enhance the proposals put forth. CSG comments are organized by area below.

**Study Area 1: 14<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor**

- Concern about site 4 opportunity site as a local business – not an opportunity site. Suggest taking off old opportunity sites, including them now is confusing.
- On site 6 show high rise 9+ stories – assume 20 – is 20 stories the maximum?
  - Response: yes assume limit is 20 stories – practical limits to building. Existing heights are very high – in some places we may go lower or may go higher.
  - How can we refine heights?
- Question: one block that would be office – would it be limited to office, no residential?
  - Response: we identified sites most likely to have office – all could be mixed-use.
- Site 6: looked at adjacent Hotel Oakland – there is something troublesome about the design Hotel Oakland that is also shown on Site 6 – turning back on 14th Street.
  - Massing – too tall of a wall on 14th Street, seems overbearing on 14th Street.
  - Longer length of building is parallel to 14th rather than perpendicular – could be better solar access if turned to be perpendicular.

**Study Area 2: East Lake Gateway**

- Concern that the high-rise could feel like a barrier instead of a gateway.
  - Would rather see lower buildings along brand-new park and high-rise more likely on site 47 and others on International Blvd.
  - Suggest that it would also be good to have a park near the new school.

- Suggestion that there is an opportunity to create a civic feel in the area and a regional destination on sites 43/44. Not necessarily institutional – could be a fabulous restaurant on the channel.
- Noted that it would be great if City could purchase some OUSD land and expand Channel Park to create a feeling of connection on the channel.
- Noted that the OUSD admin buildings are historic:
  - Suggest talking about rehabilitation, reuse on those sites.
  - Note that site 43 has two historic buildings on it.
  - Not necessarily high rise sites.
- Ensure that design is good to get a good view down East 12th – need a gateway not a wall – on Site 44. Can be tall – not about height, but about how it is designed
- Suggestion to set buildings back from channel more. Require a certain number of feet that any building must set back from the channel:
  - 25-30 feet? Would be 100 feet under tidelands trust.
  - School building too close to the channel now.
- More eyes needed on the park. Right now in Channel/estuary area only have institutional uses so doesn't feel safe – if more residential users, get some more eyes on the park – want more density.
- Good place for high-rise towers to maximize market values of views to the lake to get more financing to fund public benefits.
- Next to OUSD - market rate condos typically won't bring children:
  - Would be beneficial to require affordable development near the buildings to promote having families.
  - Feeder into OUSD Downtown Educational Complex.
- Support focus on family housing in this area because there is already a lot of residential and near OUSD. Include family housing – larger units – 3 bedrooms.
- More community center space could be beneficial in this area to help people link with one another. Designate some space for community center services, such as a recreation or community center with programming to serve families in the area.
- OUSD is becoming community hub and community facility – work with them to provide community spaces.

### **Study Area 3: Laney College/Peralta**

- Laney: Openness to connecting to neighboring community by sharing parking and/or commercial space and also getting additional classroom space.
- Laney not looking for residential space (consider sharing space in other sites, not so much redeveloping their sites for residential).
  - Needs to expand instructional space.
  - Laney parking lot could be a win-win for BART users as well as Laney users; to accommodate students as well as BART users.
- Demand for international student housing.
- Agree that international student housing is an issue, but not looking at housing on Laney sites.
- Need to keep parking available to students - right now students can't find parking. Need to provide a lot, should be structured parking, need to provide additional parking.
- Need to increase instructional space – Laney not built for size of student body trying to serve today and in future.
- Housing for students is important; the issue is where? Is there another site that exists that can accommodate it?

- In general throughout planning area parking lots are being replaced with buildings, but there continues to be a need for parking, especially for institutional uses (i.e. the parking at ARCO is used by jurors). Where is parking going? Don't want a decrease in parking.
- Laney needs a science center, library, etc – need to make sure all of Laney's needs can be accommodated on available sites.
- How will structured parking be funded?
  - Could be public private partnership that could include structured parking with high rise housing that would fund the structured parking.
- Synergistic idea among students – idea of moving 7th Street. Why not shown?
  - Traffic planners have said that it could be reduced but not eliminated.
  - How to live with 7th street if can't eliminate it – maybe overpass/ connected building.
- One thing learned in Jack London District where a lot of housing has come in – City has low parking requirements.
  - Laney Parking lot site – where are you going to put the parking that was there?
  - Cost is obviously significant to change to structured and structured has different psychological impact and different use pattern.
  - Using BART doesn't solve parking problem.
  - City's attitude defies logic – does not provide enough parking are creates a capacity problem.
- More lenient parking requirements in adjacent areas would allow people to put in secondary units, maybe a bicycle spot instead for student housing.
  - Could add in some additional student housing and improve some of the existing housing in the area.
  - Encourage bicycle use.
- Additional regional parkland part of Laney? Yes.
- Can talk about BAAQMD guidelines?
  - Within 500 feet from highway discourage housing.
  - Within 1,000 feet discourage but may be ok.
  - Lawsuit over guidelines.
- Concern about accessibility to proposed parks/regional parks:
  - How will connections be made to new park space? How to attract people to use those areas?
  - How to make that park space truly accessible for all of the residents?
  - Opportunity sites 43 and 44 as parks would be more accessible (though not saying that they necessarily should be parks).
- Bad access to Harrison Square and near the highway – not a good place for a park.
- Parks not drawn right along the channel – need to fix
- Concerned about park space.
- Concerned about spaces adjacent to the highway, .ie. Harrison Park.
- Identified need to have separate meeting with Laney to discuss proposed uses.

#### **Study Area 4: I-880**

- Opposed to Jackson Interchange turn onto 6th: spent years fighting this plan. Would create havoc and congestion in Chinatown. Should not push this option with this group. There are many people mobilized against that project, it could derail the process.
- Many people in Chinatown also support the 6th Street option.
- Don't know the problems with the options, want to understand them.
- As talking about Jackson Interchange/6th Street should also be coordinated with other efforts – need to understand all possible improvements, interrelation, and impacts.

- Chinatown Chamber in support of the plan.
- Identified need for a separate meeting to discuss Jackson Interchange.
- Endorse totally the idea of improving the highway undercrossings.
- Need to get rid of the parking lots under the highway (some debate amongst JLDA representatives on this point).

#### **Study Area 5a: Chinatown Core – BART Blocks**

- How has the vision/ideas previously articulated for these blocks been incorporated?
- Madison Park – can't take out the park.
- Want open space – other places have community centers.
  - Need open space – Madison Park is a Town Square for Chinatown where people can come freely to do what they want.
- There doesn't need to be anything built on Madison Park. Could be redesigned with a new plaza, etc, but doesn't need a building. Lincoln Center Community Center is enough.
- Madison Park identified as a treasure - don't want to develop the park just because it is convenient (since there are not buildings on it now). Want to preserve the park.
- Community Center at Lincoln is bursting at seams – one way to get people to use Madison is to have programmed spaces, but NO housing and if any building, just a small community center. Far too much development on Madison Square in both schemes.
- Idea of transforming current idea of squares into linear park is not good, linear park feels left-over.
- Existing park is well-used – the full block of space is used.
- Against community center at Madison Park in favor of maintaining full block of open space.
- At previous workshop thought if there would be a building on park then it should spill out onto the park and be integrated (such as outdoor seating for café).
- Concept of whole being sum of parts not quite the same with pieces of a park:
  - Some types of activities need expansive space – doesn't work in linear space.
  - Want more community facilities, but not in Madison Park.
- Importance of vibrancy that exists there now as a well-used park.
- Don't divide park into bits and pieces – not as usable.
- Mid-block park takes away from vibrancy of space – space between buildings should not count as park space.
- Neighborhood already deficient in community parks.
- Chinese Garden Park underutilized because of traffic:
  - Could develop that block rather than the BART block via transfer of development rights.
- Madison Park should stay Madison Park – does NOT need to be part of development.
- Community center should be provided as part of a community benefit as part of development that happens on other blocks.

#### **Study Area 5b: Chinatown Core – Commercial Core**

- Don't think sidewalk displays should be curtailed (sidewalk display rules need clarification).
- Need street retail in area.
- Vision needs to be larger: not just utilitarian.
- Streetscape (next meeting).

## Study Area 5c

- Why is the discussion about heights by lot size? Wouldn't the lot size restrict heights anyway?
- Agree with trying to be sensitive to Lincoln and expand parks around it.
- Block sized opportunity sites –deleterious to urban space if whole block built as one building. Need to break up facades.
- On Floor Area Ratio: not against height and intensity but want to be sure that when developers get that high intensity they are required to fund community benefits, i.e. community center, affordable housing.
- Site 13: at time was privately owned; since then County purchased and will develop in line with master plan – should get together with County to discuss sites 13 and 11.

## General Comments

- Suggest planning for whole area not just opportunity sites in terms of scale and height.
- The buildings proposed are huge and out of proportion, and totally out of context.
- Want to see an overall plan that shows land uses and heights.
- Proposals out of proportion with what is existing there
- Want to see a comprehensive reimagining of the area:
  - Too much silo-ing – want an integrated sense of overall community.
- Process in discrete steps – first steps identifying opportunity sites, and next step is verifying that there is general consensus about changes to heights in terms of opportunity sites
  - Response: Purpose of opportunity sites is to determine expected development potential in the area – most likely to develop over next 25 years. Actual development may occur on any site. Final plan will look at area wide framework for a unified district that will develop over time.
- Context is important – putting a tall building next to a short building might not create an integrated neighborhood.
- Oakland Heritage Alliance concerned about podium buildings being too tall – consider lower base height. Not to say that can't build towers, but base height could be less to be consistent with what is next to it.
- Chinatown existing infrastructure is old with many buildings with low building height. However, new buildings that have come in are much taller.
- As we get to each area the most important thing is to give feedback on idea and vision and identify specific sites that have visual accompaniments. Note also what we are looking at could be different with architect input.
- CBD rezoning established height limits – important to think of how buildings under the new zoning would work with lower buildings that exist in the area; that if there is a problem there we can try to address it here.
- A minimum height could also be used.
- Taller buildings are more economically viable.
- When zoning passed for downtown was this area removed or did height limits go in?
  - Height limits are in effect in this area, similar to downtown.
- Most important thing is to develop rules that require big buildings to be sensitive to the surrounding area.