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News from: Oakland Public Works Agency

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 2013

Photo/Video Opportunity

Latham Square Celebration

City Explores New Ways to Use Public Space

Oakland, CA – The City of Oakland, in partnership with the **Downtown Oakland Association**, will open a new, temporary public space this week at the intersection of Broadway and Telegraph Avenue. The “pedestrian plaza” is located at the historic Latham Square, and converts Telegraph Avenue south of 16th Street to pedestrian-only space to serve as an anchor to the burgeoning Uptown District. The City and Downtown Oakland Association will host a celebration at noon on August 16 to celebrate the public space.

What: City Celebrates the Opening of Latham Square Public Space

When: Friday, August 16, 2013 at 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.

Where: Latham Square where Telegraph Avenue meets Broadway

Invited Guests: Speakers include Mayor Jean Quan, City Councilmember District 3 Lynette McElhaney, Downtown Oakland Association President Michelle Lane and local community members

“The transformation of Latham Square from an awkward vehicular intersection to an inviting pedestrian oasis in downtown will create new open space for the community while visually enhancing the neighborhood,” said Mayor Jean Quan. “This project represents a partnership between the City and the private sector that benefits the entire community. Thanks to the support of the Downtown Oakland Association and a State grant, the new open space comes without more cost to the City for design, construction or maintenance.”

Reuse of Latham Square as an expanded temporary public space is intended to help Oaklanders explore new ways to use space. It will remain in place for six months to a year, depending upon the public and City Council’s support. The lessons learned from the pilot project regarding its effect on local businesses, downtown circulation and public use will inform new and permanent improvements to this area. Both the pilot project and the permanent project are funded by a State Proposition 1C grant awarded to the City.

The City worked to develop the initial concept with Rebar Group, an art and design studio with a passion for reimagining public spaces. Matthew Passmore, principal at Rebar and lead designer for Latham Square, was astounded when he first saw the intersection. “You’ve got beautiful historic architecture with auto-oriented streets,” Passmore said. “The goal is to reconnect the public space on the street to the surrounding urban fabric, which is really breathtaking.”

This public space is expected to be a busy and active place. The design of the temporary space reflects months of community outreach, including a public design workshop attended by over 100 people in February 2013 and over 25 individual meetings with local stakeholders. The City also conducted a traffic study of the circulation changes which found no major impacts from the temporary closure.

The design incorporates native landscaping of the existing Telegraph Avenue median and a newly painted street surface reminiscent of the Oak tree logo of the City. Additional trees, seating and a large “Latham” sign, constructed partially of reclaimed street signs from throughout Oakland, are included. Most elements are mobile in order to allow reconfiguration of the public space over time as needed or desired. The City plans to partner with local innovators and artisans to fill the spaces on a rotating basis starting this fall as part of an incubation program for small businesses run by POPUPHOOD.

The Downtown Oakland Association, a community-benefit district funded by property owners, will provide ongoing maintenance of the newly constructed plaza and will also program events within the space. “We look forward to collaborating with the City in this public/private partnership and are happy to deploy some of our resources to maintain another beautiful pedestrian environment in downtown Oakland for the benefit of residents, visitors and the many businesses based here,” said District Services Manager Andrew Jones of the Downtown Oakland Association.

For more information, including project background and design details, please visit the project website at www.oaklandnet.com/LathamSquare.



Artist rendering of Latham Square