

**May 2, 2011  
Laney Bistro, Laney College Campus  
900 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA 94607  
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

**LAKE MERRITT STATION AREA PLAN  
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS GROUP (CSG) MEETING #7  
Presentation of Community Feedback to Date and Comments from the CSG**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

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Members of the Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) attended the meeting on May 2, 2011, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at the Laney Bistro. After opening remarks from the City, the consultant presented the key points of community feedback heard to date and then led a discussion of the CSG's response to the feedback and received feedback on upcoming community meetings. Several CSG members remained after 7:30 and brought up the possibility of postponing the June workshop to focus more community outreach following the draft Emerging Plan. An overview of the discussion follows.

**CSG DISCUSSION**

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**SCHEDULE**

CSG members expressed concern about the CSG working meeting scheduled for August as many people are out of town for vacations during that time. A show of hands indicated that about half of the CSG would be away in August (for both the first half and second half). Possible alternate dates will be considered.

**GENERAL QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

- It was noted that a recurring request is that people want to understand the context for community improvement and changes; CSG members felt that the feedback to date didn't provide context or describe how people could move through the area (circulation). The importance of incorporating context was emphasized.
- It was noted that there were several comments related to height and the importance of design for tall buildings, such as setbacks or certain massing. There was a sense that this feedback is not clearly presented in the report. The importance of design for tall buildings was emphasized.
- There were some questions related to how the development potential estimates were arrived at, specifically on the BART blocks where the low and high estimates are the same. There was also a question related to assumptions on the amount of a site built on (e.g. on site 12). It was clarified that the assumptions include open space and do not cover the whole lot.
- There was also a question on how community resources were displayed on the map and what list they were drawn from (it was clarified that it was input from the workshops), as well as how such resources will be incorporated as process moves forward.

## COMMENTS ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

### Process on Providing Feedback

CSG members were uncertain about the point of agreeing or disagreeing with recommendations at this point since the recommendations have not yet been tested for feasibility. It was also requested that the discussion not start with the BART blocks since they have been discussed several times; rather to start with everything else (noting that further discussion of the blocks later in the evening or at a future date is very important). It was also suggested that rather than getting through each site, the group should select key sites to discuss, and that rather than going lot by lot, the group should focus on areas; for instance the group could talk about corridors, i.e. 14<sup>th</sup> street corridor.

### 14<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor

The discussion first focused on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, with a requested emphasis on looking at what people want to see in an area overall, rather than getting into little details. **It was agreed that 14<sup>th</sup> Street is an important corridor for a pedestrian focus.** Comments on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor included:

- 14th street is very important and should be an area for pedestrian focus. It was noted that when the City rezoned 14th street, it was designated as a key pedestrian and activity center, but it is also part of this neighborhood and we should consider what we think the character should be.
- Consider how it should feel to be there, and what transportation/access is like.
- Bike access: bike lanes – already plan to put bike lanes there? Lots of bus traffic – makes it harder for bike access.
- Wide sidewalks are really important, e.g. for senior's exercise near Hong Fook center every day; so be sure to keep the wide sidewalks and better maintain them.
- Consider the existing context of 14th street.
- Important that 14th street is inviting and engaging with more ground floor retail and better lighting.
- Challenge – a lot of basements beneath the sidewalk so few street trees (no space under sidewalk to plant).
- Public Library – a lot of families that live in planning area use the library – plan needs to ensure good connections to the library from residential areas in the area, especially Chinatown.
- Question: how do plans for County offices interact with this planning process? There are lots of county offices/governmental buildings in the area – need to consider how to be residentially friendly.
- General feeling of softening edges to institutional areas.
  - People want more greenery, better streetscapes, and amenities that make it feel more like a neighborhood and more inviting along 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> streets.
  - Also, new buildings need to be designed and sited to relate well with surrounding residential uses.

## Identification of Sub-Districts

The CSG suggested the identification of sub-districts for identifying area character and vision.

- Three possible areas:
  - 880/6th/7th (edge of planning area)
  - 8th/9th/10th (heart of planning area)
  - 11 - 14th (northern area)

## Bicycle Connections

- Note that “key bicycle street” doesn’t necessarily mean lanes, could also be bike routes.
- Need to improve connections to East Lake neighborhood. The blue line (key bicycle street) on the map should continue out to the edge of the planning area radius, to where it connects to Lakeshore (part of 12<sup>th</sup> Street reconstruction plan; should show on map).

## Family Housing

- **Need family-sized housing** on 11<sup>th</sup>/ 12<sup>th</sup>/ 13<sup>th</sup> Streets.
  - New housing should be at least 25-30% affordable.
  - Want market rate family housing.
  - Already a lot of senior housing in the area.
  - Noted that the market won’t build much market housing for families - because it costs so much to build; it usually costs the same for single-family housing, which most families will chose.
  - Of the 25-30% affordable, a significant portion must be family housing.

## Lincoln Square Park Area

- People are interested in the Lincoln Park area being a center point for creating more open space or programming for children and youth.
- With the forecasted significant increase in housing in the area, what new amenities will be needed? Will there be a need for more schools (e.g. a junior high, which came up at a few tables)? What about parks and community facilities?
- Lincoln Park is integral to the community. Sites around it should cater to/support families. Sites should have community facilities, parks, housing.
  - Big sites to the north (sites 13 and 15) and anything developed adjacent to the park need to enhance and NOT detract from Lincoln. This includes no visual barriers to park or loss of sun.
  - Block 15: one owner, one story; someday will redevelop, has a lot of potential and will likely be a tall building and be able to afford lots of community benefits; could

be a key place to identify benefits for the community, such as a community or youth center.

- No opposition to density near Lincoln Park, but new development has to add to rather than detract from Lincoln.
- The youth that use Lincoln Park dislike that it is fenced. Many don't even know that it is public. This could be an example of where we could soften the institutional edge. Other CSG members noted that the fence was put up in response to kidnapping, so there are reasons for a fence. There was mixed opinion among the CSG on this matter.

## Retail

- Retail on sites 18, 19, 21, 22. It was noted that the Museum archive building is on site 21. It was noted that site 21 is somewhat distinct from 18, 19, and 22, more related to BART sites than the 10<sup>th</sup> Street/Oakland Museum area.
- Laney constituents like the notion of linkage – want to pull people off campus. It was noted that Laney students/faculty/staff are currently an untapped resource/market, and that little restaurants are probably the best thing to pull people off campus.
- Some CSG members expressed concern that they want to be sure that new retail strengthens Chinatown rather than competes with Chinatown. Other members noted that the concern about competition doesn't come from Chinatown constituents – they want to expand and bridge the Laney campus and Chinatown.
- There was a question about whether the plan would be able to prescribe types of retail (answer: we can determine the use and size).
- City staff noted that for certain kinds of retail uses, the City may need to make choices about where certain retail locates, and that the priority area is Broadway/Valdez.
- CSG members expressed concerns about big footprint ground floor retail, because it creates an awkward pedestrian experience, doesn't fit in with the context of the area, and doesn't promote safety. **There was hesitancy as a group about 'big box' retail in the area, and it was agreed that there is not a push for big footprint retail in the planning area, and that people want small, local businesses.** It was recognized that workshop participants that identified large footprint businesses like Target were most likely talking about wanting retail that provides household goods etc., (LIKE Target, but not necessarily Target). So while some tables wanted big box, it was agreed that it was not a majority, and more tables wanted small-scale, local businesses.
- It was noted by D&B that one larger ground floor business may need to be acceptable.

## Note on Family housing

It was noted that the community request for family housing is different than what the market will likely support. There is a feeling that there is a lot of senior affordable housing, and the community wants to see more family housing.

### **BART sites need to be addressed**

- The CSG expressed concern about how the BART redevelopment will be included as part of this planning process. It was noted that the BART redevelopment is part of this planning process and BART will work with the development program that results from this process.
- There was also an identified need for a CSG meeting on the BART sites.

### **Other Comments and Concerns**

- In regard to transportation, it was noted that there is a need to synthesize what is really important and add more conclusions.
- It was asked whether parking was accounted for in the development potential table, and if we can consider reduced parking standards, in which case we might be able to get more units with lower parking ratios. It was noted that parking will be addressed in this planning process.

### **Comments Specific to the Land Use Feedback Table and Map Formats**

CSG members had several suggestions for reworking the table and making the tables clearer and easier to understand, including:

- The tables are okay for people that are ready to study them, but useless at a community meeting - the tables won't be meaningful to people not used to looking at a table with this type of information. It is a good record, but not for a community meeting.
- Skip other detail where not needed, such as the number of tables that selected a use, and narrow the possibilities.
- Need to translate what feedback looks like, such as by adding photos (like those from last time) - show photo at corner of each block of the height range.
- The map is more successful than the table, though height and bulk are not currently represented - perhaps these could be another layer added to the map.

### **UPCOMING COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS**

Suggestions and discussion related to the upcoming community workshop included:

- Frame topics and changes by areas as identified by the CSG rather than creating a new map.
- Make process very clear at the meeting.
- CSG would like to see a synthesis go to the community - focus in on key recommendations.
- CSG requested a summary of what the community gets from workshop: chance to see what was heard at last meeting, learn about process going forward, opportunity to comment on other sites, and an option to list top priorities at the meeting.
- It was noted that at the subarea workshops, some groups spent more time on some sites and didn't get to other sites. It was noted that at the June 2 workshop, there would be opportunity for people to provide feedback on sites that participants didn't have time to provide feedback on at the last meeting.

## Provide context

CSG members emphasized the importance of providing context at the community workshop:

- Present context in opening to be sure community understands that we understand what they want to see. For example, “this is what people want within the context of x...”
- Split map into sub-districts and provide context for each area that would be more detailed (including the table).
- Show area in 3d (i.e. Google Earth) to help people understand. As it is shown now the context is not clear – for instance we don’t know what is between sites.

## Materials

The CSG provided several comments on the materials that should be presented at the community workshop:

- Need a more visual way of presenting material. Participants might feel participation didn’t mean anything if the only handout is a summary table. Detailed comments are more useful - lose detail in the table; people may be discouraged to see table version of the community feedback since it misses detail.
- How to best communicate information to people?
  - Most people are visual.
  - When hundreds of people are at a meeting, all giving ideas, you end up with a vast amount of data to collate and need a mechanism to grapple with the massive amount of information.
  - There was some consensus on some sites, but not on others, which is a practical matter that needs to be represented. On first look, the tables and maps are hard to read, but a community member can work through it. Try to show where we heard consensus and represent it.
- Educational theory/learning styles show that map is great for some, table is great for some. A narrative is important, and a lot of people are going to want to discuss the feedback. We need to provide several ways of understanding/sharing information – a table can be used, with the understanding that it doesn’t have every bit of information.
- Most important – communicate diversity of opinion and grandness of wish list of improvements.
- There is a lot of information – pull out most important/loud and clear messages.
  - Help guide people through the list of community feedback.
  - Diagram summary feedback so it’s easier to relate to the area.
  - Could be a separate map that just shows the key points and priorities (diagrammatic).
- Comment regarding graphic representation: take key sites where serious change might happen to show relations of scale compared to existing context.

- Will we present analysis at community workshop? Impact of changes? This will be the fourth meeting for the public - after this meeting we do analysis?
- More distinction on what key points are – agreement and disagreement. Use photos to show what people agree on and what people disagree on.
- Community wants to know that we've heard them – nuts and bolts not as important as what it is going to feel like.
- People will get lost in data. We could break the area into sub-districts – show, for example, where are we trying to strengthen ground floor uses; east lake area has a theme.
- Combined subarea workshop follows subarea workshops but is missing the idea of linkages. We thought linkages would be addressed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Need to present ideas about linkages along with land uses.
- Add a more holistic understanding of where to place housing, and what exists nearby.
- A narrative summary would be good with map illustration and circles around the area being discussed to reinforce ideas with the audience.
- If we decide to break maps into sub-districts we will still need a larger map of the whole area for transportation improvements.
- In regard to transportation component – need to synthesize what is really important, add more conclusions.
- Agreed materials for the workshop:
  - Main handouts: 2 maps and summary of key recommendations.
  - District map: a separate large map that focuses on sites and desires for area.
  - Table: remove bold; provide as a separate handout if people want it (not handed out to everyone).
  - Concern with development potential table – creates false hope when someone looks at bottom line numbers - some sites may not actually redevelop. Some people might want to keep the Laney parking lot, for instance. Use the table as a back-up.

### **Possible Change of Date**

Several CSG members remained after 7:30 and the topic of whether the June 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Workshop should be postponed was raised. Key points of the discussion included:

- Is this workshop necessary? Maybe we should postpone until there is more 'meat' for the community to grab on to – save money for a meeting when we have more detail.
- It will be a waste of time to have a meeting just to present findings so far - data won't be helpful at this point. It is clear the proposed format is not going to work and needs to be structured differently. Need to narrow conversation.
- Community wants to see results of their feedback rather than just a summary – they want to see a plan rather than just see feedback.

- What's different from the first subarea workshop? CSG can confirm what happened at workshops; we don't need another meeting for that. Detail received at subarea workshops was good, but now we need a more focused discussion.
- Issue: community asking for analysis, and has asked for that before. Need to vet ideas first before going back to the community.
- Need to move from sites to neighborhood, and focus on where restrictions exist.
- Need to present ideas for new development and character, decisions that need to be made, key questions to address. This should be presented by area or theme.
- CSG members are connected to the community - if we want feedback and confirmation, the CSG members can get that basic feedback at member meetings to save resources for future community meetings. Members of the CSG that represent larger groups need to get feedback from the people they represent.
- Need to present a clear process to the CSG, provide critique of proposals, and provide a list of questions the CSG needs to answer. CSG Meetings should be about solving problems.
- Agreed that the Executive Committee of the CSG would determine the meeting process.

## **NEXT STEPS**

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- Workshop (pending decision by the Executive Committee of the Community Stakeholders Group).
- CSG meetings (maybe adjust August date).
  - June meeting: Land uses, heights, drawings; TAC members in attendance.
  - July meeting: Feedback from public works, determine priorities; TAC members in attendance.

## **UPDATE ON NEXT STEPS**

Following the meeting it was determined that:

- The June 2<sup>nd</sup> Combined Subarea Workshop would be cancelled in favor of a public meeting after the creation of an Emerging Plan in October (rather than after the Preferred Plan).
- The CSG Meetings over the summer were rescheduled to occur on **June 27, July 18, and August 8**.