

BACKGROUND

The Broadway/Valdez District Specific Plan process offers an important opportunity for the community to engage in discussions about how the area should develop into the future. The Specific Plan aims to develop a coordinated vision for new development, especially focusing on the potential for retail developments, transportation and open space improvements, and general quality of life gains that balances Citywide and neighborhood priorities, and builds on the area's existing vibrancy and potential catalyst development projects.

Oakland is one of the most under-retailed major cities in the United States, with limited options for "comparison goods" shopping - a retail category that includes stores for apparel (clothing, accessories, shoes), home furnishings/appliances, specialty goods (gifts, jewelry, books, stationery and cards, sporting goods, etc.), and department and other general merchandise stores.

The *Citywide Retail Enhancement Strategy* (Conley, 2006) and the companion *Upper Broadway Strategy – A Component of the Oakland Retail Enhancement Strategy* (Conley, 2007) identified the City's need to reestablish major destination retail in Oakland as being critical to stemming the retail leakage and associated loss of tax revenue that the City suffers annually. These reports also identified the Broadway/Valdez District as the City's best opportunity to re-establish a retail core with the type of comparison shopping that once served Oakland and nearby communities, and that the City currently lacks.

In January 2009, the City of Oakland received a funding grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to study the Broadway/Valdez District Specific Plan Area for potential destination retail, housing and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). The Specific Plan process commenced upon the receipt of the funding agreement from MTC.

In January 2010, three land use alternatives were presented at a public workshop. There were numerous comments, including from the Landmarks Board, that too much removal of entire blocks was required and that the character of the area was lost.

At the October 4, 2010 Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Meeting, the Board reviewed and discussed the Broadway/Valdez District Specific Plan Alternatives, focusing on historic issues including architecture, patterns of cultural and social history, and context. See **Attachment D** in order to review all of the LPAB Subcommittee, Full Board, & Public Comments.

The Board unanimously passed the following **MOTION** to:

- (1) discuss the Broadway/Valdez Specific Plan at the upcoming joint LPAB Sub-committee / Planning Commission Design Review Committee meeting;
- (2) provide in writing to staff and the consultant the comments of the LPAB's Broadway/Valdez sub-committee, those of the full Board, and those of the members of the public who spoke at this meeting, with a statement that the LPAB does not endorse any of the development alternatives presented; and

- (3) direct staff and the consultant to return to the LPAB with an update after those comments have been incorporated into the project.

The Board was concerned about Plan alternatives (as of 2010): arguing the alternatives relied too much on “large-scale new development”, and not enough on building upon vacant or underused space; that the alternatives favored new, national retailers at the expense of smaller, locally-owned businesses. A commissioner felt the alternatives proposed were “suburban”, and expected too much auto use (and parking) for an urban setting with frequent bus service. The Whole Foods Market, created out of the reuse of the former Cox Cadillac building, with new compatible construction, was cited by a board member as a good example that the plan should encourage: “take inspiration from Oakland’s “main street,” the Broadway corridor.”

Shortly after this meeting, due to Citywide budget issues, the original Project Manager was laid off and the project was put on hold. In late 2010, a new Project Manager and team took over and a “re-launch” public workshop was held in April of 2011. The main purpose of this workshop was to remind the public of where the project was in the process, and to get additional feedback from the public. General ideas received included (but were not limited to): the need to buy goods locally; wanting the area to be safer; better streetscapes and lighting; keeping the local character; making the area bicycle and pedestrian friendly; encouraging adaptive re-use of historic buildings and facades; providing residential housing units along with the retail to help support the retail; low parking ratios; and creating a connection to the Uptown district.

In May of 2011, another Public Workshop was held, called “Words to Paper: Show us Your Vision for the Broadway/Valdez District.” Eight groups presented their vision for the Broadway/Valdez District. Some of the ideas that came out of this workshop included: making Broadway the main “spine” of the plan; the request of 1,800 units of mixed income housing; incremental development that is flexible; traffic calming and bike parking; utilizing new parking techniques such as unbundling and car sharing; adaptive use of historic buildings; and phased development.

During July – October of 2011, there were a number of additional stakeholder meetings to refine the project’s new “Draft Plan Concept”. In December of 2011, a public workshop was held to present the Draft Plan Concept (see **Attachment D**). Changes were made in response to public and stakeholder comments, along with the fact that the economic climate has changed since the planning effort began in 2009. The new planning approach in the Draft Plan Concept is a much more flexible and organic plan that looks at a phased approach of short, mid, and long- term strategies. The City was aware of the potential loss of Redevelopment that has since become a reality, when the Draft Plan Concept was written. The current Draft Plan Concept is now based on strategic interventions, phasing, and building on existing assets.

The overall Plan area includes two sub areas: (1) the “Valdez Triangle” and (2) the “North End”. The land use concept is different in the Valdez Triangle than in the North End.

Valdez Triangle

- “Destination Retail” with active ground-floor uses and retail frontage required on most streets.
 - Critical mass of destination retail/commercial

- “Authentic Oakland” place
- Mix of local and national retailers
- Complementary mix of uses to animate area around the clock
- Retail Priority Areas
 - Sites prioritized for major retail
 - Minimum floorplate requirements coupled with incentives
- Other Areas
 - Diverse mix of uses and sizes allowed
 - Upper floor residential encouraged

North End

- “Mixed Use Boulevard” with commercial frontage required.
- Major Development Opportunity areas
 - Flexible, could be retail, office, housing
 - Ground floor with commercial frontage

The overall housing strategy recognizes that housing is an important component to creating a successful mixed-use district, and envisions about 900 – 1,800 new housing units. The Specific Plan will look at providing a menu of incentives to promote affordable/workforce housing. Housing is recommended primarily as an upper floor use. Streetscape improvements are recommended which includes: widened sidewalks, pedestrian scaled lighting, and street trees. Enhancements to freeway underpasses to improve the pedestrian environment, public space features, and a new linear park/greenway along Glen Echo Creek are also all recommend in the Draft Plan Concept.

For the circulation, access, and parking strategy, a “complete streets” approach is recommended, with a goal of safety and convenience for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and cars alike. The plan recommends new and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, along with the potential expanded transit service. Existing parking resources should be optimized first, and parking ratios should be transitioned over time to low overall parking ratios. For historic resources, key existing buildings should be retained that contribute to the character of the district and support reuse.

Short-Term Strategies:

- Promote more “people attractors” to the area (e.g. restaurants, bars, retail, entertainment uses, art events)
- Improve the character of the public realm on key streets
- Identify opportunities for public spaces that will anchor new development
- Design for greater public safety
- Improve transit access to the area
- Support reinvestment through existing landowners and businesses

Short-Term Strategy Tools:

- Public space improvements
- Extending Community Benefit District (CBD) boundary or creating new CBD
- Parking Benefit District
- “Pop-up”/temporary events and storefronts
- Public art installations

- Arts and Entertainment District overlay
- Greater flexibility in regulations to encourage Historic Building reuse

Mid and Long-Term Strategies

- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities (i.e. bike lanes, crosswalks)
- Streetscape improvements
- Encourage formation of a “restaurant row” in former auto garages on east side of Broadway

More detailed recommendations will be developed as part of the Specific Plan preparation.