

# LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS

## LPAB SUB-COMMITTEE, FULL BOARD AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

### BROADWAY / VALDEZ SPECIFIC PLAN ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS REPORT

OCTOBER 4, 2010

## **A. LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD (LPAB) – SUB-COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

An LPAB Sub-committee (Kirk Peterson, Daniel Schulman) was created to study the three Alternatives and make comments and recommendations to the full LPAB with respect to the historic resources. The Sub-committee met in the field twice, on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

### **LPAB Sub-committee Issues/Comments – Valdez Triangle**

#### 1) Required Square Footage and Building Heights

Market analysis indicates that 800,000 to 1,000,000 square feet of retail needs to be introduced to establish a successful retail designation. The three alternatives also establish heights at 2 – 5 stories. This strategy necessarily calls for larger than existing scaled buildings and demolition of the existing buildings to accomplish this.

Sub-committee response: Allow for taller buildings with greater square footage in order to retain Areas of Secondary Importance (ASIs). Locate/concentrate retail along the Broadway corridor because this is the location that historically has been Oakland’s retail corridor. Heights should step down toward the east.

This recommendation is reinforced by the requirement for solar access to shopping streets and public areas. Concentrating the taller buildings along one corridor would allow more opportunities to locate ‘sunny’ outdoor areas.

#### 2) All of the Alternatives remove or relocate Biffs

Sub-committee response: The sub-committee had two recommendations. Both support the demolition or relocation of Biffs.

- a) This is the location for an “iconic<sup>1</sup>” building.
- b) The building design for this site shall incorporate a use that invites the public, such as a lobby, restaurant, etc. The space should have a 270 degree viewing area to the exterior and should be located on the corner of Broadway and 27<sup>th</sup> Street.

#### 3) All of the Alternatives remove or relocate a substantial number of contributors to the Waverly Street ASI (Between 7 and 16 proposed for removal or relocation)

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<sup>1</sup> Iconic used to be a way of identifying outstanding architecture; today, the term has fallen into disrepute. In design circles, there is a debate raging about the value of iconic buildings. Often associated with irrelevant, ostentatious design rather than architecture that will stand the test of time, the term iconic has become a dirty word. At one time it was a compliment, a way of recognizing architecture that was beautiful in form, served a useful purpose, and created a sense of place by contributing to the public realm. The sub-committee intends use of the word under the earlier, complimentary, interpretation of the word.

Sub-committee response: Retain the Waverly Street ASI district. This is supported by issue #1 response to increase height along Broadway.

Specifically, along Waverly Street between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Street, rehabilitate existing housing stock to reuse as ‘boutique retail/restaurants.’ There are also vacant lots on this block. All historic smaller-scaled residential resources that require relocation should be relocated to infill these vacant lots, specifically including three buildings on the northwest corner of 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Valdez, and others in the immediate area, as appropriate.

Zoning this for ‘boutique retail/restaurants’ would assist in strengthening the retail connection between Harrison and Broadway.

- 4) All of the Alternatives retain the Seventh Church of Christ Science on Harrison between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets, but remove or relocate adjacent similarly scaled buildings to each side (with the exception of V2).

Sub-committee response: Retain all of the buildings along Harrison, with the exception of the one on the southwest corner of Harrison and 24<sup>th</sup> Street. This strategy goes along with reducing height toward the east and locating height and concentrating retail along the Broadway corridor.

- 5) Only one of the Alternatives (Alternative V2) preserves the Newsome Apartments on 24<sup>th</sup> between Valdez and Waverly Streets. The issue is that the first floor is not pedestrian oriented.

Sub-committee response: Investigate raising the building and building a first floor retail floor. Also, additions to each side of this building along 24<sup>th</sup> Street and along Valdez could retain and enhance the area. Raising the building to provide for first floor commercial would also assist in providing a pedestrian link between Harrison and Broadway.

- 6) Many of the brick buildings are posed for demolition.

Sub-committee response: Retain brick facades and reuse as first floor fabric with new construction behind.

- 7) Webster Street has several historic resources that could be retained to provide a pedestrian-oriented expanded sidewalk/plaza area.

Sub-committee response: Retain historic resources along Webster Street by narrowing the street and providing urban design features to make it more pedestrian oriented (2400 block of Webster).

### **LPAB Sub-committee Issues/Comments – North Broadway**

- 1) Support for retention of Local Register resources

Sub-committee response: Overall, the sub-committee supported the direction to retain Local Register historic resources, with the potential modifications to several in each Alternative, as outlined in the Alternatives report.

- 2) Study 27<sup>th</sup> Street: 27<sup>th</sup> Street needs to be studied with respect to urban design to better integrate/connect the two areas of the Specific Plan.
- 3) Retain and enhance low density neighborhoods to the east in both the Valdez Triangle and North Broadway areas: From Valdez Street toward the east in the Valdez Triangle area, and similarly in the North Broadway

area, retain the existing primarily low density neighborhood and provide policy direction to enhance and strengthen this area as a tightly-knit neighborhood. For example:

- Relocation of the house on 30<sup>th</sup> will provide the necessary area to create a green belt along the Creek and should be pursued. This pedestrian oriented pathway should continue across 27<sup>th</sup> to the Valdez Triangle area.
- any vacant lots in these areas should be potential lots for relocation of appropriate historic resources that need to be relocated to allow for development in other areas of the Specific Plan.

**LPAB Sub-committee - Overall General Comments/Recommendations:**

- Explore:
  - basic retail over destination retail (urban format)
  - specialty retail
    - furniture
    - interiors
    - children's
  - kid's party places
  - mid-size anchors with elimination of large anchors
  - parking strategies to support reductions in required parking
  - use of Transfer of Development Rights to support greater height along Broadway, stepping down to the east
- Support irregular heights to retain historic resources along Broadway

**B. LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MEETING - OCTOBER 4, 2010**

**1. Board Member Comments:**

*General Comments*

- The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board does not endorse any of the proposed alternatives that were presented.
- Next proposal should include photos of locations with rendered overlays.

*Historic Character- Architectural, Patterns of Cultural and Social History, and Context*

- The General Plan calls for height along Broadway. This would accommodate keeping the historic areas toward the Lake, while *infilling* with higher densities along Broadway.
- The public input received to date is not reflected in the development of the plan. The proposed alternatives do not fit within the fabric of the community or Oakland character.
- The concept behind the plan represents an “easy” approach of razing the neighborhood, including many historic resources, giving up the historic fabric and replacing it with large-scale new development and huge quantities of parking. It is easy; however, the *smart* approach is to retain what is there and build on it, and relate new infill development to it.
- Broadway is Oakland's Main Street. There's a lot of empty space along Broadway with potential for new development. Broadway is a wide corridor that can accommodate taller buildings. The Valdez Triangle and Echo Creek area have existing buildings with decent housing stock. Strengthen Broadway and leave the neighborhoods where people live alone. Strengthen the natural character of Glen Echo Creek as a residential neighborhood.
- All of the alternatives propose huge damage to the historic fabric.

- The portion of Broadway below Grand Avenue was the historic retail core of the city (e.g. around the old I. Magnin building). The plan should reference and build on this historic pattern.
- Very little consideration has been given to the cultural context of the plan area, not just individual historic buildings but also what this area represents as part of the “organic whole” of Oakland.
- The plan is entirely focused on retail economics. It has not addressed what the potential destruction the whole cultural context will do to the neighborhood. Anything that is left and what it represents, how will that survive?
- None of the proposals are fitting for the existing historic character or the goals the City wants to achieve.
- The Whole Foods in Oakland, located in the former Cox Cadillac building is a successful example of adaptive re-use of a historic building to accommodate a large retail establishment by rehabbing the existing historic building and constructing a new addition.

Retail Strategies – Type, Design, Scale, Current Trends, Safety

*Type/Design/Scale*

- The experts’ formulas are the problem. For example, Pasadena rehabilitated a historic tire factory building to reuse as a Saks Fifth Avenue store. This required going away from standard formulas to allow for a smaller square footage than what all the experts say is required.
- Questions the assumption that a major department store is needed to anchor retail. Bay Street does not have a major anchor.
- Consider popular shopping areas in and adjacent to Oakland: Piedmont Ave, Lakeshore Ave, College Ave, 4th Street in Berkeley, etc. The common characteristics of these places include: density, proximity to residential neighborhoods, transit accessibility, a mix of comparison, fashion and daily needs shopping establishments, a lack of anchor department stores, and quaint one- and two-story, re-used, historic structures.
- Project managers (City and consultant) are adhering too closely to preconceived formulas about how much retail space and parking is required.
- The land use alternatives presented are not “natural,” and will not create or contribute to a vibrant urban environment (the model seems more auto-centric).
- It is possible to accommodate larger retailers in an aesthetically pleasing, urban center context and in a way that is compatible with the above LPAB comments, although this “smarter” approach may be more difficult to realize.
- All the alternatives presented have a “suburban feel” and do not fit with the historic character of the area..

*Current Trends*

- Does not believe that retail will be a good generator of revenue in the future. Does not believe this plan will ever be implemented, since people do so much of their shopping online and retail stores are closing. The City should not tear down historic buildings for a whole industry that is dwindling and dying.
- Smaller local businesses are better for Oakland’s economy than large national chains because they keep more dollars circulating in the community. The premise for this plan (2006) is antiquated; a recent Reuters article (February 2010) finds that Target and Wal-Mart are looking at smaller retail stores for urban areas because they have found that is the only way to survive in an urban market. Therefore it appears that the data that these plans are based on is outdated.

*Pedestrian Environment*

- The amount of parking and garages called for in the plan significantly impacts the potential for a pedestrian environment due to necessity to dodge cars going in and out of the garages.
- Turning 24<sup>th</sup> Street into a pedestrian oriented street by demolishing existing building and building five-story buildings like the ones we have been getting would not create a pleasant walkable pedestrian corridor.
- Does not know of big box retailers that are interested in ‘pedestrian friendly’ retail. Rather big box retailers are interested in parking demand. Big box retail does not lend itself to a pedestrian friendly environment.

*Redevelopment*

- The proposed alternatives are like a 1960s redevelopment scheme. There is currently an existing neighborhood in the Broadway/Valdez district. There is a great deal of available space for new development without wrecking established neighborhoods.

## **2. Public Speakers Comments:**

### *Historic Character- Architectural, Patterns of Cultural and Social History, and Context*

- The area is intact and not worth loosing. Urges planners to follow the ideas of Jane Jacobs and allow new retail to develop “from the ground up” and build on what exists, rather than imposing a large redevelopment scheme “from the top.”
- Likes the LPAB sub-committee’s reflections to retain the actual fabric of the neighborhood to tie the new development together with historic rehabilitations to maintain the feel of the historic neighborhood.
- The plan does not reflect what’s happening with the successful small businesses that have recently opened within/near the study area, such as Lukas, Bake Sale Betty, Ozuma, and Mua - a lot of development in the Uptown area that builds on the rehabilitation of the Fox and Cox Cadillac (Whole Foods) – historic buildings.
- There is a lack of integration in the City’s planning processes with what is already going on, and a failure to build in a reasonable, piecemeal and urban way on what already exists. For example, there is a hospital being rebuilt. Therefore, medical offices for Doctor’s and uses that accommodate services they will need are more appropriate. Broadway already has public transportation (AC transit every 10 minutes or less) and would not require shuttles or street cars. Therefore, the proposal should concentrate on Broadway and not the Valdez area. Again, do not duplicate, but work with what is there. Making the plan better does not need to involve tearing down existing historic buildings.
- Mid-century buildings are hot! Retain historic Biff’s. Rebuilding will be expensive, but rehabilitation could build on the Arts District
- Note that there are numerous new and existing vacant buildings in the area, ready for retail uses. The new Grand building has 10,000 square feet of retail space, most of it not being used.

### *Retail Strategies – Type, Design, Scale, Current Trends, Safety*

#### *Type/Design/Scale*

- Look to existing thriving retail areas in Oakland, such as College Avenue and Temescal, where retail is incorporated into existing, often historic, low-rise buildings.
- Too much emphasis on major retail (department stores). The City cannot afford the public subsidies that would be necessary to attract these retailers.
- Oakland has had a long history with big retail schemes. The Broadway/Valdez plan is simply shifting the boundaries of past development mistakes and moving on to repeat mistakes in a new area. Additionally, the proposed boundaries of the plan pay little attention to how to integrate into what is happening.
- Supports a retail district in the Broadway/Valdez area, but opposes the proposed alternatives as presented. They are a suburban model transplanted onto an urban area.

#### *Current Trends*

- Challenges the projections for tax revenues from new retail, and questions the assumption that 100% of retail leakage could be retained in Oakland.
- The premise of the proposal is outdated, and is not in step with the stylistic proclivities of today.

#### *Redevelopment*

- The plan is essentially a redevelopment scheme. Redevelopment de-stabilizes neighborhoods because speculative land owners land bank buildings and therefore they deteriorate. No one will invest money into the existing building stock. This undermines an attractive area of Oakland.

#### *Safety*

- Safety is an important issue in attracting shoppers. If the area becomes destabilized, there will be more crime.
- New retail needs to be planned with a focus on security and safety, which is lacking in the current proposals.

#### *Parking*

- Too much parking proposed in the Valdez Triangle. The parking subsidies would be too costly.