

LAKE MERRITT STATION AREA PLAN

Public Review Draft Plan Open House Summary

December 2012

1 Introduction

The City of Oakland, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and the Peralta Community College District, through a grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), have come together to prepare a Station Area Plan for the area around the Lake Merritt BART Station. The Plan looks at ways in which streets, open spaces, and other infrastructure in the area can be improved, and establishes regulations for development projects that further the area's vitality. The Plan considers a wide range of topics, including land use, urban design, historic preservation, circulation, streetscape improvements, parks, and community facilities. A comprehensive Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is underway, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Planning Area encompasses a one-half mile radius around the Lake Merritt BART Station, including Chinatown, Laney College, civic buildings of Alameda County and the City of Oakland, and the channel connecting Lake Merritt to the estuary. Many diverse residents, merchants, workers, and students make up the community in this area, and Chinatown functions as a citywide center for the Asian community.

Note that previous reports also provide significant insight and community feedback, including:

- *Lake Merritt BART Station Area Community Engagement Final Report* - completed by Asian Health Services, Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Oakland in June 2009.
- *Stakeholder Interviews Report* and *Community Workshop #1 Report* - completed by Dyett & Bhatia and the City of Oakland in May, 2010.
- *Summary of Community Feedback* - completed by Dyett & Bhatia and the City of Oakland in April 2011.
- *Emerging Plan Open House Summary* –completed by Dyett & Bhatia and the City of Oakland in October 2011.

Ongoing participation by the Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) has also been a crucial component of the development of the Plan. The CSG has driven the development of the Plan through participation in a series of ongoing working meetings. These meetings started with community feedback from public workshops detailed in the reports outlined above, developed the framework, and refined the content of the Draft Plan through an iterative process between CSG members, City staff, and consultant work.

1.1 Next Steps

Staff is currently working on Zoning and General Plan amendments – these will translate plan concepts and policies into specific regulations. The Draft EIR is also underway – this will analyze environmental impacts of the proposed Plan.

Public Hearings to discuss the Plan and zoning will begin in January/February. The Zoning Update and Design Review Committees of the Planning Commission will discuss the proposed zoning ordinance and design guidelines. At the end of February/early March, we expect to publish a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Later in March, the Planning Commission, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (along with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and the Parks and Recreation Commission) will review and provide a formal recommendation on the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan, Design Guidelines, new Zoning, General Plan Amendments and DEIR.

A final Plan and final EIR will then be completed by end of 2013 that reflect all the remaining feedback received. These documents will be reviewed and then adopted by the Planning Commission and the City Council

1.2 Open House Summary

The Draft Plan Open House was held on December 15, 2012 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm at the Laney College Student Center/Cafeteria, 900 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA. The meeting opened with a presentation by Dyett & Bhatia, City of Oakland Project Manager, and BART, followed by a group question and answer period. Questions asked included clarification on the process for selecting a BART developer, request for details on how community benefits will be incorporated, how affordable housing is addressed in the Plan, the process for completing zoning regulations, air quality and greenhouse gas effects of the Plan, how bicycle lanes are dealt with in the Chinatown core, how the BART Station will be renamed, how sufficient community facilities were included, among others.

Following the question and answer, participants were encouraged to explore the various stations on different plan components. Materials and information on key Draft Plan components, as well as zoning and general plan concepts were presented in English, Chinese and Vietnamese at six stations. The open house format allowed participants spend as long or as little time with the material as they felt necessary.

The Stations included:

1. Welcome, Vision, and Next Steps
2. Land Use and Open Space
3. Circulation and Streetscape
4. Design Guidelines
5. Zoning and General Plan Amendments

6. Implementation

A staff person was available at each station to answer questions and facilitators for Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese speakers led tours of participants through the workshop. Participants were encouraged to provide comments on the concepts presented at each station by writing comments on sticky notes and posting the notes to the note pads on the easels at each station. Participants were also encouraged to provide comments at upcoming public hearings and to submit comments via email if they preferred.

The Draft Plan is available on the project webpage and will continue to be available for public review at the following locations:

- Lincoln Square Recreation Center (250 10th St)
- Oakland Asian Cultural Center (388 9th Street, 2nd floor)
- City of Oakland Planning Department (250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 3315)

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED AT OPEN HOUSE STATIONS

Written comments received at the open house are organized generally by topic.

Land Use and Parks

- Parks improvements.
- There needs to be a policy for developers to contribute \$ for community benefits.
- More recreation centers for youth after school programs.
- Job training.
- Small business assistance center with Asian language capacity.
- Reiteration of community benefits:
 - Affordable housing for families.
 - Community youth center and seminars.
- This newly created parcel is considered by city as “development site.”
- Will these be high value jobs that reflect area standard wages?
- Fire alarm building parcel shown also as “open space” opportunity site – keep as open space site.
- Air quality filters?
- More affordable housing for families.
- Community and youth center.
- Keep/increase open space and more recreation centers.
- Trees should be increased in Madison Park to increase shade. Note: increased heat (temperature) with global heating.
- With these designs and the planned population increase over the course of 25 years, what measures will the city take to ensure public safety?

Circulation Comments

- How will this plan improve the circulation between Alameda and Oakland via Posey/Webster tubes? (pp. 6-4, 44).
- Will it reduce cross-estuary congestion and improve connectivity between Oakland and Alameda?
- Alameda's cross-estuary shuttle lands at LM BART. Please fund it (BART? Oakland?) 7 days/week and expand address connectivity cross-estuary with LM BART.
- Roundabout concept (residential scale, i.e. Seattle) to help traffic calm.
- Pedestrians-oriented street lighting.
- Pedestrian scramble intersections.
- New traffic signals.
- Lake Merritt BART station name needs to be changed to "Chinatown/Laney BART" stations (2 notes).
- Vietnamese community doesn't want to change the name of Lake Merritt BART to "Chinatown."
- BART Station name change
 - Would likely occur concurrently with new Warm Springs Station; otherwise cost of changing all signage is prohibitive (over \$100k)
 - Stakeholders need to work together to get consensus on new name
- Need more parking (i.e., lot, garage, off-site for residents/businesses).
- The city should abolish all mandatory un-funded parking mandates and allow market to determine parking supply. Instead, mandate transit passes for new development.
- Remove LOS for city standards and replace with vehicle trips created.
- Very long-term, coordinate Oakland Broadway and Alameda point BRT/Streetcar plans to link systems through Chinatown and reduce Webster tube traffic.
- Where did the bike lane go? (In Phase II illustration).
- Class IIIA facilities in Chinatown need to be explicitly identified as temporary pending a better bikeways solution, both in the plan and on the map.
- Bicycling in Chinatown
 - Page 6-16, it's incorrect to say that biking in Chinatown is "unsafe"
 - adding a bike lane at this time, when double parking is still a problem would create an unsafe situation
 - Add next steps for dealing with loading/double parking issue in core of Chinatown (for example additional studies, etc) - add in Transportation and Implementation Chapter
- What exactly are next steps for safe bike access in core of Chinatown?
- Improve the connection to Jack London area – specifically under the freeway.
- How will bicyclists have access through and across Webster/Franklin/Broadway and the main areas of Chinatown? Bike access is critical to reducing congestion.

- How will implementing this circulation plan affect congestion on both sides of the estuary from 880/Broadway/Webster Tube/Posey Tube? Will it help reduce congestion on both sides?
- Better bikeway signage for tricky merges in spurs.
- Consider closing off roadway between International and 15 Street.
- Use parking under I-880 toward proposed parking demand. Caltrans airspace is valuable!
- Freight truck routes impacts.
- Something green in underpasses.
- Page 6-25, need to articulate the connections for possible reduction in parking ratios
- Requiring Green Trips certification could be a way to help with enforcement of demand management strategies (ex. transit passes)

Design Guidelines

- Design guidelines are “silent” on treatment of freeway underpasses.
- Consider trees for streetscapes; need to be limited to native species that will survive and maintain (less leaf cleanup).
- Encourage mix of unit types in residential buildings, including ground floor townhouses

Implementation Related Comments

- How will preservation be funded?
- There is a need for high value jobs with area standard wages. The private sector construction would benefit from using State-approved apprenticeship programs to train local residents.
- How will it impact tax payers? Will property tax go up?
- Implementation – what is the process for creating a BID? Is it outlined in the plan? Or a community benefits district? Provide information in Plan.
- Present state “bonus” incentive has not been found practical in Oakland. Seriously doubt that “incentive” option is viable.
- Explain in future meetings how plan leads to implementations of improvements (plan/process – funding – project delivery).
- Clarify any mitigations for demolition or other impacts to historic resources.
- Look at TOD specific inclusionary zoning for city (add to implementation)

Zoning and General Plan Amendments

- How to address safety concerns (Sprint store on lakeshore and Verizon are good examples of decorative roll-up doors)? Large windows can be broken.
- Re: tying community benefits to density: make the trigger for benefits very low (2.5 FAR) and remove all height limits. But make the tower profiles thinner.
- Consider for areas that require ground-floor retail allowing residential if space is designed to convert to retail space.

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- height and bulk tower separation is too little, and tower diagonal is too big.
- At what height is a setback required?
- Please limit tower height buildings in Chinatown.
- 4-5 stories for basic requirement. Build higher should kick into community benefit. Height should be around existing heights, especially in Chinatown.
- Need to eliminate mandatory parking minimums by right. Improve requirement to buy transit passes for residents/workers instead.
- Remove minimum parking requirements to facilitate the feasibility of affordable housing construction/inclusion.
- Height zone 4 cannot buffer 7th Street from the freeway when landscaping setback, tower setback, and scaling back to height zone 1 are all taken into account.
- Any bonus on proposed development on Lake Merritt BART Station should have some direct benefit to Madison Park.
- Density Bonus – Emeryville has just adopted something

Other

- Post notices about public meetings in businesses and public bulletin boards!
- In future presentations, need to better emphasize the value of the Specific Plan:
 - Better position for funding, or may be requirement for pursuing funding (like One Bay Area Grant)
 - Helps us prioritize projects
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