

Attachment G Youth Engagement Meeting Notes

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February 22, 2016

Summary

City staff and attended a regular meeting of the Oakland Youth Advisory Commission on February 22, 2016. There were about ten commissioners in attendance, middle and high school age, some of whom go to school Downtown. None of them live Downtown, and they pointed out that they don't actually see any homes, or at least homes that aren't for wealthy people, that people could live in Downtown.

Commissioners repeatedly said that they all see Downtown as a place for rich people, and not for people from Oakland, especially from East Oakland (a commissioner from East Oakland said they don't even call the area "Downtown" there because it doesn't feel relevant to their lives). All the retail is unaffordable for them, with the exception of a few "hidden" food spots, and feels focused on boutiques, restaurants and bars that serve people who aren't from Oakland (either they work Downtown, or they've newly moved Downtown). They do not feel welcome Downtown; they all had experienced having security guards and businesses yell at them, kick them out of public spaces (even Oakland School for the Arts students who were playing dodgeball in Frank H. Ogawa Plaza during PE with adult supervision).

The few places they do feel comfortable are in Snow Park, Sky Park, Henry J. Kaiser Memorial Park by Oakland School for the Arts and to some extent, Jack London Square. They'd like to see more events and festivals like Pedalfest, and they think the Jack London District needs more entertainment, music and people there on a regular basis, like they are in San Francisco's Union Square. To them, the early curfew defeats the purpose of First Fridays, and they would like to see that event relaxed; they think it's possible to loosen up without being unsafe.

The commissioners would also like to see a mall here – they currently go to other cities' malls to shop and hang out. They'd also like to see large businesses like Pandora and Uber contributing internship and job opportunities for youth. In terms of youth engagement, they think that government needs to be persistent and engage them in actual projects (like murals and music, for example) rather than just asking them to contribute ideas. They recommended using the Warriors to interact with the community, facilitating paid internships in development and planning, and going to the schools to do workshops there instead of asking students to go somewhere else.

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Notes

Question 1 – What do you currently do in Downtown? How do you get there? Where do you go? Do you use parks? Hang out on the streets? Use services? Shop? Eat?

Responses:

- Many of the youth responded that they eat/get food, referred to “hidden” restaurants that aren’t as well known.
- They hang out with friends, enjoy City Center, Lake Merritt, 19th & Broadway (first Fridays), Snow Park and Sky Park, and Jack London Square. One youth hangs out at his mentor’s business at 19th & Broadway.
- They go to the movies, walk dogs at the port, and walk the lake. They don’t come Downtown unless it’s for youth commission meetings, school, park by OSA.
- OSA students have been kicked out of the civic center area and Frank Ogawa plaza for playing games and sports (even with school supervision during PE); security guards have told them to stop
- Businesses yell at young people, and they don’t feel welcome
- People in East Oakland don’t even call the area Downtown because it’s not relevant to them – they think of it as the wealthy part of Oakland; why would they go Downtown for an \$11 burrito when they can get a better one for \$6 in East Oakland?

Question 2 – What would make Downtown a great place for you? Places? Parks? Programs? Businesses? Transportation? Entertainment? Sports? Arts?

Current likes:

- Jack London Square is good for festivals and venues like Plank
- Local youth advocate noted that Oakland is cultural hotbed of the Bay Area; we should enhance the things that make us great, like the Malonga Center, history of cultural arts, and diversity

Current dislikes:

- Downtown is dead on the weekends
- Right now there’s nowhere to shop but little boutiques
- People in Oakland can’t find jobs

Oakland Youth Advisory Commission Meeting

- You hardly see homes in the Downtown, especially affordable homes – the people who work and go to school Downtown don't live here

Recommendations:

- Union Square is an example of a successful spot with more to do – there are more people, and it's very, very alive., but
- More “hidden” really good food restaurants
- Youth would like to see more public events programmed, such as the fairs/farmers markets in Jack London Square and First Fridays, and arts at 12th & Broadway. The curfew of First Friday is too early.
- Youth would like to see more entertainment; more music, more people on a regular basis. More events like a soccer event that closed down a street, or the BMX bike event in Jack London Square.
- More dog parks and skate parks are desired, with the end of Snow Park being a suggested location for a skate park.
- More food, more affordable retail –and more “visibility” of these components (like Westfield Mall, Bay Street in Emeryville). They want these to spend 40-60% of their time shopping, but the rest just hanging out.
- Vacant buildings occupied with at least temporary uses
- Children's Fairyland is not interesting to them (middle & high school students), but some appreciated it as children
- A mini-mall; right now you have to go to another town to shop – there's only one mall (Eastmont), and it sucks
- Picknicking, fishing and outdoor cooking (BBQ) at Lake Merritt – not allowing it defeats the purpose. Would like Lake Merritt to be more family-oriented.
- Lake Merritt turned into a fishing lake
- More affordable housing in Downtown
- Dog parks and professionally built skate parks, including at the end of Snow Park – they don't just draw the skaters themselves
- Reuse empty, vacant historic buildings that are taking up space

Question 3 – How do we make Downtown a youth empowerment zone? A place where youth feel safe and welcome? Where you come to access services for education, leadership, job training? What services would help? Businesses? Cultural changes?

- Downtown feels gentrified and/or rapidly being gentrified
- Commissioner who grew up in East Oakland said it feels very different Downtown, and they don't feel welcome
- Downtown feels like a place for and controlled by rich people rather than a place for them for other people from Oakland. Implied that Oaklanders and rich people are mutually exclusive.
- Downtown seems like a place for wealthy people who commute in to work or have recently moved here.
- Cultural arts should be promoted and enhanced, such as the Malonga center. We should enhance what already makes Oakland great. Downtown should be a place to embrace all of Oakland and Oakland's culture.
- Use the Warriors to promote Downtown and engage youth, perhaps through an event, raffle/contest.
- More internships, job opportunities, and opportunities to work with major corporations that are moving in, like Uber and Pandora
- Youth service providers/representatives attending the meeting suggested reaching out to churches and other spiritual and civic institutions.

Youth Service Providers Focus Group

Meeting Notes

March 3, 2016

There used to be exposure to different things (culture, space to draw and embrace openness). There was always something to do – down Broadway to Jack London, but now people are afraid to come outside. Need to build a culture of exposure and openness, greeting other people. It's all about relationships, building rapport with businesses, young people, nonprofits; creating relationships with the youth, bridging generational gaps. We need to transmit Oakland knowledge from long-time Oaklanders to the new people.

Most businesses make kids feel like they're not welcome. Kelly (attendee) had the only store that was open to the kids, and the parents knew the owners and knew their kids were there and safe, but she closed the business because rent was exorbitant.

OSA students are familiar with Downtown, but don't feel welcome or supported by community. Fat Cat Café is the only business welcoming to youth (she knows everybody!)

It's hard to find a space for the Qeyno Labs annual Hackathon that's easily accessible. It was hard to get access to Laney (MetWest was very welcoming, but closes early). There are ten teams of students creating apps, code late into the night. They need a venue with wifi that doesn't feel like a prison (like the older schools, with metal detectors and school security that makes you feel like you're a criminal). Want them to feel welcomed and celebrated. Only had 30 of the 60 slots filled.

Need to make the youth feel like they're engaged and part of the community. They loiter at Snow Park because they don't feel like they belong anywhere else.

They need internship opportunities, job opportunities. There's a disconnect between what's here and what kids feel connected with.

How do kids even know what's available? What they can and can't do? How do they get the information? Youth need to find out about opportunities – internships, jobs, community service hours, grassroots efforts.

Downtown needs space for events like community gathering spaces to build relationships between business owners, people who work here, live here. Need to build relationships with the police department; youth feel surveilled around the Downtown space, and can't have fun because they're afraid of getting in trouble.

Youth Service Providers Focus Group

Affordability: organizations Downtown are getting squeezed out of their rent. That will impede Downtown being youth-friendly. Downtown feels like an adult space primarily (Uber, larger corporations). Rent control? Improving rent control?

Restaurants Downtown are expensive (get two meals, and it's their whole allowance for the week!). No places that sell affordable food (including breakfast) for kids. The only food the youth can afford here is fast food and liquor/convenience stores, which mimics what's in their own neighborhoods. People hang around the lake area because there's more affordability there (near Grand, Ahn's and back, the yogurt place). There are always people walking around there, and there's always something to do (including people giving away free food). There's nothing Downtown. There used to be dancing, Barnes and Noble to hang out in, you could get hot chocolate – there was a large floorplate and kids could look at books/magazines (without spending money).

Where's the closest library? Main Library or Asian Branch Library

OSA – a lot of students go to the ice skating rink for food because it's comfortable – has lots of families and youth going in and out. Need youth working in the stores Downtown to bring more youth. It's more approachable when you see someone you can relate to.

Worried about youth feeling like they're welcome; are they going to be welcomed by the new residents? Story of African-American children being harassed at the pool in their own new condominium complex Downtown by security – not feeling welcome despite being residents of the building (while the adults in the hot tub at night were just as loud, but looked different and so not treated like they're up to something). It's about how people are perceived.

We need venues and activities for integration; everyone coming together. More community-building. Community, relationship, networking, elevate, uplift, encourage. Why aren't there more trips Downtown to see that Downtown is a good place to be? There used to be a lot of field trips. Downtown is an older person's place. There's nowhere for kids to hang out in the day or at night to hang out together and take trips Downtown together. It's not just going to be from one side – everyone has to come together. Everyone has to be included in the process.

At Juvenile Hall, everyone comes and plays on the courts – when the numbers are low, and not coming together, then they don't know each other, and it becomes territorial, and it turns into violence. Need to have more things like the youth playing basketball games with the police. The police need to be humble too. Hotspots where people have money lead to robberies. Give kids free stuff – Warriors tickets, events for kids doing well at school. Used to have competitions with prizes (like warriors tickets for schools with the best attendance). We need events where the police come and interact with people, rather than surveilling. Occupy area (Frank Ogawa Plaza) is a great place to have events.

Youth Service Providers Focus Group

Need a store with technology where kids could share their ideas. Kids have great ideas, and adults aren't tapping into them – like for drones and other technology. Parents and kids should both be involved together. Have to make an actual place to get people in one spot for programming, recreation (basketball).

Downtown could have dollar burgers, cheap haircuts, all in one spot – a building for the kids, including a place with information, recreation, and job info. Businesses can encourage youth (for example, Oaklandish gives free shirts with report cards, Fenton's gives free ice cream). Embed it all throughout the community. ALL the store owners should get some sort of incentive to create youth-friendly space. Let them determine what they do. Use City marketing to help the process.

Downtown – there's a lot of space for congregation, but we need ongoing events that bring people together. Lots of class and racial difference – need to cultivate allyship, build relationships across barriers, which reduces conflicts. City needs to reach out to ALL the parts of Oakland and get them to come Downtown to build relationships together (many events, with police involved). Intergenerational, intersectional, bring adults too – like Festival by the Lake. Adults can help troubleshoot and mediate conflict (instead of just criminalizing). Even at the Y-PLAN tour of Downtown, a store owner yelled at one of the kids.

People are moving here who are different – we don't need to change Downtown for them, the people coming in need to learn about what's here. Show people the history and culture of Oakland. How do we encourage people who live Downtown to go out into the rest of the community and see the culture out in the rest of Oakland? We want everyone to feel comfortable to go to all the neighborhoods. Yet East Oakland has blight, prostitution, is a food desert, stores get robbed – it needs something that would make people want to go there. Or bring the rest of the community to Downtown, and then branch out from there.

Walking Oakland is totally different – you have to know what you do and what you DON'T do; learn the culture. People (particularly well-known ones) who leave Oakland should come back and give back to Oakland. If we want the culture to keep its roots, we have to be able to accept someone else's story that's not like our own. People who are from Oakland have responsibility to show new people/outsideers the culture.

People are living further and further away from Civicorps – close to 50% of students are homeless. We need places for them to live and play. People need to live here, not just have everyone leave at 5pm. Students should be able to access housing, services, services for children, places to play, soccer field. Worried about Oakland becoming a place for single, younger, one-bedroom-apartment people. We need options for home ownership – affordable condos. Some foster youth have never had a home or a room to call their own. Many of them live in Antioch, etc. and have to come in long distance for services, education. Transportation is challenging. Why can't they just live here in the Downtown? When students they do work, they're making minimum wage.

Youth Service Providers Focus Group

Demographics: In order for youth to feel empowered and welcome, it's useful for young people to see and know the young people who were able to do that before them. Acknowledgement of other movements led by young people (Black Panthers, for example – free breakfast, things the City was not doing). Youth need to see the possibilities in terms of shaping Oakland. Museum corner? Education for youth about movements.

Art is powerful in being able to resist oppression and liberate individuals; statues tend to be of people who are part of the colonizing process. Youth need to be able to look at other people, particularly people of color, as monumental and historic.

Youth need to be part of the planning process. Consider establishing a project youth leadership group (similar to the Plan Downtown Community Advisory Group). The people who are speaking to them and leading them at events like the Youth Summit need to look like them.

Youth Summit

Meeting Notes

March 16, 2016

How can young people advocate for social justice through civic engagement?

- Educate yourself
- Choose to work for something you're passionate about
- Join clubs / youth programs (YMCA, Bike Club, Key Club, internship, JROTC)
- Spread awareness for clubs
- School programs
- Mentors
- Joining organizations for their city
- Inform youth of organizations available to them at a much younger age
- Talk to the younger generation once you learn something
- Adding more internships in local businesses and city political offices
- Having more youth programs that interact with the community
- Youth and adult planning
- 67 Suenos (<http://www.67suenos.org/>)
- Alliances with mentors
- A teen working at city hall
- Mayor approval
- Protest
- Get the message of whatever it is out
 - Into the community
 - The people the protest is against, affecting
- Bay peace
- Y-Plan
- Youth Boards for city planning!

What do you think would help with specific issues Downtown?

- Stop gentrification
- Help gain resources for homeless
- Less police!
- Keep people of color in Downtown
- Drug rehab centers
- Help with homelessness
- Less police

Youth Summit

- Regardless what we say ya'll are going to do what you want!
- More roof-top garden
- Parklet
- Clean drinkable water
- Cleaner public restrooms
- More colorful shops / food stands
- Reduce pollution
 - Use feet [encourage walking]
 - More public transportation
 - More green
 - Solar panels
- BART: 24 hours
- Free shuttles
- More safety patrol people (even in BART)
- Shelters
- Jobs parking lot
- Bus system
- Internships at every site for High School students
- Have more lights to lighten up streets. Get cleaner streets to make it more attractive to people who usually don't come to Oakland
- Improve safety
 - Bike lanes
 - Better lights (solar panels)
- More community opportunities
- Jobs
- Having a cleanup crew around the lake
- Get more shelter homes for homeless people that cannot afford housing. Also, include jobs in maybe the same building for the people.
- Well-lit areas
- Build better relationships with police and community. As well as local businesses
- Build homeless shelter
- Have a homeless center where they can go anytime of the day and keep them off the streets.
- More light at night

Do you feel welcome in Downtown?

- Not at Taco Bell
- Yes I come to the ice rink with my family, but at the same time more East Oakland because it has more places we can go to eat and hang out with family members or friends

Youth Summit

- I feel welcomed when I have business to take care of. But there are not many teen friendly places.
- I feel like Downtown is people friendly but if you don't have money to do things or have business then there is nothing to do
- More green space
 - Yes, sometimes
- People yelling
- I feel welcomed in East Oakland
- In some areas no such as 7-Eleven in front of Whole Food are racist but some places I do.
- No because the people here are all proper and professional. And, they're all older people
- Scary to bike
 - Bike lanes
- I feel welcomed if I have \$\$\$ to spend at restaurants
- Yes, I feel welcome. I hang out by the center of Downtown where all the stores are.
- People yelling
- Smell like gasoline
- Redwood Park
- Benches, bike lane
- I feel welcomed Downtown at night because it looks better with the lights on at night. During the day, it is usually very cold.
- I feel welcomed only at restaurants / places with people that look like me. Some are too expensive and have different crowds.
- I personally do not feel welcomed as a Latino. I am a minority.
- Yes, but I don't think it has many welcoming places for youth.
- Things that would make me feel welcomed: movie theater
- Bike programs
- No I don't feel welcomed. I feel welcomed at school and at home
- For the most part, yes. I am not from the area
- Parking is bad out here
- Needs more things to do
- No, there's a lot of businessmen and not a lot to do for the youth
- Community garden!
- No, not youth friendly
- I think it could do a better job to welcome people, it's very pretty but I don't live near by
- At night, some places have not enough lighting
- More activities
- No, not a lot of activities for youth, focused more on business
- Kind of, because its really not fun here

Youth Summit

- A couple abandon building
- No free Wi-Fi
- Boring
- No life
- I got no familia
- Too hot
- Need free Wi-Fi
- Yeah, I got family and friends here. I love my dad.
- High speed
- More welcome = improved walkability, more trees, more art, more curves! Straight roads=boring
- Kinda, since one of my program is at Downtown.
- I have no reason to go Downtown.

How can Downtown be more equitable and inclusive?

- More music events (free)
- Urban gardens that are community based
- Multi-cultural food fairs...food trucks
- More attracting spaces for different ethnic groups
- Exercise stations around the lake
- Parks with skate park
- Support group for Youth
- Childcare
- Art Centers
- Art Fair
- Parks
- More Youth Employers
- Medical
- Dental
- Youth "Sex Ed"
- Have more street festival for people to come and get distracted and walk around Oakland to see what's the festival about
- Games for kids, food, all races
- Car show
- Building parks
- Reusable / green energy
- Cultural events
- Have places for all ages. Like malls and movie theaters
- Both educational programs / teen youth centers

Youth Summit

- Elderly centers
- Food trucks
 - “Food Row” Food festivals
- Affordable communities
- Family friendly parks
- Affordable keeping in mind youth, students, families
- Small park cleanup
- Homeless facility
- Strong policy for affordable housing
- More program for youth to understand what to do to go to college
- No free labor, pay the youth!
- Child care access
- Poor air quality
- Make it safer
- More youth on decision making bodies
- Civil corps
- Stop policing Youth of color
- 18-26 programs and services
- Career tech education
- Small business funding for 18-26
- Obey public land development laws ex. E 12th St
- Tax corporations and redistribute to people who need it
- Stop police violence
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How can Downtown Oakland better serve the needs of youth?

- Inviting / safe places for youth
- More Youth activities
 - Basketball
 - Football
 - Games
- Affordable food
- Less police
- More youth-led programs
- Jobs
- Paid jobs
- Youth only event space
- More parks
- Youth friendly stores / food options

- Develop cultural areas of affordable stores, places to eat, etc.
- Resources that benefit the public
- Legal services
- Bigger park spaces
- Skate parks
- Mall
- Cheaper café's / affordable things
- More homeless shelters
- Child care facilities
- Affordable housing
- Job opportunities
- Youth center
- Park
- Charging stations
- Excluding unsafe places
- Having kids be more in charge of serious things
- Bike shares for youth
- Hangout spots
- Tutoring centers
- Free Wi-Fi everywhere
- Free busing services for Youth