

I Background



The 5.5-mile long Estuary Planning Area extends from Adeline Street on the west to 66th Avenue on the east.

Introduction

In 1996, the Port of Oakland and the City of Oakland embarked on an unprecedented cooperative effort to develop the first plan in Oakland's history focused specifically on the Estuary shoreline (Figure I-1). The *Estuary Policy Plan* represents an effort conducted over a period of approximately 18 months to prepare a plan for 5 1/2 miles of urban waterfront within the heart of the city and port.

This effort encompassed a planning area extending from Adeline Street to 66th Avenue, including all of the lands on the water side of I-880 within Port and City jurisdiction. The study area touches many of the city's neighborhoods as well as downtown, and is bracketed at the ends by Oakland's airport and seaport (Figure I-2).

Oakland can claim the most extensive and diverse bay shoreline of any community in the region. Yet, for many, the experience of the Oakland waterfront is fragmented—limited to specific areas, such as the highly visible shipping terminals or the commercial activities and special events at Jack London Square. Although its shoreline extends for 19 miles along the edge of the city, Oakland is more often viewed as an inland gateway at the hub of multiple rail and highway corridors than as a waterfront city.

STUDY HISTORY

In recent years, community interest in the waterfront has increasingly focused a desire for improved public access, environmental quality, civic image and identity, recreation, and other publicly oriented activities.

In the early 1990s, public dialogue about Oakland's waterfront began with the update of the *Open Space, Conservation and Recreation Element* of the Oakland General Plan. At about the same time, the League of Women Voters published a report, *"The Waterfront. It Touches the World: How Does it Touch Oakland?"* (June 1993), which focused on the waterfront. The report strongly promoted Oakland's identity as a waterfront city. This report became a call to action for waterfront advocates and the community at large.

The efforts of the League of Women Voters spawned the Waterfront Coalition, a grassroots citizens organization that, in turn, sparked even broader interest and support for waterfront revitalization. In 1995, a charrette was sponsored by the Port and the City to help formu-



FIGURE I-1: Regional Context

late a vision for the waterfront that would, in turn, provide additional policy support.

At the time, the Oakland General Plan was being updated, overseen by a community-wide advisory committee known as the General Plan Congress. A Waterfront Subcommittee of the General Plan Congress was formed. In 1996 the General Plan Congress published its draft Goals, Objectives and Policies report for the entire waterfront area. The policies recognized the waterfront as having untapped potential for redevelopment, publicly oriented activities, and enhanced public access. One of these policies specified the need for more detailed study and planning in the Estuary portion of the waterfront.

Hence, the Oakland *Estuary Policy Plan*.

The Estuary Plan project has been undertaken as a joint effort by the Port of Oakland and the City of Oakland. The plan incorporates comments and input from other public agencies, including the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD), the Trust for Public Lands, the City of Oakland Life Enrichment Agency—Parks, Recreation and

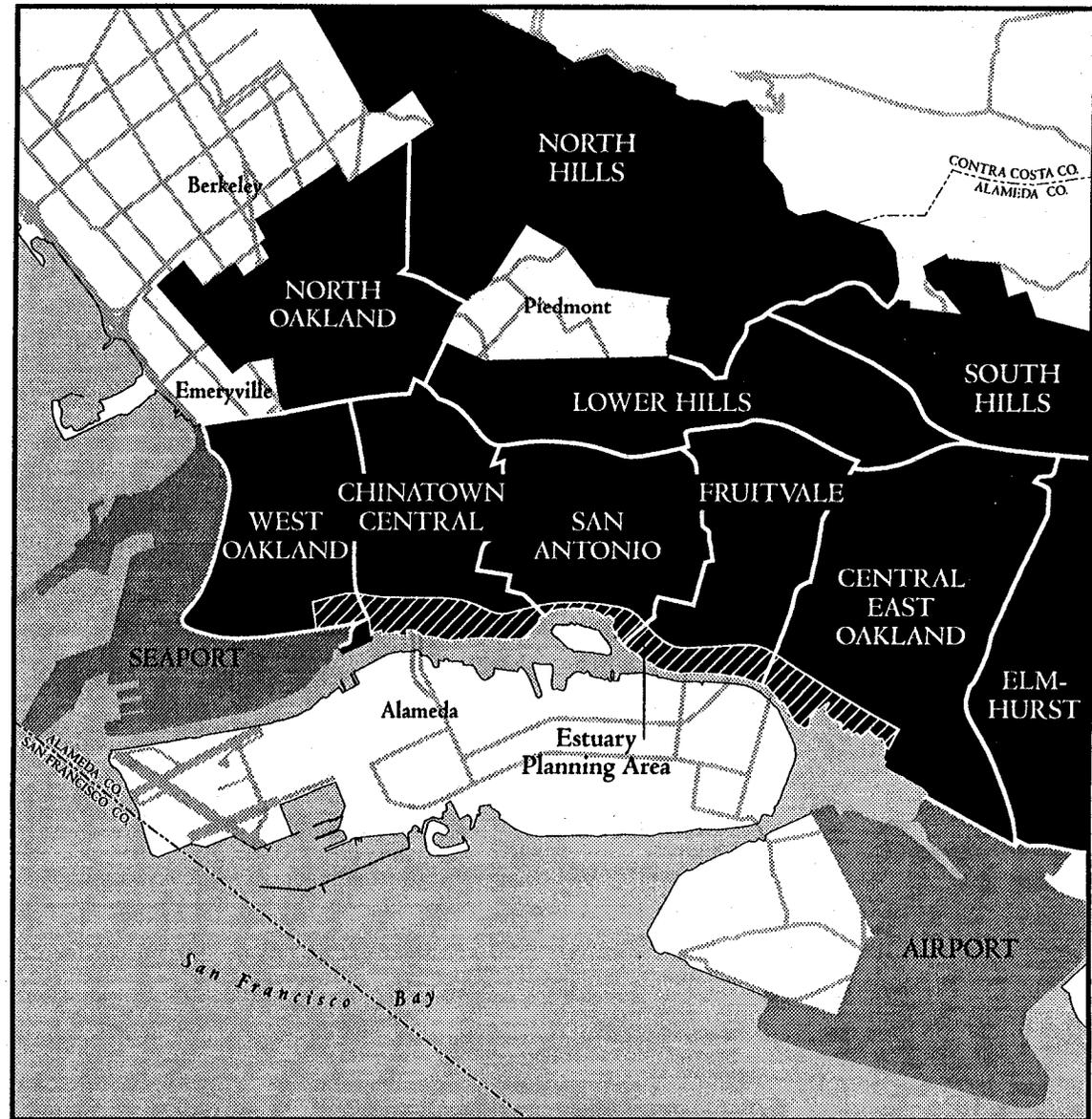


FIGURE I-2: Oakland Neighborhoods Adjacent to the Estuary

Cultural Services, and the Oakland Museum. Draft concepts and recommendations were presented to the City-Port Liaison Committee, the City Planning Commission, and the Board of Port Commissioners.

Guidance, input, and direction in the planning process were also provided by the Estuary Advisory Committee, a diverse group representing a broad spectrum of community interests. The advisory group was facilitated by the nonprofit organization Oakland Sharing the Vision. This group also helped organize the community involvement process. Members of the Advisory Committee committed significant energy and effort to shaping the planning effort. They met nine times in public sessions, and hosted a public workshop with consultants and staff.

To assist in preparing the draft of the Estuary Plan, the Port and City engaged a team of consultants led by ROMA Design Group. ROMA served as the lead firm, directing the efforts of an Oakland-based team of consultants, including Hansen/Murakami/Eshima, associated architects; Hausrath Economics Group, urban economists; Gabriel-Roche, Inc., public participation and transportation; Korve Engineer-

ing, traffic engineering; as well as numerous others offering expertise in specialized technical areas.

PURPOSE & ROLE OF THE PLAN

The Estuary Policy Plan has been prepared in an attempt to address issues and concerns that have arisen related to continuity and accessibility of the shoreline, the quality and character of new development, and the relationship of the shoreline with surrounding districts and neighborhoods. More specifically, the plan builds upon the goals for the waterfront prepared by the General Plan Congress. The goals are summarized as follows:

- ❑ Increase the awareness of the waterfront throughout the city and region, and maximize the benefit of Oakland's waterfront for the people of the city.
- ❑ Promote the diversity of the waterfront by providing opportunities for new parks, recreation, and open space; cultural, educational and entertainment experiences; and new or revitalized retail, commercial and residential development.

- ❑ Enhance and promote the city's waterfront for the economic benefit of the community, with emphasis on Oakland's position as a leading West Coast maritime terminal and a primary Bay Area passenger and cargo airport.

- ❑ Connect the waterfront to the rest of the city, with emphasis on linking the adjacent neighborhoods and downtown directly to the waterfront, reducing physical barriers and the perception of isolation from the water's edge, and improving public access to and along the waterfront.

- ❑ Preserve and enhance the existing natural areas along the waterfront.

The Estuary Policy Plan is intended to be incorporated into the General Plan, which includes elements regarding Land Use & Transportation, Open Space, Conservation & Recreation (OSCAR), Historic Preservation, Housing, Noise and Safety.

Compared to the General Plan, the Estuary Policy Plan has a more focused geographic scope, and is therefore more specific in nature. In addition to policy recommendations that

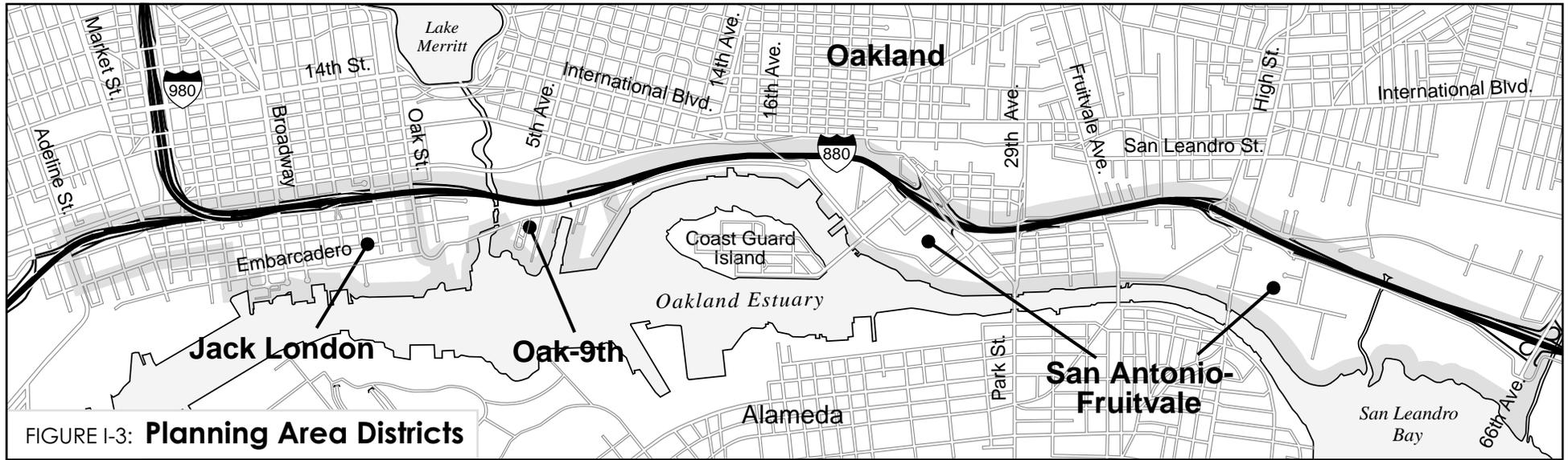


FIGURE I-3: **Planning Area Districts**

will be integrated into the General Plan, a companion document, the *Estuary Plan Implementation Guide*, will be prepared. The Implementation Guide will identify specific steps to be undertaken to implement the recommendations of the *Estuary Policy Plan*. These include detailed strategies and work programs to create and implement projects, site design and development standards, funding and institutional strategies, and other administrative steps necessary to carry out the *Estuary Policy Plan*.

Plan recommendations will also be reflected in the Oakland *Waterfront Public Access Plan*, which will identify public access opportunities for the entire Oakland waterfront. The *Estuary Policy Plan* may also serve as a basis for revisions and amendments to the BCDC *San Francisco Bay Area Seaport Plan*, plans for the regional San Francisco Bay Trail, and planning documents prepared by other regional agencies, such as the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD)

and the East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD).

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The *Estuary Policy Plan* presents recommendations related to land use, development, urban design, shoreline access, public spaces, regional circulation, and local street improvements for the entire waterfront and individual districts within it.

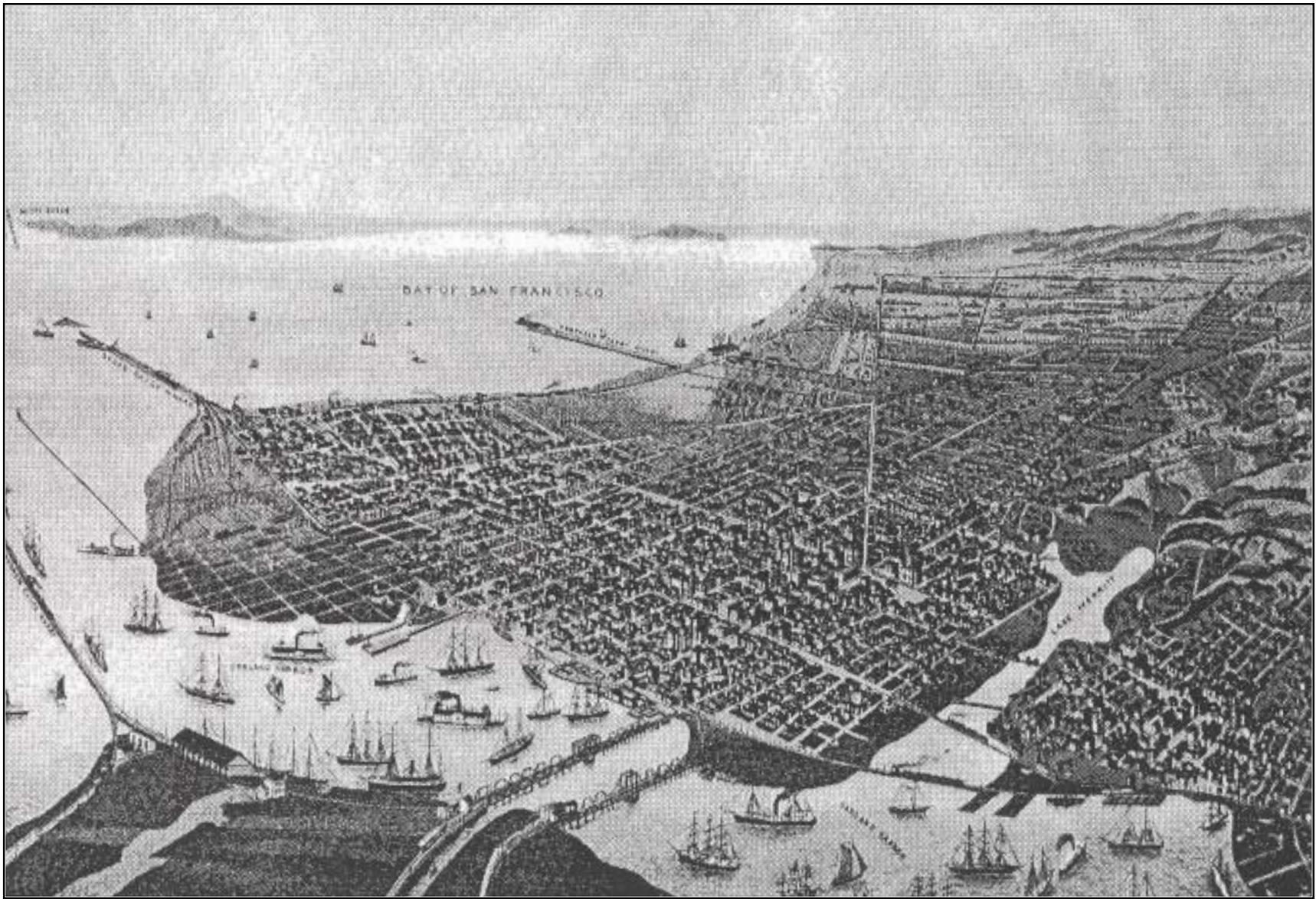
Section I includes all of the introductory elements, which provide an overview and summary of the planning process, the planning area and surrounding context, major plan concepts and recommendations.

Issues to be resolved, opportunities to improve the situation and objectives to be realized are described in **Section II** of the plan. They are organized by functional topics: Land Use, Shoreline Access, Public Spaces, Regional Circulation, and Local Street Improvements.

Section III of the plan recommends policies for each of the three districts within the Estuary planning area. As shown in Figure I-3, these districts include:

- ❑ ‘Jack London District’, extending from Adeline Street to Oak Street;
- ❑ ‘Oak-to-Ninth Avenue District’, from Oak Street to the Ninth Avenue Marine Terminal; and
- ❑ ‘San Antonio/Fruitvale District’, from 9th Avenue to 66th Avenue.

Section IV of the plan, entitled “*Moving Forward*”, describes the next steps in implementing the Policy Plan. It identifies the critical activities necessary to sanction the plan, gives decision-makers and staff direction to begin to implement the plan, and establishes the regulatory controls necessary to insure compliance with it.



Oakland's harbor circa 1882, at the present-day Jack London Waterfront, supported a diverse range of maritime and commercial activities.

The Estuary Shoreline

Oakland, California has a waterfront.

In Oakland, the shoreline of San Francisco Bay extends 19 miles, from San Leandro Bay to the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge. At its northern end, the shoreline is dominated by the Port of Oakland's marine terminals. At the southern end lies Oakland International Airport. Between the seaport and the airport is the five-and-a-half-mile Estuary shoreline (Figure I-4). The Oakland Estuary is one of California's most diverse shores, encompassing a variety of physical environments and settings, each with its own distinct quality and character.

Today, the Estuary can be viewed as a single community resource that binds together the shorelines of Alameda and Oakland. Compared to other parts of the bay, the Estuary is

more like a river. It is linear in form and contained, rather than open and expansive like the broader bay. It creates an environment that is intimate in scale and character. It frames dramatic views to the San Francisco and Oakland downtown skylines.

The Estuary is an urbanized edge that has developed over a span of more than 100 years of city history. Unlike the hillside areas of the city, this area is intensely developed, with urbanization extending all the way to the water's edge. Very little open space or vegetated area exists, with the notable exceptions of Estuary Park and the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Regional Shoreline.

Oakland's waterfront figures prominently in the history and life of the city. It is both the birthplace and birthright of what is now a mod-

ern city and national transportation hub. The settlement which became Oakland was first established on the Estuary, at a transshipment point where water-borne goods were off-loaded and transferred to transport and land networks.

Over the years, the waterfront has been dominated by the development of the Port of Oakland. Extensive backland area and rail connections have given the Port the competitive edge needed to become one of the largest container ports on the West Coast. Additionally, the Oakland Airport's central location within the prosperous bay region has made it one of the fastest growing air passenger and cargo facilities in the United States. These two centers support more than 20,000 direct jobs within the region, but they are both land intensive operations that make it difficult for residents to take advantage of the waterfront.

Most of the improvements were made once the City wrested control of the waterfront from the railroads in the early 1900s. The shoreline was extended westerly to the San Francisco incorporated limits following a momentous court case that finally settled the long-standing controversy between the City and the railroads over tidelands.

After that, Oakland experienced a period of city building that brought municipal docks, quays, wharves, and belt line railways to the waterfront.

With the advent of air travel in the late 1920s, the City acquired land for a commercial airport that became the starting point for many history-making transpacific flights. In 1936, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge was completed, signaling the emergence of the automobile for personal travel; thirteen years later, in 1949, the six-lane Eastshore Freeway (now I-880) was constructed through Oakland.

Following the ship-building years of World War II, Oakland's port facilities shifted to the Outer Harbor, where a good supply of backland could support containerized ship-

ping. This shift in technology proved to be a valuable investment for the City and the Port—one that would establish Oakland's position in the region and West Coast as a major international port of call for the transshipment of goods.

As a result of this growth, Oakland's waterfront has been dramatically transformed through filling, dredging, and shoreline stabilization efforts. The shoreline was once a series of coves, bays, inlets, and tidal marshlands fed by creeks and watercourses from the hills; over time, human activity advanced it incrementally outward into the bay. The Estuary was narrowed by filling and lengthened by dredging until it became a linear tidal canal that connects San Francisco Bay with San Leandro Bay.

At the same time, Oakland residents have long supported the notion of a commercial waterfront. A number of major investments in shoreline and infrastructure improvements were approved, primarily for the purpose of expanding trade and commerce.

In addition to the port facilities, the Estuary has historically served commercial and indus-

trial purposes. In the mid 1800s, the village of San Antonio on San Antonio Creek (now within the incorporated limits of Oakland) supported an active wharf and lumber industry supplied by redwoods from the nearby hills. In what is now Jack London District, early uses included fishing, shipping and maritime commerce, and iron works located along First and Second streets west of Broadway. With the advent of rail access, the Estuary became the terminus for agricultural goods and produce, and agricultural processing facilities, such as Con Agra, were also built.

In recent decades, the industrial and commercial character of the Estuary area have continued to evolve.

In the southern and inland portions of the shoreline (San Antonio, Fruitvale and Central East Oakland areas) business offices and large-scale commercial uses have been developed in what was once a traditional industrial area characterized by manufacturing and agricultural processing. Further to the north and west, in the area now known as Embarcadero Cove, hotels and motels, offices and restaurants have been built along the narrow stretch of shoreline once occupied by marine-related busi-

nesses, and marinas have been built along the water's edge, providing for recreational boating use.

The Ninth Avenue Terminal still remains in use—one of two such maritime facilities east of the Alameda-Oakland Tubes (the other being the Encinal Terminals across the Estuary in Alameda).

The Jack London District is far more commercially oriented than any other portion of the Estuary shoreline, and has seen the greatest amount of change along the waterfront in the past 20 years. The mix of restaurant, retail, theaters, entertainment and office uses has transformed Jack London Square into a primary entertainment venue, and has provided opportunities for Oakland residents and visitors to experience the waterfront.

Furthermore, the development of work/live housing has added to the traditional commercial manufacturing and industrial character of adjacent inland areas, and has helped to establish this inland area as a lively urban mixed-use district.

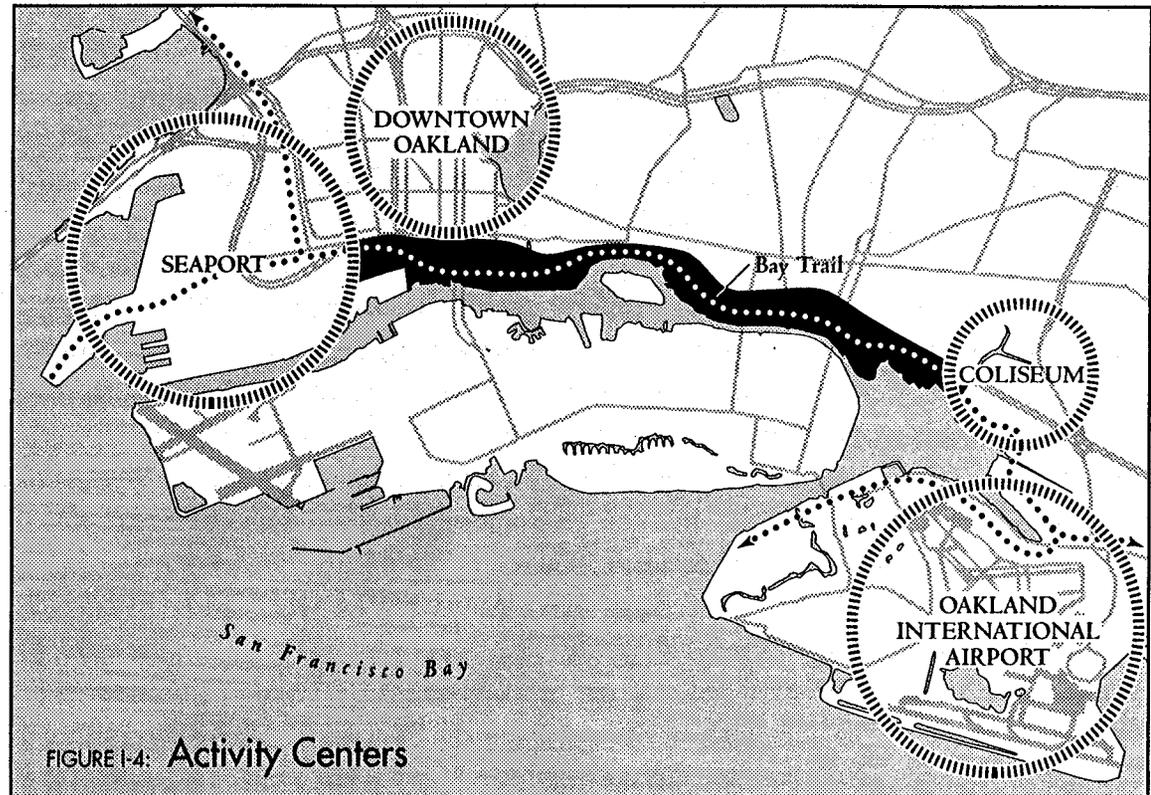


FIGURE I-4: Activity Centers

Throughout the Estuary, development patterns vary. There are large superblocks of industrial land; islands of remnant neighborhoods; the narrow, arching shoreline along the old Brooklyn Basin; and the urban grid that extends from the surrounding city through the Jack London District to the water. Variations in the urban pattern affect the opportunities for connection and infill development. For instance,

the grid pattern of streets and older warehouse buildings within the Jack London District creates an attractive urban scale that is well connected with the surrounding city.

On the other hand, barriers to the water exist in many forms along the Estuary. Interstate 880 is the most obvious of many physical barriers that separate the waterfront from the rest

of the city. At the Lake Merritt Channel, the rail lines, a major sewer line and the overhead freeway combine to create a formidable physical and visual barrier that interrupts the link between Lake Merritt and the Estuary. To the south of the Lake Merritt Channel, the freeway becomes an at-grade facility, and thus an even more imposing barrier.

Major thoroughfares, which traverse the entire length of the city, may lead to the Estuary shore, but often in an unceremonious fashion. Broadway, one of the city's most important streets, terminates in an ambiguous zone of parking, service delivery trucks, and pedestrians in the area south of the Embarcadero.

East of the Lake Merritt Channel, Fifth Avenue crosses under the freeway and changes alignment as it meets the Embarcadero. Other important streets— 16th Avenue, Fruitvale Avenue, High Street, and 29th Avenue/Park Street—enter the Estuary area, and immediately shift alignment or meet difficult intersections, and thus add to the overall sense of disorientation experienced along many portions of the waterfront today.

Throughout the study area, infrastructure and other built facilities are aging. Although there have been some recent transportation improvements (e.g., the Amtrak station at Jack London Square, removal of the Union Pacific tracks on 3rd St.), little investment has been made over the years in ongoing maintenance and repairs. There are many areas of the waterfront where improvements are needed, not so much to expand capacity, but to upgrade conditions. Along the I-880 freeway, which is now nearly 50 years old, substandard conditions exist relative to the spacing of intersections, and seismic improvements are needed. Roads and utilities need to be repaired, and in some areas the shoreline needs to be reinforced.

MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS

Like most other urban waterfronts, many governmental agencies have jurisdiction within the Estuary area (Figure I-5). The study area includes significant amounts of inland areas, within which the City has jurisdiction and provides regular municipal services. Planning and development within the jurisdiction of the city are subject to typical municipal regulatory review and permitting authority.

Also included in the study area are lands and water within the jurisdiction of the Port of Oakland. The Port is a unique agency of city government, which is given the responsibility by the Oakland City Charter to own, develop and manage lands along the Estuary within the specified area of Port jurisdiction.

In its development role, the Port acts as a landlord; offering sites to lease to the private development community and taking an active role in project development. The Port also has the unique authority to undertake its own land use planning, project planning, and project approval. It reviews and approves building projects on private property within its area of jurisdiction, and undertakes its own environmental review and certification process.

Although the Port manages these lands, it does so “in trust” on behalf of the State of California. Ultimate authority over their use is maintained by the California State Lands Commission under the public trust (aka ‘Tidelands Trust’) doctrine. Tidelands Trust properties are limited to uses that promote maritime trade, transportation and commerce, public recreation and open space.

Port jurisdiction includes a much larger area than Port-owned land within the Tidelands Trust, and includes private as well as public properties.

In addition to the City, the Port and State Lands Commission, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) exercises considerable influence over Estuary sites that lie within a 100-foot 'Shoreline Band' that surrounds the entire San Francisco Bay. Within its area of jurisdiction, BCDC insures that development is consistent with the *San Francisco Bay Plan* and the *San Francisco Bay Area Seaport Plan*. Additionally, BCDC reviews and has permit authority over all individual waterfront projects that are developed within the Shoreline Band, to insure that they maximize public access to the Bay and minimize the amount of bay fill that is used.

In addition, other large public property owners within the Estuary area will play a role in the implementation of this Plan. They include Alameda County, the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), and a myriad of state agencies with specific functional man-

dates. Also, a number of quasi-public agencies and institutions, including Laney College and the Peralta Community College District, control lands within the Lake Merritt Channel area.

Private land parcels tend to be relatively smaller in size, with the exception of certain industrial sites such as Con Agra and Owens-Brockway. However, some key parcels have been assembled under single ownership and could undergo dramatic changes. Such parcels include those associated with the Produce Market in the Jack London District, Fifth Avenue Point, and Tidewater Business Park.

TRENDS IN MILITARY USE OF THE SHORELINE

From a regional perspective, several current trends will help to shape the future of the Estuary. Perhaps the most significant of these is the changing status of military lands. For over 50 years, much of the shoreline in the Bay Area has been occupied by military uses established at the onset of World War II. Recent downsizing of the armed services has brought about the closure of many bases, amounting

to approximately 10,000 acres within the Bay Area.

In the East Bay, several military bases in Oakland and Alameda have closed; each with its own implications for the region and for the Estuary planning area. For instance, the 125-acre FISC site in Alameda, across the Estuary from Jack London Square, is being pursued as a mixed commercial, office and residential project, which would help to reinforce this part of the Estuary as an activity center.

Within Oakland, the reuse of the Oakland Army Base provides an opportunity to consolidate maritime activities away from the Inner Harbor into the Outer Harbor. Currently, significant portions of the Estuary area are used for maritime support: (e.g. truck and container storage, break-bulk cargo handling, and port-related operations). Locating these activities in areas such as the former army base could not only improve efficiency of operations, but also free up the Estuary shoreline for a variety of uses beneficial to surrounding neighborhoods.

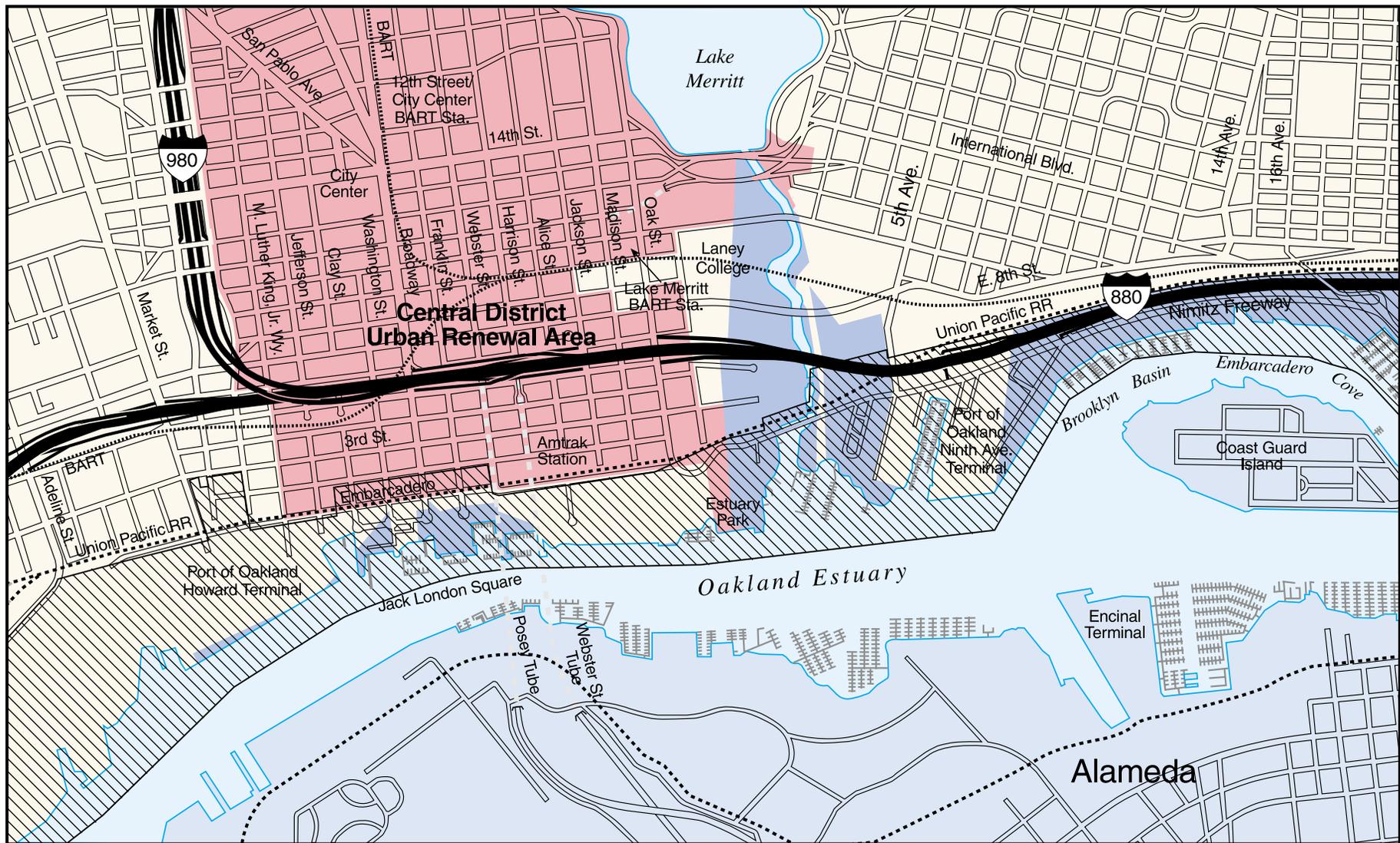
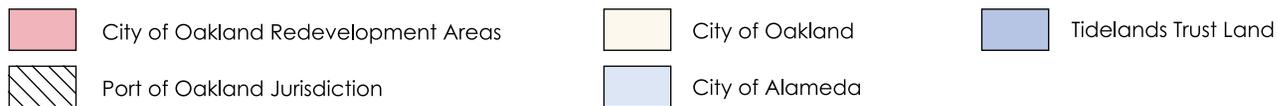
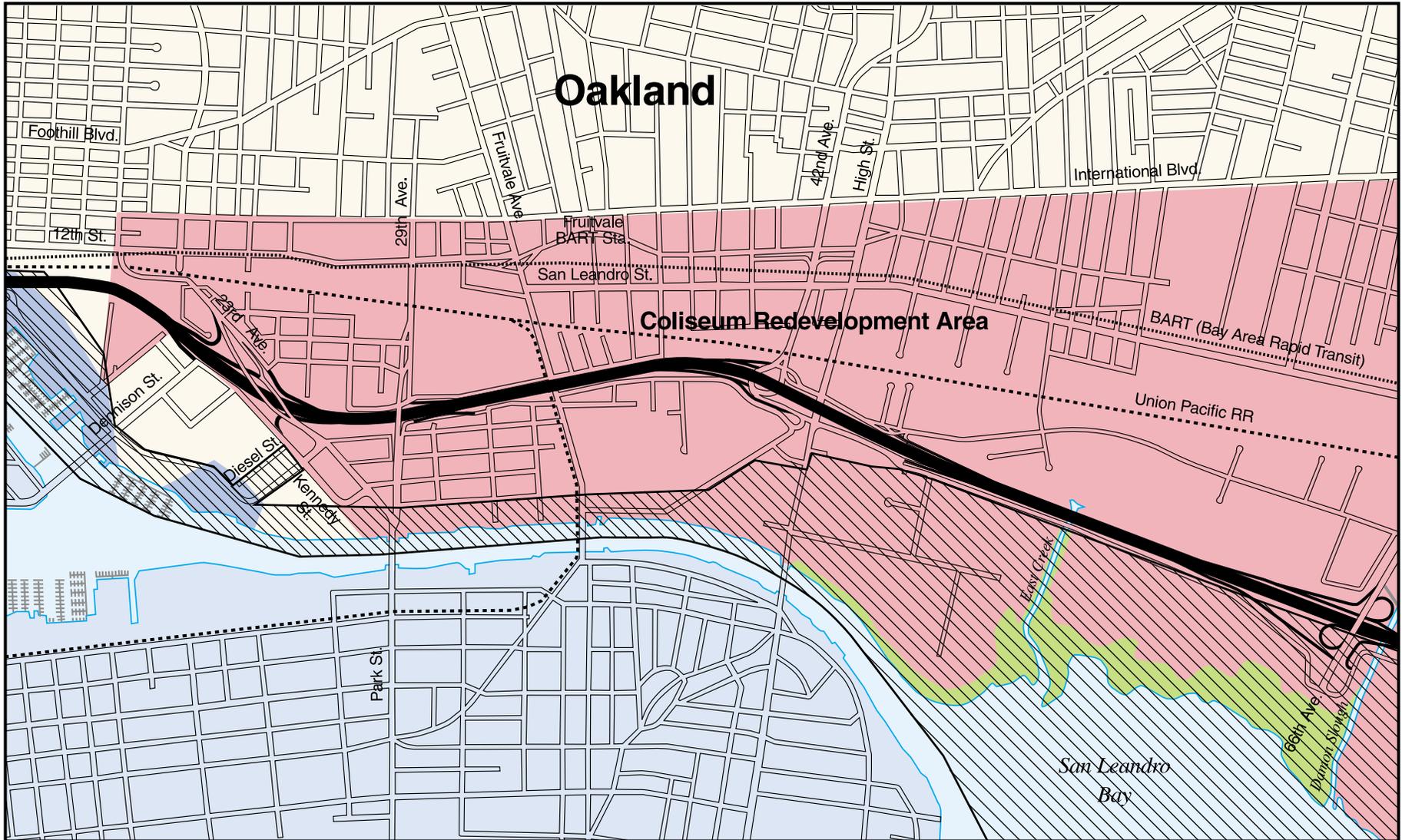


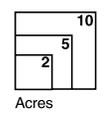
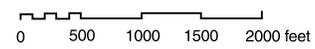
FIGURE I-5: **Jurisdictions**





Oakland

Coliseum Redevelopment Area



EMERGING ROLES FOR THE ESTUARY SHORELINE

Changes in military lands, transportation technology, and the economy of the city provide the opportunity to transform the declining industrial waterfront into one of the city's most vibrant and valuable assets. Already, a number of new roles for the Estuary have begun to emerge. They form the fundamental building blocks for the creation of an urban waterfront which accommodates diverse activities, and which is physically accessible to residents and visitors.

The Estuary area is a unique environment which intrinsically lends itself to active and passive recreation. The shoreline offers opportunities for a wide variety of water-oriented recreational activities, including fishing, viewing, sitting, bicycling, jogging, walking, and birdwatching. The Bay Trail and the MLK Regional Shoreline, in the southern portion of the estuary, contribute greatly to the emerging role of the Estuary as a place for recreation and open space.

As a protected water space, it is one of the most attractive sites within the Bay Region for water-oriented sports, particularly boating. Sailing has an established presence in the estuary, which has become the largest single focus of recreational boating in the Bay Area. There is a long-established tradition of rowing, canoeing and kayaking, all of which are well suited to the calm, smooth waters of the area.

Throughout the Estuary area, urban pioneering is underway, with the introduction of work/live and artist studio spaces into mature industrial and commercial districts. New neighborhoods are being established, and existing neighborhoods are expanding and diversifying. New uses are occupying older buildings, forming idiosyncratic combinations within distinctive districts.

Adjacent to downtown, the Jack London District is evolving into a citywide and regional center for urban recreational pursuits, including dining, shopping and entertainment.

Through the concerted efforts of the Port of Oakland, Jack London Square has also become the city's primary venue for celebrations, parades, races, and major events. The recent addi-

tion of the Jack London Cinema and Yoshi's jazz club to the existing restaurants has also contributed greatly to the attractiveness of the area as an entertainment destination in the East Bay.

Traditional industry, warehousing and general commercial uses continue to play an important part in maintaining the role of the Estuary as a place of employment.

Both traditional and emerging roles for the estuary area could be further reinforced as transportation projects are undertaken. The projects will create a stronger link between the waterfront and the surrounding city. Recent railroad consolidations resulted in the removal of one set of tracks that transverse the Estuary shoreline. Seismic improvements planned for the I-880 freeway by Caltrans offer the potential to modify existing interchanges and provide greater access to the waterfront.

Finally, public access improvements planned by the Port and City, in conjunction with the City of Alameda, will result in new opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle movement along the shoreline.

This is a unique moment in time for Oakland's waterfront. Guided by a long-range plan and goal for sustainability, livability, and accessibility, revitalization of the waterfront can occur, and the Estuary can become an attractive amenity that adds to the identity and overall livability of the city as a whole.

