

Director's Report – *Lake Merritt Station Area Plan***June 15, 2011****SUMMARY**

Staff has prepared this Director's Report to update the Commission on the status of the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan process currently underway.

The Lake Merritt Station Area Plan focuses on the neighborhoods and institutions surrounding the Lake Merritt BART station - which generally include the Chinatown business and residential districts, the Laney College campus, the Alameda County Courthouse, the Oakland Museum of California, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and a portion of both the East Lake and Waterfront Warehouse districts. One of the goals of this study is to encourage the growth of a new node of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) around the Lake Merritt BART station that will connect the neighborhood in one central place.

The Station Area Plan will propose land use changes in the station area that will reduce the barriers to increased transit use from both the immediate area and surrounding neighborhoods. By potentially increasing residential and commercial density, this plan will seek to create a core of beneficial activity around a rejuvenated transit station. Simultaneously, the plan will seek to reinforce and integrate the cultural and recreational resources that make this transit station unique, including Laney College, the Oakland Museum, and Lake Merritt and Channel Parks. As a part of this Station Area Plan, a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be completed, and necessary updates will be incorporated into the Oakland Zoning Code and General Plan.

The preparation of the Station Area Plan includes a comprehensive outreach effort that is being guided by community stakeholders representing a broad cross-section of the community. The planning process includes community workshops, public meetings, surveys, and print and web materials that integrate multilingual outreach. The ongoing outreach process has been designed to ensure authentic participation by both traditionally well-organized groups, such as local business improvement associations, homeowners, community based organizations and developers, as well as traditionally underrepresented lower-income, renter, and non-English speaking communities. Other targeted groups include the students and staff of Laney College, and current AC Transit and BART patrons.

Public Outreach Process

The Lake Merritt Station Area Plan process has been underway since 2009. The public outreach component of the planning process has included working with community-based organizations, the local business community, elected officials, area institutions, and neighborhood property owners and residents through a variety of community engagement methods - including surveys, interviews, focus groups and public workshops.

Two public workshops were held in February and March of 2011. Each of these workshops focused on a different geographic area within the plan boundary: the East Subarea, which encompasses Laney College, Oakland Museum of California, Alameda County Offices, and a portion of the Eastlake

district; and the West Subarea, which encompasses the greater Chinatown area. Attendees at these two public workshops sat in small groups and were led by facilitators through a series of mapping exercises to identify community-desired improvements related to three topics:

1. Major streets and improvements;
2. Building and services types; and
3. Parks and community facilities.

Each table was facilitated in one of four languages (English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese), so participants could freely discuss the topics in the language most comfortable to them. The following is a highlight of some of the key public feedback received during these subarea workshops:

- *Improve pedestrian safety with better lighting, bilingual signage, and crosswalks at key intersections;*
- *Calm traffic by reducing vehicle speed and converting select one-way streets to two-way;*
- *Enhance street design by widening sidewalks, and adding street trees and bus shelters;*
- *Provide better bike access around the BART station and on select streets throughout the area;*
- *Prioritize major intersections for improvements;*
- *Improve pedestrian crossings near Laney College on East 10th, 7th and Fallon Streets, near Chinese Garden Park on 7th Street; near Madison Park on 8th and 9th Streets; and near the BART station entrances on Oak and 9th Streets.*
- *Improve street design and connections at the I-880 freeway under-crossings;*
- *Improve connections between BART, Laney College, Chinatown, and the East Lake Neighborhood;*
- *Improve and expand the number and quality of parks and community centers;*
- *Parks, community centers, and other public uses were identified as being components of development on the BART blocks, in addition to office or residential development with ground-floor shopping and restaurants;*
- *Encourage a mix of shopping, restaurants, office, entertainment and residential uses throughout the area affordable to a wide range of incomes;*
- *Permit housing, public uses and parks near Lincoln Square;*
- *Permit office and housing adjacent to the freeway;*
- *Create inviting uses under the freeway, such as a “night market”;*
- *Many uses were identified for the Laney Parking Lot - such as retail, offices, college classrooms and a parking structure, among others; and*
- *Encourage development of housing in the East Lake Neighborhood.*

A Draft “Summary of Community Feedback” Report that contains detailed feedback from public workshops, community stakeholder group meetings, and focus groups is available on the project website: <http://www.business2oakland.com/lakemerrittsap>

The next step in the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan process is to continue to work over the summer with the project's Community Stakeholder Group (CSG) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and make the difficult decisions necessary to refine the overall list of community-desired improvements to create a feasible draft plan for the area. Some of the tough questions and considerations include:

- What are the priority streets for traffic and streetscape improvements? What street should be designated and improved to serve as the neighborhood's “Main Street”?
- How can the edges and underpasses of I-880 be improved to lessen the highway's impacts?
- What are the preferred building heights and land uses along the length of key street corridors?
- How should parking be managed in the station area?

- How can pedestrian connections be improved to Lake Merritt, the channel, and estuary?
- What are the key measures that can be implemented to help local businesses be more successful?
- What could serve as a “catalyst project” to help jumpstart district improvements?

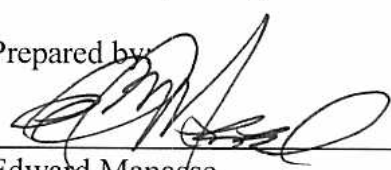
Next Steps

The most current project schedule is included in **Attachment A** and described in the following paragraphs:

As mentioned earlier, staff will be facilitating an important series of CSG and TAC meetings over the summer to help shape completion by fall 2011 of what is being called a “Draft Emerging Plan” for the Lake Merritt Station Area. The draft Emerging Plan will translate the community’s ideas and work-to-date into initial concepts and feasible proposals for the area. Another public workshop will then be held, also in the fall, to review the concepts contained in the draft Emerging Plan.


After community and stakeholder review of the draft Emerging Plan, a Preferred Plan will be developed. The Preferred Plan will build on the draft concepts in the Emerging Plan to create a more fully developed and vetted proposal. The Preferred Plan will also be reviewed by stakeholder groups, advisory boards (including the Planning Commission) and elected officials. The resulting Draft Station Area Plan will then be studied for its potential environmental impacts as part of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Final review of the Station Area Plan, along with the project EIR and all required Zoning and General Plan changes, is expected to be complete by December 2012.

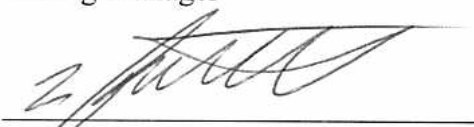
Prepared by:



Edward Manasse,
Interim Strategic Planning Manager

Approved by:



Scott Miller,
Zoning Manager

Eric Angstadt,
CEDA Deputy Director
Community and Economic Development Agency

Attachment

- A. Project Schedule – Lake Merritt Station Area Plan

**Lake Merritt Station Area Plan
Project Schedule**

May2, 2011

Meeting/Product	Date	Goal & Outcome	Detail
CSG Working Meeting	5/2/2011	Finalize refinement of overall concepts from east and west subarea workshops: key points of agreement and conflict and key questions/topics to present at Combined Subarea Workshop.	
Final Summary of Community Feedback Report	6/13/2011 (week of)	Final Report - Summary of findings and conclusions to date (including, but not limited to workshop feedback)	Available in advance of next CSG working meetings.
CSG/TAC Working Meetings	6/27/2011	Based on all of the feedback to date, the CSG and TAC will develop an Emerging Plan with mini-alternatives, focusing on prioritizing goals, resolving issues, and developing solutions.	Land use and overall circulation, character and design
	7/18/2011	D&B will provide technical analysis and mapping for meetings. The results of these meetings will be taken to the ExCSG and TAC for further refinement.	Circulation, access, and streetscape
	8/8/2011		Public resources: public facilities, open space, entertainment, schools
Draft Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives Analysis Report	9/5/2011 (week of)	Compiles findings to date, including a summary of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Feasibility • Discussion of average cost and benefits of including green building requirements (based solely on research provided by the City of Oakland). • Discussion of socioeconomic challenges identified and how they will be addressed. • BART Ridership and Station Access • Role of Station Area relative to Chinatown, Downtown, Jack London Square, and other retail areas in Oakland • Job Generation and Types of Jobs • Transportation and Transit Issues and Potential Impacts, including cursory traffic demand assessment • Parking Issues and Potential Impacts, and demand assessment • Infrastructure Issues and Potential Impacts • Site Planning and Architectural Issues – Opportunities and Constraints • Quantitative breakdown of the development potential under any mini-alternatives. 	
Public Workshop	9/7/2011	Review Emerging Plan Concepts	
TAC Meeting	9/12/2011	Staff from City and other public agencies will provide technical review of work to date, and further refine/ resolve any conflicts as needed.	
CSG Working Meeting	9/26/2011	Review Draft Emerging Plan.	
Executive CSG Meeting	9/28/2011	Review the work of the CSG to date and further refine/ resolve any conflicts as needed.	
Final Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives Analysis Report	10/10/2011 (week of)	Final Report	
Working Draft of Land Use, Circulation, Access and Parking Plans, and Building Design Standards	10/17/2011 (week of)	The report will include graphic depictions of the land use plan with accompanying text. Photos, illustrations, sections, and/or axonometric drawings would illustrate building massing, streetscape design, and other key urban design features. Photos of comparable projects would also be included.	
TAC Working Meeting	10/24/2011	Review Working Draft of Land Use, Circulation, Access and Parking Plans and Building Standards	
CSG Working Meeting	11/14/2011	Provide feedback on Working Draft Land Use, Circulation, Access and Parking Plans, and Building Design Standards and identify key topics to address at the upcoming community meeting and open house.	
Public Draft Land Use, Circulation, Access and Parking Plans, and Building Design Standards	11/17/2011 (week of)		
Grants Management Committee Meeting	12/1/2011 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance.	
Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting (PRAC)	12/14/2011 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance.	

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Project Schedule**

May2, 2011

Meeting/Product	Date	Goal & Outcome	Detail
Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Meeting (LPAB)	12/12/2011 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance.	
Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting	12/15/2011 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance.	
Planning Commission Meeting	1/18/2012 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance.	
CED Committee (subcommittee of the City Council) Meeting	2/28/2012 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance.	
City Council Meeting	3/6/2012 (week of)	Review Emerging Plan and Mini-Alternatives; receive feedback and guidance. This will be the Preferred Plan that will be further developed as the Draft Plan in the next phase.	
EIR - Project Description, NOP, Scoping	May 2012	Begins the formal Environmental Impact Review process based on the Draft Plan	
Admin Draft Plan	June to December 2012	Complete administrative draft of the Plan, based on the Preferred Plan.	Meetings include: TAC, CSG, Grants Management, Community Workshop (Draft Plan & Draft EIR Open House), LPAB, PRAC, Planning Commission, City Council
Draft EIR		Draft EIR for public review	
Draft Zoning & GP Amendment		Draft amendments based on the Draft Plan	
Public Review		Public review (EIR) and review by City Council, Planning Commission, and Boards.	
Final EIR, Plan, Zoning, and GP Amendments		Finalize Plan, EIR, Zoning, and GP amendments based on final review period.	