



2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section summarizes some key topics and possibilities identified throughout the report. These include defining sub-areas, summarizing main topics, and identifying potential possibilities for the Plan.

2.1 Focus Area and Sub-Areas

Based on analysis of the Planning Area, a revised Focus Area and sub-areas are identified. The half-mile radius remains the Planning Area. The sub-areas are not immovable boundaries, but rather distinctions that serve to better understanding of the existing context in the Planning Area. Several sub-areas lack ground floor uses and/or have a sense of isolation and desolation. These desolate areas limit connectivity and are often areas in which safety is a concern. These areas are in need of improvements to increase safety and vibrancy, which may include streetscape improvements or new development that activates the street. Figure 2.1 shows the sub-areas, which include:

Chinatown Commercial

The Chinatown Commercial sub-area is a well established mixed-use neighborhood, and one of the most vibrant retail districts in the City of Oakland. The commercial core of Chinatown is identified as the bustling commercial center that reflects a strong sense of community and identity. The Chinatown Commercial sub-area is a major asset for the Planning Area and the area with the most street and commercial activity. The majority of active ground floor uses in the Planning Area are located in this sub-area. Some streetscape improvements have been made to the area in recent years, as described in Chapter 7.

Chinatown Residential

This area of Chinatown includes the largest concentration of residential uses in the Planning Area. This area was historically larger and was hemmed in through major infrastructure projects such as the BART system and I-880. The Chinatown Residential sub-area is largely residential, with some parks, schools, local services, and small businesses. This area includes all three of the urban parks in the area. This area also lacks active ground floor uses, resulting in some streets that feel desolate and unsafe. This residential sub-area is between the Lake Merritt BART Station and the Chinatown Commercial sub-area.

14th Street Corridor

The 14th Street Corridor is a distinct retail, office, and residential corridor beginning at the edge of Lake Merritt and running to the edge of Downtown Oakland. The area includes the Oakland Public Library, several small shops and restaurants, a County office building, and a new residential building, though the street generally lacks cohesiveness and includes many potential development sites. While there are some active ground floor uses, they are not continuous except in a few locations and therefore do not create a cohesive retail corridor. The area is the southern edge of the Lakeside Apartment Historic District.

Government

This sub-area is made up of the County offices, court house, and parking, as well as the Post Office. This area is a major employment destination, but lacks businesses and active ground floor uses after 5:00 p.m.

BART/ABAG/MTC

The BART/ABAG/MTC sub-area consists of the three blocks that include the Lake Merritt BART Station and control center, and the BART/ABAG/MTC office building. This sub-area is the center of the Planning Area, and was historically part of the Chinatown Residential sub-area before being taken by eminent domain for its current uses. While the BART Station is a clear asset for transportation access in the area, the sub-area is somewhat desolate and in need of improved linkages to the rest of the Planning Area.

Cultural/ Educational

The Cultural/Educational sub-area is made up of OMCA, the Kaiser Convention Center, Laney College, parking lot and sports fields, Peralta administration buildings, Oakland Unified School District schools and administrative offices, and the Channel. These institutions sit on the largest parcels in the Planning Area and contain some of the largest buildings. Due to the large block and building size, and lack of active ground floor uses, this sub-area includes large areas that are not pedestrian friendly and that are somewhat desolate after dark. However, the arts, cultural, and educational activities that occur in this sub-area do add vibrancy to the Planning Area. This sub-area is currently difficult for pedestrians to traverse due to the alignment of 12th Street, but will be improved following the 12th Street Reconstruction.



The Chinatown Commercial sub-area is a vibrant retail district.



The Chinatown Residential sub-area is characterized one- to two-story residential uses.



On the 14th Street Corridor some new development has occurred with retail at the ground floor.



The government district includes the County Courthouse and County offices.



The BART Station is the most active part of the BART/ ABAG sub-area.

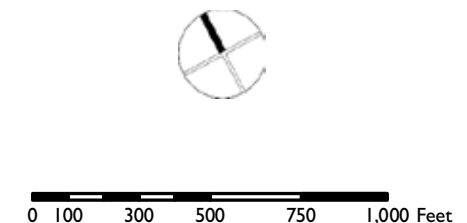


The cultural/educational area includes Laney College and its associated playing fields and parkland.



Figure 2.1:
SUB-AREAS

- BART Station Entrance
- BART Station
- Lake Merritt BART Station
- Park
- City Right of Way
- Sub-area
- Revised Focus Area
- Planning Area - 1/2 Mile Radius



Source: City of Oakland and Dyett and Bhatia, 2009.

East Lake Gateway

The East Lake area is centered on International Boulevard, the beginning of a larger commercial corridor and residential neighborhood to the east of the lake. Access from the East Lake neighborhood to the rest of the Planning Area will be facilitated by the 12th Street Reconstruction, described in Chapters 3 and 4. This increased access will make the East Lake Gateway area a critical connection between the neighborhoods to the east and the Planning Area.

I-880

This area is important to the Planning Area due to safety concerns related to crossing under the freeway and therefore the boundary that it creates between the Jack London District and the rest of the Planning Area. In addition, the freeway is the source of several other issues in the Planning Area including air quality impacts and traffic concerns related to the freeway and access to the City of Alameda.

Fallon Street Industrial

This sub-district is largely industrial and links the Planning Area to the planned Oak to Ninth development and to Estuary Park.

Jack London District South of I-880

The Jack London District south of I-880, also known as Jack London Neighborhood, is part of the Estuary Policy Plan. The character of this area is already largely defined and therefore is not included in the Focus Area.

Lakeside Apartment District

The Lakeside Apartment District south of I-880, also known as the Gold Coast, was carefully considered as part of the CBD rezoning effort in 2009. As such heights and development regulations for this area are already largely defined, this area is not included in the Focus Area.



The East Lake Gateway consists of a mix of uses that connect the Planning Area to the commercial corridor along International Boulevard.



The Jack London District has extensive renovated and new housing.



The I-880 under crossing has been identified as a sub-area due to the importance of increasing access through addressing safety concerns.



The Lakeside Apartment District is a beautiful apartment district.



The Fallon Street Industrial sub-area is currently characterized by warehouses.

2.2 Chapter Summary

This section provides summaries of the key topics discussed in each chapter as they are relevant to the Planning Area. Detailed discussions of each topic summarized here are found throughout the report. The opportunities and challenges these topics present establish a basis for the development of the Station Area Plan.

Existing Plans and Zoning

Existing Plans and zoning will provide guidance for the Station Area Plan, offer useful tools, and establish limitations that will require consideration under the Station Area Plan.

The General Plan land use designation for a majority of the Planning Area is the Central Business District (CBD). The General Plan provides guidance for the desired character and land uses of an area, and includes several policies related to promoting transit oriented development. Most of the Planning Area is part of the recently completed Central Business District (CBD) Rezoning, which established separate zones for regulating height, FAR, and density. There were no height limits in the old zoning; heights in CBD now range from 55 to no limit (with additional regulations for towers). Most buildings are well below the allowable height, density, and FAR requirements. Zoning for height, bulk, and intensity is described in greater detail in Chapter 5. Commercial corridor rezoning is currently underway, including the International Boulevard Corridor in the north-east corner of the Planning Area. Land use and development regulation changes identified in the Station Area Plan will take the place of existing zoning.

There are several City of Oakland policy plans, measures, and master plans that are relevant to the Planning Area. The Oakland Estuary Policy Plan regulates development in the Jack London District, and the Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan regulates historic resources throughout the Planning Area. Measure DD authorized the City to issue bonds to fund improved or new recreational facilities in Oakland and improved water quality at Lake Merritt. The major components of measure DD that affect the Planning Area include improvements for Lake Merritt and Lake Merritt Channel, importantly including the 12th Street realignment, Oakland waterfront trail and access, as well as creeks restoration, preservation and acquisition. Measure DD is closely related to the recommendations found in the 2002 Lake Merritt Park Master Plan, which sets goals for improvements to Lake Merritt Park. The 2002 Pedestrian Master Plan ensures pedestrian access and safety while the

2007 Bicycle Master Plan aims to promote bicycling in Oakland. Pedestrian and bicycle conditions are described in greater detail in Chapter 7.

The Planning Area is part of two Redevelopment Project Areas: Central City East and the Central District. Both districts have identified a range of projects in their respective implementation plans, which may be useful in implementing the Station Area Plan. Other applicable studies and plans include the guidance on transit oriented development from MTC, BART and the State, 2009 Lake Merritt BART Station Area Community Engagement Report, which summarizes community outreach for the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan, and the 2009 Peralta District Administrative Complex Facilities Master Plan and 2010 Laney College Facilities Master Plan, which outlines future facilities improvements for Laney College.

Land Uses

Currently 31% of the Planning Area is made up of public and institutional uses, which are focused around the Channel, in the Educational/Cultural sub-area. About 17% of the Planning is residential, and of the residential uses about 95% are multifamily. 15% of the Planning Area is parkland, 7% is mixed use, and 5% is parking. Active ground floor uses, including retail services and businesses are concentrated primarily in and around the Chinatown Commercial sub-area. The Chinatown Commercial Area is one of the most vibrant and economically active areas in the City. The rest of the area is made up of a variety of uses, described in greater detail in Chapter 4.

There are a number of affordable housing projects in the Planning Area, representing about 30% of the existing 6,200 units in the Planning Area. Given the demographics of the Planning Area and input from the Community Engagement Process led in 2009, affordable housing for seniors, as well as affordable housing that meets the needs of families, is very important and will play an important role in the Station Area Plan.

Over 1,800 residential units have been recently completed in the Planning Area, with an additional 1,200 units proposed or approved. Given the current economic climate, it is uncertain if proposed and approved projects will be completed as originally proposed. Important proposed and approved projects that surround the Planning Area include the Oak to 9th project, which will add over 3,000 units and 32 acres of parks and open



Several recent private development projects have been completed in the Planning Area. This project was completed in 2009.



The Laney Parking lot is a large inefficiently-used site in the Planning Area. Demand currently exceeds the number of available spaces.



The 12th Street reconstruction will be a transformative project for the area, by increasing access to and from Lake Merritt and the Channel.

space, and the Alameda Point Redevelopment which could have traffic implications for the Planning Area. In addition, several public space and waterfront improvements are planned for the area, including Measure DD projects and public open space as part of the Oak to 9th Project. These projects will be transformative for the Planning Area. The 12th Street Reconstruction, part of Measure DD, started construction in May 2010 and will increase access to the Planning Area from the east and improve access to waterfront parks along the Channel. These projects provide a context for growth and development in the area.

Urban Design

Consideration of urban design will be a key element of the Station Area plan as it impacts the character and aesthetic quality of the Planning Area.

The majority of roadways in the Planning Area are designed in a typical system with blocks that measure 1.6 acres in size. The major exception to this pattern is in the Educational/Cultural sub-area where the block sizes are much larger. Parcel sizes are relatively small in the Chinatown Commercial and Chinatown Residential sub-areas while larger parcels can be found for government buildings, such as the post office and court, and public facilities such as schools. Larger parcels can also be found south of I-880, as a result of warehousing or other industrial uses. In the Educational/Cultural sub-area, buildings such as Laney College and the Oakland Museum of California are built over multiple blocks.

Most of the buildings in the Planning Area are built at or close to the sidewalk edge. Ground floor conditions vary throughout the Planning Area. The Chinatown Commercial sub-area has smaller scaled pedestrian storefronts while institutional buildings often have long blank facades. Existing building heights vary throughout the Planning Area, as does architectural style. The different buildings in the Planning Area reflect the history of the community and the evolution of the Planning Area. New buildings will have to be carefully integrated into the existing urban fabric, respecting existing historic resources and contributing positively to the urban character of the Planning Area.

The recent CBD rezoning established Height, Bulk, and Intensity areas within the CBD. In general, existing FAR, density, and height is less than what is allowed, indicating that there is much potential for growth in the Planning Area from a regulatory standpoint.

Streetscape amenities typically include street trees, pedestrian-oriented lighting, and furnishings. However, they can also include storefronts and other architectural features, public art, and adja-

cent public spaces such as plazas, squares and greens. Overall streetscape conditions are strictly “utilitarian” throughout the Lake Merritt Plan Area, i.e. limited in focus to auto circulation. There are few streetscape amenities of the kind that create a supportive environment for living, working, shopping, or attracting significant private sector investment. There are very few facilities to encourage walking and transit use, such as corner curb bulb-outs, bus shelters, or directional signage. Street trees exist only along the frontages of recent development projects.

Streetscape character can affect public safety in many ways. In the Planning Area, certain street crossings are unsafe, particularly for seniors. In addition, sidewalk widths in certain areas such as along Webster, 9th, and 8th streets are often too narrow to accommodate pedestrians, sidewalk merchandise displays, and truck unloading activity that occurs during peak evening and weekend business periods. Some areas within the Planning Area lack active street frontages, adequate lighting, and pedestrian activity, which contribute to the perceived danger of walking around at night. The city of Oakland uses the Crime prevention through Environmental Design Program (CPTED) in the pre-application/permit phases of project review to help address some of these design issues that contribute to perceived dangers in the Planning Area.

Socioeconomic Issues and Property Characteristics

About 64% of the Planning Area population is Asian/Pacific Islander, 13% are African-American, 12% are White, and 11% belong to Other Races. Of the 64% who are Asian/Pacific Islander, 84% are Chinese. The Planning Area population has a fairly small household size – 1.94 persons per household – compared to the average household size of Oakland (2.65). The median age of the Planning Area population (46) is higher than that of Oakland (37), largely because of fewer children. Approximately 30% of the Planning Area population is age 60 or older. Household income within the Planning Area is lower than that of Oakland. In the Planning Area, approximately 33% of households have an income of less than \$15,000, compared to 13% in Oakland.

About 40% of jobs in the Planning Area are service jobs. These include health, educational, recreational, financial, and professional jobs. Jobs categorized as ‘other’ make up an additional 40% of jobs. Retail jobs provide 14% of jobs in the Planning Area. In a 2007 report, the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce identifies the following high opportunity sectors for Oakland – arts, design, and digital media, biotechnology, food manufacturing, green industry, healthcare and social assis-

TABLE 2.1: HOUSEHOLD GROWTH PROJECTIONS

EXISTING HOUSEHOLDS IN THE PLANNING AREA IN 2005 (BY CMA TAZ) ¹ : 9,044 ²						
ACTUAL AVERAGE ANNUAL UNITS DEVELOPED BETWEEN 2005 AND 2009 (BOOM): ³ 310						
	PROJECTION	AVERAGE UNITS DEVELOPED PER YEAR	TOTAL NEW 2005–2035	TOTAL NEW LESS 1,500 COMPLETED MAJOR PROJECTS	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS IN 2035	% INCREASE FROM 2005–2035
High	ACCMA Projections 2005–2035	351	10,500	9,000	19,600	115%
Moderate	70% of ACCMA Projections ⁴	246	7,400	5,900	16,400	82%
Low	50% of ACCMA Projections	175	5,300	3,800	14,300	59%
<div>1 TAZ data is from the ACCMA model, derived from ABAG 2007 Projections.</div> <div>2 Excluding TAZ 265 (Oak to Ninth).</div> <div>3 Based on completed major projects in the Planning Area: 1,500 units</div> <div>4 The 70% of ABAG Projections is consistent with the growth projected using the Claritas annual growth rate of 2.01% (from 2000 to 2014)</div>						

Sources: Dyett & Bhatia, 2009; California Department of Finance, 2009; MTC 1454 zone tabulations of ABAG Projections 2005 and 2007; Census 2000 (SF1 and CTPP 2000); Economic & Planning Systems (2005); Dowling Associates (2008).

TABLE 2.2: EMPLOYMENT GROWTH PROJECTIONS

EXISTING JOBS IN THE PLANNING AREA IN 2005 (BY ACCMA TAZ) ¹ : 30,500						
	PROJECTION	ANNUAL NEW SQUARE FEET	NEW JOBS 2005–2035	TOTAL NEW SQ FOOTAGE (350 SF/ JOB)	TOTAL JOBS 2035	% INCREASE FROM 2005–2035
High	ACCMA Projections 2005–2035 ^{2,3}	86,000	7,300	2,600,000	38,000	24%
Moderate	70% of CMA Projections	60,200	5,100	1,800,000	36,000	17%
Low	50% of CMA Projections	43,000	3,700	1,300,000	34,000	12%
<div>1 TAZ data is from the CMA model, derived from ABAG 2007 Projections.</div> <div>2 Excluding TAZ 265 (Oak to Ninth).</div> <div>3 Consistent annual rate of growth with the DOF 2006-2016 Occupational Employment Projections for Oakland-Fremont-Hayward Metro Division (~0.7% annually)</div>						

Sources: Dyett & Bhatia, 2009; California Department of Finance, 2009; MTC 1454 zone tabulations of ABAG Projections 2005 and 2007; Census 2000 (SF1 and CTPP 2000); Economic & Planning Systems (2005); Dowling Associates (2008).

tance, trade and logistics, and retail. Laney College, in partnership with local industry, community based organizations, and government agencies, provides extensive job training programs for students.

Nearly half of the land in the Planning Area, and the majority of large parcels, is publicly owned. Of particular importance to the Chinatown community are the three publicly owned blocks that include the two BART blocks and Madison Park. The history of these blocks and their importance to the community is described in Chapter 9. The Peralta Community College District is the largest owner, with 63 acres. Just over half of the land in the Planning Area is owned by private owners. Most private owners own only one small parcel in the Planning Area, with one quarter of an acre the average size for privately owned parcels. However, there are a large number of privately owned parcels that are over a half-acre and about 30 that are over an acre.

Many sites in the Planning Area are identified as underutilized. For instance, many sites are built to less than 50% of their allowable FAR or height. In addition, when properties are evaluated based on the ratio of the value of improvements completed to the value of the land, several properties have a low ratio, indicating that they are underutilized. About 68% of properties have an improvement value to land value ratio of 2 or less, and 30% of properties have an improvement to land value ratio of less than one. Where the ratio is less than one it indicates that the land itself is worth more than the building or other improvements made to the property. The identification of underutilized sites was used in identifying opportunity sites, discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.

Based on ABAG Projections 2007, the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMA) allocation of projected growth by TAZ, and recent development in the Planning Area, three growth projections were developed for the Planning Area. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 show the high, moderate, and low projections for housing and employment. Projections are described at greater length in Chapter 6, including an analysis of the potential capacity of opportunity sites to accommodate the various growth scenarios.

Circulation

Several studies and reports have documented transportation in the Planning Area, specifically in regards to BART use, improving the transportation network in Chinatown, and improving conditions for pedestrians and bicycles. Recommendations made in these reports will be considered in the Station Area Plan.

Key pedestrian activity areas include Chinatown Commercial area, Lincoln Park, Laney College, Jack London Square, and major employers in the area, such as the County offices and BART/ABAG. In addition, the Lake Merritt BART station is a major destination for walking trips in the Planning Area. The flat terrain and grid street network in the Planning Area provides ample opportunity for bicycling, though existing bikeways in the Planning Area are limited. The majority of users access the Station by walking and many use bikes.

However, pedestrian access through the Planning Area is limited for various reasons, which limits use of and collaboration between existing assets. Some reasons for limited connectivity include:

- Access around or under I-880 is constricted by the freeway and can be dangerous due to the heavy right-turning vehicle traffic on city streets for ramp access.
- Concerns of safety related both to traffic and crime.
- Access to the Lake Merritt BART Station is limited by the inability to cross 12th and 14th Streets between Oak Street and Lakeshore Avenue, though the 12th Street reconstruction project should address this concern, and the uninviting underpass areas created by I-880.
- Laney College, while providing non-motorized access through the campus, faces challenges to promoting safe and unlimited pedestrian and bicycle access, including:
 - On the eastern side of campus where the fenced, recreational fields are located.
 - 7th Street between Fallon Street and 5th Avenue, which separates the main campus from the surface parking lot, is a very long, heavily trafficked segment with fenced median. A signalized pedestrian crossing is located midblock on 7th Street to connect Laney’s parking lot to the campus.
 - The pedestrian under-crossing along the Lake Merritt Channel is often flooded and lacks lighting.
 - The intersection at 7th and Fallon streets is wide and subject to heavy vehicle turns with no pedestrian crossing aids on the north leg.

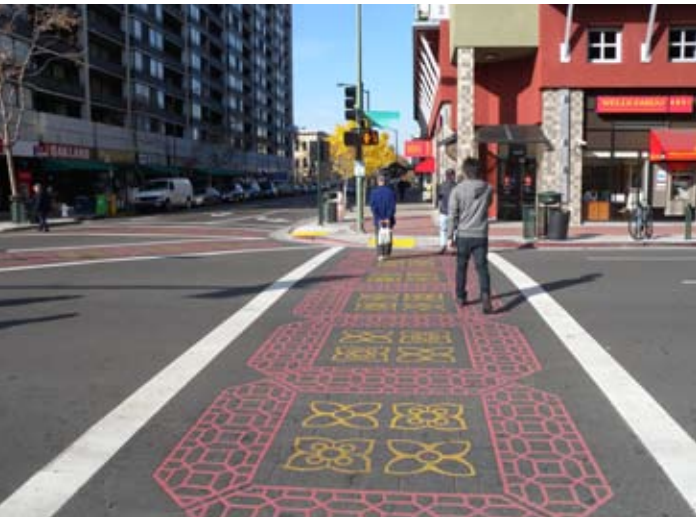
- The intersection at 8th and Fallon streets provides no pedestrian crossing aids at all, despite its location between Laney College and Lake Merritt BART.
- The crossing at 9th and Fallon streets provides the main pedestrian access to the campus from the BART station.

An extensive transit network exists in the Planning Area, including BART, bus, Amtrak, ferry, and shuttle services. Transit access to the Planning Area will be improved through planned improvements, including AC Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route along 12th Street and the shuttle connecting Jack London Square to Broadway. Additional improvements, such as providing transit facilities and amenities (i.e. benches, shelters, trash receptacles, lighting, landscaping), as well as promoting transit-oriented development in the area, would increase transit ridership in the area.

The local street network in the immediate vicinity of the Lake Merritt BART Station generally provides adequate capacity to accommodate automobile traffic, even during the weekday peak hours, with the exception of key intersections located near the freeway entrances/exits and locations that provide connections to the City of Alameda. However, most of the intersections within the Planning Area are operating at acceptable levels of service, which promotes vehicular travel and indicates that there is an opportunity to accommodate future growth in the area.

Vehicular access to the Lake Merritt BART station is constrained due to lack of public commuter parking supply at the station. Increased commuter parking supply to serve this station would likely result in increased BART patronage. However this is an urban setting defined under BART, and thus is not designated for large areas of surface parking. Another constraint is insufficient existing space for drop-offs and pick-ups.

Parking supply in the Planning Area includes on-street and off-street parking. On-street metered and non-metered parking is available along many streets in the Planning Area. Issues regarding on-street parking include parking violations such as exceeding the parking time limits on Sundays, parking in red zones and loading zones by non-commercial vehicles, and double parking by both cars and commercial vehicles that are loading/off-loading. Off-street parking is accommodated in many of the parking lots located within the Planning Area. According to the Revive Chinatown Plan, parking facilities in the Chinatown Commercial sub-area are not being parked at full capacity.



Scramble crossings and special pavement have been installed at a few intersections in Chinatown to increase pedestrian safety.



BART is a major transit resource in the Planning Area.



Few opportunities to cross 7th Street result in unsafe pedestrian conditions.

Community Services, Cultural Resources, and Public Facilities

The Planning Area is rich with cultural resources, particularly in the Chinatown Commercial sub-area, which serves the local and regional Asian communities. Cultural resources include recreational facilities, libraries, shopping, schools, and services, family and regional associations, and churches, and are critical to the identity and use of the area. There are a number of service providers in the area who focus on the needs of Asian and Pacific Islander. Services include, but are not limited to, health, housing, educational, and youth programs. In addition, Laney College and the Oakland Museum of California offer a wide variety of cultural programs that serve an extremely diverse community. These rich assets establish a strong community character in the Station Area.

There are several schools located within the Planning Area. Laney College is located at 900 Fallon Street, adjacent to the BART Station, and offers a diverse number of academic programs. There are two Oakland Unified School District Elementary Schools within the Planning Area – Lincoln and La Escuelita Elementary School. Although attendance for the Oakland Unified School District as a whole is under capacity, historic enrollment numbers at Lincoln Elementary School show that enrollment has been at capacity for Lincoln. The Planning Area also has several pre-kindergarten schools and childcare centers.

Although there are several parks within the Planning Area, parkland acreage is below the service standard in the General Plan. Additional parkland is also needed to meet the standard as well as serve additional daytime population in the area. A portion of Lake Merritt and the Estuary parks are within the Planning Area. Linear parks such as Peralta Park and Channel Park are located on the east side of the Planning Area, but are perceived to be inaccessible by some in the community due to the lack of pedestrian connections. Other parks within the Planning Area include Chinese Garden, Madison Square, and Lincoln Square parks. These parks are assets to the community, particularly Lincoln Square Park which is used extensively, to the point that it is often beyond capacity. Issues with existing parkland include a lack of programmable park space and recreation facilities, as well as safety and accessibility.

Community members have expressed serious concerns related to the safety of the Planning Area. Instances of crime, desolate streets, and the presence of homeless people throughout the Planning Area contribute to a sense of danger which limits use of the area. A police substation is located at Eighth and Webster Street in Chinatown. Police Beat areas within the Planning Area include beats 01X (Fallon Street Industrial/Jack London),

03X (Chinatown/BART/Government/14th Street Corridor/Cultural/Educational), 04X (14th Street), and 19X (Eastlake/Cultural/Educational). In 2007, the safest Beat within the Planning Area was 01X, followed by 03X, 19X and then 04X. Beat 19X ranked 54th and Beat 04X ranked 56th out of the 57 beats in Oakland. The total percentage of violent crime was highest in Beat 03X and 19X.

There is one Fire Station within the Planning Area. The Fire Department’s response time goal is seven minutes or less, 90% of the time.

Historic Resources

The Planning Area has a rich community history, particularly in the evolution of the Chinatown community. Three blocks in particular, bounded by Jackson Street on the west, 9th Street on the north, Fallon Street on the east, and 8th Street on the south, have significant history for the Chinatown community. The three blocks are part of what was once called the Madison Square area and had numerous residential properties. From 1964 to 1966, BART acquired the rights to these parcels within these three blocks and subsequently constructed the Lake Merritt BART Station, BART Administrative Headquarters, and moved Madison Square Park to its current location. The displacement of Chinese residents from these properties had a deep impact, resulting in inconvenience and a cultural and linguistic disruption for some. In 2009, the BART headquarters building was dismantled, providing the community an opportunity to envision future redevelopment of the three blocks.

The Historic Preservation Element of the Oakland General Plan guides historic preservation in Oakland. Historic properties in Oakland may be designated under Federal and State programs, but also under the City of Oakland Register of Historic Resources. Under the Local Register, properties may be “Designated Historic Properties” or “Potential Designated Historic Properties.” In addition, the Planning Area also has historic districts of “Areas of Primary Importance” which are districts that include historic resources. Because there are a significant number of historic resources throughout the Planning Area, new transit-oriented development may have to pay special attention to appropriateness or compatibility of building design with adjacent property. While opportunity sites identified within this report are not identified historic resources, some are within historic districts and others may be adjacent to historic resources. Attention to key design features will help to ensure that new development is compatible with the rich historic context of the Planning Area. Chapter 9 identifies all historic resources as well as specific historic resources that are protected on the Oakland Local Register.



The majority of park space in the Planning Area is located along the Channel. There are only three urban parks in the area.



Lincoln Square Park is a very well-used park.



The Kaiser Convention Center is a Historic Resource that is currently unused.



801-33 Harrison Street is a Community and Historic Resource.

Environmental Issues

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) regulates hazardous waste and clean-up of existing contamination. DTSC establishes and implements clean-up programs for properties that may have been or believed to be contaminated with some level of toxic substances. At the time this report was prepared, there were five DTSC clean-up sites within the Planning Area. The California State Water Board regulates Leaking Underground Tank (LUST) clean-up sites. At the time this report was prepared, there were 14 LUST clean-up sites within the Planning Area. The California State Water Board also regulates Spills, Leaks, Investigation, and Cleanups (SLIC) sites. At the time this report was prepared, there were eight SLIC sites within the Planning Area. Chapter 10 contains a complete list of clean-up site locations.

The Planning Area is located within an urbanized area and is primarily paved with asphalt and concrete. However, areas adjacent to Lake Merritt, Lake Merritt Channel, and the Oakland Estuary include diverse vegetation and offer open water habitat for a variety of wildlife. There are 56 special-status species (24 plants, 32 animals) that are known to occur, or have ht potential to occur, in the general vicinity of the Lake. The 24 special-status species are assumed to be extirpated in the Planning Area. Out of the 32 special-status animal species, only six special-status bird species have been observed at or near Lake Merritt and/or the Channel.

The closest active fault to the Planning Area is the Hayward fault, which runs east of the Planning Area along Highway 13 and I-580. During an earthquake, the Planning Area will experience a modified mercalli intensity shaking severity level of Violent (IX) to Very Violent (X). Most of the Planning Area has moderate to low liquefaction susceptibility.

The Planning Area is within the boundaries of the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin (Bay Area Air Basin). The Bay Area Air Basin is currently designated as a nonattainment area for federal and State ozone standards and for State particulate matters PM-10 and PM-2.5 standards. Scientific studies have suggested links between fine particulate matter and numerous health problems including asthma. The California Environmental Protection Agency and Air Resources board recommend standards for sensitive land uses relative to roads, based on higher particulate pollution levels found closer to heavy traffic roads. The Planning Area is also located in a high risk area for toxic air contaminants.

The major noise sources in the Planning Area are vehicular traffic on I-880 and major roadways. Chapter 10 lists the traffic

noise levels in and around the Planning Area. Human reaction to noise ranges from annoyance, to interference with various activities to hearing loss and stress-related health problems.

Surface water features in the Planning Area include Lake Merritt, Lake Merritt Channel, and the Oakland Estuary. The edges of Lake Merritt are designated as 500 year flood zones, which are areas of moderate flood hazard, while the edges of Lake Merritt Channel are designated as 100 year flood zones, which is a high risk area. The Planning Area’s water supply is delivered by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and the City of Oakland owns, operates, and maintains a local sanitary sewer collection system, while EBMUD operates the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Non-hazardous waste is collected by Waste management of Alameda County and electricity and gas service is provided primarily by Pacific Gas and Electric.

Community Health

Some of the key topics discussed previously have links to health outcomes. Factors such as housing, public safety, access to public facilities, demographics (including income level), transportation, and environmental factors such as noise and air quality are often collectively referred to as “determinants of health.” In the Planning Area, there are a higher percentage of households with a household income of less than \$15,000 per year, compared to the City of Oakland. There are several conditions associated with living in poverty. These conditions include lack of access to healthcare and to healthy foods. The Planning Area comprise a large percentage of households that speak an Asian/Pacific Islander language at home, which means access to health care by Planning Area residents may also be limited by language.

Various health indicators show that in some cases, certain diseases are appearing at a higher rate within the area, compared to the City of Oakland and Alameda County. Emergency Room visit rates for asthma and mental disorders were higher in Planning Area Zip Codes 94607 (which includes the Chinatown sub-areas) and 94612 (which includes the 14th Street Corridor sub-area) than for the City of Oakland. The diabetes hospitalization rates for those two zip codes were higher than the City of Oakland rate while the coronary heart disease hospitalization rate for 94612 was higher than the City’s. In addition, Oakland’s diabetes and cancer mortality rate is higher than Alameda County’s. The percentage of overweight children in the Oakland Unified School District is higher than the percentage in Alameda County.

Physical activity can have numerous health impacts. Several factors can influence physical activity including pedestrian safety and access to recreation space. Oakland Chinatown has the

highest concentration of pedestrians, bicycle, and vehicle collisions in Oakland, while also having a population that is more vulnerable to impacts on pedestrian safety, including the elderly and walking and transit dependent. In addition, crime can limit movement within a community while also causing fear, stress and poor mental health. The City of Oakland has the highest violent crime rate of any jurisdiction in Alameda County. Access to parks and recreation space offers can also increase physical activity while reducing crime and increasing social cohesion.



The Channel and Lake Merritt provide habitat for wildlife.



Crossing under the I-880 freeway has been identified as a safety concern.

2.3 Possibilities

Major possibilities exist for the future of the Lake Merritt Station Area. Throughout the planning process, there will be many opportunities for ideas to be developed regarding the area. Below are some of the initial possibilities that have stood out during field visits, stakeholder interviews, community meetings, and initial research efforts. These major possibilities will be expanded and updated through the public review process and community input.

A Multi-Modal Transit Destination

There is an opportunity to develop the BART station into a transit destination that enhances the existing community and serves existing and future needs. There is an opportunity to transform the BART station into a multi-modal hub, where BART and AC Transit may be easily and safely accessed and link to pedestrian and bicycle networks. Enhancing access and connectivity throughout the neighborhood will strengthen neighborhood assets.

Redevelopment of Publicly Owned Sites

This transformation of Lake Merritt BART Station into a multi-modal transit destination can be supported by the redevelopment of three publicly owned blocks that include the Lake Merritt BART Station, BART Surface Parking Lot, and Madison Square Park. The demolition of the old BART Headquarters building has created an opportunity for new uses, as well as an opportunity for new development that meets community goals, integrates itself into the community, and provides linkages among existing neighborhoods within the Planning Area.

The three blocks represent significant opportunities for housing and additional public space for the area. These opportunities are discussed more fully below.

Housing

There are significant opportunities for new housing in the Planning Area. These include:

- Housing on the BART sites. While there are some economic constraints to building housing on these sites, it could act as a catalyst project to spark development in the area.

- Housing above retail along 8th and 9th Streets to create a stronger link between Laney College and Chinatown.
- Housing along the waterfront and channel have great potential and marketability because they offer views, open space, street capacity, bike paths, access to AC Transit and BART, and access to urban life – such as restaurants, museums, and galleries.
- Housing on the large Laney and Peralta College sites could act as catalyst projects and also be huge money-makers for PCCD.

New housing could provide for a mix of households and incomes, such as Asian residents seeking the amenities of living in Chinatown, young as well as growing families, and seniors. New housing in the area could also provide additional affordable housing projects.

Jobs

There are also significant opportunities for new jobs in the Planning Area. New development in the Planning Area could lead to the creation of good jobs that provide living wages and benefits, to support a mix of residents ranging from families to new immigrants to seniors. A few of the potential opportunities for job growth and development in the Planning Area include supporting small business development and developing the green industry and manufacturing sectors, which could be located in the Jack London District. There is also great potential to increase job training in the Planning Area, building on existing programs at Laney College and possibly establishing a job training center.

Public Spaces

There are many possibilities for increased and improved public space in the form of a new parks and new community facilities. These spaces could provide facilities and recreation space for the community, including a new Tai Chi plaza/facility, a community center and/or youth center in combination with senior and recreation services, and community gardens. Increased availability, accessibility, use, and design of public spaces and parks would both increase physical activity and social interaction. A new community center could also maintain a cultural identity for residents.

One possibility would be a two-block park on Madison Park and the adjacent BART site. This could be a transformative project that would reactivate and revitalize Madison Square Park and provide additional open space for a growing population and large daytime population. New development on the BART parking lot could also include a major public space among the new buildings and Laney College.

Creating an accessible and active public space on these sites will serve the existing neighborhood as well as help transform the Lake Merritt Station into a destination and serve as a link among neighborhoods in the Planning Area. For instance, public space on these sites could help encourage pedestrian activity to and from the BART Station as well as between the Chinatown Commercial area and Laney College.

Existing plans in the Planning Area include a complete transformative waterfront on the Channel that will include trails, pedestrian crossings, bridge crossings, and new parks. This system of parks could be linked to the Estuary Park and new parks as part of the Oak to 9th project with a pedestrian bridge from the Channel to the Estuary.

Cultural Center

Coordination and increased connections between the many cultural assets of the Planning Area, including Chinatown, Laney College, the Oakland Museum of California, and the Kaiser Convention Center have significant potential to establish the area as a cultural center for the City. Increased connections may be through improved streetscape conditions, creating more active linkages among the different cultural assets, and providing better access from the Lake Merritt BART station to these different areas. The idea of a cultural center would both preserve the existing cultural aspects of the neighborhood as well as develop new connections and highlight assets.

Restaurants and Retail

Businesses are needed that would transform less vibrant areas into active urban areas and link existing destinations and amenities. In particular, this could include:

- Ground floor retail on 8th and 9th Streets that serves as a link between Chinatown and Laney College.
- An extension of the Chinatown nighttime business environment to increase nightlife foot traffic near the BART Station.
- Extended farmers markets and/or night markets.
- Ground floor stores, retail, restaurants, and residents on new opportunity sites along identified continuous routes.
- Restaurants along Oak Street to serve the County Offices, Oakland Museum of California, BART, and Laney College.
- Improved access to healthy restaurants and grocers.
- Active uses that compliment the Museum gift shop and restaurant which will be open on Thursday and Friday nights.
- The addition of a street entrance to the new museum restaurant, which would allow the restaurant to be open later than the exhibition spaces.

Strong Urban Design

There is great potential for interesting urban design and architecture that preserves and integrates the existing strengths of the area - such as its historic resources and cultural assets, with new development that embraces sustainable design and possibly greater heights and densities. Urban design will play an important role in developing possibilities for development that are contextual and accentuate the unique assets of the Lake Merritt Station Area, such as by appropriately juxtaposing historic resources with increased building heights.

Entertainment and Urban Excitement

Transformation of the area into an active area will also require draw in addition to restaurants and retail. Entertainment uses and other urban activities would add excitement, further activate the Planning Area, and help support other restaurants and retail that open in the area. These uses could include:

- Late-night restaurants and cafes that expand on and reinforce existing businesses in the Chinatown Commercial area.
- Museum galleries, lectures, store, and restaurants on Thursday and Friday nights to complement the Oakland Museum of California, as well as during the day.
- Entertainment at the Kaiser Convention Center.
- Laney College night-time classes and entertainment.
- Coffee shops and pubs.
- Venues for music and other performances.

Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape projects would further transform the public space, not only by improving aesthetics and connectivity, but also by improving safety. Streetscape improvements could protect against crime and violence as well as injuries and fatalities from traffic. Key streets that should be considered for streetscape projects include:

- Oak Street – north to south.
- 8th Street – east to west connector.
- 9th Street – as a busy street for nightlife, providing access to BART, a location for the night market, etc.
- 10th Street – as a pedestrian-oriented street running from the Asian Cultural Center (where it dead-ends) to the Channel.
- 7th Street/6th Street – evaluating the possibilities of increasing pedestrian accessibility, uniting Laney College campus with its parking lot, and possibly extending 6th Street from Fallon Street to 5th Avenue and eliminating the section of 7th Street from Fallon to 5th Avenue.

Transportation

Within the Planning Area, streets generally have adequate capacity for local auto circulation, with the exception of a few key intersections near I-880. New bikeways are planned for the area, which will improve access by bike around Lake Merritt, to BART, and along the water. The planned 12th Street reconstruction will significantly improve safe pedestrian routes for residents from north of 12th Street to Lake Merritt BART and for Laney College faculty/students to the Lake. Additional street improvements could increase pedestrian access for Chinatown residents to the trails on the Channel and Lake. Improved safety of connections under I-880 and near on- and off-ramps accessing I-800 and Alameda would greatly improve pedestrian safety and increase access to BART from the Waterfront Jack London District.

Increased transportation options and strategic parking strategies also offer the potential for decreased driving and thus improvements in air quality. Increased use of public transit can also increase physical activity and social connections.

Public and Private Confidence for Investment

Part of the role of the Station Area Plan will be to improve public and private confidence for investment in the Planning area. The Lake Merritt Station Area Plan will establish developer confidence by establishing a clear vision and development standards. This vision includes defined and profitable investment opportunities:

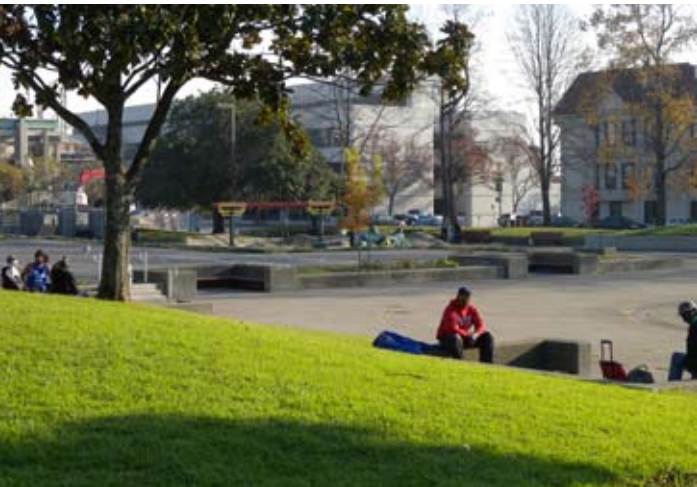
- Defined opportunity sites;
- Housing investment opportunities along the Channel, water and parks, where housing investment would be profitable because it has water views and beauty;
- Housing investment opportunities in Chinatown, where investments are profitable due to all of the factors that make it desirable – open space, retail, restaurants, entertainment, and urban excitement; and
- Housing investment opportunities in the Planning Area will be profitable due to access to work Downtown and Lake Merritt BART.

A Major Challenge

The major challenge identified is how to achieve an interest and commitment to redeveloping the available properties. While property owners have had the opportunity to build at greater heights and densities, they have not done it. The question then is what has deterred people from new development, and what would make the area convincing to investors, as compared to all the other Bay Area locations.



Housing along the waterfront would be very marketable.



Increased and improved open space could be designed to better meet community needs.



More opportunities for retail could activate streets in some areas.

This page intentionally left blank.