

LAKE MERRITT STATION AREA PLAN

Emerging Plan Open House Summary

October 2011

1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

A number of ideas have been presented by the community, including new mixed-use and mixed-income, mid-rise and high-rise buildings; new public spaces and improved existing public spaces; street lighting and other ways to increase safety; street changes that increase pedestrian safety and comfort, and convert some one-way streets to two-way; and many more.

Ongoing participation by the Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) has been, and will continue to be, a crucial component of the development of the Plan. The CSG has driven the development of the Emerging Plan through participation in a series of four working meetings, three hours each, over the summer of 2011. These meetings started with community feedback from public workshops detailed in the reports outlined above, and developed the framework for the Emerging Plan through an iterative process between CSG members, City staff, and consultant work.

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The Emerging Plan concepts presented at the Community Open House presented initial concepts for integrating feedback into area-wide concepts and area-specific visions and big ideas, and identifying street improvement concepts for priority streets.

1.1 Next Steps

Based on the community feedback received at the Community Open House and CSG and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comments (based on their review of the draft Emerging Plan Analysis report), the Emerging Plan will be revised as needed and refined into a draft Preferred Plan. Following development of the Emerging Plan into a Preferred Plan it will be reviewed by several advisory and decision-making bodies, including:

- City Council.
- Community and Economic Development (CED) Committee.
- Planning Commission.
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC).
- Landmark Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB).
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

Based on the guidance of these decision-makers, the Preferred Plan will then be further developed and refined, with continued input from the public, CSG and TAC, into the Draft Plan.

Open House Overview and Key Feedback

1.2 Open House Overview

The Community Open House was held on September 12, 2011 from 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm at the Laney College Student Center/Cafeteria, 900 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA. Materials and information on the draft Emerging Plan concepts were presented in English, Chinese and Vietnamese at six stations. The open house format allowed participants to arrive at any time and spend as long or as little time with the material as they felt necessary. The Stations included:

1. Welcome: Welcome, Vision, Next Steps.
2. Area-Wide Topics: Land Use Character, Circulation Improvement Strategies, Public Space, Active Ground Floor Uses, Massing and Height, Community Benefit Strategies, Development Standards.
3. 14th Street Corridor & East Lake Gateway: Covering the northern edge of planning area and East/ West regional connections; and street improvement concepts for 14th Street.
4. Peralta/Laney & I-880: Covering the southern edge of planning area and East/West and North/South regional connections; and street improvement concepts for 7th Street at Laney College, 10th Street East of Fallon Street, Fallon Street 8th to 10th, Oak Street Underpass, and Webster Street Underpass.
5. BART Station Area: Covering the four publicly owned blocks including and adjacent to the Lake Merritt BART Station, and street improvement concepts for Oak Street, Madison Street.
6. Chinatown Commercial Center & Upper Chinatown: Covering the core neighborhood areas of Chinatown and the key internal connections; and street improvement concepts for 8th Street, 9th Street, 10th Street, Webster Street, Harrison Street, Alice Street.

A staff person was available at each station to answer questions, and facilitators for Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese speakers lead tours of participants through the workshop. Open house materials were available on the project webpage and remained on display at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center and City of Oakland Planning Department following the open house. Community members were given until the end of the day on Wednesday Sept. 14th to submit comments.

Over 200 participants attended the Open House. Participants were asked to fill out feedback forms to answer questions and provide comments on the draft conceptual proposals for improvements to streets and sidewalks, and land use guidelines for new development in the area within half a mile radius from the Lake Merritt BART Station. In total, 173 feedback forms were completed, including 109 in English, 50 in Chinese, and 14 in Vietnamese. Table 1 provides a breakdown of how open house participants, who completed the feedback forms, currently use the Planning Area. An example feedback form is shown in Appendix A.

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TABLE 1: HOW OPEN HOUSE PARTICIPANTS CURRENTLY USE THE PLANNING AREA

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Blank
Do you live in the Planning Area?	32%	52%	16%
Do you work in the Planning Area?	26%	54%	20%
Do you own a business in the Planning Area?	9%	70%	22%
Do you use services and/or shop in the Planning Area?	83%	5%	11%

Note: A total of 173 feedback forms were completed.

1.3 Open House Feedback

Out of the approximately 200 attendees, 173 attendees submitted feedback forms; however, some feedback forms were only partially completed (i.e., some responses were blank). Feedback forms asked several questions soliciting feedback about the concepts developed for the Emerging Plan. The following section includes a summary of written comments (elaborating on yes/no survey responses, however, only a portion of survey respondents submitted written comments) and a table summarizing the percent of respondents that answered yes or no to the questions on the feedback form. For each question, the percentages apply only to those that answered the question (i.e., there is no ‘blank’ %). The total number of participants that answered the question is also provided. All of the workshop materials are shown in Appendix A.

AREAWIDE TOPICS

Generally, respondents agreed with the Emerging Plan concepts. While a majority who commented on the vision for parks agreed with that vision, there was not a clear consensus.

TABLE 2: FEEDBACK ON AREAWIDE TOPICS

Areawide Questions and Response			
Question	Number who answered	Yes (%)	No (%)
Is the vision for new parks in the Planning Area right?	99	54%	46%
Is the vision for required active use streets in the Planning Area right?	74	68%	32%

Write-in comments on Areawide Topics (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- Need for more neighborhood park space, in particular full or half-block parks.
- Madison Park and Chinese Garden Park should be improved.
- New buildings should blend in with the character of the neighborhood (character and massing).
- Building heights should be limited (consistent with existing context) with additional height allowed in exchange for community benefits.

- Affordable and family housing should be a high priority (several participants note 30% as the target).
- Ensure there is not community displacement.
- Bicycle and pedestrian oriented streets.
- Want traffic calming, including pedestrian street lights, sidewalk widening, conversion to 2-way.

PRIORITY STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

The most commonly prioritized streets and related improvements are shown in the following table.

TABLE 3: PRIORITY STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS FEEDBACK

<i>Most Cited</i>	<i>Improvement</i>
8th Street, 9th Street, Alice Street, Harrison Street, Webster Street (also includes 7th and 10th in some cases)	Pedestrian-scale lighting, traffic calming, and convert to two-way; also other pedestrian improvements such as bulb-outs
14th Street	Need bike lanes and wider sidewalks
Laney / Peralta	Safer pedestrian access to and from campus, better lighting
Webster Street	Wider sidewalks, bike lanes, median with trees
BART Station	Need more active community space for transit users, more taxis
7th Street	Pedestrian improvements such as bulb outs, traffic calming and convert to two-way
880 Underpasses	Improve undercrossings: make safer and improve lighting.

14TH STREET CORRIDOR STUDY AREA

Generally, respondents agreed with the Emerging Plan concepts for the 14th Street Corridor. While a majority of those who commented on building heights and massing concepts agreed with those concepts, there was not a clear consensus.

TABLE 4: FEEDBACK ON THE 14TH STREET CORRIDOR STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	88	72%	28%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	70	86%	14%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	67	67%	33%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	65	55%	45%
14th Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	82	87%	13%

Write-in comments on 14th Street Corridor concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- Need more affordable and family housing.
- Active retail frontage is needed at County buildings.

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- Full- or half-block parks are needed (rather than the quarter block proposed). Contiguous park space should promote active uses – suggestions included music, places for kids, cultural programs, night market, seating for lunch, gardens.
- Accessible plazas for lunch breaks, concerts.
- Proposed buildings are too tall, should be similar to existing.
- Height above base should require community benefits.
- 14th Street should have bike lanes, not shared with traffic.

EAST LAKE GATEWAY STUDY AREA

Generally, respondents agreed with the Emerging Plan concepts for the Eastlake Gateway Corridor. While a majority of those who commented on building heights and massing concepts agreed with those concepts, there was not a clear consensus.

TABLE 5: FEEDBACK ON THE EAST LAKE GATEWAY STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	88	72%	28%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	70	86%	14%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	67	67%	33%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	65	55%	45%

Write-in comments on Eastlake Gateway concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- Should be a community hub with affordable and family housing.
- Should include a community or cultural center (i.e. teen or senior center).
- More full- and half-block parks; more playgrounds.
- Buildings should be lower, matching existing context.
- Limit by-right building heights and require community benefits.
- Improve building massing and gateway concept.

LANEY/PERALTA STUDY AREA

Generally, respondents agreed with the Emerging Plan concepts for the Laney/Peralta. While a majority of those who commented on park concepts agreed on those concepts, there was not a clear consensus.

TABLE 6: FEEDBACK ON THE LANEY/PERALTA STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	92	59%	41%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	49	80%	20%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	77	51%	49%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	60	65%	35%
Fallon Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	80	95%	5%
7th Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	83	94%	6%
10th Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	34	97%	3%

Write-in comments on Laney/Peralta concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- Estuary greenway should not be considered a neighborhood park (need neighborhood parks)
- Laney facilities should be open to everyone
- Public connection to estuary is appreciated
- Full-block or half-block parks needed
- Concern about parking, particularly loss of parking.
- Building heights should be lower, match community
- Community benefits should be required for taller buildings
- Support the pedestrian- and bike-friendly streetscapes on Fallon and 7th streets

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I-880 STUDY AREA

Generally, respondents agreed with the Emerging Plan concepts for the I-880 Study Area. While a majority of people who commented on the building heights and massing concepts agreed with those concepts, there was no clear consensus. While a majority of people who commented on the parks concepts did not agree with those concepts, there was no clear consensus.

TABLE 7: FEEDBACK ON THE I-880 STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	85	87%	13%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	58	64%	36%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	57	46%	54%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	59	54%	46%
I-880 Undercrossings: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	58	81%	19%

Write-in comments on I-880 Study Area concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- No I-880 ramp in Chinatown – congestion in Chinatown related on I-880 access is a major concern for safety and health impacts.
- Add more parks and open space, including more full-block and half-block parks.
- China Garden should be preserved and should have improvements, including improved access and safer pedestrian crossings.
- Building heights should be lower, match community.
- Community benefits should be required for taller buildings.
- Top priorities for freeway undercrossings: Webster Street, Jackson Street, and Oak Street (in order). Madison, Broadway also mentioned, as well as desire to add crossings at Franklin and Harrison.
- Freeway undercrossings should have more pedestrian amenities and lights.
- Improve pedestrian safety: more pedestrian lighting, improved signals, and zebra crossing.
- Art and lighting look good.

BART STATION AREA STUDY AREA

Generally, a majority of respondents agreed with the streetscape and active retail frontage concepts, but many did not agree with the vision for parks for the BART Station. This can likely be attributed to the concern of a larger number of respondents that development would be allowed on Madison Square Park (although the Emerging Plan does not recommend development on the Park).

TABLE 8: FEEDBACK ON THE BART STATION AREA STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	110	47%	53%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	71	69%	31%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	79	42%	58%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	61	57%	43%
Oak Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	77	87%	13%
Madison Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	75	87%	13%

Write-in comments on BART Station concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- More community amenities and benefits are vital, and need to be better defined. Common suggestions include affordable housing, a community center for seniors and youth.
- Madison Square Park should be preserved as a full block of open space only, not fragmented. Housing and community center should be adjacent.
- Redesign and improve Madison Square Park, possibly incorporating community or recreation center.
- Proposed buildings are too high.
- Tall buildings should require community benefits.
- Bike lanes on Oak and Madison Streets are good.

CHINATOWN COMMERCIAL CENTER STUDY AREA

A majority of those who responded agreed with the concepts related to active retail frontage and most of the streetscape concepts. Most people preferred Option A (two-way conversion) for 9th Street. Most people preferred Option A (two-way conversion) for 10th Street (west of Fallon Street); although there was no majority opinion and many people also preferred Options B (land reduction, angled parking) and D (lane reduction, bike lane). There was no clear consensus regarding concepts for building heights, massing, parks, 8th and Webster Streets. Some of those who did not agree with the streetscape concepts for 8th and Webster Street expressed a desire to see those streets converted to two-way traffic (which was not proposed in the Emerging Plan).

TABLE 9: FEEDBACK ON THE CHINATOWN COMMERCIAL CENTER STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	80	50%	50%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	64	89%	11%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	54	44%	56%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	50	44%	56%
8 th Street in Chinatown Core: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	69	49%	51%
9 th Street in Chinatown Core: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	44	68%	32%
Preferred 9 th Street in Chinatown Core alignment	78	A: 65% B: 35%	
8 th Street east of Chinatown Core: Are changes illustrated good?	47	57%	43%
9 th Street east of Chinatown Core: Are changes illustrated good?	28	79%	21%
Preferred 9 th Street east of Chinatown Core alignment	81	A: 62% B: 38%	
10 th Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	25	76%	24%
Preferred 10 th Street alignment	83	A: 42% B: 20% C: 8% D: 29%	
Webster Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	61	46%	54%
Harrison Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	61	87%	13%
Alice Street: Do you think the changes illustrated are good?	65	58%	42%

Write-in comments on Chinatown Commercial Center concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- Like the concept of 8th and 9th as active pedestrian corridors.
- More open space and parks in densely populated areas.
- Buildings are too tall; should lower heights and keep podium heights at scale of existing buildings.
- 8th, 9th, Webster and Harrison streets should be converted to 2-way

- Some preference to keep 9th street one way.
- Some preference for no bike lanes on these streets.
- Several comments were made regarding bike lanes on 8th Street– both in favor and against.
- Webster Street improvements needed (to address pedestrian safety, congestion, pollution).
- Need more pedestrian lighting on 8th, 9th, Webster, Alice, and Harrison streets.
- Consider additional scramble intersections (i.e. at Jackson and 8th Street, Harrison and 8th Street).

UPPER CHINATOWN STUDY AREA

Generally, respondents agreed with the Emerging Plan concepts for the Upper Chinatown area. While a majority of those who commented on building heights, massing and parks agreed with the concepts, there was not clear consensus.

TABLE 10: FEEDBACK ON THE UPPER CHINATOWN STUDY AREA

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number who answered</i>	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Are the big ideas and vision right?	52	62%	38%
Are the locations of required active street frontage right?	45	73%	27%
Do you think the new parks shown are right? Are there specific programs you would like to see for parks in this area?	51	55%	45%
Do you think the building heights and massing concepts are right?	40	53%	48%

Write-in comments on Upper Chinatown concepts (note that only a small portion of survey respondents submitted written comments that elaborated on their yes/no survey responses) included:

- Need more pedestrian-scale lighting and improvements and sidewalk bulbouts.
- More park space, and specifically more full-block and half-block parks.
- Would like to see cultural, senior, youth, and family programs.
- Building height should match current context of neighborhood.
- Lower podium heights; minimize high-rise buildings.

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Appendix A

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