



# Lake Merritt Station Area Plan

**Draft Preferred Plan**

November 2011



# Lake Merritt Station Area Plan

## **Draft Preferred Plan**

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# 1 Preferred Plan Framework

This Chapter provides an introduction to the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan, the scope of the Plan, an overview of the Study Area, the Vision and Goals that guide the Preferred Plan, an overview of key Preferred Plan concepts, and a detailed summary of the planning process and community participation.

## 1.1 Introduction

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The City of Oakland, community members, BART, and the Peralta Community College District have worked over the past year to develop an exciting plan framework for the Lake Merritt Planning Area. A series of community meetings have been held to sort through a wide range of suggestions, and put together the basic plan ideas. It is a 25-year plan, looking to add between 3,700 and 5,600 new housing units, up to 5,755 new jobs, and up to 412,000 square feet of additional retail; as well as make near-term improvements related to public safety and lighting. The next steps will include extensive public review, development of the plan specifics, and drafting of the full plan. The Preferred Plan has been developed in order to achieve the vision and goals outlined in section 1-2.

The Preferred Plan builds on community feedback, local and regional transit oriented development goals, and work completed over the past several years in the Planning Area, including the 2006 Lake Merritt BART Station Final Summary Report, the 2004 Revive Chinatown Community Transportation Plan, and the Measure DD funded Lake Merritt and Lake Merritt Channel Improvements, among others.

The next steps will include extensive public review of the Preferred Plan, followed by development of the Area Plan specifics based on feedback received during that review period, and drafting of the full Area Plan. Key elements that will be incorporated in the next planning stage include detailed policies for each topic, more specific building and streetscape design standards and guidelines, an infrastructure financing and phasing plan, and prioritization and implementation recommendations. In addition, a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be completed for the Plan.

The overall project schedule is shown in Figure 1-1. There will be several opportunities for community input through the remaining planning process, as shown in Figure 1-1. Community participation to date is described in greater detail in section 1.3. Check the project website <http://www.business2oakland.com/lakemerrittsap> for updates regarding the dates and times of upcoming meetings.

**Figure 1.1:  
PROJECT SCHEDULE**

**Work Completed to Date**



**Current and Future Work**



## **SCOPE OF THE LAKE MERRITT STATION AREA PLAN**

A station area plan is a set of policies and programs about future development within one half mile of a transit station. The plan will address land use, buildings, housing, design, circulation, BART and AC Transit improvements, streetscape improvements, parks and public spaces. It will identify actions the City and the other public agencies should take to improve the area and increase transit ridership, and it will establish regulations for development projects on private property. It is a long-term document consisting of written text and diagrams that expresses how a community should develop, and is a key tool for influencing the quality of life. The plan is a basis for development project review and other decision-making by policymakers such as the Planning Commission and the City Council.

Specific plans cover land use, development density, circulation and infrastructure, and have legal authority as a regulatory document. The Lake Merritt Station Area Plan will combine a detailed specific plan approach for some areas with a more conceptual approach to others, depending on the key issues for each part of the Planning Area and community feedback. Specific Plans have certain requirements according to State law. California Government Code (Section 65450) states that planning agencies may prepare specific plans for the systematic implementation of the general plan for all or part of the area covered by the general plan. “A specific plan shall include a text and a diagram or diagrams which specify all of the following in detail:

- The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.
- The proposed distribution, location, and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.
- Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.
- A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out paragraphs (1), (2), and (3).”

## **STUDY AREA OVERVIEW**

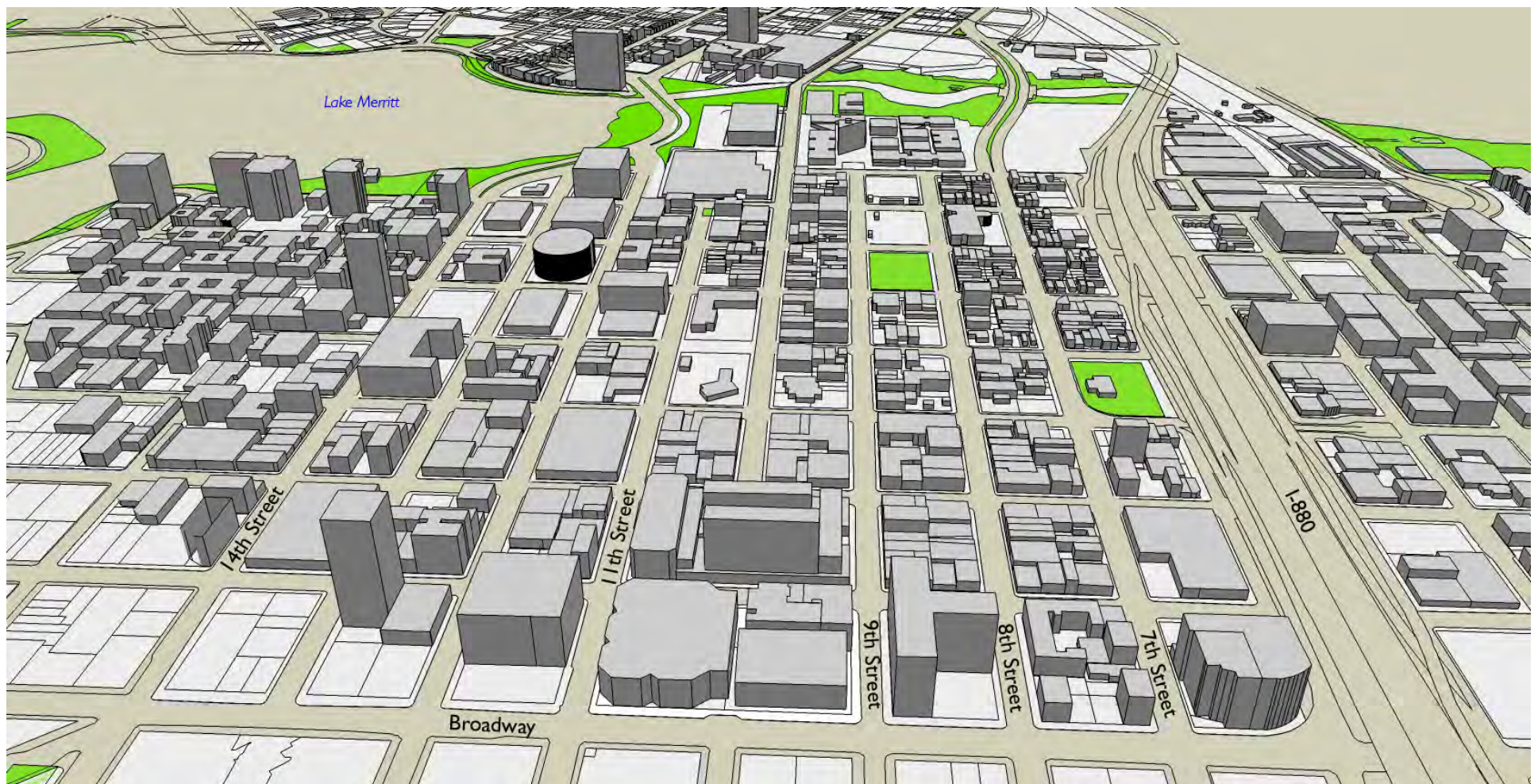
The Planning Area is located in the heart of Oakland, part of the urban center of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Planning Area includes the Lake Merritt BART Station, Oakland Chinatown, Laney College, the Oakland Museum of California, and the County of Alameda offices and courthouse. Adjacent neighborhoods and destinations include Downtown Oakland, Lake Merritt, the Jack London District, the Lakeside Apartment District, Old Oakland, and Uptown. The Planning Area’s strategic location within this context is shown in Figure 1-2. Figures 1-3 and 1-4 provide overviews of the Planning Area.

**Figure 1.2:**  
**PLANNING AREA CONTEXT**





**Figure 1.3:**  
**EXISTING AREA VIEW**  
**LOOKING EAST**





**Figure 1.4:**  
**EXISTING AREA VIEW**  
**LOOKING SOUTHEAST**



## 1.2 Vision and Goals

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### VISION

The shared vision is described below for the Lake Merritt Station Area. It is a reflection of the initial community engagement and visioning process, which was initiated in November 2008 through a partnership between the City of Oakland, Asian Health Services, the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network to begin community outreach for the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan. The Engagement process included four well-attended community meetings from 2008 to 2009 and a 19 question survey which garnered 1,100 responses in March and April 2009. The shared vision further incorporates refinements recommended by the Community Stakeholder Group, an appointed group of local stakeholders that provide ongoing guidance for the planning process (described in greater detail in section 1.4). These vision statements provide an important framework for guiding development of a plan for the future of the Lake Merritt Station Area.

- Create a financially feasible, implementable plan that is the result of an authentic community engagement process and is inclusionary of all community voices.
- Create a more active, vibrant, and safe district to serve and attract residents, businesses, students, and visitors.
- Provide for community development that is equitable, sustainable, and healthy.
- Increase use of non-automobile modes of transportation.
- Increase the housing supply to accommodate a diverse community, especially affordable housing and housing around the BART station.
- Increase jobs and improve access to jobs along the transit corridor.
- Provide services and retail options in the station area.
- Identify additional recreation and open space opportunities.
- Celebrate and enhance the heritage of Chinatown as a cultural asset and a regional community destination.
- Establish the Lake Merritt Station Area as a model with innovations in community development, transportation, housing, jobs, and businesses and environmental, social, and economic sustainability, and greenhouse gas reductions.

## **GOALS**

The following goals for the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan include all the major goals within the Nine Guiding Principles identified in the 2009 Community Engagement process, which have in some cases been condensed, or expanded to include additional community comments. In addition, two major goals that came out of additional community input have been added.

### **1. Community Engagement**

- Ensure opportunities for effective community participation by all stakeholders, including residents, businesses, students, employees, and organizations in the further development and implementation of the Plan.

### **2. Public Safety**

- Create safe public spaces by increasing foot traffic, improving lighting, and strengthening linkages.
- Promote safer streets with traffic calming, improved lighting, improved signage, improvements that address the needs of non-English speaking residents and visitors, and improved sidewalks and intersections.
- Improve community police services.

### **3. Business**

- Strengthen and expand businesses in Chinatown, through City zoning, permits, marketing, redevelopment, infrastructure improvements, and other City tools.
- Attract and promote a variety of new businesses, including small businesses and start-ups, larger businesses that provide professional-level jobs (e.g., engineers, attorneys, accountants, etc.), and businesses that serve the local community (such as grocery stores, farmers markets, restaurants, pharmacies, banks, and bookstores).
- Promote more businesses near the Lake Merritt BART Station to activate the streets, serve Chinatown, Laney College, and the Oakland Museum of California, and increase the number of jobs.

### **4. Jobs**

- Attract development of new office and business space that provide jobs and promote economic development for both large and small businesses.
- Increase job and career opportunities, including permanent, well-paying, and green jobs; ensure that these jobs provide work for local residents.
- Support the provision of job training opportunities. Ensure that local training opportunities (including vocational English as a second language opportunities) exist for jobs being developed both in the planning area and the region, particularly those accessible via the transit network.



- Employ local and/or targeted hiring for contracting and construction jobs for implementation of the plan (i.e., construction of infrastructure).

## **5. Housing**

- Accommodate and promote new rental and for sale housing within the project area for individuals and families of all sizes and all income levels (from extremely low to above moderate).
- Prevent involuntary displacement of residents.
- Maintain, preserve, and improve existing housing in the project area and prevent loss of housing that is affordable to residents (subsidized and unsubsidized), and senior housing. Promote healthful homes that are environmentally friendly and that incorporate green building methods.

## **6. Community Facilities and Open Space**

- Improve existing parks and recreation centers, including improving access to existing parks; and add new parks and recreation centers to serve higher housing density and increased number of jobs.
- Ensure all parks are safe, accessible to all age groups, clean, well maintained, and provide public restrooms and trash containers.
- Create a multi-use, multi-generational recreational facility, either in addition to or including a youth center.
- Provide space for community and cultural programs and activities, such as multi-use neighborhood parks, athletic fields, areas for cultural activities such as tai chi, community gardens, and expanded library programs for youth, families, and seniors.
- Work with the Oakland Unified School District to ensure adequate capacity of school and children's recreation facilities.

## **7. Transportation**

- Expand, preserve, and strengthen the neighborhood's access to public transit, walkability, and bicycle access.
- Ensure safety and compatibility of pedestrians, cyclists, and autos through improvements that calm traffic, improve sidewalks, improve intersection crossings, and improve traffic flow and pattern, including reevaluating one-way streets, considering narrowing streets, and reducing speeds. In particular address the flow of traffic using the Posey and Webster tubes.
- Improve connections between existing assets and destinations, including between Chinatown; the Lake Merritt, 12<sup>th</sup> Street and 19<sup>th</sup> Street BART stations; Alameda County facilities; and Laney College and between the BART Stations and the Jack London District, including improving the I-880 undercrossings.

- Develop a parking strategy that includes shared parking and allows access to the area, and particularly to local retail, while also promoting non-auto modes of transportation and makes best use of available land.
- Increase walk and bike trips.
- Preserve and reinvest in transit services and facilities to make sure operators can continue to provide reliable services.

## **8. Community and Cultural Anchor and Regional Destination**

- Establish a sense of place and clear identity for the area as a cultural and community anchor and a regional destination, building on existing assets such as Chinatown, the Oakland Museum of California, Laney College, the Kaiser Convention Center, Jack London Square, and Lake Merritt and the Lake Merritt Channel.
- Preserve, celebrate, and enhance the historic cultural resources and heritage of Chinatown as a regional anchor for businesses, housing, and community services, and highlight cultural and historic resources in the planning area through signage (both wayfinding signage and by developing sign regulations that allow the display of items in store windows), historic walks, and reuse of historic buildings. Ensure that public services and spaces proposed preserve and reflect the cultural history and aspects of Chinatown's historic geography.
- Promote a more diverse mix of uses near the BART Station, such as cafes, restaurants, music venues, retail stores, nightlife, etc., that activate the area as a lively and vibrant district.
- Encourage restoration of designated historic structures that would achieve priority Chinatown and/or City goals.
- Consider a cultural heritage district or related tools for preserving, enhancing, and strengthening Chinatown.
- Make connections to the Historic Jack London Warehouse District as a key asset in the Planning Area.

## **9. Health**

- Establish the area as a healthier place to live and work, through a range of strategies including:
  - Promoting health awareness and education;
  - Improving environmental quality, including improving air quality as a public health measure;
  - Ensuring access to healthy food and housing;
  - Increasing health and medical services available to the community;
  - Cleaning up air, soil, and water contamination (including trash on the streets);
  - Reducing noise levels where permitted noise levels are exceeded;

- Providing clean and well-maintained public outdoor places that provide public restrooms and trash containers.

#### **10. Redevelopment of Key Publicly-Owned Blocks Near BART**

- Establish a long-term plan for redevelopment of key publicly owned blocks near the Lake Merritt BART station to meet identified plan goals, including accommodating improved open spaces, new housing development, more jobs, more retail, and improved BART access.
- Recognize, incorporate, and reflect Chinatown's historic role in the redevelopment of key publicly owned blocks near the Lake Merritt BART station.

#### **11. Green and Sustainable Urban Design**

- Establish high-quality, distinctive, and green urban design proposals, standards, and/or guidelines for new private development and public infrastructure, that are place-based and include building design, street design, and park design.
- Build on the existing urban fabric and further promote high density and mixed-use building design that promotes active and safe spaces.
- Promote green and sustainable design in concert with the City's Emerald City initiative.<sup>1</sup>
- Identify landmarks and views at key locations, such as the Lake Merritt BART station plaza, promote improvements such as lights and public art, etc., and consider preservation of key views as new development is proposed (i.e., along 14th Street to Lake Merritt).
- Promote active and safe public spaces and streets by ensuring that design activates the public realm and increases the safety of streets and pedestrian crossings.
- Identify and enhance gateways between the planning area and other neighborhoods, such as on 12th/14th Street, which connects the planning area to the East Lake neighborhood.

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<sup>1</sup> The Emerald Cities Collaborative is a consortium of businesses, unions, government representatives, community organizations, research and technical assistance providers, development intermediaries, and social justice advocates, united around the goal of "greening" our metropolitan areas in ways that advance equal opportunity, shared wealth, and democracy. <http://www.emeraldcities.org/>

## 1.3 Preferred Plan Concepts

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### OVERALL CONCEPT

The Lake Merritt Station Area Plan seeks to link the existing unique destinations located within the Plan Area into a series of distinct hubs of activity: the Chinatown hub, the BART Station/Laney College/Oakland Museum (educational/cultural/entertainment) hub and the East Lake Gateway hub. Future improvements will enhance both the existing destinations within each hub, as well as the connections between hubs. The hubs will be linked together and to adjacent neighborhoods and the rest of the city and region by east/west and north/south corridors and the Lake Merritt BART Station. This overall concept is illustrated in Figure 1-5.

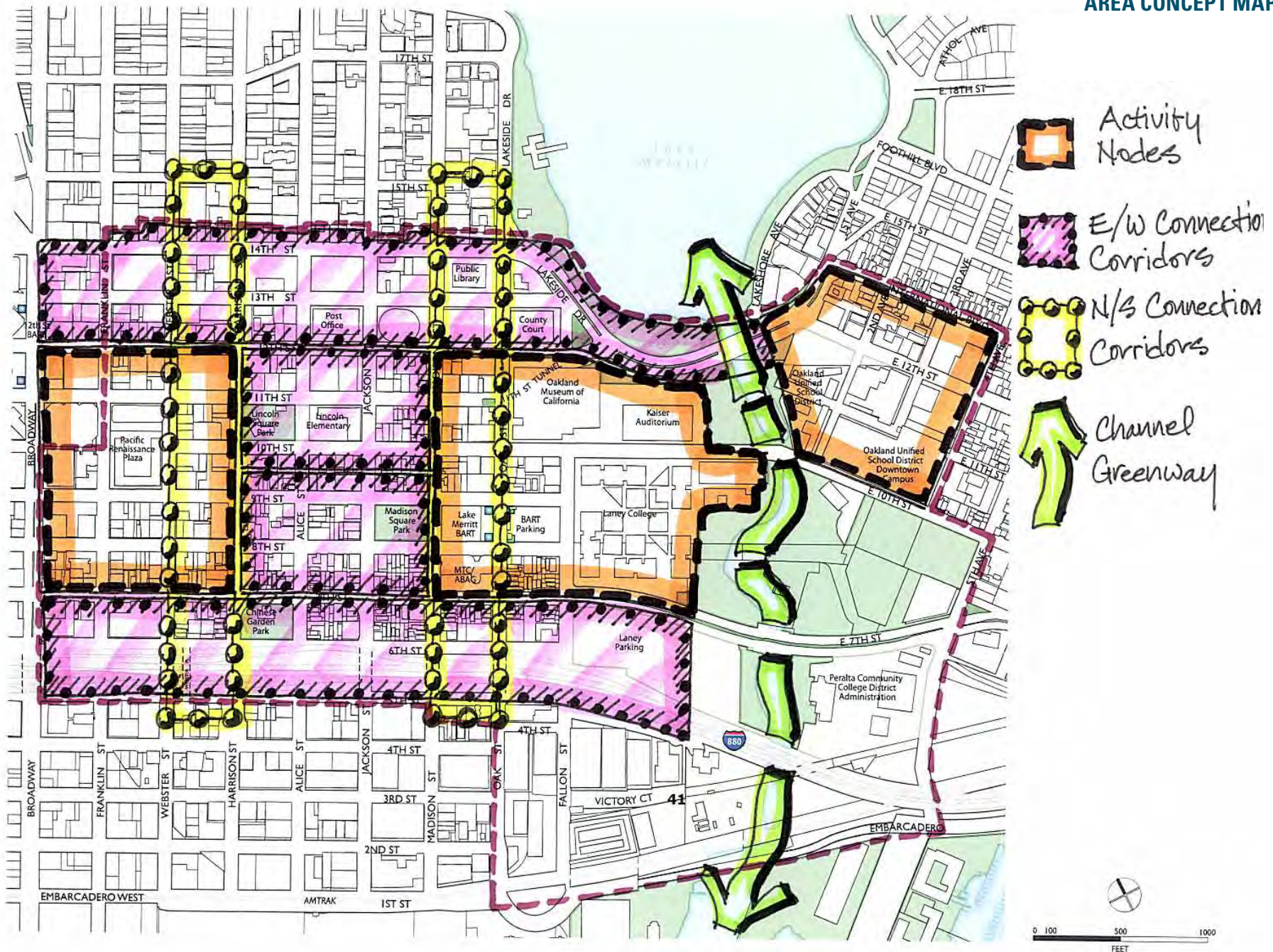
### AREA-WIDE CONCEPTS

Three key area-wide concepts – land use character, active ground floor uses, and the circulation improvement strategies – reflect the vision and goals of the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan. These concepts are presented briefly here and then further elaborated in later chapters.

#### Land Use

The land use character concept includes a range of flexible mixed-use areas intended to encourage vibrant pedestrian corridors which are complemented by high-density housing and commercial uses that contribute to activating the area, and new public spaces that ensure a high quality urban space. Additional detail on land use character is included in Chapter 4.

**Figure 1.5:**  
**LAKE MERRITT STATION**  
**AREA CONCEPT MAP**





## Active Ground Floor Uses

Active ground floor commercial uses – those that attract walk-in visitors – are important because they add vibrancy to streets and increase pedestrian traffic, which results in safer streets and more customers for local businesses. Examples of active ground floor commercial uses include: retail stores, restaurants, cafés, markets, bars, theaters, recreational spaces, health clinics, tourism offices, banks, personal services, libraries, museums, and galleries.

In order to expand the vibrancy and activity that already exists in some areas, like the core of the Chinatown commercial district, guidelines could be implemented that would *require* active uses in *new* buildings along key corridors. In areas where active uses would not be required, and the ground floor might include residential uses or offices that don't have walk-in visitors, guidelines could direct the design of new buildings to create welcoming frontages. Additional detail on active commercial ground floor uses is included in Chapter 4.

## Circulation Improvement Strategies

The circulation improvement strategies focus on establishing interconnected and safe travel for people walking, riding bicycles or taking transit. Chapter 7 identifies key streets for improvements to promote access between activity hubs within the planning area, as well as access to the larger regional circulation network. Further detail on these strategies is included in Chapter 7.

## STUDY AREAS

To best respond to the nuanced character differences throughout the Planning Area, it is divided into seven study areas, as shown in Figure 1-6. Each study area has a distinct existing character as well as a “big idea” and vision that defines future development in the area and that helps to support the overall vision statements and goals for the Planning Area. Chapter 2 describes each of the study areas in more detail.

## OPPORTUNITY SITES

Opportunity sites are shown in Figure 1-7; these show sites that are vacant or underutilized, and may have potential for land use or intensity change over the long-term (25 years). Identification of potential opportunity sites is a way to advance and test the concepts put forth, to understand the potential for future development, to understand patterns of where new development may occur, and how new development could relate with areas less likely to change. An initial analysis of potential opportunity sites was conducted for the Existing Conditions report in 2010, and identified sites that meet one or more of the following criteria:

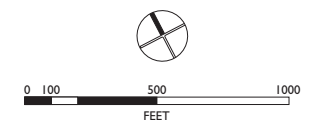
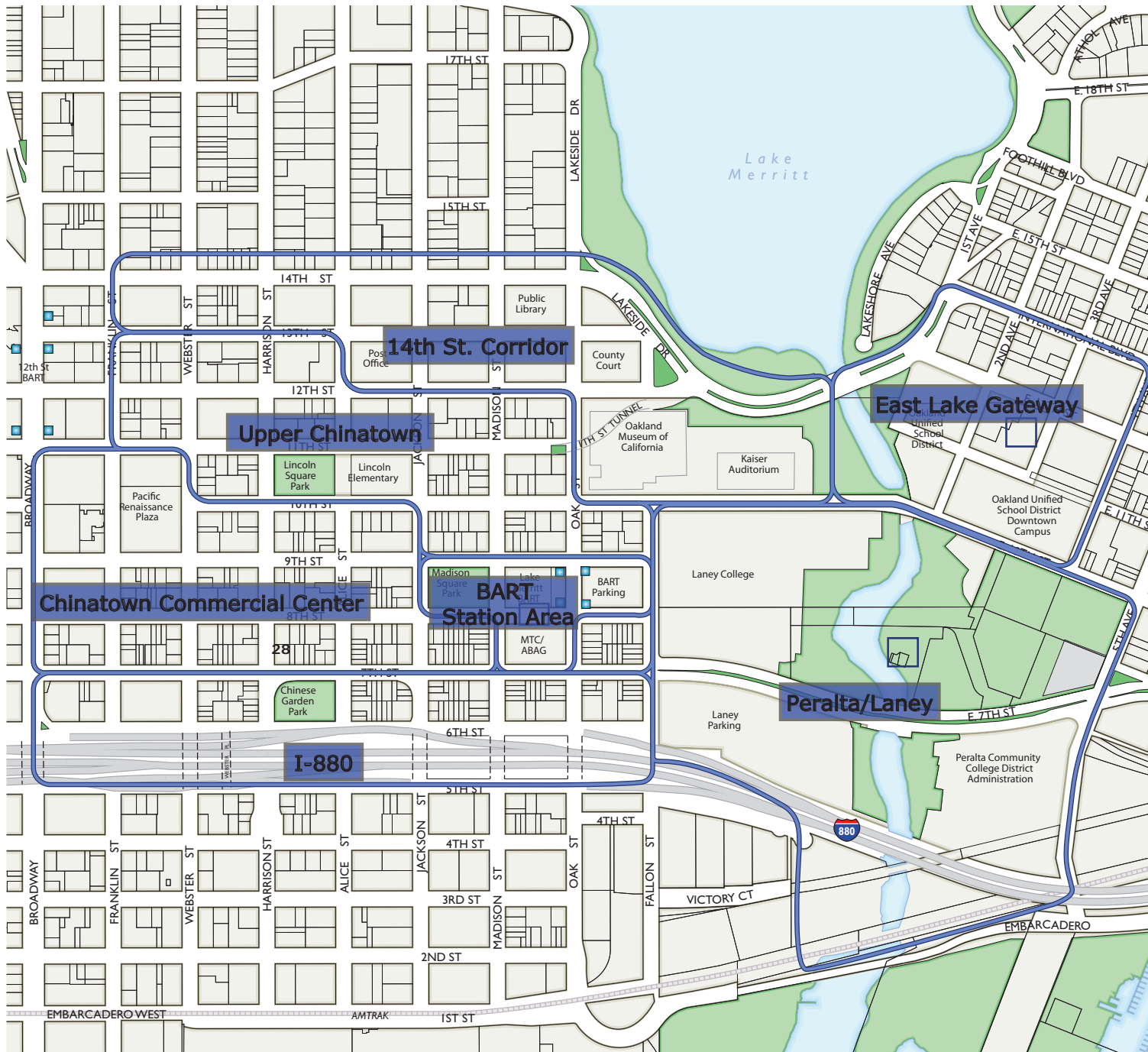
- Have a low value of improvements relative to land value;
- Have a very low existing building height (one or two stories) relative to allowable height under the zoning;
- Are currently vacant;
- Are currently parking lots;

- Have applications submitted with the City either under review or approved for development;
- Have otherwise been identified as sites for development (i.e. County offices per the Real Estate Master Plan); and/or
- Are adjacent to opportunity sites.

Sites with identified Historic Resources (see Chapter 8) are excluded.

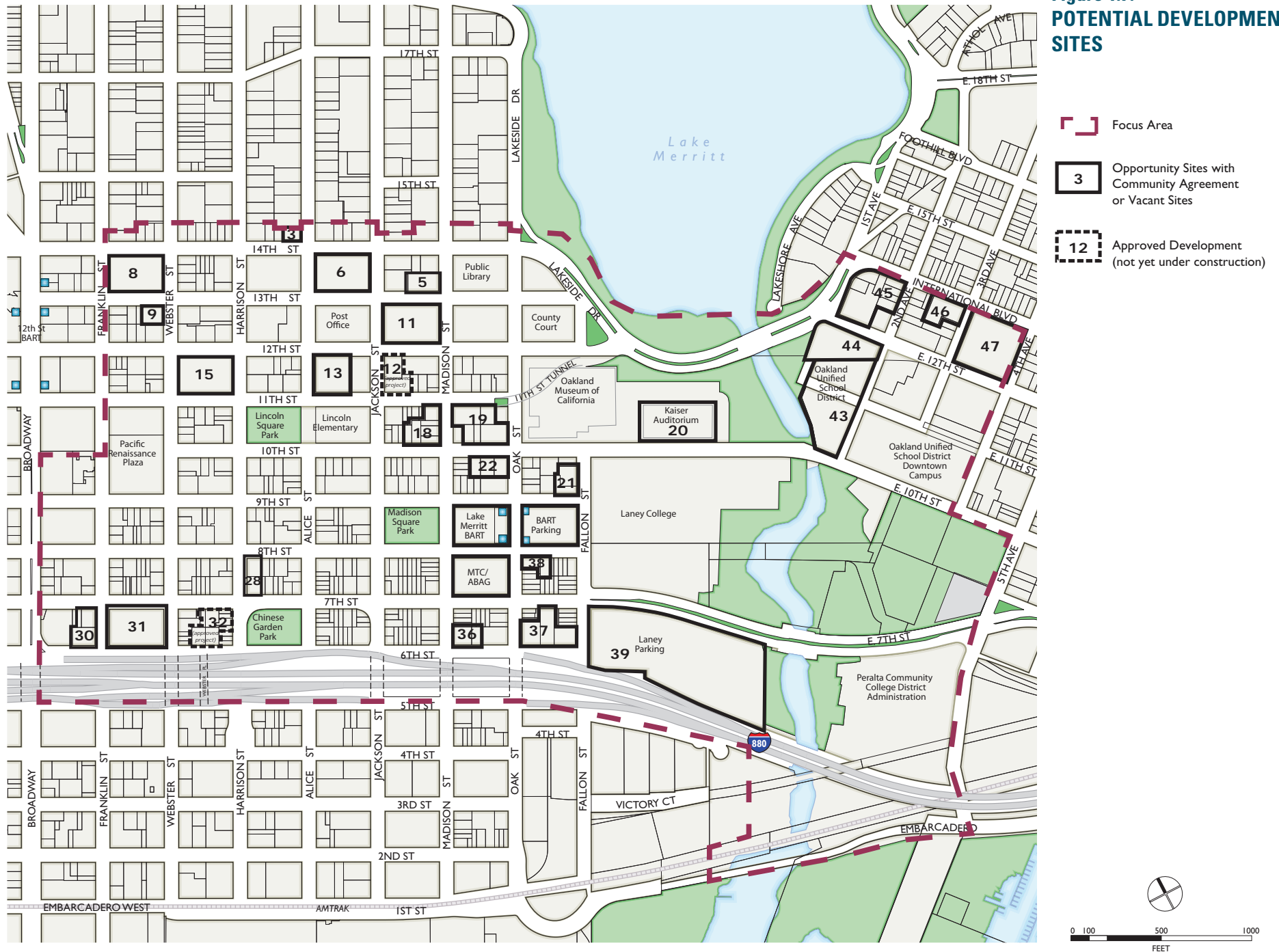
Opportunity sites were further refined through community workshops and feedback from the Community Stakeholders Group, and are now primarily vacant sites or parking lots. While the identified opportunity sites are the best guess for sites that will change, it is likely that some of the sites identified as opportunity sites may remain in their current state, while others that are not identified as opportunity sites will undergo change.

**Figure 1.6:  
STUDY AREAS**





**Figure 1.7:**  
**POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES**



## 1.4 Planning Process

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### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Many diverse residents, merchants, workers, and students make up the community of the Planning Area, and Chinatown functions as a citywide center for the Asian community. Feedback from the community is an essential component of the planning process and has been taken in variety of forms. Key elements of the community participation strategy are outlined in this section

#### Advisory Groups

A key element of community participation is the involvement of advisory groups that act to guide the planning process. These groups serve various purposes and include:

***Community Stakeholder Group.*** The Community Stakeholder Group (CSG) aims to represent all vested interests from within the ½ mile Planning Area, and is comprised of about 50 members. The forum is designed to focus on policy development and direction in response to community input. CSG members are expected to provide feedback on documents throughout the planning process. CSG members additionally serve as conduits to expand the role of public participation by providing advice regarding potential methods to effectively communicate and solicit general public input. They also serve as conduits to their respective constituencies: informing them about the planning process and how the public can participate, distributing information about the planning program and workshop flyers, and encouraging participation in the involvement programs.

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 Preferred Plan through participation in a series of working meetings, three hours each, over the summer of 2011. These meetings started with community feedback from public workshops and developed the framework for the Preferred Plan through an iterative process between CSG members, City staff, and consultant work. To date, eleven meetings of the CSG have been held.

***Executive Committee of the Community Stakeholder Group.*** An executive committee of the CSG (ExCSG) acts as a sounding board regarding comments received from the Technical Advisory Committee and the CSG, addresses specific issues of concern, and develops recommendations and/or compromise solutions in the event that the CSG cannot reach consensus on important issues. Composition of the ExCSG includes a Peralta Community College District/Laney College representative, a BART representative, representatives from Oakland City Council Districts 2 and 3, and two representatives from the Chinatown Coalition. Participants are expected to provide input that balances the various interest groups represented in the larger CSG, and have an interest and understanding of development issues in Oakland. Five meetings of the ExCSG have been held to date.

***Technical Advisory Committee.*** The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is made up of City staff and representatives from other agencies with technical knowledge about the Plan-

ning Area. Three TAC meetings have been held to date, and TAC members are invited to CSG meetings as appropriate.

### **Community Outreach**

In addition to meetings of the groups noted above, a variety of strategies have been employed to engage and involve the community in the planning process. Language accessibility has been a central component of all community outreach, including meeting materials translated into Chinese and Vietnamese and bi-lingual meeting facilitators and interpreters (Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese). To date, strategies have included:

- An initial Community Engagement Process, 2008-2009. For this process the City of Oakland partnered with Asian Health Services (AHS), the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) to begin community outreach for the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan. Four well-attended community meetings were conducted from 2008 to 2009 and a 19-question survey which garnered 1,100 results was conducted in March and April 2009.
- Establishing partnerships with local community-based organizations (including, but not limited to, Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, Asian Health Services, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, Transform, East Bay Housing Organizations, Walk Oakland Bike Oakland, East Bay Bicycle Coalition, Oakland Asian Cultural Center, Asian Pacific Environmental Network).
- Conducting Stakeholder interviews. A total of 50 stakeholders, including 18 City staff, were interviewed individually or in groups, in sessions generally lasting about one hour.
- Hosting four community workshops to solicit feedback on a variety of topics as the plan emerges. The first workshop focused on identifying issues and goals, the second and third workshops (divided by subareas) focused on specific improvements community members felt were important, and the fourth workshop presented the Emerging Plan concepts for feedback.
- Hosting a series of focus groups/neighborhood teas. These meetings sought to assess goals and concerns of local residents who typically do not attend large public meetings, small meetings will be held to assess goals and concerns in a more intimate and informal setting. These meetings specifically engaged brokers and property owners, merchants, families, Laney College students and faculty, and youth).
- Business surveys (administered to participants of Merchant's Tea).
- Other meetings to engage institutions and community groups, such as the Peralta Board meeting, Lake Merritt Station Area Plan Institutions meeting, Jack London District Association meeting, Mayor's Cantonese Town Hall meeting, and Oakland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting.

## Summary of Feedback

Feedback from these meetings is summarized in the following documents, all of which can be accessed on the project website <http://www.business2oakland.com/lakemerrittsap> in the Workshops and Meetings, and Report sections.

- *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*, completed by Dyett & Bhatia and the City of Oakland in May, 2010.
- *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.

## FORMAL PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE PREFERRED PLAN

This Preferred Plan will be reviewed by several advisory and decision-making bodies at public meetings. These meetings include:

- 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 community members, the Community Stakeholders Group, and Technical Advisory Committee, into the Draft Plan. There will be several future opportunities for participation, as shown in the overall project timeline, shown in Figure 1-1 at the start of this chapter. Interested community members may also make comments at any public meeting, by email ([Lake\\_merritt\\_plan@oaklandnet.com](mailto:Lake_merritt_plan@oaklandnet.com)), or by phone (510.238.7904).

## **2 Overall Vision by Study Area**

As described earlier in Chapter 1, in order to expand on the overall vision, the Planning Area is divided into seven study areas, as shown in Figure 1.5. Each study area has a distinct “big idea” and vision that defines future development in the area and that helps support the overall vision statements and goals for the Planning Area.

### **2.1 14th Street Corridor**

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#### **EXISTING CONTEXT**

The existing character of the 14th Street corridor includes a mix of uses and variety of building forms. 14th Street is a major east-west connector between Downtown and the neighborhoods east of Lake Merritt. It is a two-way, four-lane street characterized by intermittent retail, new mixed-use housing development, historic buildings, public resources such as the Public Library, the back of Hotel Oakland, and parking lots. Roughly two-thirds of buildings along 14th Street are one- to four-stories, with the remaining one-third eight-stories, and a few taller high-rises.

Other areas of the 14th Street Corridor Study Area include significant institutional uses, including office space for Alameda County, the County Courthouse, and key public resources including the Oakland Museum of California and the Kaiser Auditorium, both of which are historic landmarks. The Oakland Museum of California was recently renovated with the main entrance now oriented toward Oak Street. The Kaiser Auditorium currently remains out of use.

Several opportunity sites (see Figure 1-6) exist in this study area, including three full block sites (opportunity sites 6, 8, and 11).

#### **VISION AND BIG IDEA**

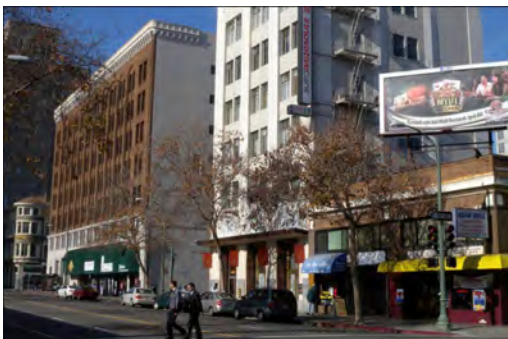
Looking forward, the importance and gateway quality of this corridor will be greatly enhanced by the Measure DD improvements currently underway at the south end of Lake Merritt, and the Emerging Plan seeks to build on these improvements.

The vision for 14th Street is to enhance citywide connectivity and activate the northern edge of the Planning Area. While 14th Street will continue to be an important street for vehicular travel, the Plan seeks to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment to increase multi-modal access. A diversity of uses and more active ground floor uses will make the area more

inviting, and the increased activity and additional lighting will add to the safety of the public realm.

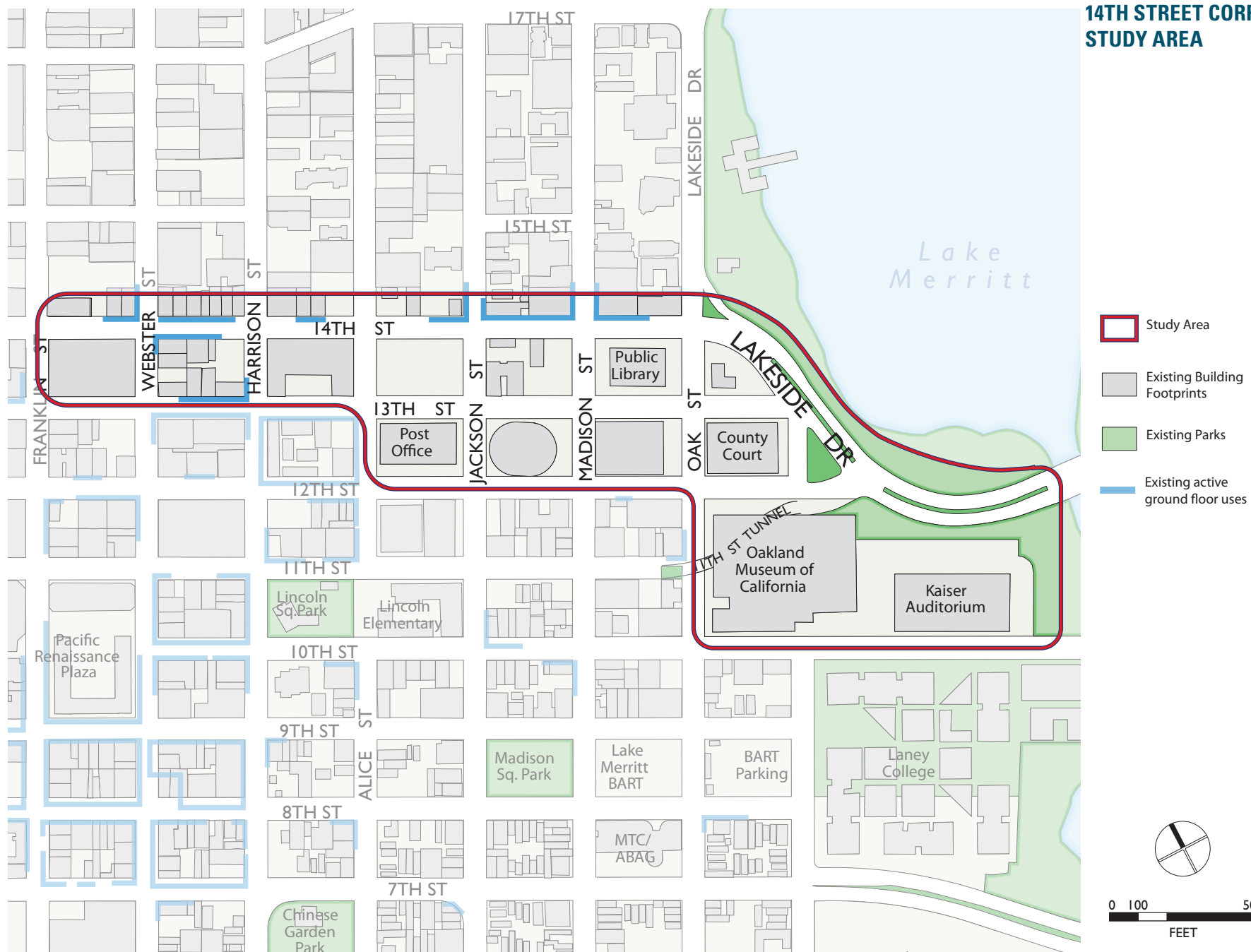
Land use and streetscape changes are included to enhance this vibrant center for educational, public services and cultural uses; and to highlight new activity on 14th Street, linking Lake Merritt to Downtown. Key components of the vision include complementing existing government and institutional uses – including the Oakland Museum, Kaiser Auditorium, County Courthouse, Main Public Library – with new residential uses. In addition, active ground floor commercial uses will be promoted in new development (including new County or other office buildings). Detailed streetscape improvements are included in Chapter 6.

**Photos:  
14TH STREET CORRIDOR**





**Figure 2.1:  
14TH STREET CORRIDOR  
STUDY AREA**





## **2.2 East Lake Gateway**

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### **EXISTING CONTEXT**

The East Lake Gateway district includes East 12th Street and International Boulevard. It has important linkages to Central and East Oakland neighborhoods and commercial districts, to Lake Merritt, and Downtown, and beyond. East 12th Street is also an important bus route that will carry the future AC Transit Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service through the area. The East Lake Gateway also connects neighborhoods to Laney College and the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Downtown Educational Complex.

The existing character of the East Lake Gateway study area is primarily residential, with some retail and institutional uses. Active commercial ground floor uses are focused on the East 12th Street and International Boulevard corridors. Existing heights are predominantly mid-rise, with some low-rise and a few high-rises.

This area encompasses several key assets, including the Lake Merritt Channel and OUSD sites. The planned OUSD Downtown Educational Complex Project is located between 2nd and 4th avenues on East 10th Street, and will host La Escuelita Elementary, MetWest High School, and Yuk Yau and Centro Infantil Childhood Development Centers (which provide preschool programming for children ages three through five and an afterschool program for children in kindergarten through third grade) in a state-of-the-art, multi-use structure.

### **VISION AND BIG IDEA**

The vision for the East Lake Gateway seeks to balance increased vitality and safety resulting from new residential and retail development with new public benefits such as more open space and improved access and linkages to existing and planned community resources and open spaces.

This study area is envisioned as a residential district with active retail uses as well as civic and commercial uses, linking Central and East Oakland to downtown through the new 12th Street improvements currently underway at the south end of Lake Merritt. Land use and streetscape changes will leverage and further Measure DD improvements to the Channel and East 10th Street. They will link the area to Lake Merritt and adjacent cultural/educational uses, like Laney, the Kaiser Auditorium, the Oakland Museum of California, and the new OUSD Downtown Educational Complex.

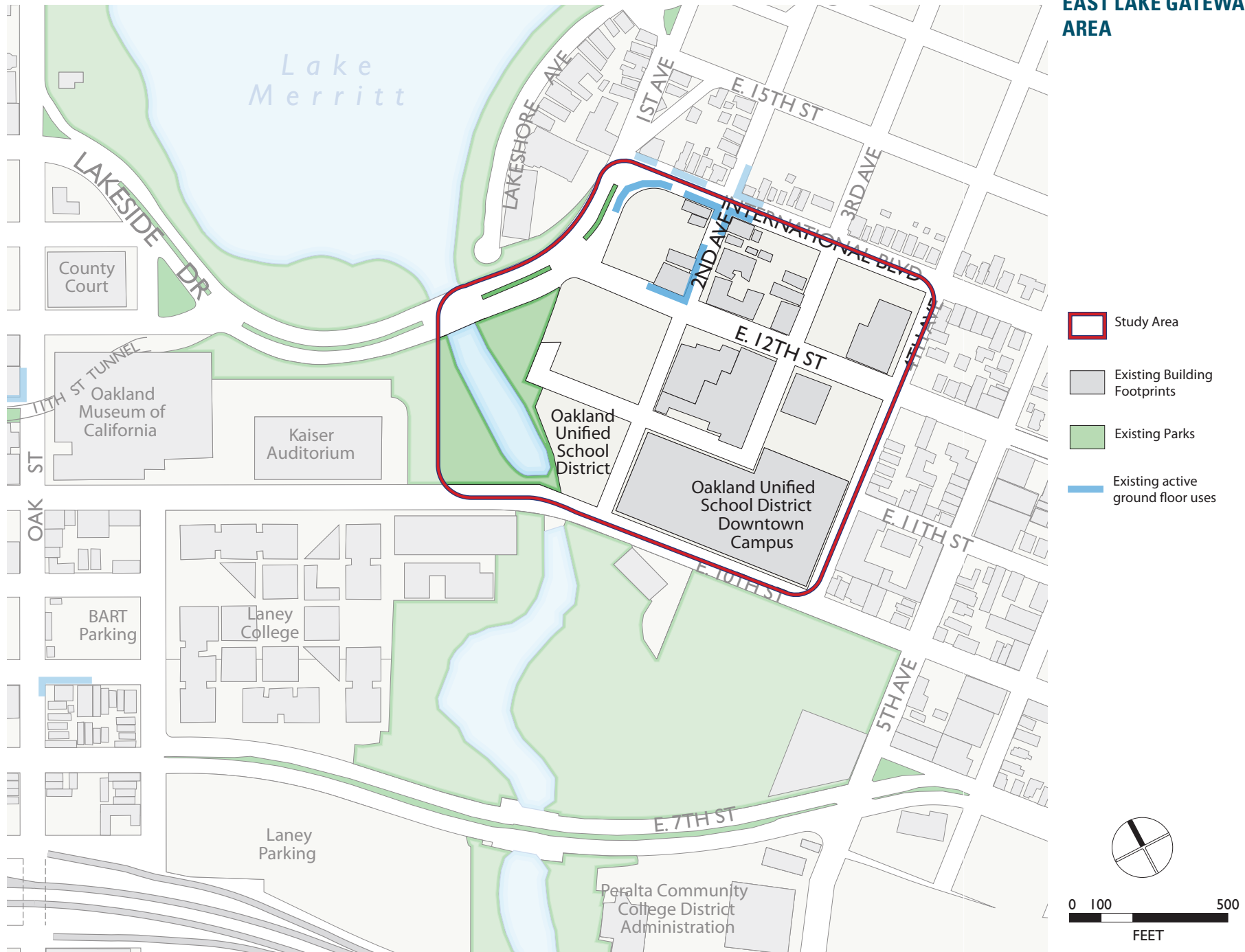
Improvements will seek to create distinctive/landmark quality design to create a gateway design of buildings along East 12th Street at 1st Avenue. In particular, design will be required to establish a welcoming gateway between the assets of the Channel and new park spaces, and the burgeoning retail areas along East 12th Street and International Boulevard.

Another key component is the establishment of public access along the eastern edge of the Channel. New buildings will be required to ensure public access to the Channel and be set back from the Channel edge and conform to design guidelines such as those outlined in Chapter 5.

**Photos:  
EAST LAKE GATEWAY**



**Figure 2.2:**  
**EAST LAKE GATEWAY STUDY**  
**AREA**



## 2.3 Laney/Peralta

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### EXISTING CONTEXT

The Laney/Peralta study area includes Laney College campus, athletic fields, and parking lot, and the Peralta College District Administration buildings, with the Lake Merritt Channel creating a north-south pedestrian and bicycle connection and 7th and 10th streets connecting east-west through the study area. The Lake Merritt Channel and some land along its edge is State Tideland Trust land, indicating that residential and some commercial uses would be prohibited along the Channel edge<sup>1</sup>. In general, the college is made up of two to three story buildings, with one tower reaching eight stories.

Laney College has a Facilities Master Plan that will direct new development on Laney property, to best meet its educational priorities and the vision of students, faculty, staff, and the neighborhood at large. The Master Plan is guided by the following principles:

- Maintain the integrity of the existing campus core buildings, open space, and athletic fields.
- Identify sites within or at the perimeter of the campus for development to respond to projected growth and programmatic demands.
- Preserve the natural environment along the Estuary and enhance the campus's connection to it.
- Over time, in response to projected growth and creation of potential future development opportunities, replace surface parking with structured parking.
- Strengthen both of the campus's recognized "front doors" and accessible pedestrian access; separate pedestrian from vehicular circulation where possible.
- Prioritize re-use of existing buildings and approach renovation and development through the incorporation of sustainable strategies and practices.

### VISION AND BIG IDEA

Land use and streetscape changes are included to enhance the role of the Laney College campus/Peralta District property as a community asset and lively hub of activity. This study area will act synergistically with the BART Station Area blocks to create a core activity node, in particular through establishment of a "festival street" on Fallon Street ("festival streets" use traffic calming and unique streetscape features to create a street that can easily be converted to public use on weekends or special events). The potential "festival street" treatment of Fallon Street would be designed to accommodate all modes of travel in order to better connect the Lake Merritt BART Station to the Laney College campus, and include a decorative surface to also function as a plaza during periodic closures for community events. The Plan also seeks to enhance connections between Laney College to the BART Station with retail, cultural assets, and entertainment.

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<sup>1</sup> Port of Oakland, Land Records Management Tideland Grants Land, November 9, 2001.

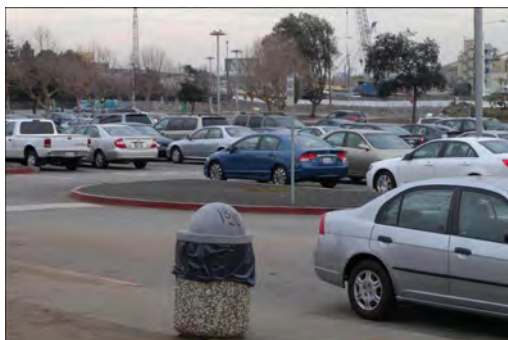
The Plan will further establish Laney College as a cultural entertainment and community center facility with more community uses and classrooms, with redevelopment of Laney parking lot including community uses, classrooms, and parking.

Crucial to the success of this area, the Plan will seek to promote movement through and throughout the campus, connecting the neighborhood to the Lake Merritt Channel, OUSD's Downtown Educational Complex, Oak to 9th development, BART, East Lake commercial, Lake Merritt open space, and the Bay Trail. Access will be facilitated by adding signage and improving streets and intersections to be more pedestrian friendly.

Open space improvements will focus on establishing the Lake Merritt Channel as a regional open space asset linking the public parks and trails around Lake Merritt to the public parks and trails along the Estuary Channel waterfront. Street improvements will focus on enhancing the east-west connections provided by 7th and 10th Streets. Streetscape improvements for 7th, 10th, and Fallon streets are shown in detail in Chapter 6.



Photos:  
LANEY/PERALTA



A detailed map of downtown Oakland, California, illustrating a proposed pedestrian bridge project. The map shows the city grid with major streets like Madison St, Oak St, Fallon St, Victory Ct, E. 7th St, E. 11th St, and Embarcadero. Key landmarks include the Oakland Museum of California, Kaiser Auditorium, Laney College, Laney Parking, Peralta Community College District Administration, and various BART stations (Lake Merritt, MTC/ABAG). A large orange-outlined area highlights the project site, which includes a green park-like area with a winding path and several bodies of water. A blue shield with the number 880 indicates the location of Interstate 880. A black arrow points to a specific spot on the bridge labeled "Potential Pedestrian Bridge". The map also shows the "OAKLAND ST TUNNEL" and "E. 12TH ST" at the top right.

## 2.4 I-880

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### EXISTING CONTEXT

The I-880 study area includes sites along the freeway edge with high noise and air quality issues, freeway access points, and the areas beneath the freeway. The existing character of the area includes a variety of land uses, such as a new high-rise residential project on 7th and Broadway; and the historic 7th Street/Harrison Square residential district, which is comprised primarily of one- or two-story Victorian and early 20th century cottages. Various opportunity sites include the Salvation Army block and underutilized sites along 6th Street between Madison and Fallon streets. Chinese Garden Park (formerly Harrison Square Park) is located between Harrison, 7th, Alice, and 6th streets.

A critical component of the I-880 study area is the area beneath the freeway, which includes six (6) street under-crossings and several parking lots (primarily managed by Caltrans).

### VISION AND BIG IDEA

The Plan aims to improve connections between the Jack London District and areas north of the I-880 freeway (Chinatown, BART, Laney College, County offices, Oakland Museum, etc) by improving the freeway under-crossings for pedestrian safety and comfort, including pedestrian-oriented lighting, and improving and/or activating the areas under the freeway. Conceptual streetscape improvements are included in Chapter 6.

In addition, identifying pedestrian safety improvements related to traffic accessing I-880 and the Alameda tubes will be essential for this study area, including improving access to Chinese Garden Park. Broadway, Webster, Jackson, Madison, and Oak Streets from 7th Street to 5th Street (including the freeway undercrossing) should have pedestrian-oriented improvements, including directional signage, to improve access to the Jack London District. Note that traffic patterns related to the Alameda tubes are outside the scope of this project.

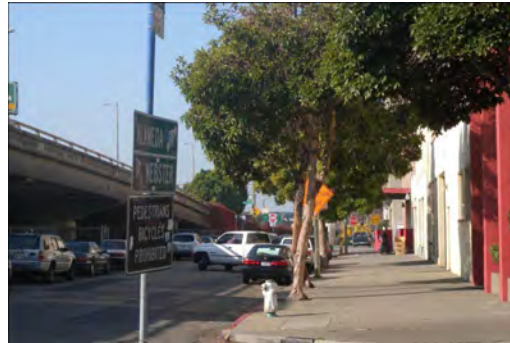
Importantly, the Emerging Plan seeks to improve the comfort and usability of Chinese Garden Park and ensure the health and safety of both existing residents and residents in new development by adding landscaping and/or sound wall buffers to the highway edge. The Plan will include policies such as:

- Locate taller buildings to buffer the neighborhood from I-880. Face buildings toward 7th Street, with parking located closer to the freeway, wherever possible.
- Ensure new development incorporates air quality and noise controls.
- Maintain clean indoor air quality (mechanical ventilation, building interiors under positive pressure, particulate filtration and carbon filtration as needed, air intakes away from pollution sources).
- Require HVAC system with filtration for sensitive use sites within 500 feet of a high traffic road if warranted by exposure analysis.
- Locate courtyards, balconies and opening windows away from the freeway.

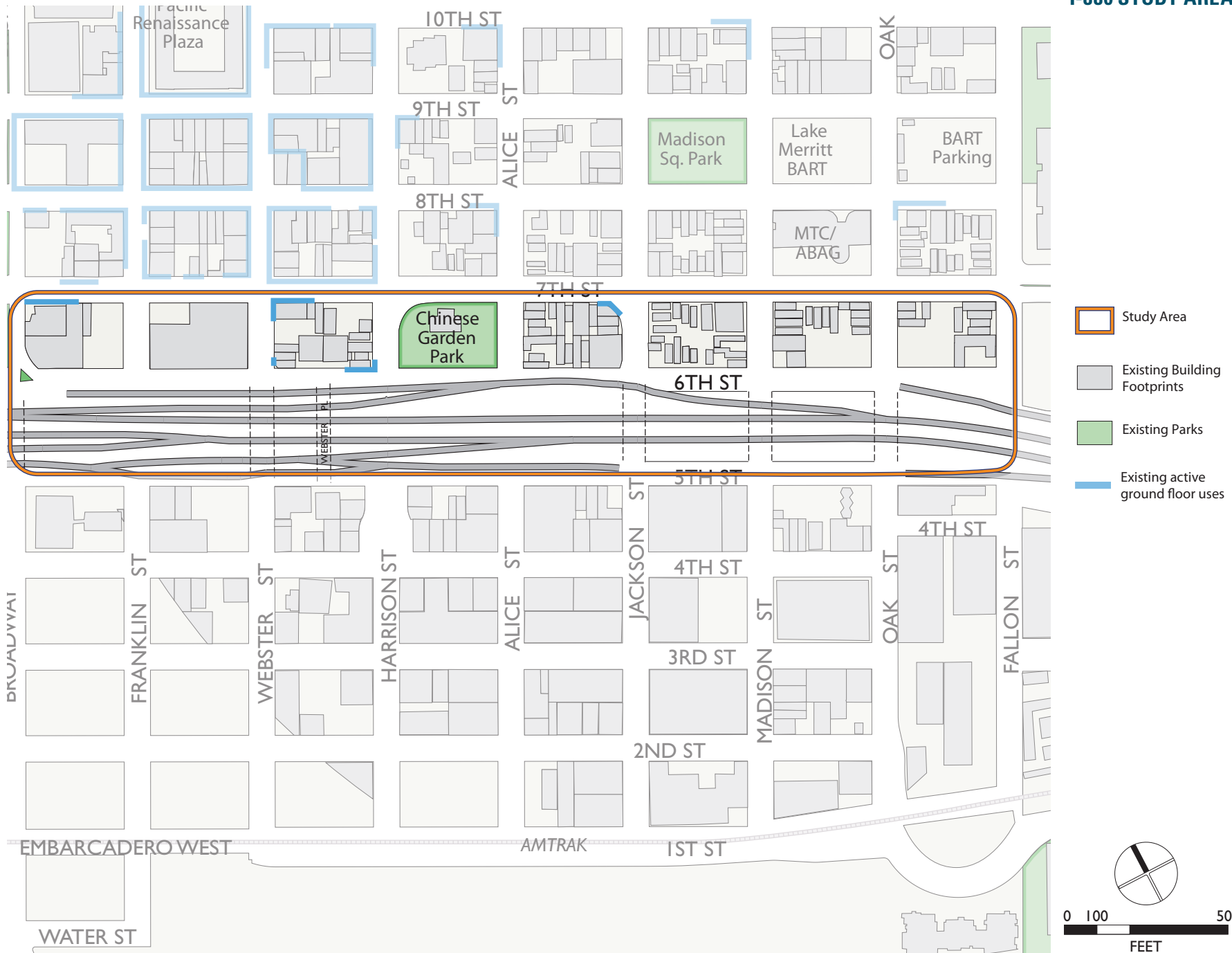


- Consider installation of sound walls or additional landscaping.

**Photos:  
I-880**



**Figure 2.4:  
I-880 STUDY AREA**



## **2.5 BART Station Area**

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### **EXISTING CONTEXT**

The BART Station Area is located at the center of the Planning Area and includes the Lake Merritt BART station, which is accessible at Oak and 8th and 9th streets; the underground portion of the station runs beneath the two BART blocks bound by Madison, Fallon, 8th and 9th Streets. Aboveground, the two BART blocks include a parking lot (between Fallon and Oak) and plaza space with small ancillary facilities either in existence or under construction (between Oak and Madison). The only block in this study area that is developed is the MTC/ABAG block which includes a four-story office building. The fourth block in this study area is Madison Square Park, which is a full-block park widely used by the Tai-Chi community.

### **VISION AND BIG IDEA**

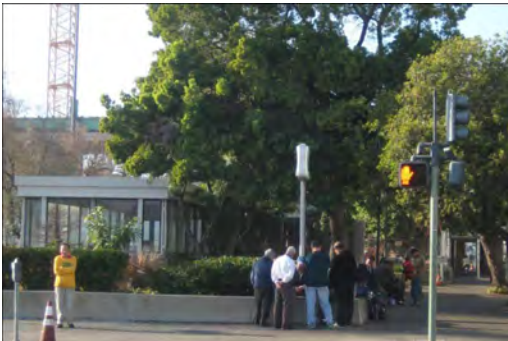
The Plan envisions development of the BART blocks, in coordination with the MTC/ABAG block if it becomes available, as a catalyst project that creates an active neighborhood hub and serves as part of an activated spine along 8th and 9th Streets connecting Laney College, the BART station, and the heart of Chinatown. Madison Square Park is a key community asset and open space, and the Plan will consider improvements that have been suggested by the community, including additional programming and amenities, while maintaining the full block of open space, to complement a major catalyst development adjacent to the Lake Merritt BART station. .

Redevelopment of the BART blocks, as well as potentially the MTC/ABAG block, is envisioned to include high-density uses, such as office, residential, retail, and entertainment uses, to promote activity near the BART station, as well as provide community services, public uses, and amenities throughout the area. The BART blocks should act as a hub of vibrant businesses, possibly with some at-grade public open space and/or rooftop gardens to activate the area.

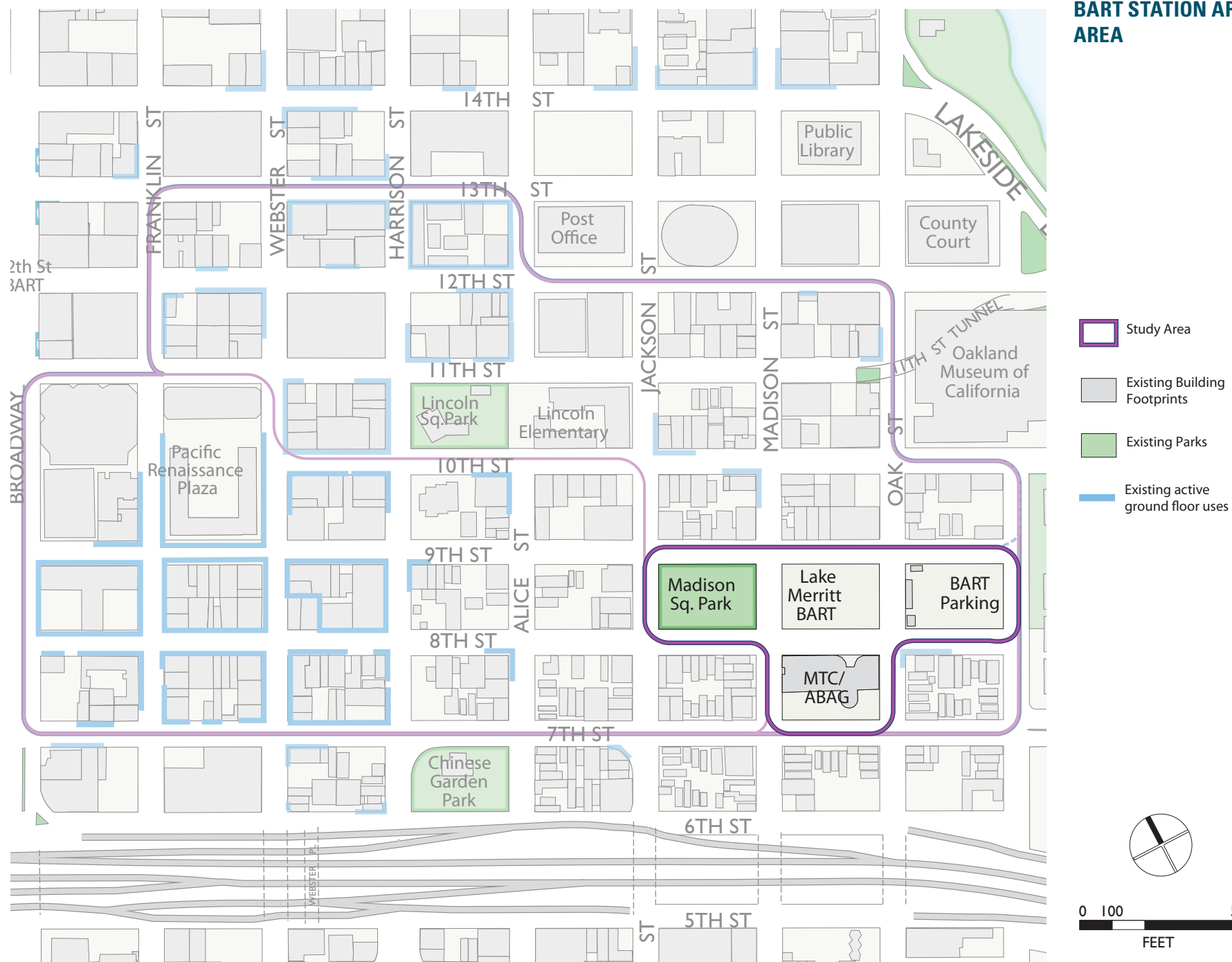
Station access should be coordinated and improved, including shuttle service stops, kiss and ride drop-off areas, and bus bays. Improving access around the station is discussed at greater length in Chapters 6 and 7. Street improvement concepts for Madison, Oak, 8th, and 9th streets, as described in detail in Chapter 6.



**Photos:  
BART STATION AREA**



**Figure 2.5:**  
**BART STATION AREA STUDY**  
**AREA**



## **2.6 Chinatown Commercial Center**

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### **EXISTING CONTEXT**

The Chinatown Commercial Center is a vibrant and active center for shopping, eating, and cultural services, as well as a historic district dating back to the middle/late 1800's. It acts as an important regional draw, particularly for the Asian community, drawing people in for shopping, festivals, services, and visiting family. Existing buildings house a range of diverse uses from retail shops and restaurants, groceries, community services, housing in a range of formats, banks, offices, churches, and cultural institutions. Buildings in this study area are typically one- to four-stories, with most of the historic buildings no more than two stories. However, newer development in the area includes several high-rise buildings between Broadway and Webster.

### **VISION AND BIG IDEA**

The Emerging Plan will further enhance this existing community hub and regional destination with high-density commercial and residential uses. The Emerging Plan will ensure that new development is sensitive to the historic context of the neighborhood, and will seek to improve façades of existing buildings and streetscapes, improve access by all modes to the commercial core, improve the pedestrian experience, and improve business quality of life. Targeted improvements include improving loading regulations to reduce double parking and congestion, promoting improved cleaning of the sidewalks and streets, enhancing the overall sense of security in the area, improving access to parking, and enforcing compliance with regulations that aim to improve the quality of the commercial district. Enhancements will seek to address local needs and enhance the vibrancy of one of the most successful retail districts in Oakland.

A key component of the vision for the Chinatown Commercial Center is to enhance the street network to improve pedestrian access and amenities. Streetscape improvements are recommended for all the streets in the Chinatown core, with detailed streetscape recommendations for several streets in this study area, including 8th, 9th, 10th, Alice, Webster, and Harrison streets, described in greater detail in Chapter 6.

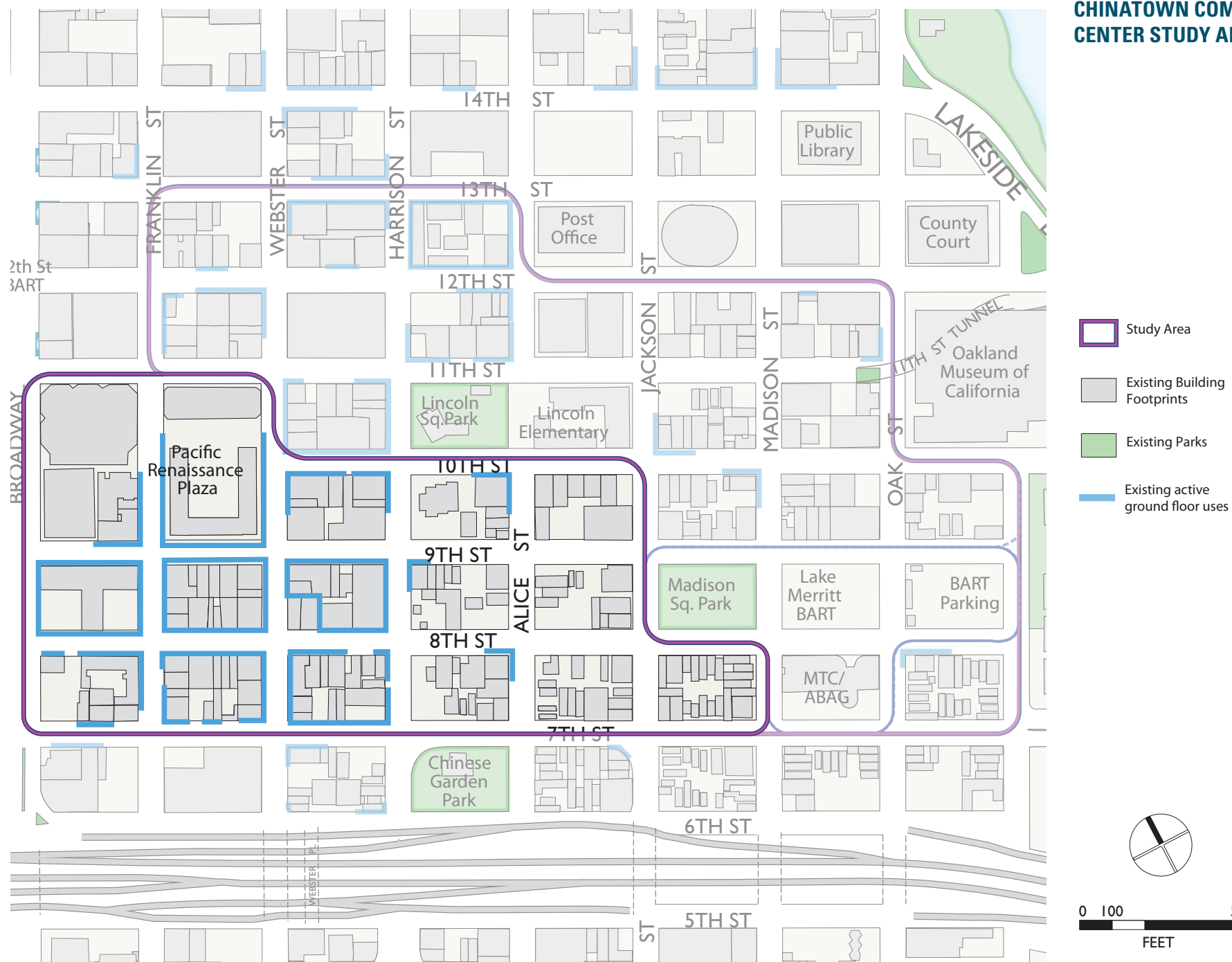




Photos:  
CHINATOWN COMMERCIAL CENTER PHOTOS



**Figure 2.6:**  
**CHINATOWN COMMERCIAL**  
**CENTER STUDY AREA**



## **2.7 Upper Chinatown**

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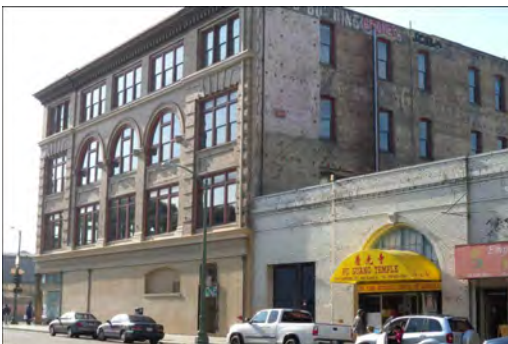
### **EXISTING CONTEXT**

The existing character of the Upper Chinatown study area is that of an active urban neighborhood. There are a wide range of uses currently in the area, including residential, office, schools, and recreational space, with retail and restaurants on the ground floor in some places. Lincoln Square Park is a major asset and community destination, adjacent to Lincoln Elementary, an award-winning school and another key asset of the Planning Area. Many of the buildings in this area are older one-story buildings, with several four- and five-story buildings, and a few high-rise buildings. This study area also includes several opportunity sites.

### **VISION AND BIG IDEA**

The Upper Chinatown area is envisioned as becoming an intensified urban area for living with new high-density housing and accompanying retail, restaurants, commercial uses, and publically accessible open spaces to complement Lincoln Square Park and Recreation Center. Active uses at the ground floor and more day-time uses and residences will help to activate the area at all hours, making a safer and more vibrant neighborhood. Buildings on one-half to full-size blocks are likely to include at least one high-rise. Buildings on smaller sites are likely to be mid-rises.

**Photos:  
UPPER CHINATOWN PHOTOS**



**Figure 2.7:**  
**UPPER CHINATOWN STUDY**  
**AREA**

