



City of Oakland

Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (DOSP) Zoning Amendments

Meeting # 2: Special Districts

May 16, 2022, 6:00-7:30pm

Meeting Materials

- Presentation
- Handout

Meeting Summary

This was the second of three meetings addressing the key components of the recently released Draft Zoning Amendments intended to implement the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (DOSP).

- Meeting #1 Land Use Activities (May 11, 2022)
- Meeting #3 Development Standards & Zoning Incentive Program (date to be announced)

City Staff gave an overview of the special districts proposed, including the intent of each district, the zoning mechanisms proposed, and other additional work that will be required (including actions anticipated in the DOSP) to realize the intent of the district. The presentation was followed by questions by the public and answers by City Staff. Then attendees broke into three small groups to discuss questions about the land use activities, and then reported key highlights back to the main group. Notes from the questions, small group discussions and large group report-back were recorded here and will be incorporated into a revised version of the Draft Zoning Amendments.

Introductions

CITY STAFF

City staff attending included:

- Ed Manasse, Deputy Director of Planning
- Laura Kaminski, Strategic Planning Manager
- Joanna Winter, Project Manager
- Neil Gray, Khalilha Haynes & Daniel Findley, Planners
- Stephanie Skelton, Public Service Representative

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Attendees included: Naomi Schiff, James E Vann, Andy Campbell, Vanessa Whang, Chris Malki, Ronnie Turner, Gary Knecht, Roy Chan, Chantelle Lorenz, Tiffany Eng, Steve Lowe, Jeffery Levin, Charles B, Diane Strong, Eric Arnold, Scott Greenwood, Garrick Huey, Gabriella Folino, Mike Jacob, Douglass Marshall, Merlin Edwards, Savlan Hauser

Attendees were invited to share their organizations or neighborhoods, and which special district(s) they would like to talk about/know more about:

- **James E Vann-** District 2. Gold Coast NH; as well as Coalition of Advocates for Lake Merritt.
- **Andy Campbell-** Member of Oakland’s Bicyclist and Pedestrian Advisory Commission. Interested in the Green Loop
- **Vanessa Whang-** Cultural Affairs Commissioner, District 6 resident. Worked on cultural plan consultant of cultural equity and arts and culture issues. Interested in all of it, but mostly interested in cultural issues citywide.
- **Chris Malki-** Eves Waterfront Property.
- **Ronnie Turner-** Turner Development Resource Group. Interested in the DOSP regarding Old Oakland and 14th and Franklin. Involved in City development. Keeping up with what’s happening with the city, looking at opportunities to see what’s going on. Also concerned about communities that are harmed by structural racism.
- **Gary Knecht-** Jack London District since 1982. Concerned with the special districts affecting Jack London. Interested in what we have to offer.
- **Roy Chan-** District 4 resident. Cultural Affairs Commissioner. Interested in cultural and special districts city wide.
- **Chantelle Lorenz-** Concerned citizen watching Oakland change rapidly, curious about what is happening.
- **Tiffany Eng-** Has neighbors in Chinatown that are near and dear to my heart. I have a lot of opinions, but I feel like a broken record.
- **Naomi Schiff-** Oakland Heritage Alliance
- **Chris Buckley-** Oakland Heritage Alliance

Questions

- **Steve Lowe** – How will the EIFD interact with the zoning? How do residents have input into the EIFD? *EIFDs [Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts] are separate from the zoning. EIFDs are able to fund infrastructure maintenance and housing development, economic development, transportation infrastructure, sewage treatment, and climate adaptation projects, among other uses. EIFDs do not increase property taxes; they work by freezing tax revenues from a tax rate area in the interim base year and diverting forecasted tax revenue in future years (known as increment) to pay for improvements and/or pay back bonds. An EIFD would go through a City Council approval process where the public can give comments at City Council meetings.*
- **Tiffany Eng-** In regard to office priorities, did they mean places that have employment or just offices? *Commercial buildings that could house a variety of employment opportunities.*
- **Charles B-** Any talks of public midrise and high-rise green spaces as is common in Tokyo and Singapore? *We will discuss open space requirements integrated into high-rises in the next meeting.*

- **Chris Buckley-** regarding activating 880 underpass connecting JL and Chinatown, could the city allow for popup commercial activities such as in Japan? Would this be viable option? Is there a timeline from Caltrans for a specific program? *The proposed under I-880 Zoning would allow pop-up commercial; however, Caltrans does not allow permanent construction under freeways.*
- **Jeffery Levin-** How does staff determine how its applied to proposals? How does it relate to having objective standards? *Objective standards are currently being developed for Downtown and will be used in concert with the development standards in the Code.*
- **James E Vann –** Is Estuary Park included in the DOSP? *Estuary Park is not included in the DOSP.*
- **Naomi Schiff-** What are the potential types of districts? *Special districts that have been proposed include ones addressing sea level rise, arts and culture, I-880 freeway underpasses, the Green Loop and the Lake Merritt Channel.*
- **Gary Knecht-** Does Culture keeping have anything to do with historic preservation in the planning department’s approach to zoning? *Culture Keeping in the DOSP refers to maintaining and supporting the social, artistic, economic and physical cultural aspects of the community, including important cultural structures, though most traditional historic preservation policies are included in the Land Use and Urban Form section. We will be discussing a proposed Transfer of Development Rights Program to protect districts and structures at the next meeting. Culture keeping can overlap with historic preservation when there are historic events and cultures that have taken place and or continue to take place in a historic building.*
- **Roy Chan-** With a broader definition of “Arts and Culture” what is not considered an “Arts and Culture” use and would trigger a CUP? *Examples include offices that do not support arts and culture activities and retail or services that do not include performances, rotating art, or other arts and culture activities that meet the intent of the Black Arts Movement and Business District (BAMBD), in the case of this pilot zone.*
- **Eric Arnold-** So BAMBD is going to be a pilot program for Cultural Districts throughout the city? *Yes.*
- **Tiffany Eng-** Do you mean it’s the first City-Zoned cultural district? Or first zone under City’s new ordinance? *It is the first cultural district in Oakland that has been formally designed as such through a Council resolution. As a result, it is also the first City-zoned cultural district, where the City is recommending piloting an Arts & Culture overlay.*
- **Vanessa Whang-** What it the thought around “below market rate” for ground floor activity, how much below? *This question is currently under study, but we are analyzing the costs at 50% of market rate.*
- **James E Vann-** What about the proposed Webster Greenway Under I-880? *The Webster Greenway was inadvertently left off this map, but that would connect to the Green Loop as well.*
- **Scott Greenwood-** Does the office portion of downtown specific plan allow for conversion or new construction of life science uses? *Staff has amended the definition of Research Service to include research in an office or laboratory environment.*
- **Chris Malki-** What are you proposing regarding Sea Level Rise. Are you implicating there will be a wall built? *The proposal for the overlay zone would be to require that new development provide improvements to protect sites from inundation. Separately, the City is going through a citywide/regional process to determine approach to shoreline protection.*

- **Jeffrey Levin-** If the mitigation for sea level rise is to create a new fill to build up site height, what does that do to seismic safety, including risk if liquefaction? *New buildings will be evaluated for seismic safety and liquefaction during the building permit process.*
- **Merlin -** most of this is referring to downtown- any specific plans for East Oakland? *This meeting is regarding the rezoning of Downtown. The General Plan update is also underway and will be specifically addressing the needs of East and Deep East Oakland. In addition, the recently completed East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative resulted in a Community Plan and a Transformative Climate Communities grant that is being implemented through the Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors initiative.*

Comments/Feedback from Participants

980, HOWARD TERMINAL & EIFD

- **Steven Lowe-** Would like to know what we are doing about 980 and reconnecting downtown to Oakland, and West Oakland. Needs to be discussed about specific plans about the 980 reconnection efforts. Would like to know if there are other plans as well, especially now that there is more energy and discussion around Howard Terminal to connect old Oakland to Howard Terminal. Would like to know the future of 980.
- **Steve Lowe-** Concerned about enhanced infrastructure financing district.
- **Eric Arnold –** The [Howard Terminal] CBA [Community Benefits Agreement process] recommendations have been entered into the public record; hopes these will be used

OFFICE PRIORITY/LIFE SCIENCE

- **Scott Greenwood-** Some questions about the office portions of the DOSP whether it allows for Life Science use. The pandemic has just crushed demand, in class B market there is almost 40 percent vacancy it's going to be a long shot to get it down; both development and redevelopment of existing assets, it would be a way to speed up demand. The reason this is happening is because the zoning rules are outdated. I don't think it's an allowable use, I think that ownership of a lot of them would have an interest in exploring that because the demand just isn't there. If we don't have a driver that's a little more active than just office use.

ARTS & CULTURE

- **Tiffany Eng-** Nightlife is a concern in cultural district activities. We want to make sure Old Oakland doesn't become de facto tailgating district with only bars because they can't be elsewhere. I would support the idea of flexible definitions to encourage as much of mix use as possible. Thank you for removing entertainment district designation, there are renewed concerns as not sure what is in place to keep one from forming in Old Oakland and pushing out other uses.
- **Kristen Zaremba-** Generally it all looks like it's coming together in a way that connects the dots on everything we've talked about
 - **Interested** in combining nodes and how the Arts & Culture overlay relates to the Art + Garage District; it might make sense to treat them consistently
 - Not really seeing activation of Frank H. Ogawa/Oscar Grant Plaza in the zoning

- Need to have more discussion internally w/staff stakeholders such as DOT re: their underpass toolkit
- **Eric Arnold**- 17th Street has some cultural businesses; could start at the three proposed nodes and then expand there
- **Jeff Levin**- Ground floor arts & culture is great; we need to make it financially feasible for both tenants and owners; don't want to end up with a bunch of empty space
- Need to look at rents for cultural uses and how they can be affordable
- Need a definition of historically marginalized communities

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Chantelle Lorenz**- Hopefully affordable housing for low-income and very low-income will be a priority with real solutions. Having a hard time hearing such topics when it is a small audience. When these decisions are made it affects all stakeholders, we need to reach a larger table to get feedback to make equitable decisions.
- **Ronnie Turner**- Just using our neighboring town Berkeley when we talk about affordable housing and their commitment to go to the citizens and raise capital to see how the affordable housing goes, but I think we are talking about housing and affordability. There must be conversations about affordable housing so we can achieve some of the goals that are set by the region.

I-880 FREEWAY ZONE

- **Gary Knecht**- Would like to see the infrastructure that's desperately needed; lighting and fencing the garbage that's mostly around Caltrans is God awful; fencing and lighting is crucial.
- **Steve Lowe**- Connectivity with the waterfront and Broadway needs to get resolved. The six or so blocks on the Broadway underpass should have a precise plan.
- **Chris Buckley**- We need underpasses to create connections; has shared examples of construction of commercial activities under overpasses
 - *Construction is not a viable option, but perhaps we can get permission for Caltrans for something like converted shipping containers – the goal is low-impact commercial uses, special events, etc.*
- **Scott Greenwood**- 880 underpass is a great idea – Argentina does it with permanent structures, light, music and retail
- **Jeff Levin**- Underpass stuff is great and long overdue – talked about in the 1998 General Plan update
- Need to push Caltrans to make investments in lighting and fencing to connect Old Oakland to other neighborhoods and Howard Terminal along Washington Street

SEA LEVEL RISE

- **Jeffrey Levin**- For areas like Victory Court that are targeted for high density development, but are also potential inundation areas, this needs to be evaluated on an area basis first, rather than just project by project.

GREEN LOOP

- **Scott Greenwood-** Exciting and great; the Green Loop will make a huge difference

GENERAL/OTHER COMMENTS

- **Vanessa Whang:** Appreciates that we clarify acronyms. Concerns that the slides will not be available offline.
- **Naomi Schiff:** Had to leave early, but encouraged the group to discuss whether these are the right special districts.
- **Eric Arnold:** So far what he's hearing is encouraging; the proposals do reflect what the equity team and CAG [Community Advisory Group] have recommended; the devil is in the details, but it seems like a robust series of initiatives
- **Diane Strong-** one of my concerns is lit based products like asbestos being released into the community, and I feel like I don't have a voice. I am 56 years old, and I don't have a clue what is being discussed; trying to follow the language and what's being proposed, however I would like simpler language.
- **Ronnie Turner-** Childcare works well with mixed use developments.

Additional Feedback Opportunities

Participants and community members are invited to share their feedback:

- Visit the [DOSP Zoning Amendments website](#) to read summary materials and make comments on an interactive version of the Draft Zoning Amendments (using a tool called Konveio).
- Send an email to PlanDowntownOakland@oaklandca.gov.
- Fill out a [survey](#) to share feedback on the meeting and allow us to learn about who attends the meetings.
- Attend future meetings, including a meeting of the DOSP Community Advisory Group and hearing of the Planning Commission's Zoning Update Committee (ZUC) – both to be scheduled.
- [Sign up](#) on the [DOSP website](#) to receive email updates, including an upcoming survey.