

**CITY OF OAKLAND**  
Interoffice Memorandum

**Office of Parks and Recreation**

**TO:** Barry Miller, Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
**FROM:** Alicia Parker, Planner III, Planning & Building Dept. Strategic Planning Division  
**DATE:** March 9, 2016  
**SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL REPORT ON THE DOWNTOWN OAKLAND  
SPECIFIC PLAN**

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SUMMARY

The City of Oakland's Bureau of Planning is developing a specific plan for Downtown Oakland, and would like to solicit preliminary input from the PRAC on the Plan Alternatives Report (Report), which contains draft scenarios, policies and design options related to parks, recreation, and open space.

The process of developing a Specific Plan for Downtown Oakland began in July 2015. The Plan Alternatives Report was developed after engaging Oakland's community in a series of community workshops, stakeholder meetings (including with OPR staff), tours, surveys (online and paper), neighborhood meetings, Community Advisory Group meetings, and a week-long charrette that included a pop-up open house. The concepts in the Plan Alternatives Report were initially presented to the community at a public presentation on February 1, 2014. Feedback from the community on the alternative options presented in this Report will inform the Preferred Alternative, which will be developed in June 2016 and reviewed for environmental impacts with an EIR in 2017.

At this meeting, staff will focus on the parks, recreation, and open space aspects of the Plan alternatives. These elements are woven through the Plan, but are particularly addressed in the "Open Spaces & Recreation" pages of the Vision & Goals (Section 4), and shown graphically by neighborhood in Illustrating the Vision (Section 5). The alternative options include improvements to the current parks in Downtown; suggest new parks in residential areas west of San Pablo Avenue, north of Grand Avenue, and in Chinatown; and further the Webster Green concept; and provide designs for urban pedestrian open spaces such as paseos and plazas.

The Priority Development Area (PDA) Profile Report, which is the existing conditions report on which the infrastructure analysis is based, is available at [oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland](http://oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland).

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact to the Office of Parks and Recreation of adopting the Downtown Specific Plan has not yet been determined. However, the Specific Plan is likely to recommend improvements to existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces in Downtown. The Specific Plan intends to encourage higher density residential development to serve the needs of the expanding population, which would pay via the City's proposed Development Impact Fees for capital improvements needs resulting from that development.

## BACKGROUND

Downtown Oakland is the cultural, business, government, and entertainment hub of the East Bay with excellent transit service, including three Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations, multiple Alameda County (AC) Transit bus lines, Amtrak train service, and ferry service. The specific plan will help to ensure that Downtown remains a place of continuing growth and revitalization, as well a valuable resource for the larger Oakland community through increased employment, arts, and cultural opportunities. The plan will provide sound policy guidance on land use, transportation, economic development, housing, public spaces, cultural arts, and social equity.

Initiated in July of 2015, the Downtown specific plan will incorporate recommendations from the recently completed specific plans adjacent to downtown, the Mayor's Housing Cabinet, the Downtown Oakland Parking Supply Study and the Complete Streets Implementation Plan. The Downtown specific planning process will closely coordinate with parallel planning studies including the Alameda County Transportation Commission's "Freeway Access Project" which will study access to and from Interstate 880; Citywide Impact Fee Nexus Study and Implementation Strategy for transportation, affordable housing, and capital improvements; Broadway Transit Circulator Study; and a State Law SB743 Standard Procedures Update, which removes Level of Service (LOS) as a traffic input analysis methodology from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### Community Engagement

The initial centerpiece of the public participation process in the Downtown Specific Plan process was a design charrette held over a 10-day period in October 2015. During the charrette process, a series of tours, stakeholder meetings, surveys, and community workshops were held that provided opportunities for group brainstorming and input. The charrette was advertised in local newspapers, electronic newsletters, and via flyers posted in local businesses, community centers, residential hotels, and other public venues. Well over 200 people attended each of the initial public meetings held before and during the charrette, such as the project kick-off meeting, the hands on design workshop, and the work in progress presentation. During the 10-day charrette, the city and its consultant team welcomed the public into an open studio housed in a temporary storefront on Broadway that allowed community members to have one-on-one conversations with members of the consultant team as draft ideas were being explored. Surveys were available throughout the charrette period, allowing anonymous written feedback for the consultant team. Finally, a virtual "town hall" was created on the Speak Up Oakland website to facilitate participation from anywhere, any time of day. Last fall's charrette kicked off the specific plan's public engagement efforts. Community comments from the charrette are available on the project website at [www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland](http://www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland), see the "past meetings," "charrette" section.

The ongoing Specific Plan engagement process has been designed to encourage authentic participation by both traditionally well-organized groups, such as local business improvement districts, property owners, community-based organizations, and developers; as well as traditionally underrepresented lower-income, renter communities, small businesses and arts and culture organizations. A youth engagement component is also underway, with a youth summit scheduled for March 16th. City staff has attended over 10 neighborhood group/coalition meetings

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(see notes from these meetings available on the project webpage at [www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland](http://www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland), see the “community input” section) and continues to meet with stakeholder groups. General feedback received (via email transmission or hard copy surveys left at the Plan Downtown display in the lobby of the Planning Department) are also available on the project website.

Another public workshop was held on February 1, 2016, at the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts to introduce the Plan Alternatives. This public outreach event was attended by over 300 people. In addition to presenting the Plan Alternatives, the new “Streetwyze” public input platform was unveiled. Launching of the web-based Streetwyze application is meant to provide a culturally responsive method for engaging the community, particularly those who would not otherwise engage using traditional processes such as city-sponsored public meetings or city-hosted online survey tools. Community comments from this meeting are available on the project website at [www.oaklandnet.com](http://www.oaklandnet.com): see the “past meetings” section.

The Specific Plan process is also supported by a project Community Advisory Group (CAG) is comprised of professionals from a variety of fields who provide technical knowledge on issues such as urban design and real estate development, feasibility, as well as larger housing organizations and business improvement districts. Additionally, the group includes representatives of the local neighborhood groups, artist community, as well as youth, health and advocacy organizations to help direct the policies and decisions of Plan Downtown.

Community feedback from each of these avenues has been folded into the Plan Alternatives Report that is the subject of this report.

### PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The Plan Alternatives Report includes a summary of background information, a summary of the community vision for Downtown Oakland (to date), and a series of plan options and scenarios. The plan alternatives are reflective of the community vision and goals that have emerged through a series of small group meetings, large public events, and a 10-day public interactive design charrette. These working concepts and goals are grouped into the following categories:

- Affordability & Equity;
- Arts & Cultural Heritage;
- Built Environment, Preservation & Housing;
- Open Space & Recreation;
- Environmental Sustainability;
- Connectivity & Access; and
- Economic Development.

The Plan Alternatives Report contains the “Big Ideas” that the city and consultant team have heard from the community to date, and are discussed as goals on pages 1.8-1.11 of the Plan Alternatives Report. The big ideas and goals will continue to be refined and edited throughout the planning process.

The Vision/Goals specific to the built environment, preservation & housing are as follows:

- Focus intensity of new development in appropriate areas within Downtown Oakland to preserve the character of other neighborhoods;

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- Create walkable and bikeable places that complete healthy, livable neighborhoods;
- House residents of all incomes and family sizes in a wide range of traditional and innovative housing types close to transportation, jobs and services;
- Help to attract a vibrant mixture of uses in Downtown Oakland to generate activity at all times of the day.

The entire Plan Alternatives Report, **Attachment B** to this report, is available on the project webpage: [www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland](http://www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland) under the “Reports” section.

Based on community ideas and feedback to date, a series of draft alternative scenarios for the future of downtown’s neighborhood districts have been created and analyzed. They are intended to illustrate ways to achieve the community’s vision for an improved public realm that serves residents better while accommodating both growth and preservation. Basic circulation improvements are assumed to apply regardless of the specific alternatives chosen that prioritize pedestrians, bicycles, and transit including: all streets are re-designed to be complete streets and traffic calming techniques will be applied where appropriate; working with AC Transit, transit infrastructure is enhanced such as transit shelters/platforms and dedicated transit lanes and signage; policy options that result in two-way restoration of as many downtown streets as is feasible; a strategy to green the streets with bioswales, trees and other natural elements; in partnership with the Downtown Parking Supply Study, a parking strategy will be developed that accommodates current and future demand and balances on-street and off-street options. Additionally, in partnership with the Freeway Access Project, all freeway access points will be evaluated and modified where necessary to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists feel comfortable and safe.

This section summarizes the draft ideas and vision statements from each neighborhood with considerations demonstrating how the envisioned concepts could be achieved. For a complete description and analysis of the draft alternatives, see Sections 5 (Illustrating the Downtown Neighborhoods) and 6 (Evaluating Alternatives) on pages 5.2 to 6.17 of the Draft Alternatives Report. The neighborhoods identified below are identified on a map on page 5.2 of the Plan Alternatives Report.

**Koreatown Northgate (KONO)** (bounded by 27<sup>th</sup> street, Northgate Ave., Broadway (roughly), and Grand Ave.)

### *Urban Design Vision*

New development in Downtown’s KONO neighborhood should focus on vacant, surface parking lots and underutilized lots. Preserving the smaller, early 20<sup>th</sup> century production buildings will help maintain the industrial character of the neighborhood by introducing minimal changes to these buildings: such as openings, awnings, signage and building lighting. Large- to medium-scale building types are envisioned on transit-rich Telegraph Avenue and 27<sup>th</sup> Street. A network of open spaces such as a mid-block pedestrian paseo within the blocks along 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> Streets could be linked by tree-lined streets and rain gardens that filter stormwater. Streets would share the use of curbs for passenger loading zones and mobility hubs that accommodate bike share, on-street car share and ride share. Implementation of the Telegraph Avenue Complete Streets Plan, including a separate cycle track provides comfortable path for cyclists of all experience levels.

### *Development Potential*

The development potential for the two alternatives is summarized below:

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	<b>Alternative 1*</b>	<b>Alternative 2</b>
Total new residential units	1,368 units	1,721 units
Total new commercial space	187,653 square feet	196,465 square feet
Total office space	--	261,896 square feet
Total new parking area	96,750 square feet	111,150 square feet

\*Alternative one would prohibit residential near the core of 25<sup>th</sup> Street.

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

An Industrial/Maker designation (that permits work-live spaces while also encouraging or providing incentives for preserving industrial buildings) could be implemented to help preserve existing artist and production spaces, and introduce new artist and maker spaces within the Garage District between Telegraph Ave. and Broadway. Standards and regulations for historic designations may need to be examined and revised to preserve the artists and maker building fabric, as well as potentially identifying any additional buildings to add to the historic building survey. Historic designation can be a tool, by providing eligibility for incentives (Mills Act, historic code, tax credits) that could help make preserving the existing building fabric economically attractive. A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program could occur with this area and other properties in Downtown. This would enable needed housing to increase in another neighborhood, while maintaining the historic buildings and uses in KONO and providing incentive for KONO landlords to maintain their properties and provide community benefits. Affordable work/live units could be achieved by implementing a workforce housing policy that incentivizes units that house residents who meet specific income or occupational requirements (such as artists and makers). Alternatively, affordability could also be achieved by design with creative housing models. For example, small yet high-quality work-live units could be designed above shared a commercial space at the ground level enabling small businesses to share operational costs.

**Uptown** (bounded by Grand Ave., Broadway, San Pablo Ave. and 16<sup>th</sup> St.)

*Urban Design Vision*

The Plan Alternative’s vision for Uptown includes an improved public realm, strategic infill and the re-purposing of underutilized and historic buildings to meet current needs —such as incubator space for small businesses. There are a variety of building types in Uptown, from office towers to Victorian homes, including several parking garages. One idea for the future involves retrofitting parking garages at the ground level into commercial spaces the depth of an individual parking bay. This would add commercial space in Uptown, repair damaged street frontages, and re-purpose underutilized portions of parking structures. Along 20th and 21st Streets, a pedestrian connection is envisioned along this very long city block. A “road diet” (road narrowing) is already being implemented for Telegraph Avenue; the new street design includes separated bike lanes in each direction, narrowed travel lanes, the addition of drought tolerant street trees, and a central street space that accommodates cars and buses which collectively make the center of Uptown more walkable and bikeable to reduce traffic congestion, support business and create a more livable public realm. A redesign of the Uptown section of Broadway could better prioritize pedestrians, cyclists and transit users, and provide better connections to City Center to the south.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for Uptown is summarized below:

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	<b>Alternative 1</b>
Total new residential units	1,228 units
Total new commercial space	38,076 square feet
Total office space	19,302 square feet
Total new parking area	39,404 square feet

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

New design guidelines can be implemented to ensure that storefronts are inviting to the pedestrian. For example, minimum transparency on the first floor, signage that is visible to the pedestrian, and the presence of awnings, can result in a more comfortable and inviting experience. Additionally, programs can be implemented that encourage existing blank walls to be transformed by local artists into murals or art installations. This will help to establish continuity between active storefronts. Programs can also be created to encourage incubator spaces and pop-up retail, like shipping containers or food trucks, on underutilized sites. These temporary solutions can catalyze permanent change within a neighborhood.

Height allowances within the Uptown neighborhood already permit tall buildings; buildings in this Plan alternative are at least 7 stories tall, and as tall as 12 to 15 stories along Broadway and Telegraph. This would accommodate at least 689 new housing units, as well as additional retail and office space at the heart of the city. Several options could be pursued to target more affordable housing in this scenario, including the City allocating an impact fee for subsidy and allowing more creative housing models such as “Micro Living Quarters” (very small units which are more affordable by design).

**City Center** (bounded by Franklin St., 16<sup>th</sup> St., Jefferson St. and 10<sup>th</sup> St.)

*Urban Design Vision*

Broadway, the “main street” of downtown Oakland, travels through the core of City Center. Improvements suggested for this historic street in the Plan Alternative Report include the addition of transit-only lanes, bike infrastructure, street trees, to help to connect the Civic Center to Uptown and facilitate successful ground-floor commercial businesses. A distinctive characteristic of Broadway is its many small, well-loved, and unique retail businesses. Improving the sidewalk and street space will encourage pedestrian traffic to support them while making public spaces more comfortable and secure. The restoration of a streetcar system could also energize Broadway by adding another mode of transit to this busy corridor. The return of the streetcar to Oakland would complement other improvements, such as extended bus service along the corridor, the implementation of dedicated bike lanes, and generous sidewalks. These improvements would not preclude car traffic, but would add more and different modes of transportation to Oakland’s iconic “main street.” The City Center could be infilled with mid-sized buildings with retail on the ground floor and residences above to create more activity beyond weekday office hours, boosting safety and the local economy. To improve walkability along streets with exposed parking garages, small retail units could be introduced on the ground floors of parking garages, providing usable space along the street. These “liner” units would face the street, providing activity and security.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for the City Center is summarized below:

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	<b>Alternative 1</b>
Total new residential units	240 units
Total new commercial space	10,071 square feet
Total office space	12,000 square feet
Total new parking area	19,250 square feet

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

One of the key concepts for implementing this new vision for City Center is a redesign of Broadway as it travels through the core of Downtown. The envisioned street retrofit includes a transit priority lane to accommodate the forthcoming Bus Rapid Transit route that will pass through Broadway. The proposed street design could include car travel lanes in each direction, dedicated and separated bike lanes, and large sidewalks adjacent to retail storefronts. On street parking could be removed in some areas, and while not recommended for every street, given the importance of this segment of Broadway as a multi-modal center of the City, the benefit of increased bike and transit facilities could outweigh the impact from the lost parking. A program could be implemented that encourages local artists to partner with property owners to add murals to existing large blank walls at the ground level. Adding temporary mural art or other art installations on blank or covered frontages along Broadway will help to establish continuity from Uptown to the City Center and from the City Center to the Jack London neighborhood.

**Lake Merritt Office District** (bounded by Grand Ave., Broadway, Lakeside Dr., and 19<sup>th</sup> St.)

*Urban Design Vision*

New high-rise towers on vacant, surface parking and underutilized lots are envisioned to join those already located in the Lake Merritt Office District. New high-rises would be encouraged to have “tower” forms, which are more slender and have less impact on views and light. Regularly spaced street trees, rooftop gardens and green roofs would create an urban canopy. Pocket parks, plazas and courtyards would add to the quality of life for new and existing residents. Improvements to the street frontages of existing buildings are also proposed, allowing local businesses to expand and reinvest in the area to provide goods and services to new and current residents and workers, while streets provide pedestrian-oriented places throughout the day and into the night. Connections to Lake Merritt and other downtown districts would be improved as pedestrian and bicycle routes are enhanced and more people commute to work by transit or bicycle. Key connections in this neighborhood include 20th Street and Grand Avenue. 22nd Street could be re-made with decorative paving and special lighting (such as a “necklace of lights”) between Telegraph Avenue and the Kaiser/Cathedral plaza to create an intimate, plaza-like street corridor through Downtown to Lake Merritt. The former section of Valdez Street between 22nd Street and Grand Avenue is also envisioned to re-open to auto traffic to better connect the Lake Merritt Office District to the future retail corridor along Valdez Street north of Grand Avenue.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for the Lake Merritt Office District is summarized below:

	<b>Alternative 1</b>	<b>Alternative 2</b>
Total new residential units	598 units	1,288 units
Total new commercial space	74,512 square feet	104,512 square feet
Total office space	1,395,586 square feet	1,565,600 square feet
Total new parking area	143,617 square feet	188,617 square feet

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

New development should provide a variety of housing types, including one-, two-, and three- bedroom units. Coupled with an adjusted zoning ordinance that incentivizes a variety of unit types, the Lake

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Merritt District can offer opportunities for much needed housing supply and affordability. Additionally, policies to incentivize shared office and commercial spaces so that small businesses can share the costs of office and commercial spaces at the ground floor should be included to implement the vision for this district. In both alternatives evaluated, the overall vision is met; however, the second alternative includes no additional parking for the added development. A lower parking requirement in this transit-rich neighborhood would give developers more options to achieve more units with a variety of development types in the same footprint.

**Lakeside** (bounded by 19<sup>th</sup> St., Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> St. and Lakeside Dr.)

*Urban Design Vision*

The Plan Alternative’s vision for the Lakeside neighborhood would preserve existing high-quality buildings and cultural centers, including the Malonga Casquelourd Cent for the Arts, while integrating new infill development and civic spaces that support and enhance local cultural institutions. Infill development would focus on vacant, surface parking and underutilized lots to accommodate additional residential development, as well as supporting arts, office, entertainment, and retail uses. The planned intensity would allow large-scale buildings between Broadway and Harrison, as well as fronting 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Lake Merritt and 19<sup>th</sup> Street, to encourage an increase in the supply of housing. Contextually sensitive small-, medium- and large-scale buildings could fill in the residential portion of the Lakeside District. The Black Arts Movement and Business District designation along 14th Street would be celebrated with improved streetscapes, distinct signage, and other visual and architectural cues that reinforce the character and significance of this area to Oakland’s culture and history. A network of great public spaces, including a shared street right-of-way space (plaza-like streets with a priority on the pedestrian, designed to eliminate the separation between pedestrians and car traffic) along 15th Street, pocket plazas, and greens, could be linked by shaded, tree-lined streets to pedestrian paths along Lake Merritt and Snow Park. Both 14th and 17th Streets are key links between neighborhoods as is Lakeside Drive as it meanders around Lake Merritt. The unifying elements of these corridors will include generous sidewalks and transparent shopfronts along the street edge, street trees, dedicated bike and transit infrastructure, and memorable architecture.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for the Lakeside neighborhood is summarized below:

	<b>Alternative 1</b>
Total new residential units	2,147 units
Total new commercial space	236,163 square feet
Total office space	588,000 square feet
Total new parking area	165,062 square feet

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

As in other Downtown neighborhoods, workforce housing is a priority; several policies could be considered to achieve plan goals including incentives with new development, or design approaches that incorporate a diverse range of housing types, including smaller affordable-by-design units or cooperative housing. Infill will be encouraged to occur at the scale of the building and lot, and not by entire city blocks. This will help retain the existing neighborhood character and scale. The proposed vision for improvements to public spaces in the Lakeside District should be created and implemented in partnership with the community to ensure improved streets, plazas and shared spaces meet community needs for celebration of arts and cultural heritage. Establishing institutional leadership, such as an arts commission, or partnering with existing community groups, to work in conjunction with the City in establishing priorities, defining specific projects and detailing designs could be a first

**West of San Pablo** (bounded by San Pablo Ave., 14<sup>th</sup> St. and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd)

*Urban Design Vision*

Street-oriented infill will help to better define both 17th Street and 20th Street, which are gateways to Downtown. Streetscape improvements and traffic calming along these streets could also make them more welcoming gateways. Replacing the I-980 Freeway with an at-grade boulevard would help to re-connect West Oakland to Downtown and this neighborhood (see further description on the I-980 proposal on page 11 of this report). Historic buildings – commercial on San Pablo, houses throughout the district – are maintained and appropriately used. Innovative small businesses and venues continue to thrive. Improvements to 17<sup>th</sup> Street (including narrowing the street, adding a planted buffer between the new protected bike lane and auto travel lanes) could catalyze private investment in the area (as the public realm improves) and would improve the gateway appearance of this importance entrance to Downtown. Shared street features (such as decorative paving allowing for easy conversion to festivals and street fairs, etc.) on San Pablo at 17<sup>th</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street could provide additional plaza amenities.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for the West of San Pablo is summarized below:

	<b>Alternative 1</b>
Total new residential units	537 units
Total new commercial space	86,559 square feet
Total office space	77,849 square feet
Total new parking area	47,798 square feet

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

The West of San Pablo neighborhood is uniquely situated adjacent to Interstate 980, the City Center, and parts of Old Oakland. It is somewhat cut off from the north edge of the Old Oakland-Preservation Park neighborhood by 14th and 17th Streets but it is historically continuous with that neighborhood and shares its physical character. Many of the existing lots are small and have intact 19<sup>th</sup> century housing that is similar to the housing in West Oakland. Local incentives to preserve and re-use historic structures, such as a transfer of development rights (TDR) program or code provisions to facilitate continued use of older housing stock, could be used to help maintain the buildings. Public and private partnerships between the City and civic organizations are another option. Changes to I-980 could have transformative impacts on the neighborhood, and the high associated costs could be offset by the potential for new public land and improved connections to West Oakland and Old Oakland.

**Old Oakland** (bounded by Castro St., 14<sup>th</sup> St. and 10<sup>th</sup> St., Broadway and 7<sup>th</sup> St.)

*Urban Design Vision*

Vacant or underutilized lots could be built out with small, context-sensitive buildings that contribute to the public realm. Underutilized parking garages could be adapted and reused as micro-housing units or incubator retail space. Ninth Street can be transformed from one-way into two-way, as well as reconfigured with head-in diagonal parking converted to back-in diagonal parking. The addition of textured paving would help to increase safety for bicyclists because it signals to motorists to drive slower and more cautiously. New street trees could be added to fill in the tree canopy, making the street more comfortable and inviting for pedestrians. Respecting the existing and historic buildings, new development can complement the character of Old Oakland. At the west edge, the

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transformation of I-980 into a surface boulevard enhances the neighborhood by creating a better experience on Castro Street.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for Old Oakland is summarized below:

	<b>Alternative 1</b>	<b>Alternative 2</b>
Total new residential units	467 units	1,107 units
Total new commercial space	33,323 square feet	157,823 square feet
Total office space	64,052 square feet	291,552 square feet
Total new parking area	--	--

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

A TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) program to assist preservation efforts Downtown can be studied and implemented. Rehabilitated buildings in Old Oakland should be protected by carefully crafted and enforced historic design guidelines. Additional historic designations should encourage Local Register or National Register, etc. to provide additional protections and incentives

**Jack London District** (bounded by Brush St., I-880, the Lake Merritt Channel and the Estuary.)

*Urban Design Vision*

Maintaining the existing character of the Jack London District by preserving historic warehouse structures is a community priority; these can be repurposed for work/live uses that increase the vibrancy and mix of uses in the district. There are opportunities for infill on underutilized lots, appropriately-scaled to fit with the surrounding context. These new buildings can repair gaps in the pedestrian network by introducing continuous, interesting building facades that line and activate sidewalks, creating a memorable and comfortable experience. New streets and development could be extended in the “Victory Court” area between Oak Street and the Lake Merritt channel.

The historic produce market in the Jack London District provides a useful hub for commerce, but there may be an opportunity to develop a better equipped facility for the produce market in a more appropriate location, while taking advantage of the current market’s historic buildings for adaptive reuse. Oakland’s produce market buildings could then be revitalized to become a unique destination similar to the French Quarter in New Orleans (with the appropriate relocation of the existing produce businesses to a suitable location).

The Webster Green is an envisioned a new linear greenway that could be constructed over the alignment of the Webster Tube, and connect to additional open spaces in Chinatown and near the estuary waterfront. The waterfront would be improved with better lighting, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and open space amenities. Connections between the Jack London District and the rest of Downtown would also be improved by enhancing the I-880 under-crossings with new lighting, wider sidewalks, and public art. In the near-term, the impact of the rail line on the Embarcadero could be significantly reduced through implementation of a “quiet zone”. To implement a quiet zone, intersection and other safety improvements must be installed to allow trains to travel across streets without having to blow their horn. The plan also considers developing a new transit hub near Howard Terminal that could serve Jack London, West Oakland and Downtown.

Howard Terminal is no longer utilized as a container shipping terminal by the Port of Oakland; however, the land continues to support Port operations through accessory activities such as truck parking and cargo and container storage. A visionary long-term plan for Howard Terminal that lays out a phased transition to other uses could bring new energy to the Jack London District and Downtown. Numerous jurisdictions have regulations applicable to the property. Despite the complicated system of approvals, there is still

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optimism over the range of future development possibilities. The Plan Alternatives Report contains three scenarios for the reuse of the site: stadium scenario, transit oriented development scenario and combined scenario. The development potential of each scenario is presented below.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for the Jack London District is summarized below:

		<b>Total new units</b>	<b>Total new commercial space (square feet)</b>	<b>Total new office space (square feet)</b>	<b>Total new parking area (square feet)</b>
<b>Alternative 1</b>	Jack London	1,219	320,524	68,000	61,575
	Howard Terminal	--	509,884	571,129	49,465
<b>Alternative 2</b>	Jack London*	1,219	320,524	68,000	61,575
	Howard Terminal	578	228,329	582,679	49,465
<b>Alternative 3</b>	Jack London*	2,347	610,049	1,075,800	186,900
	Howard Terminal	895	347,749	900,995	42,099

\*This alternative explores options for infill and revitalized sites that surround the I-880 Freeway and the BART line.

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

The Jack London neighborhood includes a variety of historic warehouse and industrial buildings, which should be preserved and re-used. East of Broadway the area has already been extensively redeveloped with live/work conversions of existing buildings and new construction at a much larger scale. West of Broadway and in the Produce Market much more original building stock remains. A Transfer of Development Rights system would support preservation. Redevelopment of the Howard terminal site, either as a stadium or transit oriented development, would dramatically change Oakland’s waterfront, yet is a costly investment. However, the Howard Terminal site is large enough to accommodate a stadium, a vast waterfront park, and other new development. Together, the mix of uses on the site may help to offset a portion of the infrastructure costs. If I-980 is removed in the future, the new housing and commercial opportunities that could be created in its place would further strengthen connections to the Howard Terminal site.

**Interstate 980**

*Urban Design Vision*

Approximately 15 blocks long and cutting through several neighborhoods, the I-980 is an existing barrier between West Oakland and Downtown and only carries a fraction of the traffic it was originally designed for. A “big idea” in the Plan Alternatives Report is to eventually replace the swath of land that is currently I-980 with an attractive, walkable and bikeable surface boulevard that accommodates the former I-980 traffic, but takes up a fraction of the land. The remainder of the land could be used to reconnect the downtown street grid to West Oakland, and thereby create a new set

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of blocks for both public spaces and appropriately scaled development with a mix of market and affordable housing.

*Development Potential*

The development potential for the I-980 is summarized below:

	<b>Alternative 1</b>	<b>Alternative 2</b>
Total new residential units	1,010 units	1,150 units
Total new commercial space	379,900 square feet	337,700 square feet
Total office space	242,200 square feet	988,050 square feet
Total new parking area	29,715 square feet	29,715 square feet

*Getting There: Plan Considerations*

The potential for new development around the envisioned multi-way boulevard replacement for I-980 is great; attention will need to be given to the details, such as specifying the urban form (defining areas of intensity, as well as areas where buildings should step down to meet the scale of surrounding neighborhoods) and including provisions for affordability, mix of housing types, and variety of uses.

For the full Plan Alternatives Report, please visit [oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland](http://oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland)

**KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS**

The Downtown Specific Plan will shape the Downtown over the next 20 to 25 years. Staff would like to hear the PRAC’s comments on the Alternative Report’s design and policy options for further developing Downtown parks, recreation and open spaces. This section contains a summary of key concepts and options presented in the Plan Alternatives Report that relate to these topics. For details, please see the Report itself.

Over the course of the public participation process to date, staff has heard the community repeatedly express a desire to take better advantage of Downtown Oakland’s existing amenities, such as Lake Merritt, Lake Merritt Channel, and the Estuary waterfront; maintain and activate existing parks and plazas; better provide parks that support families with children; and celebrate Oakland’s unique cultural gifts with flexible outdoor performance, art and gathering spaces.

The Plan Alternatives Report presents possible scenarios to address these needs. The concepts are primarily addressed in two sections of the report, “Vision & Goals” and the “Illustrating the Vision.” However, other areas of the Report present ideas that also further parks and recreation goals, including general public realm and public space improvements; urban canopy growth; sustainability through open space interventions; and safe, multi-modal connectivity between Downtown north of I-880, Lake Merritt, and the Estuary Waterfront. Staff will use feedback from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission to develop a map of proposed new parks for the Preferred Alternative Memo.

**Existing Open Spaces**

The Plan Alternatives Report acknowledges both the well-beloved and the less successful parks in Downtown, and suggests maintenance, expansion, and activation through programming and new amenities. Key suggestions include:

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- Build upon the recent work, particularly through Measure DD, to identify remaining areas to prioritize for improved maintenance.
- Activate the waterfront by Snow Park, which is one of the few locations in Downtown with the opportunity to provide active recreation possibilities.
- Improve the existing waterfront open space in the Jack London District with improved lighting and amenities and expand the open space down Webster Street to connect the Estuary Waterfront with the rest of the District.

### **New Open Spaces**

The recommendations in the Alternatives Report are intended to provide new open spaces to address the needs of new and existing Downtown residents. The goal is to build a network of civic spaces. The Planning Department would work with local property owners to acquire land for new parks. Key recommendations include:

- Provide new parks in residential areas west of San Pablo Avenue, north of Grand Avenue (between Telegraph and Northgate), and in Chinatown. Focus on small pocket parks and plazas west of San Pablo.
- Create a new waterfront public space at Howard Terminal, including a stadium, an extension of the Bay Trail with a pedestrian entrance at the end of Jefferson street (in front of the Fire station), and retention of one or more of the shipping cranes for their artistic and historic value.
- With new development in Old Oakland, incorporate pocket parks, community gardens, outdoor performance spaces and other small public spaces (potential locations include 8<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets and 9th and Castro Streets).
- Remove the I-980 freeway and replace it with a street-level boulevard that is lined by new buildings and green spaces.
- Improve the network of main community gathering spaces and secondary public open spaces in the Lake Merritt Office District. Encourage centralized, enclosed open space such as pocket parks, plazas and courtyards.
- Improve pedestrian access to the Kaiser roof garden by transitioning from the street with a pedestrian plaza and walkway.

### **Cultural Spaces**

The community has emphasized how important Oakland's arts and culture are both to its people and to its economic value. The Alternatives Report suggests addressing arts and culture both in parks and plazas, and on the streets, which are a valuable part of the public realm. Key recommendations include:

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- Partner with the community to establish the community's priorities so that appropriate new public spaces meet needs for celebrating arts and cultural heritage.
- Work with community members to identify appropriate locations to build new open spaces that celebrate cultural history, provide space for visual and performance art, and function effectively as community gathering spaces.
- Celebrate and sustain the 14th Street Black Arts Movement and Business District with improved streetscapes, distinctive signage, and other visual and architectural cues that reinforce the character and significance of this area to Oakland's culture and history.
- Consider adding public art and outdoor theater to Snow Park.

### **Sustainability**

The Alternatives Report addresses environmental sustainability primarily through recommendations in the public realm along streets, in parks, and in private open spaces to filter stormwater, create an urban canopy and minimize urban heat island effect. Key recommendations include:

- Plant regularly spaced street trees, structural soil systems, pervious pavers within secondary spaces, rain gardens in street tree planter boxes.
- Encourage green roofs and rooftop gardens, particularly in the Lake Merritt Office District.
- Use drought-tolerant plantings in parks and public right-of-ways to conserve water.

### **Connections Between Open Spaces**

All alternatives in the Alternatives Report have an orientation to better connect Downtown between neighborhoods and with the rest of Oakland and the region. Some of the most critical connections identified are those that connect residents to Oakland's open space resources. Key recommendations include:

- Connect the Estuary waterfront to Lake Merritt and the rest of Downtown with a linear sequence of open spaces, greenscape and hardscape, including natural and recreational trails, improved undercrossings, and public art.
- Construct the "Webster Green", a new linear greenway over the alignment of the Webster Tube, to better connect the areas of Downtown north of I-880 to the Estuary Waterfront. Development options are limited on these parcels due to underground infrastructure; today the Tube right-of-way is primarily surface parking lots and underutilized land.

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- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections to Lake Merritt from the Lake Merritt Office District, particularly along 20th Street and Grand Avenue.
- Maintain the sight lines down Thomas L. Berkeley Way that lead to views of Lake Merritt.
- Re-make 22nd Street with decorative paving and special lighting (such as extending the “necklace of lights”) between Telegraph Avenue and the Kaiser/Cathedral plaza to create an intimate, plaza-like street corridor through downtown to Lake Merritt.

### **Public Realm/Street Improvements**

The recommendations identified above explicitly address parks, recreation and open space. However, the Alternatives Report presents additional street improvements that will serve the purpose of getting people out of their cars, getting physical activity, feeling safe walking or cycling. In addition to zoning changes that will increase activity and permeability at the street level of buildings, the Alternatives Report makes the following recommendations to make Downtown Oakland’s streets a livable part of the public realm:

- Put Telegraph Avenue and Broadway on a “road diet,” allowing space for drought-tolerant street trees and bicycle and pedestrian-friendly amenities. Provide bike lanes, street trees, and a transit-only lane on Broadway at Civic Center.
- Turn 15th Street from Broadway to Harrison Street into a shared-space street to create a new plaza-like linear civic space with plenty of room for green infrastructure, an outdoor art walk and activity flowing from ground-floor uses.
- Link a network of great public spaces, including the proposed shared space along 15th Street, pocket plazas, and greens, with shaded, tree-lined streets to trails along Lake Merritt and Snow Park.
- Install a separated cycle track along Telegraph Avenue in accordance with the Complete Streets Plan.
- At the pedestrian-unfriendly intersection of San Pablo and 17th, develop a multi-use plaza as a gateway to Downtown that would be shared between pedestrians, bicyclists and cars.
- Convert I-980 to a grand, tree-lined, multi-modal boulevard to reconnect the street grid, provide space for development and public greens, and knit West Oakland back to Downtown.

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### NEXT STEPS

City staff is currently soliciting feedback from a number of bodies including:

- Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission
- Public Art Advisory Committee
- Planning Commission

Based on input from these advisory bodies and Planning Commission the Preferred Plan will be prepared and publicly vetted at a community workshop and meeting of the Community and Economic Development Committee of the City Council. The draft Specific Plan will then be prepared including proposed design standards and guidelines and supportive policies reflective of community and City priorities. Once the draft Specific Plan is prepared, it will be presented to the advisory bodies and Planning Commission for comment (anticipated in winter 2016).

The next public workshop will be held in the summer of 2016, when key elements of the Preferred Plan will be presented for public input. The public review draft Specific Plan is anticipated to be circulated in fall/winter 2016 and will be presented to the LPAB and other City advisory bodies, Planning Commission and City Council for review and comment. Development of the EIR will begin after the preferred alternative is selected. Once the Specific Plan and EIR are complete, adoption hearings will be held (anticipated for late 2017).

For details or to sign up for project announcements visit the project webpage:

[www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland](http://www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the PRAC accept this informational report.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Parker

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Attachments: Plan Alternatives Report