

OAK to 9th

OAK STREET TO
NINTH AVENUE
WATERFRONT
PROJECT

Oak Street to Ninth Avenue Waterfront Project

SUMMARY REPORT

Small Group Interviews & Public Meetings



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The whole view.

OAK STREET TO NINTH AVENUE WATERFRONT PROJECT

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Executive Summary

Background

The City of Oakland (City) is currently reviewing and evaluating a proposal, submitted by Oakland Harbor Partners (OHP) to redevelop existing industrial land in the area along the Oakland estuary identified as the “Oak to Ninth” area. The proposed Project includes up to 3,100 residential units, 200,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space, 3,500 structured parking spaces, approximately 27 acres of public open space, two renovated marinas, and a wetlands restoration area. The proposed Project was developed six years after the adoption of the Estuary Policy Plan, which is the current policy framework for Oakland’s estuary area. The proposed Project now before the City represents a departure from the vision set forth in the Estuary Policy Plan and is in the process of being reviewed and evaluated by the City, other State and Federal agencies, and the Oakland community.

Because the proposed Project does deviate from the Estuary Policy Plan, the City requested additional public review and comment on the proposed Project before OHP completes the environmental review and initiates the formal approval process. This additional community outreach included nine small group interviews with 40 individuals representing 35 different local community organizations (invitations were extended to 47 organizations) and two community-wide public meetings attended by 140 different community members (notification was sent to 523 elected officials, government agencies, community organizations, and residents who have expressed an interest in the project).

The purpose of these community outreach activities was to:

- a) Solicit broad citywide feedback about the proposed Oak to Ninth Project
- b) Increase the community’s understanding of the proposed Project
- c) Obtain specific comments on further refinement of the proposed Project
- d) Gather input about how best to provide information to the community

The comments, concerns, and suggestions gathered during the community outreach activities will provide input for the continued refinement of the proposed Project and further inform the policymakers who will ultimately determine the course of this Project.

Findings

Generally speaking, all meeting attendees expressed a deep understanding and appreciation of this important opportunity to develop Oakland’s waterfront. Meeting attendees understand and respect the need for the project to be economically feasible for the developer. Many community members share an excitement about the potential for the proposed development site. They also shared the following issues:

- **This is a unique opportunity that must be done in a way for all of Oakland to enjoy.** The community welcomes more housing, more open space, and the opportunity to access the waterfront. Residents understand this is an important and strategic opportunity that must be maximized; a test of the project’s success will be how well the development celebrates Oakland’s uniqueness and ties the waterfront into the rest of the City for all to enjoy.
- **The proposed Project should more closely relate to the Estuary Policy Plan.** Many were concerned with the level and degree to which the proposed Project

diverges from the Estuary Policy Plan, which was developed through a very involved public process and adopted by the City. Participants felt the developer should be requested to adhere more closely to the Estuary Policy Plan, particularly in terms of open space and access to the estuary.

- **Concerns that the proposed density cannot be handled by existing roadways and access points.** Participants consistently expressed concern about the proposed Project's impacts on traffic and questioned how residents from 3,100 units will easily move into and out of the development. All surrounding communities are also concerned about traffic congestion when construction is underway simultaneously for both the I-880 retrofit project and the proposed development. Many wanted to know how public transportation has been incorporated into the proposed Project.
- **Long, broad, sweeping view corridors to the water are important.** Repeatedly members of the community expressed the wish that when driving along the Embarcadero, and other major roadways within the development, that there be several expansive view corridors to the water – that can be enjoyed from one's car – and that indicate to the community at-large that there are parks and a shoreline at Oakland's edge for all residents to enjoy.
- **Integrate the site into the rest of Oakland and utilize context sensitive design.** Community members generally understand the challenge I-880 presents as a significant barrier to the site. However, residents believe the importance of the development warrants serious discussion and action on how this can be minimized. In addition to successfully linking this project to the rest of Oakland, community members would like to see design patterns and density that are compatible with adjacent land uses. For example, many mentioned concern that residential units next to open space being used for civic uses would not be practical if music or noisy activities are involved. Also, many mentioned they would like to see a site design that better integrates and highlights the existing 5th Avenue community.
- **The desire for mixed income housing.** Participants involved in the outreach process consistently voiced the desire that the project include a mix of rental and privately owned units, and that the residential units be priced and sized for a range of incomes, including “affordable housing.”
- **Preserve or reuse a greater portion of the 9th Avenue Terminal.** Many community members see the preservation of the terminal as a way to bring uniqueness and historical connectivity to the development. A number of suggestions were made on ways to adaptively reuse the facility, such as: bookstore and café, wine shop, multi-theatre art house, museum, restaurant, indoor open space, convention center, movie studios, or mixed-use development.
- **The community would like a more inclusive, iterative planning process.** Because the proposed development site is primarily State Tidelands Trust property, the community feels strongly that it is “their land” and therefore they should be more involved in planning for its development. In addition, OHP's original proposal to the Port described a series of public workshops in conjunction with developing a Specific Plan; this was the community's expectation and it did not occur. Also, there were a

number of suggestions about the need for making more project information available to the public.

A meeting attendee provided the following comment, which is representative of what was heard throughout much of the small and large group meetings:

“The proposed Project should reflect the core concepts of the Estuary Policy Plan – open space, public gathering spaces, spaces for wildlife, compact walkable areas, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented, and integrated with what surrounds the area. It should promote the estuary and mixed income housing.”

Following is a summary of the key issues and suggested refinements to the proposed Project that were mentioned during the nine small group interviews and the two public meetings. A comprehensive listing of individual comments made by participants can be found in Appendices A and C.

Introduction

Project Description

The City of Oakland (City) is currently reviewing and evaluating a proposed Project for the area along the Oakland estuary identified as “Oak to Ninth Avenue.” The proposed Project submitted by Oakland Harbor Partners, LLC (OHP) includes up to 3,100 residential units, 200,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space, 3,500 structured parking spaces, approximately 27 acres of public open space, two renovated marinas, and a wetlands restoration area. This proposed Project was developed six years after the adoption of the Estuary Policy Plan, which is the current policy framework for Oakland’s estuary area. The development proposal now before the City represents a departure from the vision set forth in the Estuary Policy Plan, and is in the process of being reviewed and evaluated by the City, other State and Federal agencies, and the Oakland community.

Purpose of Outreach Process

The Outreach Process for this project was designed to encourage broad community input on the proposed Project. Because the proposed Project does deviate from the Estuary Policy Plan, the City is interested in receiving further public comment on the proposed Project before the developer completes the environmental review and initiates the formal approval process. The outreach process includes a series of small group interviews and two community-wide public meetings. The small group interviews provide an opportunity for more detailed discussions with a small number of participants. The large public meetings provide opportunities for all interested parties to learn more about the proposed Project and to provide comments and express issues to be addressed.

Notification

The City sent personalized letters to key stakeholders identified to participate in the small group interviews (see below for more information on small group interviews). The letter provided basic project information, a brief explanation of the public outreach process and encouraged recipients to attend these initial interviews.

For the large public meetings, notification consisted of a meeting notice mailed to a project mailing list including over 500 people. The same notification information was sent to each of the individuals who participated in the small group interviews. A newspaper advertisement ran in the Oakland Tribune on March 23rd and April 4th and the City of Oakland distributed a press release.

Outreach Meetings

Small Group Interview(s)

Small group interviews were organized to solicit feedback about the proposed Project and learn more about interests and concerns from a range of key community organizations regarding development in this area. The City identified key organizations to contact to participate in the small group interviews. These interviews were intended to bring together local community organizations’ interests only; elected officials and/or regulatory agencies were not included in this process.

The key objectives of these small group interviews were to:

- Better understand the various stakeholder interests and positions on the proposed Project;
- Broaden citywide feedback and input on the proposed Project;
- Obtain input on other effective ways to reach out to the greater community for participation in the community meetings;
- Gather input to help design the upcoming public meetings; and
- Request that groups encourage their membership to attend the upcoming community meetings

On February 1, 2, and 3, 2005 the nine small group interviews were conducted with representatives from 35 local community organizations (meeting invitations were extended to a total of 47 organizations). A total of 40 individuals participated in these meetings. These interviews were intended to include representatives that reflected a range of stakeholders with an interest in the proposed Project. Representatives were grouped together by common interests. The nine groups included:

- Citizen Groups
- Chambers of Commerce
- Business Associations
- Community and Urban Development Issues
- Housing and Community Groups
- Environmental Interests
- Parks and Recreation
- Historic Preservation
- Other Oakland Neighborhood Groups

At each interview, participants received an overview of the proposed Oak to Ninth Project and had opportunities to provide comments on elements of the proposed Project and were asked to give input about future public involvement activities. Participants were also asked a series of questions geared to solicit specific and overall comments on the proposed Project.

Comments and questions were recorded on flip charts at each interview and in notes taken by meeting facilitators. The “Summary of Key Issues & Concerns” in the “Small Group Interviews” section of this report provides a summary overview of all comments heard at these meetings. A more comprehensive listing of all comments received at each of the interviews can be found in Appendix A.

Public Meetings

Two public open houses and meetings were organized to provide the public with the opportunity to learn about the proposed Project, review community issues discussed in small group interviews, provide comments on the proposed Project and understand the project development schedule and future opportunities for public involvement. The meetings were scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, 2005 from 5:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. at the Jack London

Aquatic Center and Saturday, April 9, 2005 from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center.

Each meeting began with an open house where participants could view display boards with the proposed Project information. Representatives of the OHP and the City were available during the open house to answer questions about the project. Meeting participants then heard a brief presentation, including a summary of key project issues heard to date, an overview of the Proposed Project and a review of the project development process. After the presentation, meeting participants divided into small groups to discuss the following questions:

- What issues about the proposed Project are important to you? Why?
- What specific changes to the proposed Project would you recommend?

After the small group breakout the entire group reconvened and a representative from each group reported out the key issues and recommendations discussed. The remaining time at the workshop was allocated to additional comments and questions.

All comments and questions during both meetings were recorded on flip charts. The “Summary of Key Issues & Concerns” in the “Summary of Public Meetings” section of this report provides an overview of all comments heard at the public meetings. A comprehensive listing of all comments received at each of the meetings can be found in Appendix C.

Summary of Small Group Interviews

The information below provides a summary of the key comments and questions heard at the small group interviews and the public meetings. This summary is not intended to be a precise transcript of comments made during these meetings, but provides an overall summary that captures the main issues, concerns and suggestions of participants. Comments have been categorized to group similar ideas and comments. The organization of the categories in no way represents a hierarchy of importance or weight of an issue.

Key Issues & Concerns

Importance of the Site

There were many comments about the importance of this particular site to the entire Oakland community. It was also noted that this is the largest parcel of land on the waterfront and the Oakland community should not lose its claim to it. One participant thought the overall vision for the waterfront area is extremely important. A master plan for the area that includes plans for the surrounding neighborhoods would be a valuable resource to all of Oakland. Participants thought this development represents an important opportunity to include and integrate surrounding communities.

Access, Transportation & Traffic Impacts

Access to the site and impacts on traffic were two of the major concerns raised in the meetings. Several participants were also concerned that the planned infrastructure cannot support the proposed number of cars or people. Many people do not believe that there are enough routes leading to and from the site to support smooth traffic flow. Participants felt that there would be significant traffic impacts because of residents and shoppers coming into the site. Others were worried about the cumulative impacts on traffic from Jack London

Square as well as numerous road improvement projects planned within the next few years (i.e. the I-880 retrofit). “Coordination with Caltrans is imperative.”

Effect on Surrounding Communities

There was a lot of concern regarding the integration of the communities surrounding the development. Several participants pointed out that the Estuary Policy Plan called for an artisan village plan that was a dense development but it took into account, and integrated, the 5th Avenue community into the new development. Many participants felt that the proposed Project does not adequately recognize the existing community and will not allow the existing community to be sustainable, including people living in the marina. A few participants disagreed with the idea of “bringing downtown Oakland to the waterfront” since downtown is far from the development area and its character is vastly different.

Participants also worried that the height and density of the buildings would negatively impact the surrounding communities, creating a shaded, dark and unpleasant community. Others were concerned that this is an isolated development that could easily be viewed as a gated (figurative) community. One commenter was concerned that new development projects in Oakland are resulting in higher rents in surrounding neighborhoods forcing more concentrated areas of poverty.

Housing

The scope of the housing portion of the proposed Project brought about several comments. Participants wanted to make sure that affordable housing would be included as part of the project, noting the original development plan submitted to the Port of Oakland included 15–20% affordable housing. One participant suggested the developer consider affordable housing to be 30% below market rate.

Some participants want to ensure that the housing that is created is an inviting and safe atmosphere to live in, noting challenges with noise and pollution as well as concerns about seismic activity.

Open Space

Keeping the open space public is a key factor for this project. Participants were concerned that once residents move in they will apply pressure to the City and developer to make the area more private and discourage outside public use of the open space areas. The open space areas should be visible to the public from outside the development. One participant noted that the existing restored wetland area was created as mitigation from a past oil spill; it is imperative that the integrity of this site is maintained. Participants also discussed specific uses for the open space areas such as recreational activities and wildlife habitat.

One commenter noted that Measure DD had a vision of creating green space along the waterfront all the way down to the airport and this project seems to counter those ideals. It was also noted that the Estuary Policy Plan calls for 60% open space and this proposed Project is only 43%. However, other participants were concerned that there is little demand for the open space, asking that the developer define the existing need for more open space in the Estuary.

9th Avenue terminal

Many participants wanted to see the preservation of the 9th Avenue terminal. It was noted that the terminal is being reviewed for landmark status, and also that the terminal was not

preserved in the Estuary Policy Plan. Several commenters stated that the terminal is the last one of its kind and creates historic connectivity to the area.

Commercial Use

How the commercial use would impact the rest of the City was a significant topic of the meetings. Some commenters wondered if the retail space was needed or sustainable; they noted that the mixed-use space in Jack London Square is mostly empty because of insufficient planning. Others wanted to know if the retail space will support just the local residents or attract outside customers.

Economic Impacts

Some participants thought that there would be negative economic impacts on the City stemming from this development. They noted that the project area is part of the Oakland Central City East Redevelopment Plan, which means the tax dollars generated will go to the redevelopment district and not the City. Therefore, City services (police, fire services, etc.) will have to be paid for by other tax dollars for the next 35 years.

Others were concerned that the land is actually worth much more than what the appraiser reported and thought the property pricing should be compared to that of equivalent properties along the Estuary.

Estuary Policy Plan

Most of the participants were concerned that the proposed Project does not reflect the Estuary Policy Plan adopted by the City in 1999. They believe the developer was granted the exclusive development rights because they would follow the Estuary Policy Plan or engage the public in a Specific Plan process, noting that any changes to the Estuary Policy Plan should be made through a large public process. Many participants believe that the Estuary Policy Plan process created a satisfactory plan and it should not be set aside after so much work was done by members of the community.

Public Process

Many participants felt that the process is moving too quickly and that people are not knowledgeable enough about the proposed Project to give input. A few groups said that while they want to work with the developer to create an acceptable development, they feel they are being ignored. The groups are committed to changing the project through a charrette process, politically or otherwise. Many groups expressed the desire to be at the negotiating table, working with the developer. Several participants asked that the developer hold a design charrette so that surrounding communities and the public can provide input on the design and are not just reacting to an existing development plan. They believe that there should be more collaboration and input from the entire Oakland community before the proposed Project goes to the Planning Commission.

Project Information

Concern was expressed about the vagueness of the project description and because there are no verbal descriptions or effective maps/models. Participants thought the description should include more technical information. Another felt they would be legitimizing this proposed Project by commenting on the specifics, especially since it is a conceptual plan.

Supported Aspects of Proposed Project

Several participants supported the types and amount of open space and parks in the proposed Project, especially along the waterfront. One commenter thought that the parkland could have many public uses if proper buffer areas are established around the homes. Residential units in the development were generally supported with a balance between the scale of the development and the economics. Support for the renovated marina was also mentioned by one commenter.

Suggested Refinements to Proposed Project

Access, Transportation & Traffic Impacts

Suggestions from participants regarding access to the site focused on the need for comprehensive public transportation to serve the residents and those working in the area. Participants made suggestions on methods to encourage the use of public transportation. In addition, several participants commented on the importance of including connections to other communities through physical infrastructure and links to the existing neighboring businesses and communities.

Effect on Surrounding Communities

One commenter suggested that the development should be complementary to the final plan for Jack London Square. Another noted that the proposed Project should consider the need for schools or where children living in the area would attend school. Several commenters suggested that the area create an artisan community to attract artists and commercial uses for other Oakland residents.

If creative mixed use is implemented, including shops, light manufacturing, live-work studios, and artisans, the development could be a source of employment for people from the surrounding communities. One commenter suggested that the proposed Project include job opportunities that would give preference to Oakland residents. They would also like to see the developer provide pre-construction training so local residents can be hired to work on the construction activities.

Housing

Many participants asked that affordable housing be included in the development in order for people who make less than \$40,000 per year to be able to buy into the development. Several community groups stressed that the percentage of affordable housing should be around 30%, regardless of the number of units in the development. Members of the Oak to 9th Community Benefits Coalition suggested that the developer integrate the information provided in their Community Benefits Agreement to address affordable housing, jobs and community opportunities.

Other commenters want to see a live-work community with no more than a third of the development being strictly residential. They want to see at least half of the space used for light industrial purposes, not live-work lofts only used for desk jobs. One participant also suggested that there should be a variety in the architecture in the development, which could be achieved by employing several different architects and builders.

Open Space

A variety of ideas were expressed regarding the open space proposed in the proposed Project. While some commenters suggested that open space be left undefined, others suggested defined recreational space such as a soccer field. Most felt that a balance between programmed and flexible use space was the best use of the land. Many participants felt that the open space should have connections to the Bay Trail, Jack London Square, and other communities, and that there should be a consistency in signage with the rest of the Bay Trail so that people are instantly aware that they are welcome. There was also a suggestion the some open space be set aside as habitat for native plant and wildlife species.

Many participants also suggested creating a large open space where community festivals and concerts could be held. It was noted that open space areas should be separated from residences in order to avoid noise and traffic conflicts.

Views

Several participants suggested that the visibility of the public open space and waterfront from the Embarcadero needs to be preserved. One commenter suggested that the proposed Project could include high rises on the Embarcadero with view corridors separating them so the public space is visible. One participant also suggested consulting the Bay Conservation and Development Commission regarding the buildings going over 6 stories and their potential interruption of sight lines.

9th Avenue terminal

Several suggestions for the preservation and reuse of the 9th Avenue terminal were made. Many participants thought the historic buildings could be used to draw people to the waterfront by offering the development an historic and distinctive look and feel. Several suggested that at least the 1920's portion of the terminal should be saved in order to maintain its historic value. Participants suggested that waterfront and structures be reused in creative ways, with relation to history and natural history of the town. Suggestions included indoor open space uses (for festivals), partial residential use, museums, restaurants, cafes, and stores. Examples of successful adaptive reuse projects were given, including the Ford assembly plant in Richmond, Chelsea Piers in New York City, the Marine terminal Lofts in Minneapolis, and the Torpedo Factory in Arlington, Virginia.

Commercial Uses

Recommendations for land use in the development varied greatly. Suggestions for commercial uses include an exhibition hall and/or an art gallery for local artists, outdoor and marina activities, restaurants, an amphitheatre, cafes, and other retail space (not office space). A few commenters noted that high-end retail would not be the best use of the estuary. Rather, stores should capture the marine atmosphere instead. Some participants wanted a more detailed list and description of what facilities would be available on the project site.

Public Process

Several recommendations for the large public meetings were given at the small group meetings. Participants asked that there be sufficient advanced notice of the public meeting, including consulting small groups before scheduling public meeting to avoid timing conflicts. One participant suggested using a public service announcement or media release to get information out about the public meetings. Participants also asked that, if the public meeting

involves breaking into groups, the groups should be mixed up in order to get input from a variety of people. A few commenters asked that the developers and the City attend the next meeting.

Project Information

Most of the participants thought that more images of the project were needed to fully understand the development. Some requested changes to the current map include identifying the existing 5th Avenue community, adding information or simulations of the sunlight and shadowing in the proposed Project, and showing restored wetlands on the development map. In addition, the map should be made available to the public in an easily printable size. Provide more accurate and realistic visuals for the public process.

Other participants requested new project images. These included a 3-D map of the towers, a topography/elevation map, visuals of recreational activities, and an overlay map comparison with the Estuary Policy Plan. Several simulations of views around the project were requested, including views at boat level from the Lake Merritt Channel, Alameda, the hills, 880, and the Embarcadero.

Additional Information

Requests for Additional Information

During the small group meetings participants requested several additional pieces of information. Clarification on what constitutes open space and how long the developer would have to maintain the open space was requested. One commenter asked how the Measure DD money that was allocated for the purchase of open space in the Oak to Ninth district would be distributed since it is not needed in this proposed Project. One commenter asked for more detailed info about cleanup of the site; who would pay for it and what exactly needs to be cleaned up.

Provide additional financial information about the property showing what the property currently generates in property tax and use fees and what the property could generate with the development. Others would also like to see a social and economic analysis in the EIR.

One participant asked that the developer show how this project would fit in with other plans. Provide more rationale for the high density towers and how the towers would blend into the whole development. Provide more information on the target residents envisioned to occupy the development. Provide information addressing the number of slips that would be removed from or added to the marina. Provide more information explaining the ratio of business to residences that a “neighborhood” like this requires. Demonstrate how the businesses will serve the residents and what additional service may be sought outside of the development (e.g. supermarket).

Additional Information/Comments Provided by Meeting Attendees

9th Avenue terminal: A landmark application is in place with the City. Landmarking does not preserve the building forever. There would have to be an historic review before it could be knocked down. The terminal probably falls under the federal historic landmark guidelines (section 106).

Tidelands Trust: Tidelands Trust lands cannot be used for residential housing. With the recent law change, now the Port can sell the “after acquired” lands (not the originally acquired land). The 9th Avenue terminal is on originally acquired land.

Estuary Policy Plan: One meeting participant felt that the answer to question #4 on the Frequently Asked Questions is incorrect. He pointed out that the Oakland Estuary Plan is a general concept plan while the Estuary Policy Plan was adopted into the General Plan in 1999. He noted that they are two distinct documents. In addition, it was his belief that the published version of the Estuary Policy Plan had been changed after the City Council approved it in 2000. Therefore, he did not believe that the City has ever published the Council approved version of the Estuary Policy Plan.

Summary of Public Meetings

Key Issues & Concerns

Importance of the Site

Many participants commented on the importance of this area to the entire Oakland community. Participants noted that this waterfront property belongs to the public and any project needs to celebrate and be representative of Oakland. This waterfront location is part of the Public Trust and any plan for this site needs to respect the guidelines and limitations for Public Trust land. There was concern that the developer could look for other waterfront properties that could be used in a “land-swap,” to mitigate for developing the Oak to Ninth property. They noted that the State Lands Commission will have the final say if this land can be sold to the developer. Other participants saw an opportunity to develop an active waterfront like areas found in Seattle, Portland and Baltimore.

One commenter specifically requested that the development not be named after any politician.

Access, Transportation & Traffic Impacts

Many participants expressed concern about access to the site and potential impacts on traffic on the existing roadways. They specifically pointed out that the existing exits off of I-880 would not support the additional cars coming into and out of the site. With increased vehicle traffic in the area, participants were also concerned about pedestrian safety. In the case of fire or earthquake safety, some expressed concerns about emergency vehicle access as well as residential evacuation, if needed. They also noted that the freeway poses a huge challenge for creating connectivity with the rest of Oakland. Participants were also concerned that the site would not be accessible to pedestrians and bicycles.

Parking was also a major concern. Many felt that there are not enough parking spaces in the proposed Project to accommodate the residential units, businesses and public access. Others noted the need to connect the site to existing and new public transportation opportunities and find ways to encourage people to utilize public transportation.

Effect on Surrounding Communities

Some participants questioned the proposed Project’s compatibility with the existing communities (e.g. the 5th Avenue artist community). They want to see the surrounding communities better incorporated and connected to the site to create an integrated

“neighborhood feel”; not a private “gated” development. Participants were concerned about the density and height of buildings and that the waterfront would be essentially “walled-off” from surrounding areas.

Other commenters want to see a hiring preference for local residents for jobs and training opportunities that the project could provide.

Housing

Participants were concerned about the mix of rental/ownership housing and the availability of affordable housing. They want to see a larger percentage of affordable housing. Others noted the need to comply with the fair housing guidelines in the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide housing for people with disabilities and senior citizens.

Some participants showed concern about the density and location of the residential area, specifically noting the potential for noise conflicts since the residential area would be close to Channel Park where the large festival area is proposed. Others thought that Oakland could use more housing and supported building residential units. They felt that an appropriate level of density is needed to develop a “sense of place” and neighborhood.

Open Space

Open space was an important topic for many participants. They would like to see the proposed Project maintain view corridors to the waterfront, including views of open space areas, making it more inviting to the public to use these amenities. Some asked if the Bay Trail would be incorporated into the open space areas. Others felt that the proposed Project needs to provide more open space to meet the goals of the Estuary Policy Plan. There was also concern that open space and historic preservation are “pitted against each other” in the current proposed Project when there could be room for both within the development.

Some participants felt that the open space areas should have a designated use, such as a soccer field; while others wanted to see the open space left as an ecologically functioning area. Participants also noted the need for more wetland restoration in the project area.

9th Avenue terminal

Many participants were interested in the reuse and preservation of the 9th Avenue terminal. Participants pointed out that the terminal is eligible for both the National and California Register and that it is the last remaining building of its kind. Some felt that the proposed Project should include creative strategies for the adaptive reuse of this historical landmark, such as retaining the whole building and using it for an indoor festival space, making it the “Fort Mason of the East Bay.” Others felt that the preservation of the entire terminal would be cost prohibitive and could drastically change the project and further delay the project schedule.

Commercial Use

Comments from participants addressed many concerns and ideas for commercial space in the development. Some participants suggested that the commercial space needed to include small to medium size businesses that would serve the residents; not only small boutiques serving visitors.

Estuary Policy Plan

There was concern that many members of the public are unfamiliar with the Estuary Policy Plan and need to have more information on the contents of the plan and how it was developed. Many participants suggested that this proposed Project significantly diverges from the Estuary Policy Plan, which was developed through a very involved public process and adopted by the City. They noted that the Estuary Policy Plan did not include any residential units; only commercial and hotel space. Some participants felt that the developer needs to adhere more strictly to the plan that was supported by the public and approved by the City.

Public Process

Many participants are concerned that the proposed Project does not reflect the comments and suggestions provided by the public in the numerous meetings and workshops. They want to see a feedback loop that provides responses to the issues and questions raised by the participants. They also want specific information on changes to the Plan in response to public comments and concerns. There was concern that this is a “design and defend” process rather than the dynamic iterative process promised. Participants asked that comments from the small group interviews and these public meetings be posted to the City’s website.

Some participants felt that the project needs to move forward. They were concerned that the public could lose the opportunity to work with the developer on this project and encouraged the process to continue forward.

Participants expressed concern over the tight review schedule for the Environmental Impact Report and want to ensure the public has adequate time to review the document and numerous opportunities to provide comments. They asked if the City would guarantee consideration of public comments beyond the required public meetings.

Participants living in the 5th Avenue community were concerned that the entire community was not included early in the review process.

Project Information

Participants noted that the developer needs to provide a more detailed project design before people can provide comments on specific aspects of the project. Participants asked if the Port of Oakland provided any guidelines for the project design. Some felt that the developer is trying to address too many needs on this site and that the multiple uses may be too large of a goal for this parcel. There was a specific concern that the proposed Project does not currently address the facilities needed to manage storm water runoff and flood control.

Suggested Refinements to Proposed Project

Importance of the Site

There were several requests that a site-specific design be developed that reflected the history and diversity of the area and the community. There were also many comments that emphasized the strategic importance of this site being the last undeveloped property on Oakland’s waterfront. For that reason the site should be developed in a way that celebrates and emphasizes the waterfront.

Access, Transportation & Traffic Impacts

Participants made suggestions to address concerns about the ease of access to the site on foot, by car, and through public transit. A few participants suggested widening or modifying the 5th Avenue entrance to provide improved access to the site and to connect the area to the surrounding community. There was also a suggestion to create additional entrances along 10th and 17th Avenues. Suggestions for pedestrian improvements included widening the sidewalk at Merritt Channel Bridge, building a pedestrian and bike bridge to Channel Park, and improving the Embarcadero and 5th Avenue intersection. One commenter suggested placing I-880 underground to improve access and connectivity to the waterfront. Suggestions for public transportation included connecting the community with the San Francisco Ferry, creating a transportation link to Jack London Square, and working with BART to improve service to the area. Finally, several participants asked that the developer study emergency access for the site, as trains could block access during an emergency and there is no longer a fire boat to serve the area.

Effect on Surrounding Communities

Many participants called for preservation of the 5th Avenue artist community because of its uniqueness to Oakland and the waterfront area. It was suggested that building heights around 5th Avenue be kept low and that surrounding buildings include live-work housing to complement the adjacent community.

Housing

Housing suggestions reflected a variety of topics from individual units to the community as a whole. Many participants asked that affordable housing (at least 20%) be included to address the housing crisis in Oakland. Another suggested that half of the units be rental and half privately owned to allow for a more diverse community. Noise concerns from the freeway prompted one participant to recommend soundproofing all housing units. One participant requested that the development include floating home communities in the marina.

Suggestions for the community as a whole included less density and lower building heights. In contrast, one commenter suggested turning one of the high-rise towers into a hotel in order to generate visitors and revenue. Others asked that multiple developers be used in order to provide a variety of architectural styles. Another participant suggested integrating public (City owned and operated) buildings into the project site.

Open Space

Suggestions for the open space were varied but many participants called for a greater amount, especially along the waterfront, and for visual cues from the Embarcadero to note that the area is open to the public. Many called for a minimum of 60% open space to reflect the Estuary Policy Plan. Several commenters asked that Estuary Park be expanded and that no buildings surround it. One participant suggested relocating the Embarcadero closer to the waterfront and proposed locating the residential units to the east of the new Embarcadero. This would provide safe and easy public access to open space areas and the 9th Avenue terminal near the water.

Many participants had ideas on how to improve the open space. Suggestions included a sculpture garden for local artists, playgrounds, and a dog park. One commenter suggested the early involvement of landscape architects to help design the open space. One idea was to turn

everything west of 5th Avenue into open space for use as a festival area. A similar idea was to turn one entire “peninsula” of land into open space for use as a festival area.

Views

Several participants wanted to ensure that there would be view corridors from public locations. Others asked for building heights of no more than eight stories in order to preserve existing views. In contrast, one participant asked that only tall buildings be built in order to provide more open space. One commenter asked the developer to provide a more detailed view impacts evaluation, especially for communities above and below I-580.

9th Avenue terminal

Many participants were in favor of preserving and adaptively reusing the entire 9th Avenue terminal. They saw it as a valuable historic resource that would draw people to the waterfront and serve as a connection to Oakland’s past. Suggestions for reuse included an indoor event venue, commercial space, or a new space for the Jack London Aquatic Center. Another suggestion was to create a citizens advisory committee to oversee a study on the feasibility of preserving the 9th Avenue terminal.

Commercial Uses

Suggestions for the commercial space in the project area were varied. A few commenters suggested that there be practical stores for the residents, such as a grocery store or copy mat. Others thought that the commercial space should incorporate and enhance the existing artisan community. One participant thought that a percentage of the commercial space (perhaps 6%) should be set aside for new marine trade opportunities. This would be a chance to preserve the history of boating and marina workers in the Bay Area.

Public Process

Several participants suggested that there should be a more iterative public process for developing a site plan. One thought there should be a public access website where people can provide a feedback dialog. Another suggested creating a citizens advisory committee to oversee the project. One commenter noted that some community members are pursuing a referendum to stop the project, after which they plan to create a commission to oversee any new development in the City.

Project Information

Participants had several additional requests of the developer and the City:

- Work out the Tidelands Trust issue with the State Lands Commission in a public forum.
- Create a safety plan accounting for all issues and areas along the waterfront, including fire danger and seismic safety of the area, especially for residences.
- Create an electronic dialogue for the project, such as a “blog” or a Yahoo group.
- Discuss the proposed Project’s compliance with the General Plan and whether there will have to be an amendment should this proposed Project go through.
- The City’s Cultural Affairs Board and the Parks Commission should review the project.

Next Steps

The City will review the comments heard during the public outreach process and determine the direction to take with the developer and the proposed Project. All comments in this report will be

distributed to the development team as well as local policymakers for their review and consideration as the proposed Project moves forward.