

Downtown Oakland Specific Plan

East Jack London/Victory Court Meeting: June 15th, 2023

Summary

Attendees

City Staff

- Joanna Winter- Project Manager, DOSP Overview and planning intro to Victory Court Area, Planner IV
- Michelle Matranga- Planner III
- Neil Gray- Zoning in Victory Court Area Planner IV
- Ed Manasse- Deputy Director
- Stephanie Skelton- Public Service Representative
- Tarisha Bal- Oakland City Attorney

Community Members

- Brenda Ivey, Neighborhood Services, City of Oakland
- Nicholas White, Resident and Property Owner at 311 Oak St
- Manoj Tripathis, Property & Business Owner, soon to open The UPS Store in the area
- Jennifer Nettles, Manages Jack London Square on behalf of CIM and the Port of Oakland. Also sits on the JLID Exec Board
- Jennifer Newman, 8-year resident of Jack London and chair of the Jack London Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council
- Britta Gustafson- Old Oakland homeowner excited about the Plan, especially the Green Loop!
- Tita Bladen, Homeowner at 222 Broadway St
- Mark McComb, Property owner in west Jack London
- Sharon Grewal
- Heather West, Resident at 222 Broadway St and a frequent walker around the area of Oak St.
- Allison Tom
- Nadene Re, Resident at 222 Broadway St
- Steve, Resident at 222 Broadway St
- Jacquelin L
- Paul Warner

Presentation

City planning staff presented an overview of the DOSP and what it would do for the area, including different emphasis areas and associated goals. An overview of the Zoning Incentive Program (ZIP) was also provided. This was followed by an overview of the concept for Victory Court development, which would allow for increased density to help meet housing goals and encourage a diverse range of commercial and community amenities, including open space and active transportation infrastructure.

City staff explained that to allow the desired increased density that the plan calls for life safety standards require extending 3rd Street through Victory Court, aligned with the former 3rd Street right-of-way that the

City previously abandoned. That extension, which would only occur if and when the current property owner chooses to redevelop, would connect with 4th Street to allow access. City staff showed overlay maps and renderings of potential open space and transportation concepts. These include connections to a bike/pedestrian path along the Lake Merritt Channel, a bike/pedestrian bridge across the Channel along an unused rail alignment, and a trail adjacent to existing rail. Sea Level Rise Overlay maps and a regional strategy underway to develop sea level rise infrastructure along the Jack London waterfront and Lake Merritt Channel were briefly discussed.

Zoning changes relevant to the area were also presented; the area is proposed to have its own unique zoning district and overlay with requirements for minimum heights, planned unit development processes, and sea level rise adaptation plans. This addresses the need due to the area's constraints to address sea level rise, develop the area comprehensively, and meet the DOSP goal for dense, mixed-use development.

Next steps presented involve feedback on the proposed zoning amendments and feedback from this meeting to develop a 3rd Street/Victory Court appendix to the DOSP.

Discussion

Public Comments/Questions are in **bold**

What ever happened with DOT's plan to remove the Broadway Street off-ramp?

- The Oakland-Alameda Access Project received its last chunk of funding, a 25 million dollar grant in a state allocation, so it is fully funded now for the first time in 25 years. The schedule as presented is to break ground early 2024-2025 and complete construction by 2027.

It's obvious that we need higher density; I'm trying to understand what 80 sq feet per unit to 100 sq feet looks like, is that like a single occupancy, an SRO building, or is it something else? Second question, is this plan related in any way to the tax initiative that Jack London residents were recently asked to vote on?

- On the first one what that density looks like, it's not an SRO necessarily; it's not related to the size of the building; it's a way of calculating density based on the size of the parcel, so if the density says you can have one unit per 80 square feet. That is a way of calculating how many units are allowed, based on the size of the lot; lets say 10,000 square feet, so lets say you divide that 10,000 by 80 square feet, and that would give you how many units are allowed. The units themselves can of be whatever size are proposed to us, but that sets maximum density, is the calculation of square feet per lot size.
- Looking at some of the more high rise apartments for condo buildings downtown is more of the realm. The SROs that are currently existing tend to be older buildings, and are not as tall.

We have a very high tall building, and then we have a relatively modest tall building, so how does that work? Like 8 story, versus 20 story, that kind of thing?

- 80 square feet is quite dense. The current density for the central part of downtown is around that same density, so it's a very high density.

- It is easier for everyone to focus on the height limitation; the size of the units within those buildings; its up to the developer; generally I think its easier; people can more relate to the height of the building.
- We can follow, we can look at some examples of buildings that are around different heights and we could follow up
- There might be a building that allows tons of units, but doesn't have that great a height limit; to keep that in mind.

Forgive me if this was covered, I was having issues with my audio... is the Estuary Park project part of this plan?

- Estuary Park is part of the plan area, but the estuary park plan, my understanding is that is farther ahead than this process.
- Estuary Park is still in design developmental finalization, and then the question would be whether that final design is funded to move forward into construction, we can get back to the folks on where that project stands.
- So it is part of the plan area; and part of that idea of the green loop connecting all of the open spaces in the area and connecting all of the green and blue spaces that is the waterfront around the downtown, and just to follow up on that; the idea is not just making a loop around the downtown. The idea is that there are a couple of different loops, and the idea is that they connect North, East, West; so that we are bringing in all of the rest of Oaklanders to the downtown, and to the waterfront, to the lake and the channel to take advantage of all of those things so its not cutting off, but inviting connections.

All of this is unrelated to the Jack London Improvement District tax.

- That is true it is unrelated.

Regarding 3rd Street Expansion; does the expansion mean that the buildings currently housing Peerless Coffee, Cash and Carry, and the buildings behind them will be demolished?

If Peerless is not interested in making any changes to their footprint, then the 3rd St extension would not be implemented, is that correct?

- Ultimately if they chose to develop that, then yes; they would be reconfigured; if Peerless wanted to stay there then they could redevelop the property and have a ground floor production and then have residential above; that's part of the zoning; the incentives for the zoning; much higher density in return for dedicating the space along it, which would be a much smaller portion of the parcel.
- There is a possibility of phases. If Peerless is not interested soon in redeveloping and helping to create the extension from Oak to Fallon, but other property owners wanted to develop, there are other connections that could be made that could potentially allow a Phase 1 development.

Feedback (How do you feel about this plan) (Public Comments/Questions are in Bold)

This is lot of new information, what kind of timeline for any of this, are we talking 20 years away?

- We are talking potentially 20 years away; it depends. The DOSP has a 20-year horizon; there is an implementation matrix, and there are some actions in the plan that we are looking at for example 5 years; but some of the bigger structure changes that would require installing a new road, and some major pedestrian infrastructure, that would be a longer term out. But it will depend; we are not talking about eminent domain but rather creating an incentive for property owners to develop, and as part of that along the right of way of 3rd street would dedicate as part of it. We are looking at a far-off timeline, dependent upon the property owners. As far as the timeline for property owners to move forward, that is an unknown. That will be the decision of property owners. Regulations would allow the redevelopment. What will take the full length of the timeline is the big moves of infrastructure and bridges, and new streets which will happen over time as funding becomes available.
- As far as the timeline for individual property owners to move forward that is an unknown. It could be as soon as we adopt regulations, or it could be 5 years, 10 years, 20 years; that will be the decision of individual property owners. The regulations will allow it and it would happen or not happen, depending on whether a particular property owner finds it in their interest to move forward under new regulations.
- The bike and pedestrian infrastructure will still come as funding becomes available.
- That is what plan does, it puts in place a concept, it puts in it provides the policy infrastructure and direction for public investment, but the actual buildout of private land depends on market.

I'm just curious, what kinds of inundation / sea level rise infrastructure improvements could come with the new buildings?

- A lot of that depends on the site and on the individual development; each project that gets proposed will need to do its own study and adaptation plan, which is why we will require a Planned Unit Development process. Also, a developer could provide funding for improvements at neighborhood level through the ZIP program. We will be looking at this more in the future as we collaborate with other regional agencies; ZIP benefits may help forward a regional-level plan that includes the Jack London Waterfront.

I'm very curious with the process. How do you see it all through. It would be neat if you and your team would be here for 20 years as the plan goes on but, many of us won't be here either. Is this a year by year check in on progress?

- There is not necessarily year by year, but we are planning on regular check ins on the process. There are measures of success for the plan, and we put those in very intentionally because we want to make sure that we are tracking those on a regular basis, and see what isn't working, and shift them as needed. Yes, the big infrastructure changes would likely occur over a longer term, but there are some shorter-term projects. We now have more capacity (planning staff) than we have had in the past to do this.

I have a shorter-term timeline question related to the DOSP generally. How are the winds blowing related to likelihood of approval? Is the mayor behind this? How about the city council members, planning commission, etc? How realistic is approval of the plan by the end of 2023?

- We have met with the new mayor and given her a presentation she asked very thoughtful questions. She is wanting the best for downtown and trying her best to make downtown more active, so this plan aligns with her goals for the downtown, we have had a lot of changes because this plan has been going on for so long. We are working to schedule briefings with all new appointed officials, and see how the goals of the plan might align with their goals. We think that its pretty realistic they can get approval for the plan, by the end of the year.

Any additional transit planned to handle all the additional residents on top of the Brooklyn Basin residents?

- We have tried in the Plan to ensure that transit; like AC Transit, that we are talking with them and that new development would lead to higher increase in service, so it depends on the development will meet the needs of growing residents. We are in communication with AC transit about new development, so if the development is moving forward at a high density, then we will be working with AC Transit to make sure that the transit plans keep up with it; we can't put in the new transit before the new development happens, but as it happens that would lead to increases in service. We cannot put in new transit before it happens, but as it done, we would be in communication with DOT and AC Transit.
- Link 21 is also happening; it would add an additional transbay crossing. There are discussions about adding stations in Oakland, including a potential station in Jack London Square. There are absolutely plans to increase transit capacity and we will be involved in those conversations. Link 21 has upcoming Public Meetings this summer, including an open house on June 21st.

Do you have any short-term plans (1.5 years) that you can implement that would improve the neighborhoods. I think that you are telling us about objectives, but I don't hear specific examples of plans

- The zoning we are putting in place is a short-term action that is part of the longer plan, but the Plan itself has other short-term actions. There are several departments within the City working on more immediate solutions to provide housing for unsheltered residents, increase safety, and bolster the economy. There is a lot of collaboration going on within the City to activate public spaces and businesses. We can follow up with our colleagues in business development and find out specifically what they are doing.
- New developments will go in during the next few years. We are developing design guidelines; these will be created and go into effect sooner downtown.

Larger question, likely for our mayor and council members... how do we attract the right developers here for projects like this when many major businesses are leaving because of economy, high crime in these areas and all our big sports teams have left/leaving? I am an advocate for new development and improvements but, local neighborhoods are struggling as is. thank you.

Recording error, no notes available

We know what the real problems are is encampments, and homeless. We are impacted by a day-to-day basis; we don't feel like anything is done about these issues.

- City staff are working every day to clean up illegal dumping, and working on provided housing for unsheltered residents; it can be overwhelming to a lot of people.

The 880 is a barrier for the flow between downtown and the Jack London District. How is the city planning to improve the gateway to Jack London District on Broadway?

- The area where 6th St. stops and starts, because of its lack of activity and being at the back of house infrastructure-wise, has become a ground zero for encampments. Several things are happening which will change the area; the Oakland Alameda Access Project includes the active design and funding for improvements to the Broadway underpass, the ramps will transition to become an active street. We will need to get updates from DOT. Additionally, Caltrans did not put out a parking lease for the parking lot under the freeway that was a potential of the extension of the Webster Green. This parcel has potential to become something better than a parking lot. We intend to prohibit storage and allow for pop up uses as well as improve the sites for pedestrians. As storage facilities, we have seen those sites quickly turn into blight.
- DOSP staff have also been in conversations with the county regarding their buildings. As they redevelop those sites, they are incorporating improvements that are much more pleasant and pedestrian friendly; these include more active uses and more interaction with the street.

A few months ago, I participated in an EBALDC public workshop (on Zoom) getting local input on the ground-floor spaces for the new affordable housing buildings planned for the JLS side of Broadway by the overpass - excited about that work potentially happening over the next several years.

What this is creating guardrails to allow 10-15 stories on the south side, going to 10-15 stories and making it a way that protects the channel and protects the estuary. Property owners will be allowed to go up, and the rest of the area will be developed.

- Yes, that sounds accurate. The development that happens is based on private development; we provide the policy infrastructure for this to happen, set goals and ways to achieve them.

There is a lot of long-term stuff here, there was talk about doing something about walking under Broadway, how can we learn more information? What is the vehicle that we as residents can know about that is short term? How do we find out more and maybe even promote what is more of a 0-to-5-year plan?

- Are you a part of the neighborhood council? This is one of the best ways the City has in communicating with residents and we are happy to share info about this, maybe Jennifer Newman can make pitch?

I am part of the neighborhood crime prevention council; we do talk about pain points that happen in neighborhood and what can be done to get ahead of crime. We also coordinate with the Jack London Improvement District; we share events and activities. Savlan attends to all the crime calls, but the

meetings are not just crime related. They are hyper focused on Jack London. They occur once a month, I will add to chat.

Neighborhood Council meetings JenniferLNewman@hotmail.com

We meet once a month on Zoom (4th Tuesday of each month). Email me for the invite! Also, mark your calendars for our annual neighborhood block party, welcome to all Jack London residents and businesses - Tuesday August 1st!

- The City is going through a name change to “Neighborhood Councils” from Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils and will include an enhanced services team.

I appreciate the email newsletters from Bike Walk Alameda and the Jack London Improvement District.

Are there specific plans in process for other areas in the city that contemplates this level of density?

- The DOSP is the only one under current development. The downtown is where we want the most development. We are also updating the General Plan which has not been updated in about 40 years. We are doing updates to Housing and Environmental Justice elements of the General Plan now and will next be looking at Land Use and Transportation. We will be looking at increased density throughout the City, specifically focused around major transit systems.

This has been very informative. We really appreciate the time and energy devoted by the city representatives!

Old Oakland homeowner excited about these plans, especially the green loop! I walk in Estuary Park a lot and look forward to the connection to the lake someday.

- Since there are not any other questions, we can adjourn the meeting. If you do have additional questions, you are welcome to contact us. We will also put the presentation up online, including a Zoom recording and the power point slides for those who could not attend today.