

UNDERCROSSINGS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT Engagement Summary Fall/Winter 2024



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CITY OF
OAKLAND

DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION



BACKGROUND

Project Scope

The goal of this project is to improve undercrossings for people walking, biking, and rolling.

Undercrossing Improvements will include:

- **Lighting** will help make people feel safer and could be colorful or fun to look at.
- **Wayfinding** will help people know where they are and see where they want to go.
- **Placemaking** makes the space feel safe, welcoming, and reflective of the surrounding community.

Lighting



Wayfinding



Placemaking



Project Locations

This project will improve four undercrossings:

- 7th Street under I-980
- Martin Luther King Jr. Way under I-880
- Washington Street under I-880
- Broadway under I-880



Background - How We Gathered Feedback

The first round of community engagement for the Undercrossing Improvements Project **began in November 2024 and ended in February 2025**. Engagement focused on gathering input from a diverse range of **people who live, work, and travel through these areas**.

The project team developed a **voting activity to gather feedback** on people's preferences related to lighting, wayfinding, and placemaking. Participants placed a dot sticker next to the options that they prefer.

The project team also designed an activity for participants to **share open-ended feedback** related to concerns or ideas to improve the four undercrossings.



Background - How We Gathered Feedback

Through a combination of meetings, presentations to boards and commissions, in-person events, and online engagement, stakeholders provided **777 feedback comments** and cast **2,509 votes in board activities**.



Engagement efforts focused on reaching people who live and/or work near the four undercrossing locations. Engagement activities took place in West Oakland, Downtown Oakland, or Old Oakland.

Briefings with organizations

- 12/19/24 – Baywell Health
- 12/20/24 – Kinetic Arts Center
- 1/8/25 – Common Vision
- 2/3/25 - Oak Center Neighborhood Association
- 2/25/24 – 7th Street Thrives

Presentations to Commissions and Committees

- 12/12/24 – OakDOT Major Projects Division Community Advisory Committee
- 12/16/24 – Mayor’s Commission on People with Disabilities
- 1/15/25 – Mayor's Commission on Aging
- 1/22/25 – Mayor's Commission on Homelessness

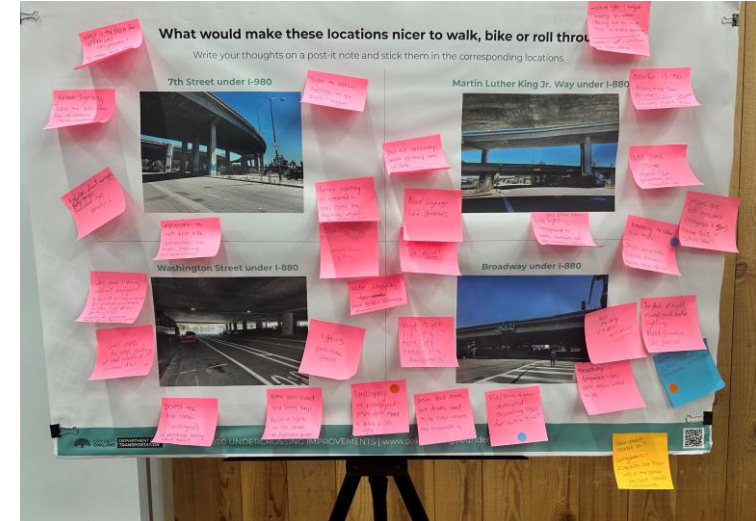
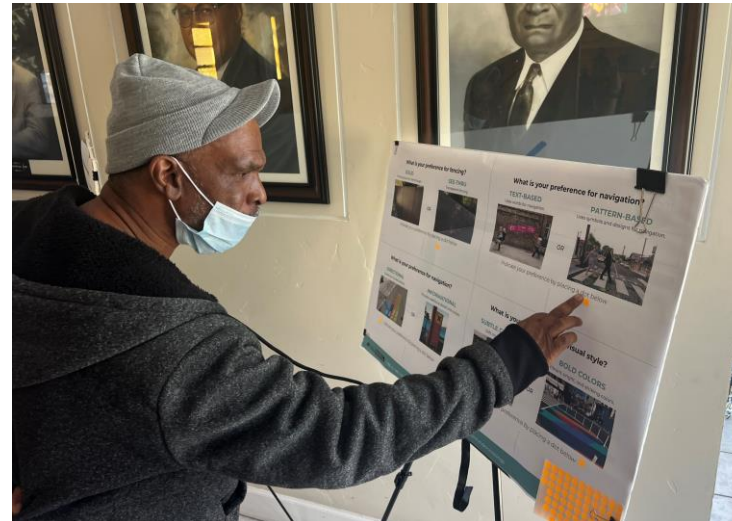
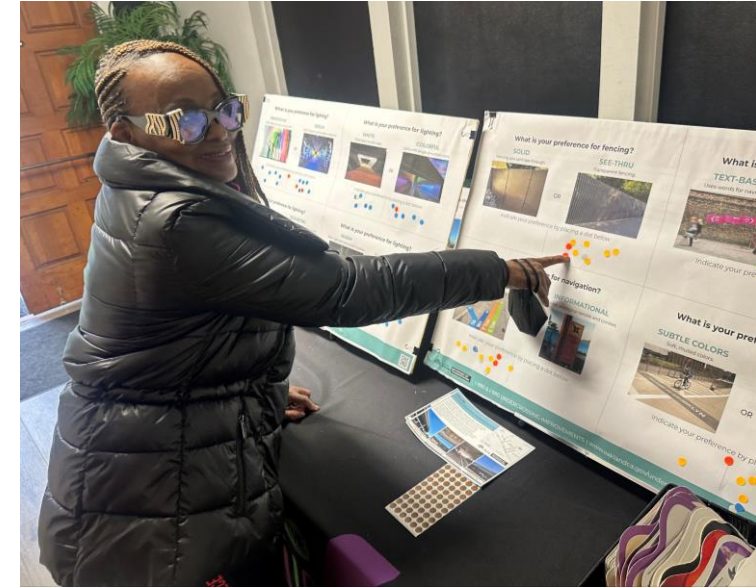
Tabling at events

- 11/6/24 – West Oakland Community Action Plan End of Year Celebration
- 11/8/24 – Old Oakland Farmers’ Market
- 11/17/24 – West Oakland Farmers’ Market
- 12/6/24 – Old Oakland Farmers’ Market
- 12/8/24 – West Oakland Farmers’ Market
- 12/18/24 - Oakland African American Chamber of Commerce event
- 2/4/25 – Tabling during lunch period at McClymonds High School

Community Engagement: CAC members hosted events

OakDOT's Major Projects Division convenes a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to provide insights on community needs and priorities for transportation projects. Committee members also share project information with their networks. Three current CAC members and one former CAC member hosted the dot voting activity at their organizations.

- **1/17/25 – Home of Chicken and Waffles**
- **1/26/25 – Friendship Christian Church**
- **2/2/25 – True Vine Ministries**
- **2/12/25 - Bike East Bay**





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FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Lighting improvements should be functional, enhance safety, and be easy to maintain.



People had concerns about personal safety and traffic safety when traveling through the undercrossings.



There is strong interest in art and creating vibrant spaces that represents Oakland's history and culture.



There was support for adding bright, bold colors, especially if it could be used to enhance community identity. There were suggestions to use color on the ceilings, columns, and walkways to brighten the undercrossings.



Maintenance was a concern. Undercrossings should be clean, and trash should be removed regularly. Any new improvements should be easy to maintain.

1 Preferences for lighting based on voting activity

WHITE

White light, no color used.

33%



COLORFUL

Lights with single or multiple colors.

61%



OR

WARM

Warm light with colors close to yellow.

58%



COOL

White light, matching natural daytime light.

37%



OR

Preferences for lighting based on voting activity

IMMERSIVE

Playful light you can interact with.

33%



OR

DISPLAY

Light displaying still images or graphics.

60%



NATURAL

Lighting design that reflects nature.

68%



OR

GEOMETRIC

Lighting design with straight edge shapes.

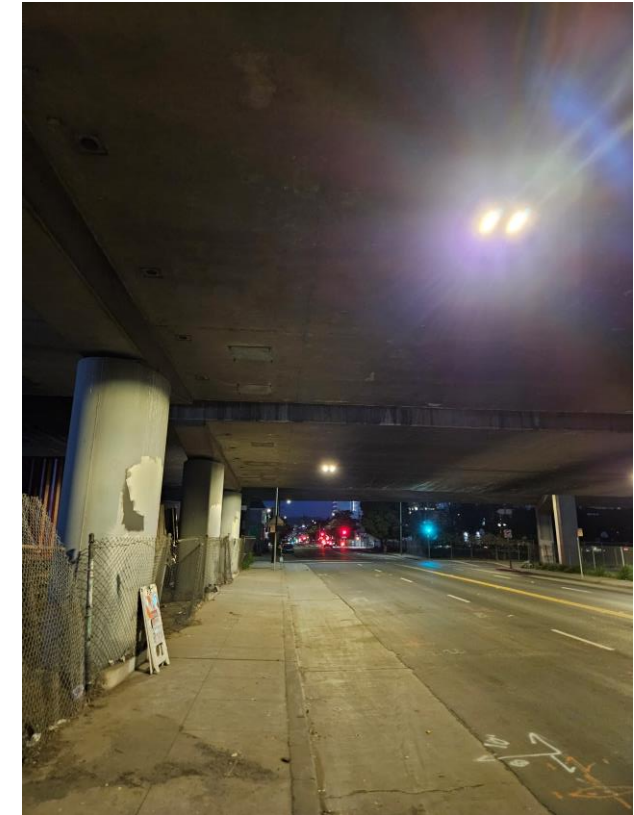
25%



Lighting Feedback (193 comments)

Improved lighting is the most requested enhancement, with community feedback highlighting safety as the primary concern.

- The design must prioritize **functionality** and be **easy to maintain**. It should avoid designs that can be damaged or be difficult to repair.
- Balance is needed to **avoid overstimulation or distraction** (such as flashing lights or lights that are too bright), especially for drivers and individuals with sensory sensitivities.
- The lighting design should **complement the local community** and be consistent with other decorative elements along the corridor.
- Lighting alone won't solve issues; it must be paired with **other safety measures** like cleanliness and signage.



Existing lighting conditions at night at the MLK Jr. Way undercrossing between 5th and 6th Streets. Photo taken in January 2025.

Preferences for navigation based on voting activity

DIRECTIONAL

Guides you to destinations.



INFORMATIONAL

Provides additional details and context.



OR

TEXT-BASED

Uses words for navigation.



PATTERN-BASED

Uses symbols and designs for navigation.



OR

Wayfinding Feedback (54 comments)

People prefer straightforward navigation aids that are easy to understand and that are intuitive.

People prefer signage that is simple and does not take a long time to read.

Text on signage should be legible.



Participants engaged in the voting activity at the Oakland African American Chamber of Commerce mixer in December 2024.

Preferences for visual style and fencing based on voting activity

SUBTLE COLORS

Soft, muted colors.

11%



BOLD COLORS

Vibrant, bright, and striking colors.

83%



OR

SOLID

Fencing you can't see through.

7%



SEE-THRU

Transparent fencing.

90%



OR

Placemaking Feedback (218 comments)

Comments about placemaking covered various topics, including design, landscaping, maintenance, waste management, and graffiti.

- Any images should **represent/celebrate Oakland's history, culture, and diversity**.
- Participants preferred **bold colors** at the undercrossings.
- There was interest in protective barriers, bollards, or vertical delineators to **separate pedestrians and bicyclists from vehicles**.
- Some people were interested in adding **greenery**, such as trees, landscaping, and flowers to the undercrossings. Any greenery should be easy to maintain.
- Long-term **maintenance** and **sustainability** were common concerns. Participants wanted durable designs that can withstand vandalism and weathering. Participants expressed interest in materials that deter graffiti.
- **Cleanliness** was a concern. Participants asked for regular trash removal, street sweeping, and preventing debris from accumulating in bike lanes.



Debris from a fire near the 7th Street undercrossing. Photo taken in August 2024.

Safety feedback (71 comments)

- Personal safety is a concern. Bright lighting is needed for visibility and to feel safe.
 - Some people avoid traveling through the undercrossings if there are encampments.
 - Lack of businesses and foot traffic contributes to a sense of desolation, making it feel less safe.
- Traffic and pedestrian safety was also brought up as an issue.
 - Comments revolved around increasing the visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Shorter crosswalks and better lighting at intersections would improve pedestrian safety.

Community engagement feedback (32 comments)

- Participants suggested that the project team works with community ambassadors (such as Jack London Improvement District) for maintenance.
- People felt that long-time residents and small businesses should be included in the design process and should weigh in on the project.
- The project team should work with youth and schools.

General feedback and support for the project (31 comments)

- People expressed excitement about the project and wanting to get the improvements done as soon as possible.
- There were questions about future phases, maintenance, and what happens after the project is completed.

Feedback about project budget (14 comments)

- There was interest in understanding the funding sources of the project in light of the evolving federal funding landscape for transportation.
- There was support for cost-effective solutions to make sure that these improvements happen.

Addressing homelessness (62 comments)

- There were concerns about displacement and lack of support for people who are sheltering at the undercrossings.
- There were also requests that the project team engages with people who are unhoused.
- Some people felt that the presence of people who are unhoused at the undercrossings made them feel less safe.

Bike infrastructure (28 comments)

- The project team received questions and comments about bike infrastructure near the four undercrossings.
 - There were a few requests for parking-protected bike lanes to improve safety for bicyclists.
 - There were also suggestions to remove parking and use that space for bike infrastructure.



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INCORPORATING FEEDBACK INTO PROJECT DESIGNS

Design Direction for All Four Undercrossings

The project team incorporated community feedback into the designs of the four undercrossings. The project designs follow the principles outlined in this slide and the next slide.

Lighting

- Lighting materials should be resilient to damage and easy to maintain.
- Lighting design should consider individuals with sensory sensitivities and limited vision. For example, glare, flashing lights, and shadows should be avoided.
- Colorful lights and warm tones are preferred, if they provide adequate brightness and align with the above two points.
- Static lighting is preferred over interactive lighting.

Wayfinding

- Directional signage should be clear, simple, and not have too much text



Example of colorful lighting. This photo is McKinley Village Way Underpass in East Sacramento, CA. Source: Sestak Lighting Design



Existing wayfinding signage in Oakland Chinatown

Placemaking

- Any placemaking features should prioritize functionality and be designed to be easily maintained and resistant to weathering and vandalism.
- Each undercrossing location should be distinct from the rest.
- Bold colors should be included in the overall designs.
- Natural imagery is preferred over geometric imagery.
- Sidewalks should be kept clear.
- Fencing should be transparent or 'see-through' where feasible.
- Design should not include hostile infrastructure.

Community engagement

- Project team will explore ways to partner with community organizations to conduct outreach to people who are sheltering at or near the undercrossings.
- Project team will continue to engage people who live or work near the undercrossings. They will also focus on reaching youth and families.



A painted column at the undercrossing on 52nd Street in Temescal. Artwork by Oakland muralist Alan Leon. Source: OakTown Art

Broadway

- Broadway is considered a major gateway, and should be colorful, bold, distinct, but not too dynamic as to be distracting
- If the project budget is constrained, prioritize enhancements on Broadway over Washington Street.

Washington Street

- Include pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements.

New bike and pedestrian safety improvements will be delivered at the **Martin Luther King Jr. Way, 7th Street, and Broadway** undercrossings through these projects:

[Martin Luther King Jr. Way Streetscape Improvements](#)

[7th Street Connection Project](#)

[Broadway Streetscape Improvements](#)



NEXT STEPS



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The project team worked with the consultant teams to incorporate feedback from community engagement to prepare a set of concepts for the four undercrossings.

In Summer 2025, there will be a second round of community engagement to get feedback on initial concepts. Visit www.oaklandca.gov/undercrossings for more information.

For questions, contact mpd@oaklandca.gov