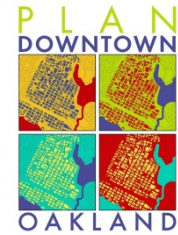


Downtown Oakland Specific Plan

Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan?

A Specific Plan is a regulatory tool that local governments can use to implement the general plan in an identified area. Specific Plans bring together detailed policies and regulations to guide future city actions in a specific geographic area.

The Downtown Oakland Specific Plan will guide decision-making to create an equitable, vibrant and sustainable city center over the next 25 years. The Specific Plan will be created through community input to develop an overall vision for the downtown area and establish effective policies. The Plan will result in recommendations/regulations regarding land use/zoning, design guidelines, affordable housing, economic development, arts and culture, open space and recreation, transportation, and infrastructure.

2. Why is the City of Oakland preparing a Downtown Specific Plan?

The Specific Plan will lay out a long-term vision for the Downtown area and include strategies to achieve that vision. The process of developing the Downtown Specific Plan includes many opportunities for the community to take part in planning the area's future. With the accelerating rate of development and investment happening Downtown and throughout Oakland, the time has come to make important decisions about cultural resources (including architectural and institutional resources and other community-identified businesses and cultural assets), the type of places and services that are critical to urban quality of life, the methods to fund those elements, and to identify ways to strengthen connections between Downtown and the rest of the city.

3. How is the community involved in the Downtown Specific Plan?

The community has played a key role in the Downtown Specific Plan process to date through multiple public meetings including community workshops, a nine-day open studio/charrette, stakeholder group meetings, one-on-one meetings with various citizens, public committee hearings, a community advisory group, online tools, and meetings by request with community groups. This feedback has all been collected, made public, and summarized in a Comments Memo for inclusion in the next phases of the Specific Plan process.

Starting in Spring 2017, the Specific Plan's "Equity Team" led by I-SEED (the Institute for Sustainable Economic, Educational and Environmental Design), will begin to reframe the

planning discussion so that social and racial equity are not just a piece of the plan but a lens we use to view the process and expected outcomes. The Equity Team is partnering with the lead consultant team led by Dover-Kohl Partners to support an expanded engagement effort to reach communities that the City has not yet been able to bring into the Downtown Plan process, particularly those who have been poorly served by planning efforts in the past.

In Spring and Summer 2017, the Downtown Plan process will include a round of community-based events and working groups that incorporate additional community representatives, build on the community feedback collected in the process to date, approach the plan's topic areas with an equity lens, focus on key opportunity areas, and drill down into the technical analysis, strategies and implementation plans for topics such as housing, transportation, arts and culture, open space, public health, sustainability and economic opportunity.

4. How is the City reaching out to historically underrepresented populations to support their involvement in developing the Downtown Plan?

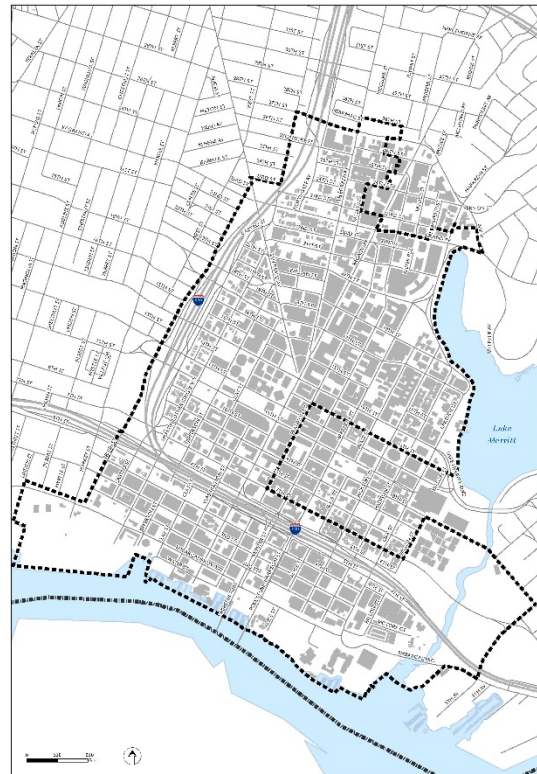
In addition to traditional ways of engaging the community, such as community workshops advertised in newspapers and the City's social media outlets, the project team has undertaken more active efforts to include a broad range of Oakland's residents and stakeholders.

For instance, the City has worked with local youth services and partnered with UC Berkeley's Y-PLAN program to ask students from local public high schools to share their ideas for making Downtown more equitable, youth-friendly and sustainable. In addition to the City's online forum, Speak Up, Oakland!, the planning team is implementing *Streetwyze*, a mobile tool and engagement process developed by I-SEED that will help to reach out to and involve local community-based organizations and residents who traditionally do not participate in formal public participation channels such as workshops, meetings and public hearings.

The City has also hired a social equity consultant team to work more in depth with community-based organizations to bring their communities into the planning process, as well as to develop other strategies to proactively engage underrepresented populations.

5. What is the planning boundary and how does this plan relate to the recently adopted specific plans for Chinatown (Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan), Broadway Valdez, and West Oakland?

The Downtown Specific Plan is the sixth area plan process undertaken in Oakland in recent years, and the first ever for downtown. Creating a specific plan for the downtown neighborhoods and districts will help weave together the recent specific plans for the West Oakland, Chinatown, and upper Broadway areas adjoining downtown, as they are linked via streets, public transit and neighborhood activities. See the boundaries of the Downtown Specific Plan and adjacent specific plans on the map.



Downtown Plan
Planning & Building Department
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Downtown Specific Plan Study Area and Nearby Adopted Specific Plans

6. How will the City address housing affordability in the Downtown Plan?

The Specific Plan will include an affordable housing strategy for Downtown that will draw upon a number of efforts concurrent with the Downtown Specific Plan process to address this issue. One of the important tools that the City has recently developed is an affordable housing impact fee. The fee was adopted in Spring 2016, and is now being charged to new market-rate housing in order to generate funds for new affordable housing. In addition, the City continues to relax its Secondary Unit regulations to

facilitate creation of new small housing units, and has instituted a moratorium on the conversion or demolition of Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) residential hotels while working on strengthening the existing SRO conversion ordinance to protect housing for some of downtown’s most vulnerable residents.

The City of Oakland is also looking at other tools to include in an affordable housing strategy for Downtown. Mayor Libby Schaaf convened a Housing Cabinet to determine the most effective

solutions the City should implement to protect existing affordable housing and to build new affordable housing. Their recommendations were published as *Oakland at Home* in early 2016. The Specific Plan affordable housing strategy will be borrowing from the *Roadmap* and *Oakland at Home* recommendations and include a goal for the percentage of new affordable housing units to be built in the plan area. It will also include additional recommendations, as part of the economic analysis and equity strategy, to provide a menu of options to preserve existing affordable units, protect tenants, and finance the production of new affordable units.

7. How will the City address social equity in the Downtown Plan?

As mentioned earlier, the City has hired a social equity consultant team led by I-SEED to join the existing lead project team to help develop a social equity strategy that, incorporating a diverse range of stakeholder viewpoints, will guide policy and institutional change to address structural inequality through land use and other mechanisms appropriate to the specific plan. To that end, the Downtown Plan team will work with the community to define social equity and work towards ensuring that the Plan is used to address the physical environment and economic conditions for all people, particularly targeting those with the fewest resources, through the promotion of broad participatory engagement, analysis of racial and social equity impacts, and strategies to achieve targeted equitable outcomes.

Some topics related to social equity and city planning that have been discussed in Oakland include racial and ethnic diversity, economic opportunity, discrimination in the public realm, affordability, supporting immigrant and re-entry populations, distribution of resources and infrastructure improvements, cultural diversity, access to resources, homelessness, community policing, public health, environmental justice, and youth empowerment. The physical environment in particular impacts social equity based on whether it provides opportunities for housing for all income levels, places of employment for a wide range of job types, transportation to jobs and services, open spaces and recreation accessible to people of all income levels, arts and culture venues that serve the diversity of cultures, and social service facilities.

8. How will the City address preservation of arts and support for local artists in the Downtown Plan?

Representatives of the local arts community are involved in the planning process through ongoing meetings. Nearly 50 artists and arts administrators attended the first stakeholder meeting targeted to arts and culture, and expressed their interest in ensuring that the Downtown Plan will address the need for support for local arts. The upcoming series of working group meetings will include discussions specifically targeted to arts and cultural issues. The

planning process will consider a range of land use and policy strategies to ensure that arts and culture continue to have an important place in the Downtown.

9. What is an Environmental Impact Report, and will one be necessary for the Downtown Plan?

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for projects that may have significant environmental impacts. Although Plan Downtown will be a policy document rather than a physical project, CEQA nevertheless requires that an EIR be completed, in order to evaluate the results of the recommended policies of the Plan.

The EIR will identify the potential environmental effects of the Downtown Plan, as well as mitigation strategies that can reduce any negative effects. The EIR also includes Downtown Plan alternatives, to help decision-makers make informed policy decisions. For example, the EIR will compare impacts of potential development under the status quo – current zoning, density and height controls (called the “no project” alternative in the EIR) with impacts of the development alternatives being considered for the Downtown Plan. The EIR will analyze environmental factors potentially affected by new development under the Plan: air and water quality, traffic, noise levels, population and housing, historic and archeological resources, biological resources, public services and utilities, hazardous materials and visual aesthetics. The EIR process is formalized in State and City law, and provides the public, as well as other government agencies, multiple opportunities to participate. These include the opportunity to comment on the scope and content of what the EIR will cover, as well as provide input on the draft EIR during public hearings before the City Planning Commission. The final EIR will be heard and certified by City Council.

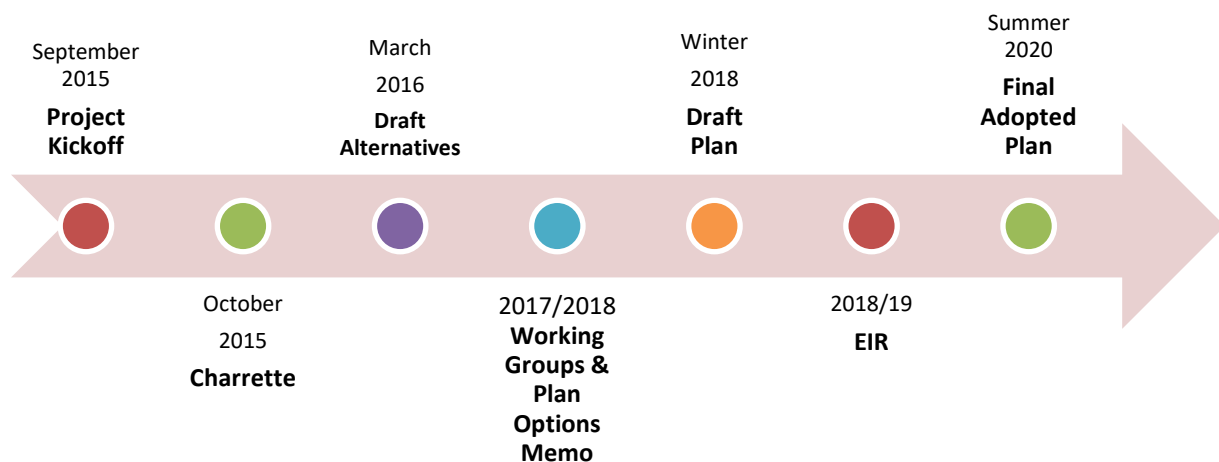
10. How will the Downtown Plan be approved, and by whom?

The Downtown Oakland Specific Plan is being developed in phases, from 2015-2019. During each phase, the public, City advisory boards, commissions, and Council have a chance to review and shape the direction of the Plan. Ultimately, the Oakland City Council will review a version of a final plan and associated EIR for public hearing and adoption.

11. What is the timeline for development and adoption of the Downtown Plan?

As shown in the graphic below, there will be several phases before the final Downtown Plan is drafted. The planning team used feedback from the public gathered in 2015-2016 to develop draft alternatives for analysis. Based on feedback on the alternatives, the team has synthesized the community’s preferred elements of the alternatives with additional ideas from the community and analysis from relevant City departments to create a set of goals and potential

actions as a starting point for work by topical working groups. With input from the working groups, the team will develop a Plan Concepts Memo to solidify goals and approaches that, after public review, will be the basis of the draft specific plan. The draft plan will receive public review, will be analyzed for environmental impacts and then be updated to create the final plan. At every stage, the team will be soliciting input from the public through community meetings, advisory groups, targeted stakeholder meetings, online outreach, and public hearings. Environmental review will also include a scoping meeting that will allow the public an opportunity to suggest what issues are critical for the EIR to focus on.



12. How is the development and implementation of the Downtown Plan funded? What is the anticipated timeline for implementation?

The City received a \$750,000 grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) under the Priority Development Area (PDA) planning grant program to prepare a specific plan for Downtown Oakland. The Jack London Square Redevelopment Project also contributed \$100,000 to fund additional planning studies that include JLS and the Planning and Building Department contributed \$150,000 for the development of the Specific Plan and EIR.

In addition, the City partnered with the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) and was awarded a federal grant in the amount of \$600,000 to support transit-oriented development in downtown. The money will be used to fund additional transportation, economic and environmental analysis for the downtown specific plan. In February of 2017, Oakland City Council authorized an additional \$255,000 for an equity consultant to create a social equity strategy that will be integrated in the downtown specific plan and \$453,440 for additional community engagement, design work and for the development of zoning standards to create a vibrant downtown where Oakland’s authenticity and varied cultural identities are reflected in

the built environment, plus a project contingency of \$45,000. The total project cost is \$2,353,440.

The Plan will include implementation measures that range from small, immediate tasks to visionary, long-range, multi-agency processes. Based on input from the community, some of the more easily feasible ideas may be incorporated into processes that will be in motion before the Plan is even adopted. Other projects will begin after adoption according to priority, funding and feasibility. Long-range plans that require complex funding and coordination between several governmental agencies may not be realized for several decades.

13. How can I become involved in the planning process for Downtown?

All Oakland community members, including residents, property owners, business owners, students, etc. are invited to share their ideas and feedback for the Plan. We have several different ways you can participate:

- Read all about the project at the website: www.oaklandnet.com/plandowntownoakland
- Sign up for our email list (by visiting the project website and clicking on the “subscribe for updates” link at the top of the page)
- Join our topical working group meetings and/or attend larger community meetings, which will be announced to the email list, online as well as through newspaper and other announcements
- Invite us to attend a meeting of your existing organization
- Share your feedback online:
 - Twitter: #plandowntown @Oakland
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CityofOakland/>
 - Speak Up, Oakland!: <https://oakland.granicusideas.com/projects/plan-downtown-oakland>
- Email [comments](mailto:comments@oaklandnet.com) to PlanDowntownOakland@oaklandnet.com.

14. How does the Downtown Plan relate to the other City initiatives and other agencies’ projects currently under development and consideration?

The purpose of a specific plan is to refine and implement the Oakland General Plan in a specific area. The areas that abut the Downtown have separate adopted Specific Plans: West Oakland, Lake Merritt-Chinatown, and Broadway Valdez. The Downtown Specific Plan will help strengthen the relationships and connections between downtown and these areas.

In addition, there are a number of transportation studies currently underway:

1. Alameda Access Project
2. Walk This Way: The Broadway/Webster Project
3. Broadway Circulator Feasibility Study
4. Complete Streets Typology Project
5. Pedestrian Master Plan
6. Transportation Impact Review Streamlining
7. Downtown Parking Supply Study
8. Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC): Countywide Transportation and Transit Plans
9. Alameda County Transit (AC Transit): Major Corridors Study and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
10. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC): Core Capacity Study

Finally, as mentioned under Question 5 above, the Plan will be coordinated with the **Affordable Housing Impact Fee**, the **Mayor's Housing Cabinet**, and the City's **Housing Equity Roadmap**.

15. What are the next steps to develop the Downtown Plan?

After a well-attended community workshop in March 2016, and a subsequent series of stakeholder meetings, public hearings, presentations to community groups, and online engagement efforts, the public has submitted over a thousand comments on the Draft Plan Alternatives Report. The project team has synthesized these comments, worked with the responsible City departments to analyze the feasibility of specific actions and programs that have been recommended, and developed a draft framework of goals and priority actions for the community advisory group and working groups to review over the next several months.

During this next phase of the Downtown Plan process, the social equity team will assist the lead consultant in both developing strategies for plan implementation to support equitable outcomes and of developing a more deeply inclusive process moving forward with the development of the plan. The social equity team has been integrated into the project team as of spring 2017, and will provide guidance and input into this next phase, which will lead to the preparation of the draft plan.