

Hannah Lindelof, Project Manager
BART Planning, Development + Construction
300 Lakeside Drive, 21st Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

February 6, 2018

Dear Ms. Lindelof:

On behalf of the Oakland Chinatown Coalitionⁱ, we are submitting written comments in response to the Draft BART Lake Merritt Transit-Oriented Development Goals and Objectives document presented on January 28, 2018.

The basis for our comments reflect the significant opportunity for the Lake Merritt BART development to build on the natural assets and resources of the historic neighborhood, and leverage the resiliency of Oakland Chinatown, which has thrived in spite of its history of eminent domain and misguided urban renewal. Aligned with BART's three-fold vision of creating an activated place of "live, work, and play", our vision is to establish a distinct "community thumbprint" through a mix of at least 200 affordable housing units, community control of 120,000 square feet of community and non-profit space, and a \$1M contribution to Madison Park. The synergy of these three aspects, which represents the highest community use, will establish a community hub that will both anchor and cultivate the vibrant activity that the area so greatly needs while increasing BART ridership.

We have the following recommendations and edits to the draft goals and objectives that echo the sentiment of our input and feedback we provided in the most recent TOD Stakeholder Meeting.

In Section A- Complete Communities, we recommend the inclusion of these four objectives:

1. Provide an Equitable Development Project to the Chinatown Community and surrounding area, which lost affordable housing and community resources as a result of the eminent domain of the Project site.
2. Enhance the Livability and Vitality of the Neighborhood surrounding the Chinatown-Lake Merritt BART Station, and particularly its visual and physical connection to core commercial Chinatown down 9th Street towards Franklin.
3. Incorporate a "highest community use" approach to ensure an activated community hub and identity that will both complement and leverage the rest of the proposed development and surrounding area.

We ask that BART include a commitment to the highest community use as a complement to the principle of highest feasibility, and that this commitment be articulated as a top priority in this section. This commitment will signal an integral investment that will excite a community that is currently on edge about a proposed twenty-story high-rise development that echoes our past

history of displacement. This commitment will also signal to the community that we will be able to exert our rights and have the resources to continue to grow, thrive and become a strong and vibrant neighborhood.

4. Establish station naming opportunities that acknowledge the historic neighborhood.

Given Chinatown is the primary neighborhood of the Lake Merritt BART Station, we ask that BART include a goal that speaks to the renaming of the Lake Merritt BART Station to the Chinatown BART Station.

In Section D- Value Creation and Value Capture, we recommend the inclusion of this goal:

1. To support high quality public spaces at the center of our community, which in turn help bring about neighborhood wide improvements and increased property value

The premise of this goal is to bring critical improvements to Madison Park so that it is useful and attractive to both seniors, youth and families that reflect the 88 percent of the residents that make up the surrounding neighborhood and who are of Asian descent, and utilize the Lake Merritt BART Station. Madison Park will play a key role in helping to create an enlivened community center of gravity for the proposed development. A \$1M investment will help not only jumpstart needed improvements, but also leverage funds from city and philanthropic partners to establish a district wide financing effort.

In Section F-Affordability

1. Objective #1 should be modified to include the goal of building at least 200 affordable units, or 35%, including bedroom counts suitable to housing multigenerational families.”

Additional housing beyond BART’s 35% system-wide affordability goal will be critical threshold point for the enhancing the vibrancy of the development, establishing “eyes on the street”, and generating increased ridership. Low-income community members are the ones who rely heavily on public transportation, as most do not own cars.

2. Objective #4 of “Explore affordable commercial space options for non-profit use” should be modified to state, “Include commercial space options for non-profit users at \$2.50/SF full service rent.”

This modification will more accurately reflect the minimum of 20% of affordable commercial space that was determined as feasible by BART’s economic consultant, Economic & Planning Systems. It will also more clearly underlie the principle of highest community use with highest feasibility and value. Affordable commercial space options for non-profit use will allow for a mix of non-profits, community serving space, and an innovation hub that will be foundational to creating a regional destination and gateway to Chinatown, Laney College and Lake Merritt. Establishing a footprint for service organizations, civic uses, and additional housing in this part of the neighborhood will help Chinatown stay vital for generations to come.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and urge you to adopt them in the goals and objectives for the RFQ. We are committed to working with BART to ensure that these proposed

objectives are made real. Together, we can create what will be the brightest light zone illuminating the vibrant culture that is Oakland, and a model of transformation for the city.

Sincerely,

Oakland Chinatown Coalition

*Oakland Chinatown Coalition membership includes: Asian Health Services, Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, AYPAL, Buddhist Church of Oakland, Chinese American Citizens Alliance - Oakland Lodge, Chinese Community United Methodist Church, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, Family Bridges Inc, Filipino Advocates for Justice, Friends of Lincoln Square, Ivanna Huthman, Lincoln Elementary School, New Hope Cancer Foundation, Oakland Asian Cultural Center, Oakland Chinatown Lions Foundation, Wa Sung Community Service Club, Alan Yee, Gilbert Gong, Heidi Kong, Lailan Huen, Karolyn Wong