

We Love West Oakland! Making Our Gateways Inviting, Welcoming, and Safe for Residents and Visitors

Oakland, CA: McClymonds High School



ISSUE

In October 2010, the City of Oakland was awarded a TIGER II Planning Grant Program through the US Department of Transportation and US Department of Housing and Urban Development to coordinate a planning effort for two redevelopment areas, including West Oakland. The purpose of the West Oakland Specific Plan is to develop innovative strategies to revitalize select vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial sites in West Oakland. The plan will focus on leveraging West Oakland's assets, and supporting and attracting commercial and light-industrial enterprises to provide jobs and services for West Oakland residents and the larger community.

In addition, a key element of the plan is reclaiming the identity of West Oakland through guarding and place-making of gateways and corridors into the neighborhood. City of Oakland recognizes that student voice is critical to activating and stewarding the West Oakland Specific Plan, and this fall, looked to students at McClymonds High School to be the voice to inform what these welcome points to West Oakland will look like. Students worked with UC Berkeley student mentors, city planners and community leaders to map assets, challenges, interview residents, and create evidence-based solutions for change. Students presented their proposals to a panel of civic leaders and community stakeholders who will take student's insight into consideration in implementing the West Oakland Specific Plan.



QUESTION

How can we make the gateways and corridors of West Oakland welcoming, safe, and attractive for residents and visitors?

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: Y-PLAN TEAM

Y-PLAN Instructor: Elise DeLagnes

Students: 10th + 11th Grade

Client: Margot Prado, Senior Economic Development Specialist, City of Oakland

Community Partners: West Oakland Neighbors Community Organization, UC Berkeley

YOUTH DRIVEN DATA AND INSIGHTS

- The liquor stores and nearby billboard advertisements for alcohol, cigarettes, and casinos do not promote a positive image for the community.
- There are not enough close and accessible options to get healthy, fresh food. This makes it especially difficult for students who stay after school for sports or other extra-curricular activities to stay fueled and concentrated.
- Students observed a working community garden one block away from their school, and began identifying vacant lots in the surrounding area for pop-up and community gardens.
- The streets that students use to walk to school contained trash, dead animals, or potholes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Turn vacant lots into gardens and farmers markets.
2. Promote clean and maintained streets.
3. Create more healthy food options instead of liquor stores, with potential alternatives being food trucks on vacant lots, food courts with a greater variety of food to eat, and grocery stores with healthy produce.
4. Remove billboards and advertisements for liquor stores, alcohol, cigarettes, and casinos and instead promote a positive image for the community
5. Improved bus shelters with bus stops that are covered, have some component of community artwork, and are safer to stay in while waiting for the bus.
6. Create more community artwork at the gateways and walls of industrial areas in West Oakland, while removing graffiti with negative imagery and messages from current surfaces.
7. Invite local businesses to take over “For Sale or Lease” signs in empty storefronts, and promote businesses that benefit the community.



NEXT STEPS

The Oakland Planning Department has invited Y-PLAN students to share their findings and recommendations at official city planning and city council meetings over the summer 2014 so that these ideas can be officially considered in the West Oakland redevelopment planning process. On the school side, Oakland Unified School District’s Linked Learning office is working with CC+S to bring Y-PLAN to more career academies and students throughout the district. Finally, UC Berkeley mentors are working to find ways to connect students with opportunities to visit and gain internships with businesses, offices, and firms that align with fields and interests that students have expressed interest in – particularly planning, engineering and design.

For more information on Y-PLAN, contact Jessie Stewart, Y-PLAN National Coordinator: jessie.stewart@berkeley.edu