



Y-PLAN Students Present Their Ideas at City Hall

On May 11th engaged citizens gathered at City Hall to present their vision for the 16th Street Train Station in West Oakland. This would be one more of dozens of meetings held in the past two years addressing the varied interests around the abandoned rail station. This time, however, most of the citizens holding the microphone or advancing the PowerPoint slides were born after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, an event which helped to spur the reinvestment in the area.

The current and future residents presenting their approach are students from West Oakland's McClymonds High School participating in Y-PLAN, a program administered by mentors from UC Berkeley's Center for Cities and Schools.

The students presented their ideas for reuse of the historic train station and the plaza in front of the station before an audience of over 60 people. Their proposals were evaluated by a jury of stakeholders in the train station redevelopment, including local residents, historians, councilwoman Nancy Nadel, and the Wood Street Project developers.

("City Hall" continued on Page 2)

McClymonds High School Students Have Plans For West Oakland's Train Station

Once the terminus of the transcontinental railroad, the station holds tremendous cultural significance for West Oakland, presenting an exciting opportunity to connect the past, present and future of the community. "The train station for some families represents the beginning of a new life and I believe that's very important," writes Samirah Adams, from Mr. Smith's 11th Grade class.



(More on the students' proposals on Page 3)

What is Y-PLAN?

The Y-PLAN (Youth - Plan, Learn, Act, Now!) is an award-winning collaborative where UC Berkeley students in urban planning, design, and education engage youth as genuine stakeholders and participants in local planning projects. Y-PLAN has been working for five years with McClymonds High School in West Oakland. This year the students' "client" was not just one group or individual, but instead a collaborative of interests around the 16th Street Train Station, including nearby residents, community groups, the Randolph Institute and the Wood Street Project/Central Station development companies -- BUILD, HFH, and Holliday Development as wells as McClymonds High School. Having witnessed previous Y-PLAN successes, this team were eager to engage students to create independent visions for (a) the future of the train station and plaza, (b) how these public spaces within a larger development effort could serve needs of area youth and (c) building linkages to the surrounding community.



Plaza and Station Design Objectives

Sustainable: plan for ongoing community involvement and volunteer-initiated improvements with high odds of success.

Viable: politically, financially, and logistically feasible

Placemaking: physically and functionally integrated into the surrounding neighborhood, creating opportunities for informal and formal community interaction

Economically Beneficial: contributing to economic revitalization of the immediate neighborhood, the Wood Street corridor and/or West Oakland.

Culturally/Historically Relevant: accessible and comprehensible to a wide range of prospective visitors affirming a sense of history, community and connectedness.



Y-PLAN students interviewed a variety of stakeholders including residents, business owners, historians, local activists and family members. Community mapping exercises identified opportunities and constraints surrounding the site.

City Hall (from Page 1)



*"I think neighbors around the station and housing development would like to see the station or the plaza as a place where kids, youth or anyone can go to stay off the streets."
- Fabiola Duran, 11th Grade*

"It was a good experience to speak in front of a judge's panel at City Hall and I won't forget it," noted Antoine Howard, an 11th grader. Students were awarded prizes including "Most Creative," and "Best Overall Presentation." In addition all participants were offered scholarships to the Junior Statesmen Foundation's summer institute in California Politics and Civic Engagement.

Bay Area Design Tour with Professor Walter Hood

On a sunny Saturday morning in April, Y-PLAN mentors and students boarded a bus with Professor Walter Hood, from UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design. Hood, a nationally renowned landscape architect, and a resident of West Oakland, took Y-PLAN students on a tour of open space around the Bay Area with stops at the Splash Pad near Oakland's Grand Lake neighborhood, Frank Ogawa Plaza, Jack London Square and the renovated Ferry Terminal.

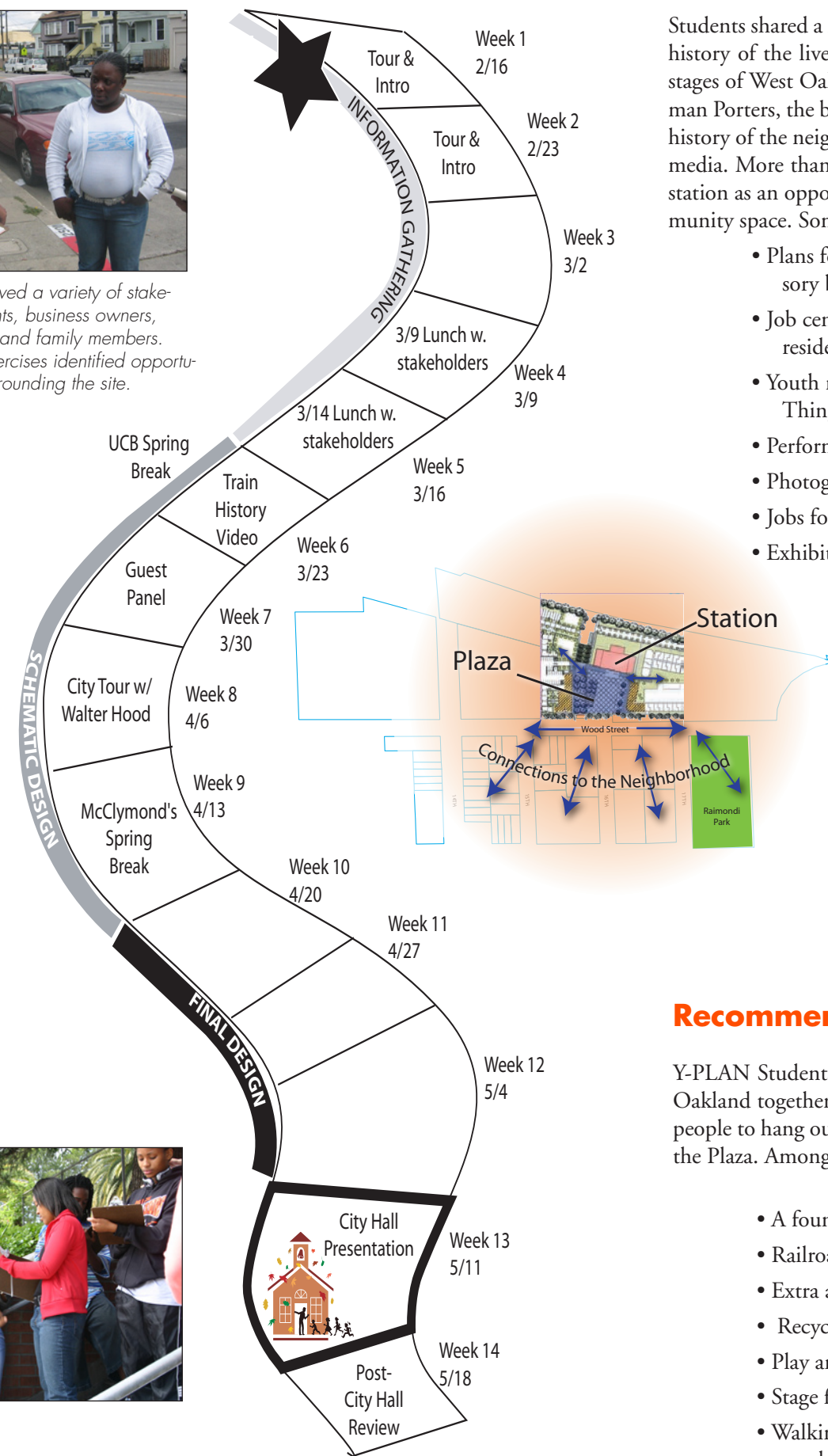


On the tour, Hood helped students to identify what they liked and disliked about these open spaces, encouraging them to develop their own vision for the plaza in front of the renovated train station. Hood has been hired to develop the conceptual design for the plaza and will incorporate many of the ideas that students developed in this process.

Recommendations for the Train Station

Students shared a heartfelt belief that the station should accurately tell the history of the lives that it helped to shape. Stories describing the stages of West Oakland's settlement, the powerful role of the Pullman Porters, the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement and the history of the neighborhood since may be told through a variety of media. More than a museum, however, students also see the train station as an opportunity for new business, job training, and community space. Some of their recommendations include:

- Plans for youth representation on a train station advisory board
- Job center with job-training opportunities for local residents and youth-run cafe
- Youth run cafe ("Cafe Mack") or a restaurant possibly named "Baggage Wings 'n Things"
- Performance/community space
- Photography exhibition hi-lighting the relationship of the station to West Oakland
- Jobs for youth in design and implementation of station improvements
- Exhibition space for local youth art



*"I am proud that I didn't give up even though I really wanted to. I'm glad that I actually had the chance to help change the community for the better."
- Kierre D, 11th Grade*

Recommendations for the Plaza

Y-PLAN Students agreed that the plaza should provide a safe place for different groups in West Oakland together. In particular, their designs called for a safe, crime-free environment for young people to hang out. Students also developed a rough budget for construction and maintenance of the Plaza. Among their recommendations:

- A fountain with seating wall
- Railroad history "tunnel"
- Extra attention to lighting fixtures for safety
- Recycled/Reused materials for landscape treatments
- Play area for children
- Stage for performances
- Walking path with facts about the station and its importance to the West Oakland community
- Shade trees in landscaping



Opportunities to Sustain the Youth Vision

Y-PLAN students have demonstrated their commitment to the future of West Oakland. They walked their community, talked to friends, family, developers, community members, and historians, and showcased their commitment at City Hall. *Now What?* How can these young leaders sustain their passion and commitment?

A corresponding commitment can help to keep the project moving forward by keeping students involved in related work. This may include internships with developers and designers, future work with graduating UCB students, opportunities to assist with graduate student research, volunteer opportunities and any other opportunities for sustained civic engagement to encourage students to be leaders in local decision-making.

Can you help keep the ball rolling? For more information, please contact the Center for Cities and Schools at (510) 643-3105. By helping students to stay involved, you become a steward for community change and personal growth.

“I also learned a lot about the process you have to go through when trying to rebuild or develop a neighborhood. There is a process to everything and it really takes time. I think that will always be a part of life.”

- Lena Chen, 11th Grade



CENTER for CITIES & SCHOOLS

The Center for Cities and Schools was formally established in 2004 to bridge the fields of education and urban policy through research, direct service and teaching. In addition to the Y-PLAN, the Center sponsors academic research, professional development workshops for public school teachers and public events and symposiums highlighting key issues in creating equitable, diverse, and livable cities and schools.

For more information go to:

www.citiesandschools.org