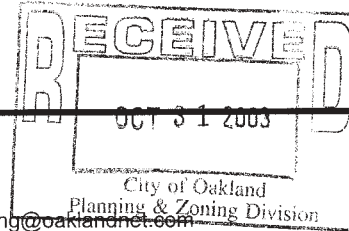


**Warner, Lynn**

**From:** Wong, Howard [Howard\_Wong@ci.sf.ca.us]  
**Sent:** Friday, October 31, 2003 3:23 PM  
**To:** lwarner@oaklandnet.com  
**Cc:** dwan@oaklandnet.com; jquan@oaklandnet.com; hchang@oaklandnet.com  
**Subject:** CAUTION NEEDED ON UPTOWN MIXED USE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (ER 03-0007)



TO: Lynn Warner, City of Oakland Planning Department  
CC: Councilmembers Danny Wan, Jean Quan, Henry Chang  
RE: UPTOWN MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT, Case File No. ER 03-0007

I am alarmed that the "Forest City Project" could cause the demolition of parts of Old Chinatown, with roots back to the 1860's---without meaningful wider-ranging and legal considerations. Unfortunately, many American cities, as well as foreign nations, have learned from horrible mistakes that the "Demolition of History" is irreversible and detrimental to community/ economic vitality. In the relatively youthful west coast of the United States, we have far fewer historic resources to chronicle our lineage. Especially for Chinese America, the few significant historical resources, which exemplify the difficult journey to American enculturization and success, should be preserved.

From a Developer's perspective, preservation of history can increase the value of the project. This has been proven, over and over again, in Washington DC, Shanghai, Jerusalem, Paris, San Francisco..... The incorporation of old historic architecture into the Uptown Development Project would build on, rather than dismantle, the historical values that strengthen community and economic values. For example, even Marysville---a small California Town--- is working to restore the old Bok Kai Taoist Temple (1880) and its old Chinatown as a Chinese Cultural Village. Washington DC is currently expanding its Chinatown. Historic Boston, Philadelphia, Williamsburg, Savannah, Charleston etc. revive the historical elements that attract visitors and economic vitality.

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The old Oakland Chinatown in the uptown San Pablo area has origins in the 1860's. Ironically, past governmental agencies have attempted to dismantle Chinatowns for political reasons and special interests. It would be so tragic to lose these vestiges of Chinese American history now, after staving off political attacks for so many decades.

Aside from just good urban planning and sensitivity to cultural history, national, state and local planning/ zoning historical codes need to be considered. Old Oakland Chinatown is definitely eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Oakland's history is one its unique attributes that is being gradually lost. Oakland must reinforce the historic resources that give it a sense of Place, while many critics have cited "There is no there, there". Well, there are historical roots there---and these are the basis for building a stronger sense of community.

Many organizations can provide extensive information about the historical value of Old Oakland Chinatown, e.g. the National Trust for Historic Preservation, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, California Preservation Foundation, numerous Oakland community organizations, Chinese Historical Society of America..... Please incorporate a wider range of participation into the planning and EIR process.

Feel free to contact me for any assistance at (415)-557-4759.

Regards,  
Howard Wong, AIA  
(For identification purposes only---  
Chinese Historical Society of America, Board Member;  
San Francisco Architectural Heritage, Board Member;  
A Better Chinatown Tomorrow, S.F., co-Chair).