

Oakland Central Estuary Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Central Estuary Plan?

The Central Estuary Plan (CEP) is what city planners refer to as a “Specific Plan.” This is different from a General Plan, which is a set of long-term goals for the development of a city. The goals of the General Plan are pursued by establishing zones for different types of uses, traffic patterns, and development. A Specific Plan is a refinement of the General Plan for a particular area. It links specific development decisions to the goals and policies of the General Plan. Therefore, the CEP will link the policies laid out in Oakland’s General Plan to specific development proposals for the Central Estuary area.

Specific Plans function as comprehensive “guidebooks” and can include information about the type, location and intensity of development; the design and capacity of infrastructure; the resources used to finance public improvements; and the design guidelines of a subdivision. They address a number of planning, zoning and environmental issues and set the required fees and mitigations in advance. The technical components of a Specific Plan include:

- Text and diagrams showing the distribution, location and extent of all land uses, including open space
- Proposed distribution, location, extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy and other essential facilities needed to support the land uses
- Standards and guidelines for development
- Standards for the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, where applicable
- Program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects and financing measures
- Statement of the Specific Plan’s relationship to the General Plan

The development of a Specific Plan begins with an analysis of the current conditions in the chosen area. Next, “alternatives” are developed to express different possible outcomes. Community participation is crucial throughout the Plan development process. Once the city has received input from the community and thoroughly analyzed the Plan Area, the city selects a single “Preferred Plan.” If this Plan is adopted by the City Council, it will become the City’s Specific Plan and guide for future development.

2. Why is the City of Oakland developing the Central Estuary Plan?

By creating the CEP, the City will lay out a vision for the area and how that vision can be achieved. The process of developing the CEP also enables the community to take part in planning the area’s future. The CEP will provide a framework to address infrastructure deficiencies and guide appropriate and agreed-upon development.

3. Where is the Central Estuary?

The Central Estuary is 2.5 miles of urban waterfront and extends from 19th Avenue to 54th Avenue and includes all lands on the coastal side of I-880. A map can be found here: <http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/ceda/revised/planningzoning/StrategicPlanningSection/Central%20Estuary/default.asp#map>

4. What is an Environmental Impact Report and will one be necessary for this Plan?

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a document required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a law intended to protect the environment and to ensure the public has a part in the review process. Passed by the California legislature in 1970, CEQA requires that development and planning projects submit documentation of potential environmental impacts as well as proposed measures to mitigate such impacts.

An EIR includes analysis of all potential impacts of a plan or project in topic areas such as 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. An EIR also recommends steps to avoid or minimize those impacts, called mitigation measures. Possible alternatives are considered as well, including the option of not moving forward with the plan or project. The EIR process provides the public, as well as other government agencies, multiple opportunities to participate – for example, by commenting on the scope (or content) of what the EIR will cover, as well as providing input on the draft EIR during public hearings before the City Planning Commission.

The City has determined that an EIR is required for the CEP. By completing the EIR as part of this process, the City is streamlining the process for future catalyst development projects. This EIR will eliminate the need or streamline the process for individual developers to conduct additional environmental studies in the future, as long as their projects are consistent with the CEP. In addition, much of the same research and analysis required for the development of the CEP also is required for the EIR. Therefore, managing the CEP and EIR processes concurrently is very efficient.

5. What is a redevelopment area?

The City of Oakland has established redevelopment powers through its Redevelopment Agency in several areas within Oakland, referred to as “redevelopment project areas.” The City’s goals are to redevelop or rehabilitate public or private facilities and remove blight conditions in the redevelopment project area. The Redevelopment Division of the Community and Economic Development Agency is responsible for administering these redevelopment project areas and works with developers, local businesses, and residents to build new housing, retail, office, parks, streets and streetscape improvements, or to rehabilitate existing facilities.

State law allows a redevelopment agency to obtain funds using tax increment financing. On the date the City Council approves a redevelopment plan, the property within the boundaries of the project area generates a certain amount of total property tax revenue. If this total property tax revenue increases after the redevelopment plan is adopted, then most of this increase goes to the Redevelopment Agency. These funds are referred to as a tax increment. The Redevelopment Agency uses the tax increment funds during the life of the redevelopment plan to rehabilitate properties, purchase land, stimulate private development, and create investment to accomplish what could not be done by other public or private means.

The Central Estuary falls into two redevelopment project areas: the [Coliseum Redevelopment Project Area](#), (that contains the majority of the Plan Area), adopted in 1969, and the [Central City East Redevelopment Project Area](#), adopted in 2003. The Coliseum Redevelopment Project Area encompasses a 250-block area bounded by Embarcadero to the south, 27th Street to the north, Lake Merritt to the east and Interstate 980 to the west. The Central City East Redevelopment Project Area encompasses portions of the Eastlake, Fruitvale, Central East Oakland, and Elmhurst neighborhoods that make up central and eastern Oakland. It begins at the southern border of Downtown and extends east to approximately Durant Street, covering 3,339 acres.

6. What is the Estuary Policy Plan and how does it inform the development of the Central Estuary Plan?

In 1999, the City of Oakland and The Port of Oakland published the Estuary Policy Plan (EPP), a collaborative vision of the Estuary area as a vibrant, diverse destination that would redefine Oakland as a waterfront city. This planning effort was a result of community interest in the future of the waterfront. The League of Women Voters and other community organizations began publicly discussing the future of the Estuary in the early 1990s. The resulting planning efforts placed a strong emphasis on community benefit, focusing on increased open space and shoreline access balanced with development that would promote economic and community growth. The plan encompassed a larger site: 5.5 miles of urban waterfront from Adeline Street to 66th Avenue, including all lands on the water side of I-880 within Port and City jurisdiction.

There have been many changes to this area since the 1990s, including the ongoing development of Jack London Square and extensive planning for the Oak to 9th area. The EPP deferred specific details in the central and eastern portions of the waterfront to a future process. The development of the CEP is that process. The CEP will implement the broad recommendations of the EPP, while also building on them and reflecting the many changes that have occurred in the area over the last decade.

7. What are the key elements of the Vision Statement that was developed at the beginning of the current planning process? How does it inform the Central Estuary Plan?

The Vision Statement identifies the objectives of the CEP. The Plan is being developed to make these objectives a reality over the next 20-30 years. At the first community workshop in March of 2009, participants contributed ideas for the Plan’s Vision Statement. This process brought together stakeholders to discuss expectations, needs and goals for the Central Estuary area. The resulting Vision Statement prioritizes the following characteristics:

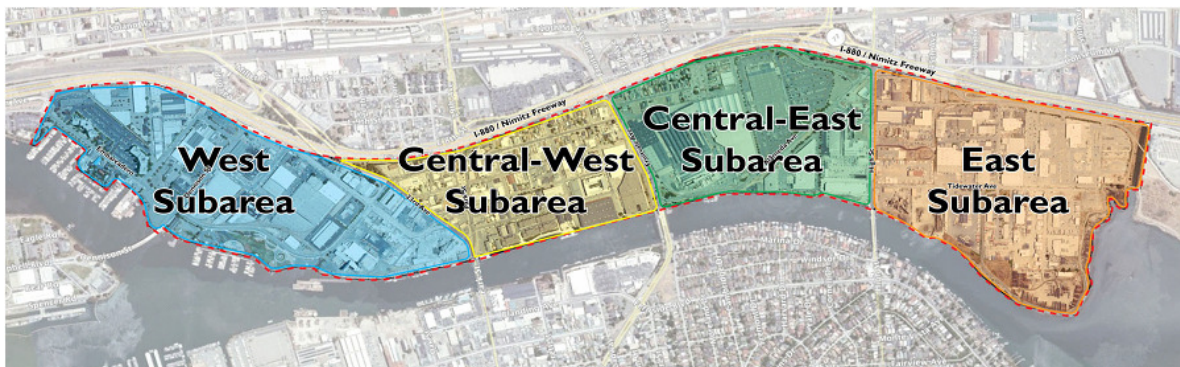
- A diverse and vibrant mix of land uses
- A “destination” waterfront area
- Complete, safe and clear transportation connections
- Infrastructure to support development

More details can be found here:

<http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/ceda/revised/planningzoning/StrategicPlanningSection/Central%20Estuary/RefinedEstuaryVisionStatement.pdf>

8. What are the Central Estuary Plan’s subareas and key opportunity sites? Why are these terms used?

In order to begin to refer to and study the Plan Area in more detail, it has been divided geographically into four subareas: West Subarea, Central-West Subarea, Central-East Subarea, and East Subarea. These subareas allow the planning team to develop more focused studies within the Plan Area.



A thorough analysis of the Plan Area identified and classified sites as locations that are most likely to change, might or might not change, or sites that are not likely to change (hard sites). This analysis yielded “key opportunity” sites or sites with the potential for change.

Such sites are considered redevelopment opportunities and potential catalyst sites, which will be instrumental in realizing the vision of the CEP. Sites that were classified as hard sites are considered likely to remain in their current or planned use, even with the development of the CEP.

9. What are the key considerations in developing the Specific Plan for the Central Estuary?

- *Transportation* – Improving conditions for walking, biking and transit
- *Circulation* – Providing more clear, safe and continuous roadway connectivity throughout the area
- *Sustainability* – Creating a healthier and more environmentally sustainable environment for area residents, employees and the natural environment along the estuary
- *Public health and safety* – Ensuring that development and public investments create a healthy place to live and work
- *Jobs* – Creating good jobs that pay well and are matched to Oakland’s workforce
- *Waterfront* – Increasing access to the waterfront

10. How will the Central Estuary Plan be approved and by whom?

Once a Preferred Alternative for the CEP is identified by the community, it will be reviewed by several city bodies, including the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC), the Landmarks Preservation and Advisory Board (LPAB), the Planning Commission, the Community and Economic Development Committee (CED), and the City Council. Consultants and staff will use this input to develop a draft Plan document, which will be presented to the community and the city bodies again. During these reviews, the Plan will be examined closely, questions will be asked and changes may be recommended. Residents are welcome to attend these meetings and provide comments.

Feedback from each of these reviews will be factored into the Plan, followed by more feedback from the community. Eventually, the Plan will be submitted to the City Council for approval. Once approved, the Plan will become official City policy.

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

The process of developing the CEP began in March of 2009 with the first of eight community meetings. The city, working with the community, will identify a Preferred land use pattern by early 2010, which will be vetted by several city bodies and the public. It will not receive final approval for adoption by the City Council until the appropriate environmental documents are complete, which is expected to occur in the summer of 2011.

12. What actions will be taken following the adoption of the Central Estuary Plan?

Once the CEP is approved, it will attract investment to the area by offering more certain and more marketable zoning to properties identified as likely to be redeveloped. Over time, the new CEP policies will be enforced through the redevelopment of properties pursuant to the new zoning. The funding mechanisms put in place by the Plan will pay for neighborhood improvements and the vision of the CEP will begin to be realized.

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

The creation of the CEP and Environmental Impact Report is funded by the Redevelopment Agency. Once the Plan has been formally adopted by the City, individual developers will fund their own projects. Developer fees would likely fund major infrastructure improvements such as new roads. Other infrastructure improvements will require indirect financing mechanisms such as community facilities districts, which will be established by the Plan. Because the site is a redevelopment area, funds raised will funnel back into the community to promote neighborhood improvements. The timeline for implementation of the Plan is estimated to be 20-30 years.

14. How can I become involved in the planning process for the Central Estuary?

The City of Oakland is hosting a series of eight community workshops. Community stakeholders will be heavily involved at every stage – developing the Plan vision, conceptualizing planning elements, and validating the final CEP.

The environmental review will take place during the later stages of the development process, as the CEP becomes more concrete. Prior to final certification and adoption, the proposed language will be available to members of the public. There will be a written comment period, and public hearings will be held in order to receive oral testimony on the proposals.

More information can be found here:

<http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/ceda/revised/planningzoning/StrategicPlanningSection/Central%20Estuary/>