

7TH STREET THRIVES

PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

LSC



EAST BAY
PERMANENT
REAL ESTATE
COOPERATIVE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

7th Street Thrives, named for a set of shared priorities generated from 18 months of momentum building, engagement, and community-led investigation, is proud to share our findings and conclusions that inform the coming phase of this project's implementation.

The 7th Street Corridor, historically a hub for a thriving Black community in Oakland, has, since the mid-20th century, been subject to disinvestment and infrastructural devastation. Now, after more than five decades of neglect, West Oakland's 7th Street Corridor presents an opportunity for revival rooted in permanence and empowerment for the existing Black and People of Color community, preservation of its historic culture, and new forms of building prosperity. Yet, with nine major market-rate real estate projects planned for the corridor, there are critical interventions necessary to address local needs around equity, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment. This report reflects 7th Street Thrives' progress engaging key stakeholders, examining the neighborhood's small business and built environment needs, and proposes shared priorities to implement necessary interventions.

West Oakland's historic 7th Street Corridor, situated in the Nine-County Bay Area between downtown Oakland, the Port of Oakland, and the San Francisco Bay, is a critical corridor that connects 880, 980, and 80, and is the last neighborhood in Oakland on the way to San Francisco. The area of focus for the 7th Street Corridor is defined as 7th Street between Brush Street and Frontage Road, which includes the following neighborhoods: Prescott, Lower Bottoms, Acorn, and Cypress Village.

To better understand the needs of the stakeholders and neighborhood dynamics we seek to support, we built a process to engage an Advisory Group, and three working groups around our ongoing research and findings:

Real Estate— focused on evaluating the state of 7th Street's built environment, challenges confronted by prior and ongoing development projects, and overlooked opportunities to improve and activate the corridor's commercial spaces.

Small Business— focused on strategies to stabilize existing businesses, attract new business, and support the development of the neighborhood's small business ecosystem.

Community Experts— provided local expertise on the neighborhood's history, social climate, and daily realities. Their guidance built connections to key partners, legacy residents, and organizations.

Through engaging the Advisory Group and working groups, we identified four shared priorities that form a valuable framework for implementing our vision, mission, and goals on the corridor. These shared priorities are:

1. Strengthen the Enabling Environment, or the conditions on which the neighborhood can realize its vision. From relationships, data collected, partnerships developed, to ensuring the streets are free of trash and well lit – the enabling environment includes everything in the ecosystem that accelerates or impedes progress by repairing local government systems, stabilizing the corridor by providing and maintaining regular services, and supporting existing small businesses.

2. Fortify Organizing Capacity to ensure longevity and sustainability of community interests and control of the neighborhood. Our findings suggest that fortifying organizing capacity would entail strengthening and repairing local systems by organizing an Implementation Advisory Group, incubating a Merchants Association, exploring the creation of a Community Development Corporation, and strengthening resident relationships and ongoing community engagement.



3. Activate Vacant and Underutilized Land to create a vibrant corridor that is led by and benefits the community— activations enable a wide range of spatially reparative activities including facade improvement, property acquisition, master and collective tenancy as well as advocating for lower rents and more equitable access.

4. Enhance and Develop Local Infrastructure that sustains the vibrancy and creates everlasting organizing capacity and control of how the neighborhood grows— a foremost priority arising from our finding is the roadmap to launch a Merchants Association that functions as the vision keeper and business association that will hold up the legacy of this historic community corridor.

Working groups put particular effort into understanding the existing conditions of the built environment given the balance between the prevalence of underutilized properties, challenging access to real estate, and the nine impending development projects on the horizon. The vacancies create long lasting blight, starving the neighborhood of critical opportunity, while the developments have the potential to substantially shift demographics, retail, commercial, and housing patterns in and around the corridor.

During our survey of the built environment, we focused on *Property Conditions*, *Sidewalks/Public Space*, *Occupancy*, *Activation*, and *Blight*. We found recurring issues in the public and private realm including inconsistent maintenance of property frontage and a lack of activations that create a disjointed pedestrian experience. We also found that some programming, such as community gardens, see strong use and are a good example of activations that serve the community regardless of low foot traffic.

In terms of occupant mix, there is a shortage of establishments providing fresh food, and in general, an excess of vacant or closed storefronts. In addition to this excess of vacancy, there is a clear deficit in city processes meant, for example, to ser-

vice public trash bins or repair lighting on the corridor. The bright spot among the blight is the clear opportunity to utilize these vacant and underutilized spaces for existing and emerging businesses and nonprofits. Due to car-centric street design, poor maintenance plans, weak efforts to curb illegal dumping, and an abundance of poorly maintained privately owned lots and buildings, pedestrians who would populate and activate the corridor at ground level are dissuaded by a sense of blight.

Insights from our Small Business Needs Assessments showed that the corridor is overserved with raw commercial space, creating challenges for small businesses to occupy and flourish. Our needs assessment showed that the top business needs on the corridor include: assistance with Storefront/ building & tenant improvements and challenges with hiring. By addressing these issues, there is opportunity to bolster entrepreneurship, and help solve the issue of vacancy contributing to diminishing vibrancy. Both opportunities will be addressed through our activation of underutilized commercial space, paired with technical assistance programs that will galvanize small, local, Black and People of Color owned businesses during the implementation phase.

Based on the shared priorities raised by our working groups, the findings stemming from our Built Environment, and Small Business Needs Assessments, we propose coordinating economic development interventions focusing on technical assistance to small businesses and physical improvements to the built environment.

The following sections provide background, context, research, and strategies laying the groundwork for implementation. This report is intentionally focused on action, all in service of creating a self-sustaining model to ensure the 7th Street Corridor continues to be stewarded with care and purpose. The strategies are created as a road-map of interlocking efforts that will inform and influence one another.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



PITCHING A LARGER TENT

Our work toward creating an Planning and Implementation Report would not have been possible without the historic efforts of community advocates on and around 7th Street, and more recently, the residents, local government partners, small businesses, private partners, and community organizations who generously offered their time and expertise to its development. Their contributions have allowed for these priorities to honor and uplift work done before us and continue to be reflective of the 7th Street community and its needs, hopes, and dreams.

Project Phase One Team Partners

Alliance for Community Development
 The City of Oakland Office of Economic & Workforce Development
 East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EB PREC)
 En2action

GreenInfo
 Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
 Studio O
 Viscera Studio

Advisory Group Member Name & Affiliation	Advisory Group	Working Groups		
		Real Estate	Small Business	Community Expert
Adrionna Fike, Mandela Grocery Cooperative	x			
Aisha Brown, Bay Area Regional Transit (BART)	x			x
Ari Takata-Vasquez, Oakland Indie Alliance	x	x	x	
Bosco Kante, ElectroSpit	x		x	
Ciara Segura, Mandela Partners	x			
Jared Spencer, Office of Council Member Keith Carson	x			x
KaSelah Crockett, KaCierge	x			
Kevin Pelgone, 7th West	x		x	
Leonardo Nelson, Self-Help Federal Credit Union	x			x
Leticia Henderson, Exceptional Community Connections, LLC	x			
Margaret Gordon, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project	x			
Melanie Nuni, Alliance for Community Development	x		x	
Michael Chao, Self-Help Federal Credit Union	x	x		
Miles Dotson, Sanctuary for Sustainable Artistry	x	x	x	
Monica Edwards, Community HDC	x	x		
Nicole Thompson, Oakland Housing Authority (OHA)	x			x
Noni Session, East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EBPREC)	x	x	x	x
Ojan Mobedshahi, East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EBPREC)	x	x		
Patricia Wells, Oakland Housing Authority (OHA)	x	x		
Regina Davis, SUDA	x	x		
Shawnee Keck, City of Oakland	x	x	x	
Stefanie Parrott, Realtor	x	x		
Marqueta Price, The Hood Planner	x	x		
Cat Howard, Community Vision	x			
Amanda Bornstein, Community Vision		x		
Dianna Tremblay, Inner City Advisors	x	x		
May Mui, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation		x		



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO 7TH STREET THRIVES

Bay Area Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), in partnership with East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EB PREC), has embarked on an emerging Economic Inclusion Strategy on the historic 7th Street business corridor in West Oakland, CA. This multi-year effort supports an integrated, place-based approach to advancing a collective economic revitalization where everyone is considered, and West Oakland's legacy and community is prioritized.

The 7th Street Thrives Economic Inclusion Action Plan is the start of a two year work plan that identifies partners, guides programmatic activity, and cascades small investments to support economic development efforts on the 7th Street Corridor. Now is a pivotal moment for the 7th Street Corridor and Oakland at large. There's a convergence of shifts and activities including a new mayor and city council, the development of the Oakland General Plan, and major privately held developments in the pipeline.

WHAT IS AN ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTION PLAN?

The 7th Street Thrives Economic Inclusion Action Plan will build on work that started in early 1994 and is being developed collaboratively with businesses, City-wide economic development initiatives, and community-based organizations to ensure that partners are working together towards common, community-informed goals and activities.

The vision for the 7th Street Economic Inclusion Action Planning process is to create a thriving Black business, arts, and cultural district that draws on and sustains 7th Street's rich legacy of Black community solidarity, cultural activism, and political resistance. This strategy seeks to nurture 7th Street's hidden strengths and untapped opportunities, draw on its rich legacy as the Harlem of the West, address areas of need around affordable and permanent commercial space, sustainably resource its residents and small businesses, leverage West Oakland's human and capital resources, and foster revived intercommunal and economic connections that lead to greater economic opportunity for Black, legacy and current residents living in and around the 7th street neighborhood. This will be done by supporting the sustained activation of underutilized commercial space, providing technical assistance to Black and People of Color businesses, and reviving the community character of the 7th Street Corridor.

HOW IS THIS PLAN DIFFERENT?

This journey to support enlivening 7th Street is the culmination of over 30 years of deep community work on the corridor, from the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization, 7th Street McClymonds Corridor Neighborhood Improvement Initiative, the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, West Oakland Community Collaborative, and several other organizations and efforts working to protect, revive, rebalance, and improve the overall health and wealth of the corridor and its people. Despite these efforts, many of the recommendations from these plans are still needed today. Many have asked, "Why have the stated goals of these efforts remain incomplete?" and "What is different about our efforts today?"

While we cannot diagnose every challenge faced by previous plans, through interviews we heard a few key themes that got in the way of success: relying too much on support from the City of Oakland (both for funding and intentional support), without pairing the design of sustainable processes and relationships; attempting to accomplish too many priorities at once; pledging to undo a very long and complicated history of redlining that one plan cannot tackle.

SO, HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT?

Our efforts are focused.

Previous neighborhood plans took on massive scopes of work, creating challenges with execution. Our approach seeks to focus our energy on two areas with high need, and low support in the neighborhood: (1) supporting Black and People of Color owned small businesses, and (2) activating vacant retail space and land by attracting business and cultural activities to the corridor.

Our priorities are actionable.

Our short and medium-term priorities are actionable, and we are already moving on them. We have already started: providing technical support to businesses on the corridor, conducting small business focus groups, building relationships with property owners, and creating systems for the City of Oakland to appropriately service 7th Street's critical needs like fixing street lights, adding garbage cans, and addressing pest issues.

We have a sense of urgency.

The 7th Street neighborhood has been redlined for too long. Neighborhood residents, businesses, and community are anxious to see urgent reforms to how the corridor is supported by the City. Furthermore, many understand the massive impending changes that nine anticipated large development projects will have on the corridor, making it even more critical to act fast and galvanize more control over the neighborhood and its success.

All hands are on deck.

Our work is collaborative – everyone is aligned on mission and has a critical role to play in activating this corridor in line with the neighborhood's culture and spirit.

We intend to build sustainable neighborhood infrastructure.

We have a clear intention to build community infrastructure, power, and agency to sustain this work beyond LISC's support.



● Noni Session, EB PREC
Esther's Orbit Room
Photography Reem Media

URGENCY

WHY WE NEED AN ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACTION PLAN NOW

7th Street is at the center of nine major real estate projects that will undoubtedly change the neighborhood's landscape. The neighborhood has already been subject to the whims of detrimental urban renewal, de-industrialization, and absentee owners and profit seeking developers inflating the cost of land and housing in the neighborhood, **yet this next wave of developments may change the very fabric of the neighborhood in perpetuity.**

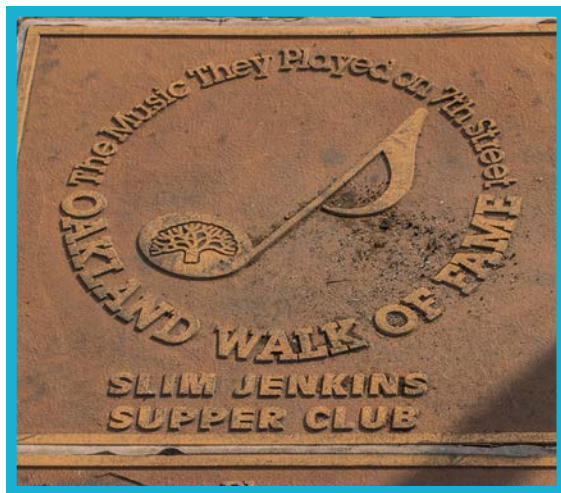
Our sense of urgency is an intention to sustain existing and create new opportunities for small Black and People of Color owned businesses to thrive on the corridor; provide neighborhood residents with services and amenities that they want to see and patronize; and ensure residents and businesses are aware of the pending neighborhood changes.

7th Street has a critical moment of opportunity for legacy Oaklanders. Black and People of Color owned small businesses and legacy residents are eager to actively participate in neighborhood economic growth. They are positioned to help build community capacity through the centering of collective community action and fostering a revived vision of economic equity.

Given the neighborhood's legacy as a thriving Black business corridor, we intend to **center our efforts on increasing locally based ownership, permanent access to commercial space, and strengthening and creating more transformative, collective and sustained economic opportunities for the West Oakland community centered around 7th street.** These efforts would re-establish the corridor as a thriving Black business, arts, and cultural district promoting the corridor's legacy, small businesses, and economic growth.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the early 1900s, Black migrants escaping the South arrived in West Oakland to build safe lives and find work. Over time, they built a hub for Black communities on the West Coast that rivaled New York's Harlem and was known as the Harlem of the West. A bustling place of commerce for Black businesses, the corridor was home to over 200,000 Black Residents and a variety of enter-



 **Oakland Walk of Fame at Slim Jenkins Court**
Photography Reem Media

prises including markets, cleaners, tax services, cobblers, restaurants, hotels, gyms, and the nightclubs that birthed West Coast Blues. At its height, the 7th street Corridor attracted people to Oakland from around the world. However, between the 1950s and the 1960s, West Oakland's population decreased by twenty percent— a rate which has only accelerated until today.

In a pattern repeated with chilling precision, injudicious development and policy decisions decimated the neighborhood; and urban renewal & federal programs dismantled the neighborhood and its thriving Black community. The negative impacts of these intentional and myopic decisions displaced people and businesses, created poor air quality conditions, and fractured critical social and cultural institutions that had anchored the small community.

Large infrastructure projects displaced the neighborhood's population to facilitate the movement of goods and people through the San Francisco Bay; and prior interventions such as the construction of BART, the Cypress double decker freeway, the construction of the Post Office Distribution Center, and trucking routes to service the Port of Oakland have drastically shifted the character of the area.

Yet, 7th Street still sits as a powerful symbol of Black culture and belonging in Oakland. Many Legacy and long time West Oakland Residents still have hope for its revival, and this process and action planning is a step toward returning control and ownership as well as reviving this vital neighborhood hub.

ANTICIPATED DEVELOPMENTS

The issue of real estate access and developments on the corridor have the greatest urgency given the impending progress of seven new developments, potentially representing a substantial shift to the demographics, retail, commercial, and housing patterns in and around the 7th Street Corridor. To further investigate the corridor as it exists today, first-hand observational studies of the corridor were produced using a built environment survey. To understand how the corridor will change, below is a map of developments along the corridor as well as adjacent developments outside of our project area that will likely influence our work.

Adjacent Developments

While outside of the 7th Street Corridor, these neighboring developments' impacts will influence our focus area.

A **801 PINE ST.**
THE PHOENIX
 Commercial
 19,400 SF Light industrial
 Housing
 205 Market-Rate Units
 101 Affordable Units

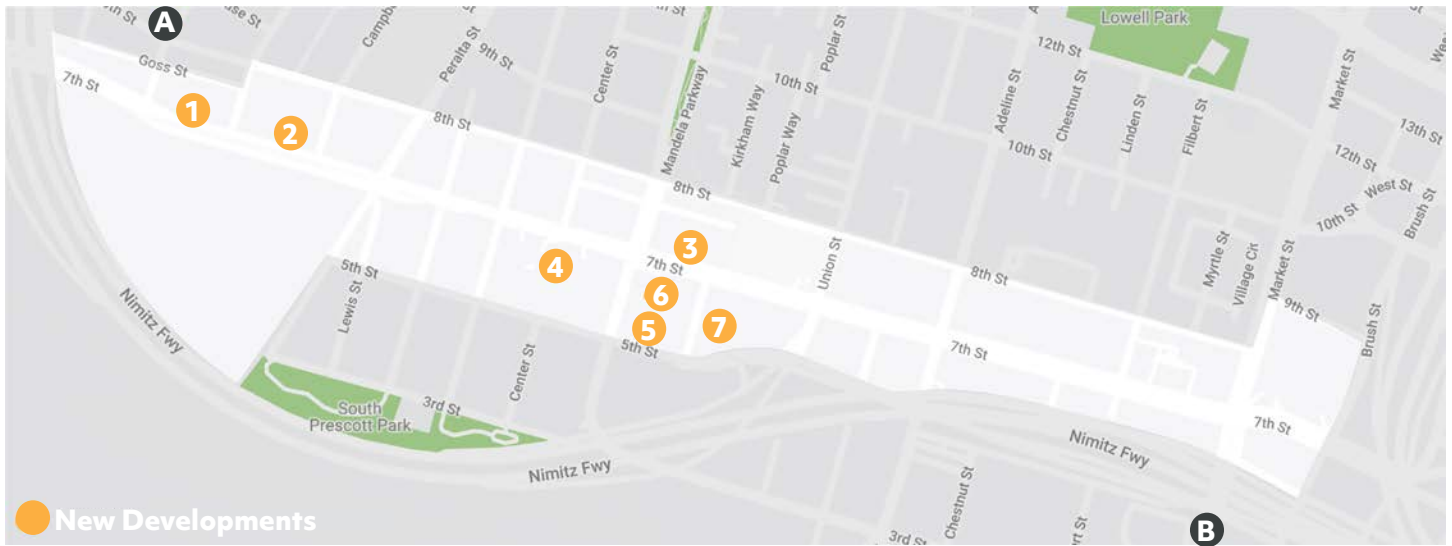
B **1 MARKET ST.**
HOWARD TERMINAL
 Commercial
 35,000 Seat Stadium
 1.5M SF Office
 270,000 SF Retail
 Housing
 3,000 Units
 400 Room Hotel

North of 7th Street

1 **1724 7TH ST.**
ESTHER'S ORBIT ROOM
 Commercial
 9,596 SF Retail
 Housing
 3,039 SF Living

2 **1666 7TH ST.**
THE BLACK PANTHER
 Housing
 79 Very Low-Income Units

3 **1370 7TH ST.**
SELF-HELP CREDIT UNION
 Commercial
 10,640 SF Industrial
 Housing
 TBD



South of 7th Street

4 **1451 7TH ST.**
MANDELA STATION
 Commercial
 300,000 SF Office
 53,000 SF Retail
 Housing
 760 Residential Units

5 **1395 5TH ST.**
THE GOLDEN WEST
 Housing
 222 Market-Rate Units

6 **533 KIRKHAM ST.**
533 KIRKHAM
 Commercial
 3,030 SF Retail
 Housing
 289 Units

7 **500 KIRKHAM ST.**
500 KIRKHAM
 Commercial
 35,000 SF Flex
 Housing
 1,032 Units



BACKGROUND

NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES, ENVIRONMENT, AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Our Neighborhood Boundaries

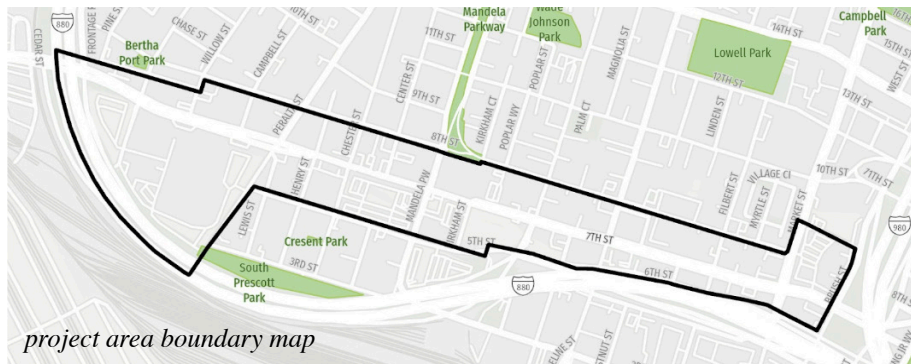
Situated in the Nine-County Bay Area between downtown Oakland, the Port of Oakland, and the San Francisco Bay, 7th Street is a critical corridor that connects to 880, 980, and 80 and is the last neighborhood in Oakland on the way to San Francisco. The area of focus for the 7th Street Corridor is defined as 7th Street between Brush Street and Frontage Road. It includes the following neighborhoods: Prescott or Lower Bottoms, Acorn, and Cypress Village.

To situate the project, background data from prior reports were reviewed and consolidated to provide additional context, however, the focus of the plan is action. The following sections help to situate the corridor and while not exhaustive, provide the context of the history and socio-economics of the area. For the study, 7th Street was researched in relation to West Oakland, whose boundary encompasses the areas between 880 to the West, 580 to the North, San Pablo Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. to the West, and 3rd Street to the South.

Real Estate & Business

Commercial and residential prices per square foot are similar within the corridor. Commercial costs within the corridor are virtually the same as across West Oakland (6% less in the corridor, \$35.63/square foot and \$37.94/square foot respectively), while residential space is substantially cheaper (32% less in the corridor, \$33.02/square foot and \$43.59/square foot respectively). While not located in the central business district, the 7th Street Corridor is largely affected by adjacency to high-rise development and the overall real estate pricing volatility of the San Francisco Bay Area at large.

While we are able to find general costs for space, there is no visibility into the cost of improving a space to make it operable for business. Many shifts in the construction industry create constant fluctuating costs for labor and materials, not to mention ongoing supply chain shortages affecting overall build-out timelines.



project area boundary map

Zoning & Usage

The western half of the corridor is dominated by government-owned lands, while corporate ownership dominates the eastern side. Corporate owners are the majority by acreage in the corridor, while in West Oakland overall, individual and married owners predominate. The community assets located on the 7th Street Corridor are primarily religious spaces and community organizations. The 7th Street Corridor, when compared to West Oakland, is not as rich in non-commercial community assets such as parks, plazas and community spaces. The 91 businesses in the corridor are relatively evenly distributed along 7th, except for the large areas occupied by the Postal Service and BART station. Very small businesses also dominate along the corridor, i.e. those with 15 or fewer employees account for 85% of all businesses.

Demographics

The demographics of the 7th Street Corridor are 78% Adults (18+), 35% of the people on the corridor are Black (non-Hispanic/Latino). People of Color make up about 75% of the corridor. It is important to note that Black households have the highest poverty rate across Oakland, almost six times the rate of white households. Black households' median income is less than half that of white households across Oakland overall. Similar patterns are expected in West Oakland.

The area south of the corridor has the highest income in West Oakland. This area also has the lowest population of People of Color. The largest number of households in poverty are concentrated on the east end, between Market and Interstate 980.



ACKNOWLEDGING ASSUMPTIONS & HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While our work is focused specifically on the 7th Street Corridor, this work does not exist in a vacuum. There are numerous factors outside of the control or scope of this project that will heavily influence the future of this undertaking. Although not exhaustive, there are numerous assumed shifts at the neighborhood, city, regional, and state level influencing the future of the corridor as well as unknowns we do not have control over that we would like to acknowledge.

From urban renewal initiated in the late 1960's to redevelopment under former Mayor Jerry Brown, the benefits of growth and change in Oakland have consistently accrued to districts other than the 7th Street Corridor. At the neighborhood level, speculative residential acquisition and development have displaced Black and People of Color communities. West Oakland, in many ways, is still reeling from the effects of the 2008 housing market crash. Additionally, environmental quality issues persist in West Oakland, the results of heavy industry and continued and accelerating regional commerce.

Air and ground pollution have a long history of being researched and studied, however, substantial repair has yet to take place. Many industrial uses remain adjacent to residential and municipal uses. At the city and county levels, we have a new council and Mayor, likely to have different priorities and proposals than their predecessors. The area is also likely included in numerous State and Federal measures which will be difficult to predict.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge that while COVID is no longer deemed an ongoing pandemic, the effects of the pandemic are still revealing themselves. Already structurally disenfranchised communities enter such times of crisis under-resourced and are not often advocated for when recovery resources are allocated.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

METHODS INFORMING OUR WORK

7th Street Thrives is leveraging LISC’s economic inclusion framework¹ to create an action plan informed by cross-sector stakeholders, coordinating resources and investments, and understanding and examining patterns of entrepreneurship. Stakeholders engaged in this initial phase of work represent cross-sector leaders in the small business ecosystem, economic development and planning, non-profits, and real estate, and were invited based on their deep knowledge of Oakland, former and current residents of the neighborhood, and/or ties to the corridor. Additionally, stakeholders bring with them lived experience.

Our shared work identifies specific opportunities for greater inclusion of historically and currently marginalized local Black and People of Color communities and coordinated implementation within the economic development ecosystem in two key areas: (1) small business and (2) physical improvements to the built environment. This approach respects the specific conditions within distinct regional, city, and neighborhood contexts and both acknowledges and pushes back against racialized planning policies found in conventional approaches to urban renewal, auto-oriented transportation planning, districting, and deindustrialization resulting in adverse racialized consequences such as redlining and urban neglect.

The resulting strategies and recommendations were developed through a collaborative effort involving the participation of residents, business owners, organizations doing work on 7th Street, and other key stakeholders.² This document represents work that began in February 2022 and concluded in January 2023. Prior to engaging our advisory and working groups, we reviewed prior planning documents and engaged local stakeholders to guide the initial planning of our shared work. It is intended that this report is the first phase in the reactivation of the 7th Street Corridor and that partners will continue to iterate on the recommendations it contains. Following the production of this report, implementa-



NEST Meeting with Local Stakeholders
Photography Hellena Ruiz

tion of short-term strategies will begin with key stakeholders and partners being established to steward this project through mid-term and long-term strategies.

The process was designed with an advisory group responsible for reviewing and commenting on all aspects of the plan. The advisory group is a collective of thought partners assembled to help guide the process to create and implement an economic inclusion and strategic action plan. The advisory group was composed of regionally invested stakeholders across sectors (public, private, community, residents) who are invested and committed to reviving 7th Street. The Advisory Group members provided input on the planning process, identified individuals and other members for the project, reviewed research methodologies, provided input, and feedback on the economic development strategies identified. The Advisory Group was able to leverage their working relationships, and identify connections and resources to advance the development of the Economic Inclusion Agenda.

To gain deeper insights into key areas of opportunities, working groups were developed as part of the economic inclusion process. These working groups included: Real Estate Development, Small Business, and Community Experts.³ Smaller working groups were tasked with reviewing relevant prior reports, asked to consider specific issues, and strategies, and offered recommendations. Many individuals serving on the advisory group also served on the smaller working groups and supported the development of the small business needs assessment.

1 Brookings & LISC, “Community-Centered Economic Inclusion”. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Brookings-Playbook.pdf>.

2 Refer back to Page 2 (Acknowledgments)

3 Refer to Appendix - Meeting Outline and overview



Real Estate Working Group

Goal: The real estate working group helped evaluate and identify: strategic connections across development projects on 7th Street; previous barriers and current opportunities to successful projects; and opportunities for activating ground floor commercial retail.

Members: Members of the group had extensive experience in real estate development and were leaders in prior cycles of development in Oakland.

Output: This group planned and participated in one community engagement—an assessment of the built environment on 7th Street that surveyed and assessed commercial properties on and around the corridor.



Small Business Working Group

Goal: The small business working group helped assess the strengths and needs of existing businesses on 7th St.

Members: Members of this group represented small business owners, small business technical assistance providers, and economic development professionals.

Output: This working group provided input and helped develop a small business needs assessment. The goal of the needs assessment was to identify and evaluate the needs of existing small businesses on the corridor, as well as any existing barriers to entry which may have stunted economic activity along the corridor— for example, quality of retail space available, costs of tenant improvements, owner expectations, etc.



Community Experts Working Group

Goal: The community expert working group helped expand our connections to residents and key community members across the corridor and provide helpful context around the needs of the neighborhood.

Members: Members of this group included residents, and staff of local government offices. Community experts had deep local knowledge of the neighborhood and its history and had crucial lived experiences to advise the economic inclusion agenda.

Output: This group provided input and connections to other residents and community members, and helped our work stay relevant and connected.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

01

BUILD & PRESERVE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR BLACK OAKLANDERS

Center the creation and preservation of social, cultural, and economic wealth for Black and legacy Oaklanders on 7th Street.

02

ENHANCE SUPPORTIVE ECOSYSTEMS FOR BLACK & POC SMALL BUSINESSES

Enhance neighborhood ecosystems that are the essential component of conserving local economies and building renewing pathways to long-term neighborhood independence.

03

UPLIFT MODELS FOR RESOURCE CREATION & EXCHANGE

Center mutual aid models that support community ownership, amplify resource circulation to elevate local economic opportunity, and build the capacity of the neighborhood's human capital to sustain the flow of resources.

04

FOSTER A VIBRANT, HEALTHY, EQUITABLE NEIGHBORHOOD

Advance innovative approaches to enhance local infrastructure and create new public and green spaces that foster a neighborhood environment free from harm in a culturally welcoming manner.

05

HONOR & SUSTAIN A THRIVING BLACK LEGACY

Honor and sustain the legacy of Black culture, Black workers, and the Black Arts Movement tradition that enlivened 7th Street from the 1920s to the late 1960s.

SHARED PRIORITIES



Sasha Werblin, LISC
7th WEST
Photography Hellena Ruiz

SHARED PRIORITIES & FINDINGS

SHARED PRIORITIES

Shared priorities were developed with the goal of decreasing economic leakage in order to create a rich ecosystem for small businesses to thrive, and community residents to have their needs met.

While this is an evolving and living plan, we have identified gaps, and in those areas **are seeking additional partners to support**. The areas are indicated with *. The shared priorities are in sequential order, with each being dependent on the previous.

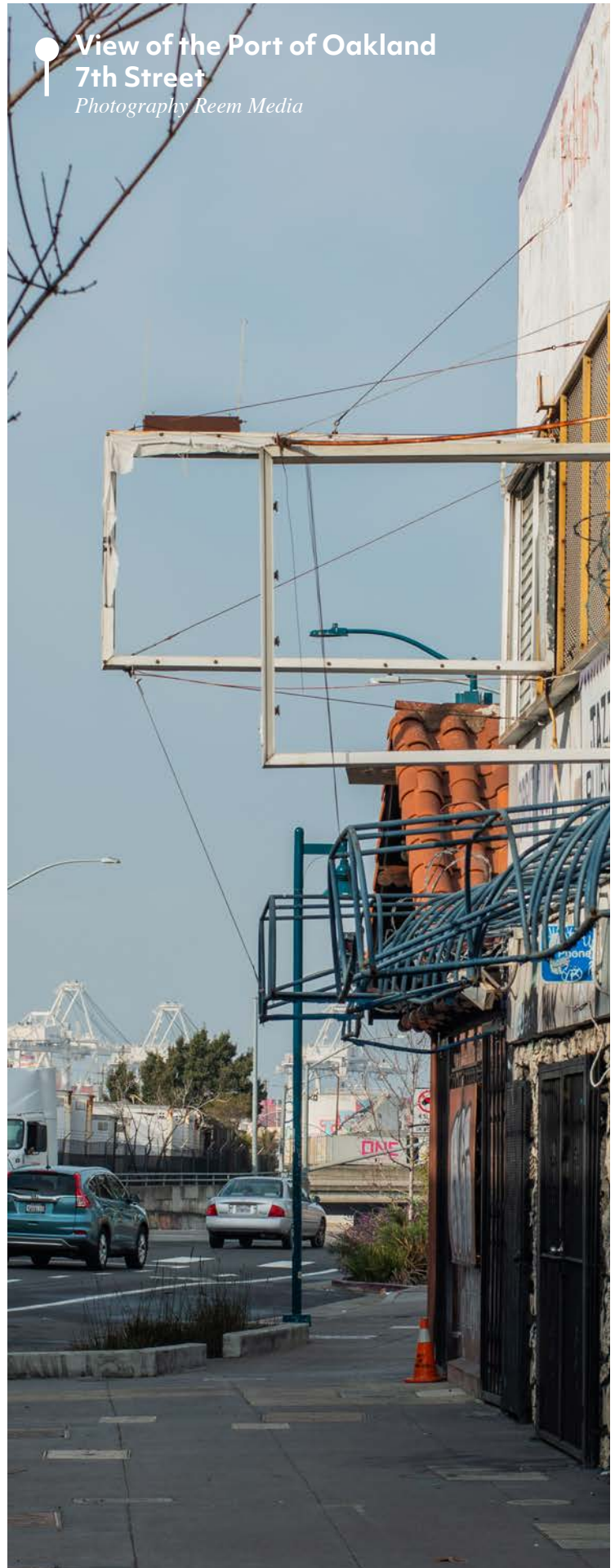
01 STRENGTHEN
THE ENABLING
ENVIRONMENT

02 FORTIFY
ORGANIZING
CAPACITY

03 ACTIVATE
VACANT AND
UNDERUTILIZED
LAND

04 ENHANCE
AND DEVELOP
SUSTAINABLE
INFRASTRUCTURE

View of the Port of Oakland
7th Street
Photography Reem Media



01

STRENGTHEN THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Residents, business owners, and patrons are not receiving the essential city services they need to thrive. In order to lay the groundwork for future interventions, establishing proper maintenance and stewardship is a crucial step to building trust and confidence in future actions to reinvigorate the corridor.

Reform Local Government Systems

- *LISC, City of Oakland Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), Neighborhood Enhanced Services Team (NEST)*

Stabilize Corridor by Providing and Maintaining Regular Services

- *LISC, OEWD, NEST*

Support Existing Small Businesses *

- *Alliance for Community Development*

02

FORTIFY ORGANIZING CAPACITY

To ensure the longevity and sustainability of ongoing efforts, those deeply rooted in the neighborhood must be at the forefront of leading the change and be appropriately resourced to continue carrying that work forward in perpetuity. In creating pathways to greater organizing capacity, the goal is to arm the neighborhood with sustainable infrastructure to protect the corridor from forces that have harmed the corridor and its residents in the past. Organizing is a critical mechanism to hold government agencies, developers, and others accountable to the community's vision for its neighborhood, and the promises made to the community (for example, community benefits agreements).

Organize Implementation Advisory Group *

- *LISC*

Build Merchants Association

- *LISC, Alliance for Community Development*

Corridor Development Strategy

- *EBPREC*

Strengthen Resident Relationships and Community Engagement*

- *EBPREC*

03

ACTIVATE VACANT & UNDERUTILIZED LAND

To create a vibrant corridor, we need to mend and reinvigorate 7th Street by activating the spaces left vacant or underutilized. In order to strengthen and build excitement and energy across the corridor, vacant and underutilized spaces must be programmed and marketed to bring residents together and attract patrons to support the businesses on the corridor.

Partner with Property Owners to Activate Space *

- *LISC, Bridge Housing, Self-Help Federal Credit Union, Jack London Gateway*

Develop Activation Cohort/Committee to Organize Seasonal Activities*

- *7th West, LISC, EBPREC*

Explore land acquisition strategies for sustainable placekeeping *

- *LISC and EBPREC*

04

ENHANCE AND DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

To ensure the 7th Street Corridor remains vibrant for Black people for generations to come long-term mechanisms for place-keeping will need to be implemented. This may look like developing a merchants association, creating a CDC or new land-ownership strategies to help keep businesses and residents in place, and real estate from volatile and speculative markets.

Develop Infrastructure to Maintain Corridor Strategy in Perpetuity*

- *LISC, EBPREC*

Explore Creative Methods of Commercial Ownership*


- *LISC*

Identify mission aligned long-term sources of funding *

- *LISC and EBPREC*

NEXT STEPS & IMPLEMENTATION



 Paula Troung, Owner
Orbit Coffee & Donuts
Photography Reem Media

NEXT STEPS & WORK PLAN

In order to move our shared priorities forward, our next steps are to secure commitments from various participants. We're leaving space for the unknown and iterative approaches. We want to avoid some of the pitfalls of prior plans with clear and easily digestible next steps, however we want to include input from the implementers themselves. Next steps are to create concrete agreements, plans, and deliverables with implementers. Our process in implementation will require durability to maintain a sustainable project.

The preceding sections provide background, context, research, and strategies laying the groundwork for implementation. This report is intentionally focused on action, all in service of creating a self-sustaining model to ensure this corridor continues to be stewarded with care and purpose. The strategies are created as a road-map of interlocking efforts that will inform and influence one another.

As the implementation phase begins, there are likely unknowns or shifts that will arise and so it will be crucial to stay nimble to respond to changing needs and staunchly aligned with our guiding principles to build wealth and opportunity in under-invested places, create more equitable landscapes of opportunity, and connect cities and places to regional economic growth.

CONCLUSIONS & PATH TO IMPLEMENTATION

It is clear that the 7th Street community is ready to collaboratively work toward changing the character of the corridor, decreasing commercial vacancies, and creating lasting infrastructure that protects and activates 7th Street in a way that truly honors the voice and real needs of legacy and current residents – in place of building for future speculative populations without strong relationship or community ties to 7th Street.

We are encouraged by the momentum we've built thus far. When embarking on this strategy, it was clear to us that research, planning and implementation would go hand in hand, and that this journey would be iterative. This approach both allowed us to revisit lessons learned from previous economic development efforts on 7th Street, while forging a renewed path that allowed us to remain nimble to shifts in the market and community conditions.

Since then, we have made great strides—collecting and analyzing data, taking stock of the status and needs of the built environment and the small business community,

Convening

To ensure we have the proper stakeholders involved and invested in the implementation of the strategies created in this action plan, a convening will be held to develop an implementation plan further. With the creation of the plan, the goal is to generate momentum behind the plan and ultimately deputize key stakeholders to continue the work ahead, to ensure these efforts are sustained long-term. We also know the implementation plan will likely be a living document, adjusting as new needs emerge and additional resources are available.

Accountability

Following the convening, we'll likely need to begin engagement with larger-scale organizations such as BART, Howard Terminal, and various industrial users such as Schnitzer Steel. These collaborative efforts will require coordination and collaboration alongside the City of Oakland to bring together stakeholders with disparate priorities and goals. While we don't anticipate it to be a simple endeavor, it is one worth pursuing to create a thriving and just 7th Street Corridor.

rolling out free technical assistance to businesses, building strong relationships with property owners to activate space, and fostering a critical alliance and process with the City of Oakland, ensuring its ongoing services reach the 7th Street Corridor.

As we move toward implementation, we continue to engage local leaders, organizations, businesses, and residents in how we shape the tactics that will help guide our shared priorities. Over the next year, we will build a work plan to operationalize these shared priorities in partnership with a new configuration of 7th Street Advisory and Working Groups. Called our Implementation Working Group, these community leaders, developers, small business and public sector representatives will help guide our process, build greater momentum, and enhance our reach into West Oakland's Black community.

The following is an overview of key approaches around which we will engage the Implementation Advisory Group toward the next 1-2 years of implementation:

Strengthen the Enabling Environment helps set the foundational conditions on which 7th Street can be successful in realizing its vision. This enabling environment is defined by, but is not limited to: how relationships are built and nurtured; the data that is collected, analyzed, and measured against; the infrastructure built to sustain and expand our shared priorities over time; systems that are built or exist to support a thriving corridor; and how the built environment is nurtured to stimulate rich economic activity.

Activities that help support this priority will include:

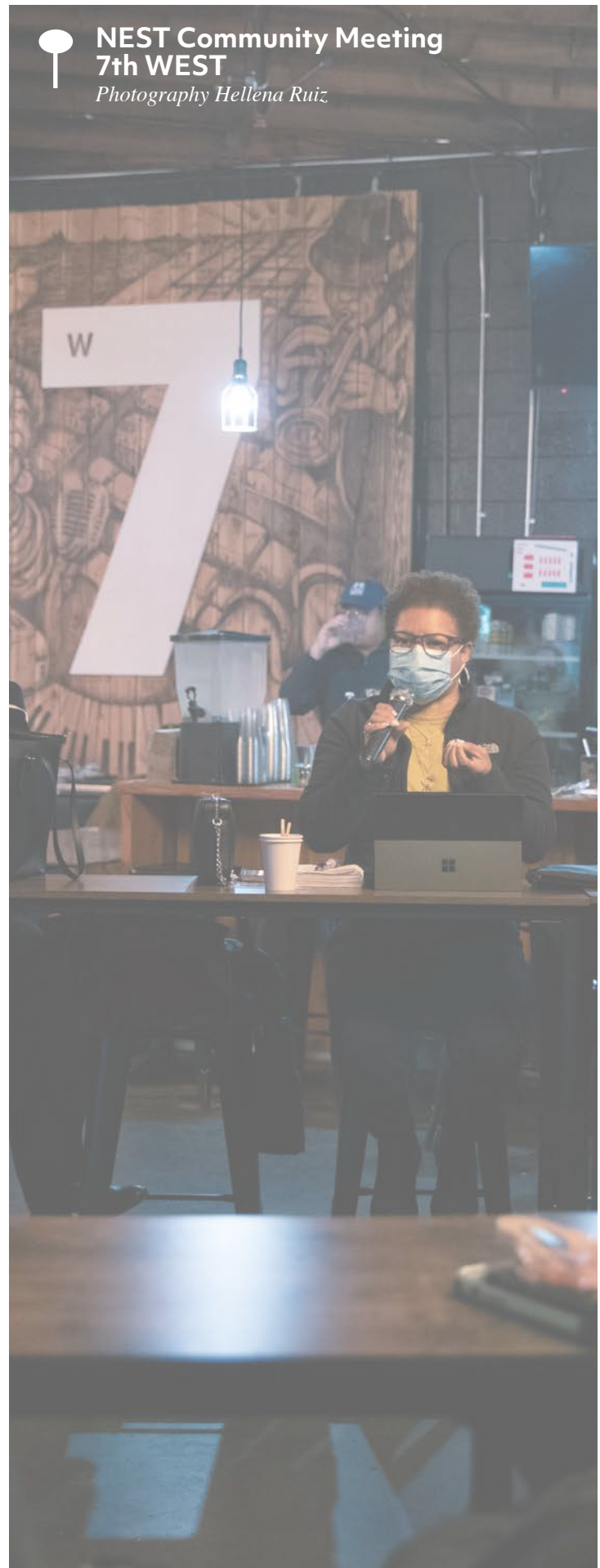
Continued monthly service meetings with the City of Oakland's Neighborhood Enhanced Services Team (NEST) to develop and streamline systems to maintain regular City services. Thus far, this includes keeping track of progress with fixing the more than 22 street lights out on 7th Street; exploring options to re-light the Dancing Lights Arch at 7th and Union; assessing and increasing the number of trash bins on the block and enforcing a regular pick-up schedule, as well as organizing quarterly events to clean the neighborhood.

Deepening and bridging relationships across the corridor, particularly among entities leading development projects, which includes, but is not limited to: East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EB PREC), Self-Help Federal Credit Union, Tidewater, Strategic Urban Development Alliance (SUDA), Oakland & the World Enterprises, Panoramic Interests, Creative Development Partners, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), Kingmakers Oakland, and Pacific Housing West.

Engaging an Implementation Advisory Group to provide input and guidance on how to operationalize our shared priorities over the next 1-2 years. Implementation Advisory Group members will consist of organizations, businesses, residents, and local government representatives who are actively engaged in 7th Street.

Continue assessing small business needs and providing 6-months of free technical assistance to businesses on 7th Street to ensure they can thrive on the corridor. Over the last year, we surveyed over 15 businesses and provided free TA to more than 7 businesses on the corridor. We are committed to continuing this level of business navigation support for the corridor over the next year.

Jumpstart a Small Business Resource Collaborative to triage small business case studies on the corridor to provide wrap around support for challenging small business needs. Potential themes to support, unveiled by our small



business needs assessments, may include: buying property, lease negotiations, facade and tenant improvements, and accounting. The idea is to build a range of approaches that can support the development of a small business ecosystem on 7th Street and its connecting corridors.

Fortify Organizing Capacity helps maintain the longevity and sustainability of community interests and its control of the neighborhood. While 7th Street has a wealth of incredible organizations, businesses, non-profits, and residents, it is clear that the corridor needs a more coordinated coalition across all stakeholders to receive the attention and protections it deserves from the City of Oakland. While every neighborhood deserves care and maintenance for the municipality, we moved on the opportunity to enrich existing organizing capacity, and provide hands-on support to bring together local government, community organizations and commercial operators. From the Advisory Group and Working Group meetings, to the small business focus groups, and monthly meetings with the City of Oakland – we brought people together on a consistent basis, helped bridge interests, and provided capital resources to support the continuation of this work. Through these efforts, we saw that nourishing and activating the neighborhood’s organizing capacity built momentum, confidence, and a sense of possibility for nonprofits, small businesses, and residents.

Moving forward, we are committed to at minimum, implementing our shared priorities through the following actions over the next 1-2 years:

Design and create a 7th Street Merchants Association. 7th Street Merchants were hungry to enhance small business connections across the corridor, develop a locally coordinated ecosystem of support, create programs to support existing businesses, and foster a safe and rich foundational community for new Black and People of Color owned businesses to land. Merchants also expressed interest in exploring how they can help provide supportive services to members of the community.

Strengthen resident relationships and community engagement through coordinating regular business socials for local residents and businesses to get to know each other. In addition, we plan to expand our reach by increasing our connections with residents to better understand what activities and businesses they want to see in the neighborhood.

Activate Vacant and Underutilized Land

Partner with property owners to activate vacant space on 7th Street to help improve the overall character and liveliness of the corridor. We know that many property own-

ers, non-profits, private, and mom-and-pop owners, have struggled to get businesses into their retail spaces. We will partner with property owners, starting with Bridge Housing, to help build a pipeline of businesses who can lease retail space, and provide wrap-around technical assistance to ensure they thrive in a brick-and-mortar location.

Improve the character and cleanliness of commercial space to promote a more welcoming commercial environment across the corridor. We will do this by leveraging front windows, fences, and street lined walls to feature a neighborhood poster campaign that evokes the histories, narratives, and strategies we hope to employ on the corridor.

An activation cohort will explore interim and permanent activations to enliven the corridor’s character to activate space. These activities may range from temporary interventions such as community clean up events to large permanent interventions such as land acquisition.

Enhance & Develop Sustainable Infrastructure

Building organizational infrastructure to maintain the 7th Street Thrives corridor strategy is a necessity to sustain momentum and concretize our efforts. We are exploring multiple approaches to building such infrastructure, including a:

Merchants Association that might support and protect businesses on the corridor;

A West Oakland Small Business Resource Collaborative focused on galvanizing resources for West Oakland’s Black and People of Color owned business community;

A not for profit entity or neighborhood CDC with the structure, capacity, and mission to enhance and sustain collective economic and cultural activity on the corridor; identify long term mission aligned sources of funding; and sustain a container for small business support and collective action.

While we have recommendations and ideas on what could be implemented, our next steps are to secure commitments from various participants. We’re leaving space for the unknown and iterative approaches. As this implementation phase begins, we expect to encounter many unknowns and shifts in the neighborhood conditions and market. It is crucial that we are nimble and responsive to changing needs **while remaining staunchly aligned with our guiding principles to: build wealth and opportunity in under-invested places; create more equitable landscapes of opportunity; and connect cities, peoples, and places to regional economic growth.**



 **Lower Bottoms Park**
Photography Reem Media

APPENDIX

FINDINGS

We are fortunate to have more than five reports generated by prior community efforts and plans from the city. To supplement prior research, one-on-one interviews were conducted with long-term community stakeholders to better understand the history and root causes of challenges the corridor has faced over the years. We used prior reports as well as one-on-one interviews to help frame our research methods.

Common themes raised in one on one conversations were lack of resources. Generations of disinvestment in the neighborhood, at least since the 1969 redevelopment plan had the effective consequence of denying West Oakland residents the social and economic opportunities afforded those who resided in Greater Oakland. As the city grew, West Oakland bore the brunt of the environmental and economic fallout of a growing city. Contemporarily, respondents also cite the lack of coordination among local stakeholders as a critical failure of past efforts. As well, the inconsistent, slow, and unsustained interventions from the city municipality were highlighted as challenges to overcoming the vestiges of redlining and years of neglect.

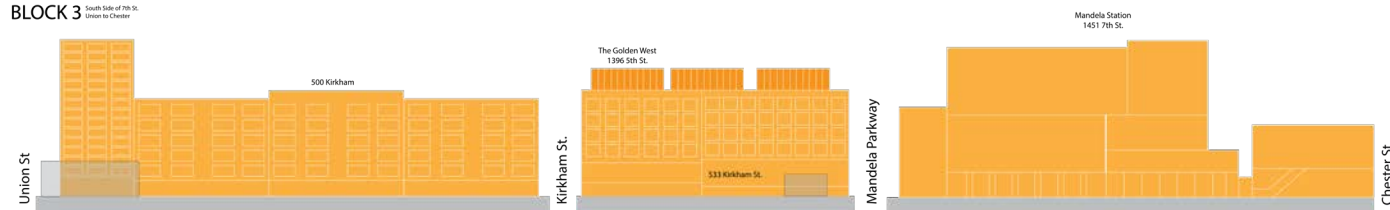
Built Environment

The issue of real estate access and developments on the corridor have the greatest urgency given the impending evolution/progress of 9 new developments, potentially representing a substantial shift to the demographics, retail, commercial, and housing patterns in and around the 7th Street Corridor. To further investigate the corridor as it exists today, first-hand observational studies of the corridor were produced using a built environment survey.

BLOCK 1 North Side of 7th St. Wood to Peralta



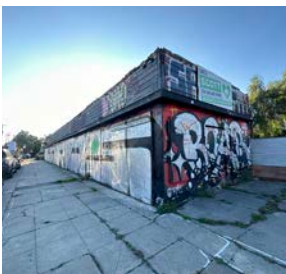
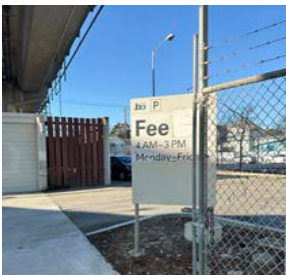
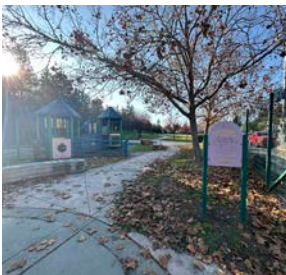
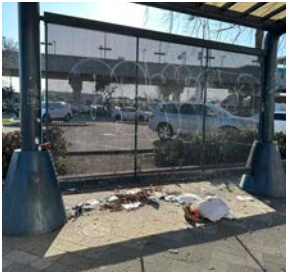
BLOCK 3 South Side of 7th St. Union to Chester



Built Environment Survey and Analysis

The surveys were conducted by the project team and members of the real estate committee in person on foot with participants noting the physical condition, occupancy, use, blights/opportunities, business operations, and general condition of existing structures and parcels (appendix: sample survey, maps). As is the case with all observational studies, the observers bring a valuable insider's perspective, but also their prior experiences, perceptions, and biases which we would like to acknowledge.

Although the corridor's structures and character vastly differ across blocks, some common strengths and areas for growth were noted throughout the area:



Property Conditions

- Planted medians and hardscaped features exist across the corridor but are not consistently maintained; Nor are they planted with local flora which would require less on-going care pedestrian signals are not as frequent as needed, rendering particular blocks hostile to pedestrians, particularly in areas with 8 parking/driving lanes.
- Lack of continuous frontage creates gaps in the urban fabric. The lack of activations up to the sidewalk of 7th street often makes the corridor appear less activated and is uncomfortable for pedestrians at the current scale.
- Across the corridor property's frontages are used for surface parking or unimproved two-level structures (such as Jolly Jolly, 7th Street Center, and State Market Liquor)
- Properties turn their backs on 7th street creating gaps in interaction
- Vacant lots additionally create dead space in frontage, often overgrown

Sidewalks/Public Realm

- Community gardens appeared to be used and are well-tended/maintained
- New sidewalks and paving including bioswales, benches, and plantings
- Many un-utilized/under-utilized properties are overgrown with vegetation
- No seating at the West Oakland Station bus terminal
- No trash cans and poor trash can maintenance

Occupancy

- Commercial: Two liquor stores and only one establishment provides fresh foods
- Two hot food establishments on the corridor, both appear to be independently owned
- Many closed/unleased storefronts

Activation

- Little foot traffic outside of BART
- Super-block scale of BART and the Post Office distribution center are not pedestrian friendly and remain inactivated with some surveyors noting areas felt unsafe
- NO public or pseudo-public areas for gathering/socializing

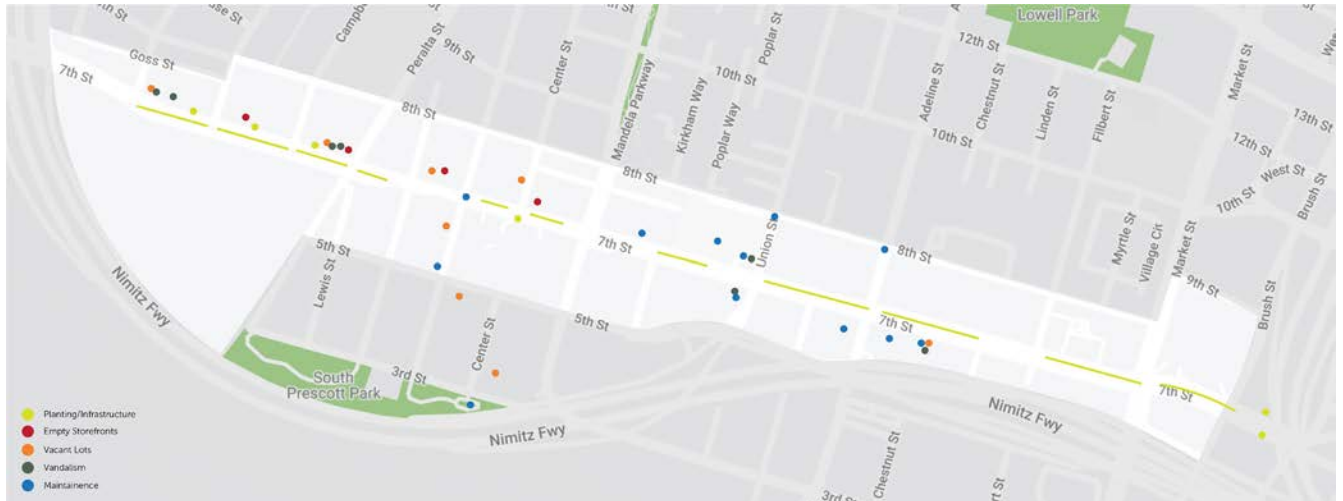
Blight

- While not enough exist, public trash cans were installed throughout the corridor, however, servicing of the trash cans is inconsistent to almost none, with some being well-maintained while many others sit overflowing for weeks at a time
- Many properties were sprayed painted with the tags of local graffiti artists, others were vandalized made possible due to the absence of activation and pedestrian foot traffic.
- Sporadic Dumping of furniture and other oversized items especially on side streets around the post office and near the two main homeless encampments near the corridor.
- Overgrown lots sitting underutilized
- Some sidewalks and gutters directly in front of underused or poorly uses frontage space filled with trash, or appeared filthy

Analysis

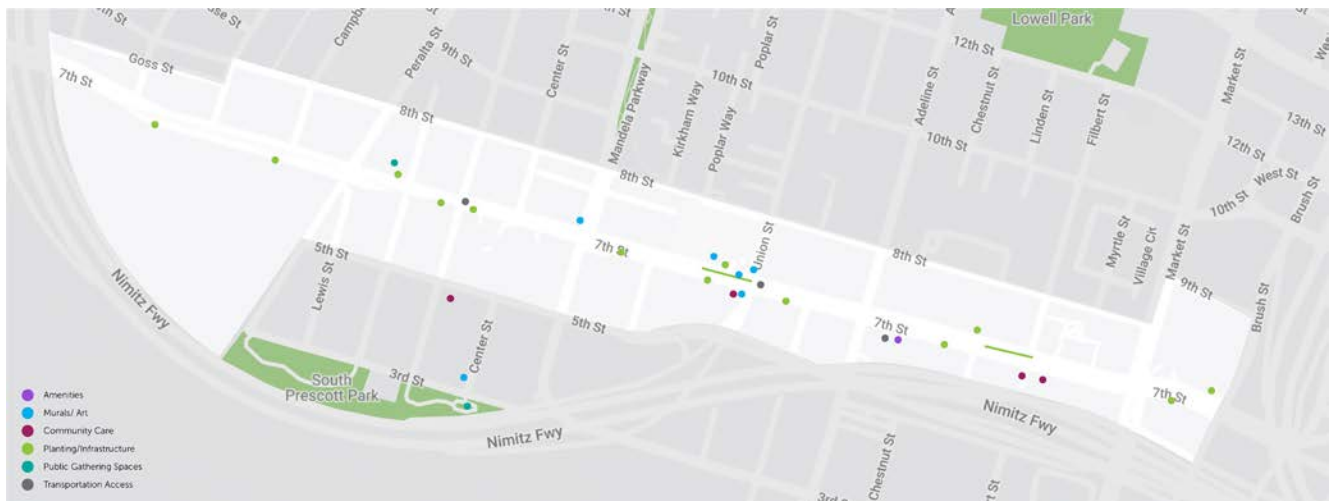
Many of the blights across the corridor, such as trash, graffiti, overgrown vegetation, and vacant lots/storefronts, stem from general neglect and poor planning and foresight around maintaining a good condition. Typically these blights would be remediated by active landlords, responsive and consistent basic city services, or an entity such as a Business Improvement District (BID), Merchant Association, or Community Development Corporation (CDC) that would apply pressures to the municipal mechanisms. While our research could not explicitly ascertain whether the blights and the lack of street activity were connected, some surveyors noted discomfort as pedestrians in the area, particularly along vacant or near setback properties.

Blights Along the Corridor



Despite the signs of neglect, the corridor's persistence and adaptability shine through in a few ways. Across the corridor, there were community-generated and maintained edible gardens, as well as independently-owned businesses – both of which activate the corridor. In terms of infrastructure and street geometry, the majority of 7th street has a planted median with many street trees. Along the West end of 7th street, there appear to be new sidewalks, benches, and bioswales, yet seating and gathering spaces are limited on the corridor. While the areas for plantings and landscaping are in place, they too suffer from inconsistent maintenance and tending. The majority of the planted medians, though improved less than 8 years ago, have been left to regress back to brown dry tufts of plant matter or hard compacted dirt. Many of these findings were also corroborated by a prior study conducted by UC Berkeley's Urban Design Studio in 2021, Reparative Urban Design Potentials for 7th Street.

Assets Along the Corridor



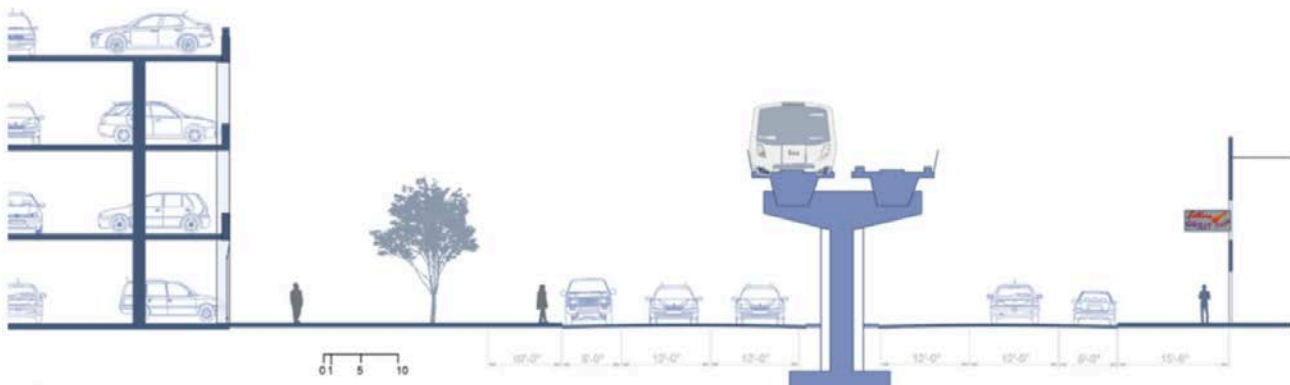
Additionally, one of the current blights may present an opportunity. While the corridor has many vacant and unused storefronts if activated the storefronts could serve to provide space for emerging businesses and nonprofits. Many of the commercial storefronts are class B or C properties, meaning while they require improvements the spaces are often lower cost per square foot than class A space, rendering them more accessible to small organizations (costar report).

External Influences

The corridor is shaped by major infrastructure such as the BART station, USPS distribution center, and Port of Oakland operations. With a large surface lot, the West Oakland BART station is a major hub for commuters, especially since it is the last East Bay BART stop before entering San Francisco. West Oakland is sandwiched between two public transit-poor cities, Emeryville and Alameda, and is likely absorbing the externalized transit needs of their residents. While this can pose a challenge as an auto-oriented design, with more commerce present, the 7th Street Corridor could potentially capture money flowing through the neighborhood.

One major physical feature that was not captured by the built environment survey is the 7th street BART station. The station had about 294,000 monthly entering or exiting the station. The station brings people to the area, however, the station's design is auto-oriented with the surface parking lot fronting 7th street. Unlike the stations either west or east of the West Oakland station are below-grade and pedestrian-oriented, the West Oakland BART has an expansive surface lot creating visual and pedestrian gaps along 7th Street's frontage. This number of pedestrians crossing 7th street on a daily basis presents a missed opportunity for economic activity within the neighborhood and tax base of the City of Oakland. One could easily argue that this area, remaining underserved as it is, presents as a core area of retail leakage

As mentioned earlier in our assumptions section, some physical infrastructure affecting the corridor is outside of our scope and ultimately our control.



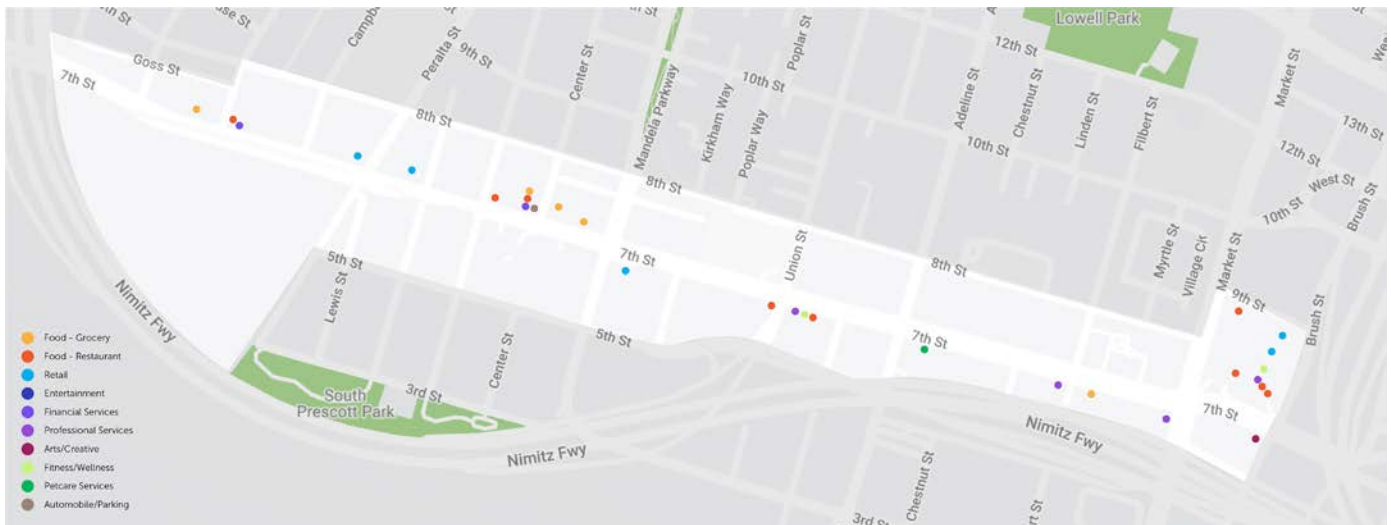
1. To illustrate the scale of the block and how the external influences change the character of the corridor (ie. looping BART tracks, wide car oriented streets, and oversized sidewalks.

Reparative Urban Design Potentials for 7th Street

Oakland, CA Hanah Goldov, Anaise Jean-Philippe, Tera Johnson, and Amelia Goldrup in conversation with The East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EB PREC)

Small Business Assessments

To engage small businesses across the corridor, an outreach campaign was conducted by the Alliance for Community Development (ACD). In this outreach, ACD conducted phone engagements with each physical business operating on the corridor; sharing information about the 7th Street Thrives endeavor and conducting needs assessments meant to identify and to connect businesses with a wider range of resources. The goal of the outreach was to build relationships for long-term engagement and to collect data to inform the technical assistance strategy and approach (appendix ACD slide deck).



Across the corridor, 91 entities were listed in the 2021 City of Oakland business license report, this was inclusive of nonprofits as well as for-profit entities. Utilizing the list of 91 entities, ACD reviewed the list to create a sub-list of businesses that appear to be “open to the public” or “in operation” given the nature of the entity. Of the 50 entities in operation open to the public 38 are classified as for-profit businesses and 12 are classified as non-profits. 30 of the for-profit businesses are open to the public and 28 are located directly on 7th street.

In analyzing the businesses, two industry clusters were identified:

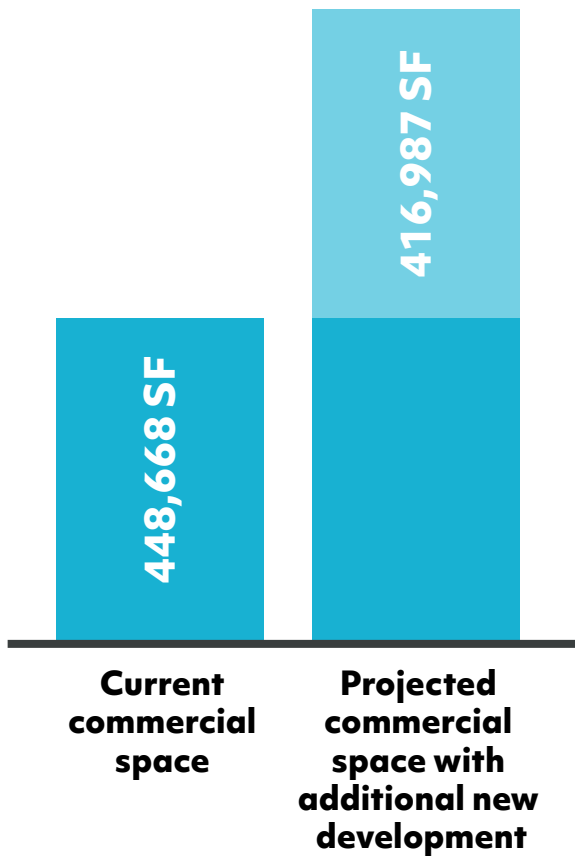
- (1) automotive (such as repair, fuel, and parking) and
- (2) arts/creative/entertainment (including light industrial/ visual arts, and performing arts).

Furthermore, there were two secondary types of space usage:

- 1) Retail or any entity with customers that come in to utilize a good or service, and
- 2) Office building with employees

Also the ACD team canvassed ancillary streets between 5th and 8th street to add any “open to the public” or “in operation” entities, including the Jack London Gateway Shopping center on Market and 7th street. Utilizing both the business license report and in-person canvassing on 7th and ancillary streets, ACD developed a list of 50 entities that are in operation and/or open to the public. This list is a working list and is not verified to be an all-encompassing list of entities in operation and/or open to the public on 7th street or ancillary streets.

Ten of the businesses were engaged in a needs assessment to gather information about their operations, challenges/opportunities, and the business’s sustainability, and to gauge interest in participating in further economic inclusion actions. Although the interviewed businesses represent a small sample size (20%), common needs were highlighted.



Analysis

The top two areas requiring technical assistance services were (1) storefront/ building and tenant improvements and (2) hiring. Additionally, most of the businesses interviewed were also interested in buying their current property or another property on 7th street. In terms of needs along the corridor, respondents listed the City of Oakland’s slow response as a challenge, specifically listing street light repairs, public works, trash/illegal dumping, and zoning/permitting requests.

Currently, there are 448,668 square feet of commercial space available in the corridor, with entitled and in progress new developments, we expect to have an additional 416,987 square feet of commercial space added to the corridor (excluding the proposed Howard Terminal which would add 1.5M square feet of office space and 270,000 square feet of retail space). With the commercial space roughly doubling with new developments, it’s crucial to maintain the unique, creative, character of the neighborhood that made the corridor attractive to investment. Additionally, with new unleased commercial space, the potential for additional vacant space could exacerbate the challenge of gaps in street frontage. With the promise of new development spaces in the pipeline, existing spaces could be negatively positioned as cold dark spaces that require heavy capital investment to be business ready.



SWOC ANALYSIS

The SWOC (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges) analysis was developed through a review of 18 precedent reports with the 7th Street Corridor included. Precedent reports ranged from environmental indicators, transportation plans, community development plans, and more. We used the SWOC analysis to help guide our work, ensure we understood the institutional history of the corridor, and to provide a summary of prior work for people carrying out implementation of the project.

STRENGTHS

- Engaged community members with a long history of community organizing and distributed power structures, for example, West Oakland Visions & Strategies report¹
- Although shifting, racially diverse neighborhood²
- The City of Oakland has a cultural equity plan and has demonstrated an interest in prioritizing equity³
- New street scale improvements such as bioswales/plantings, benches, new paving plan⁴
- TOD designation⁵
- BART & AC transit access
- Located within an opportunity zone - parts of the corridor have been written out of the opportunity zone map (also potentially a challenge given who typically has access to opportunity zone funding)
- Network of nonprofit and locally based organizations
- Foundation setting work of the Black Economics Salon, a 2019 convening of community stakeholders
- A clear desire for partnership across organizations with shared cooperative values⁶
- History of creative entrepreneurship (formal and informal)
- Viable pathways for Arts & Culture-based revenue streams
- Size of the district - Clearer pathways to organize the mid-sized district with little more than 55k people
- Several large employers are in or adjacent to the corridor, creating a natural draw to the area, and large BART traffic volumes⁷
- Clustering of similar/complimentary industries

WEAKNESSES

- The cost of housing in Oakland and the Bay Area at large is exorbitantly high⁸
- Rent Blight - Prices being so high causing higher number of vacancies than economically healthy
- “Affordability” (80-100k) is out of proportion with the median income of the average Black Oaklander (36-40k), the implication is that affordability can still only serve future and high-salaried populations⁹
- Commercial real estate rates in Oakland have increased continuously, adding more pressure and competition for commercial spaces, especially class A & class B¹⁰
- City not advocating for or enforcing policies that disincentive and mitigate inflated real estate values
- Gaps in commercial frontage due to building demolitions, historic redlining, urban renewal, and other racialized and classed policies.¹¹
- 7th Street Corridor stigmatized and isolated from resources

- 7th Street Corridor stigmatized and isolated from resources
- There is no merchant association, BID, or CDC to advocate for the corridor, leading to 7th street being bypassed for resources, exacerbating current inequities
- Low pedestrian activation- with few eyes on the streets, 7th street has become a target for illegal dumping and neglect from the city's sanitation department
- Essential quality of life City services such as health services, trash removal, and Internet infrastructure are lacking
- A repeat pattern of being over-studied and under-resourced paired with poor execution from previous interventions, leading to skepticism for future projects¹²
- The vestiges of prior projects, Out-of-Date infrastructure, and short-sighted planning must be mitigated as we attempt to build sustainable infrastructure for the corridor¹³
- Reputation as a neglected, unsafe, resource-poor neighborhood, making it less attractive to investors—missing mixed-income communities
- Street geometry is car-oriented rendering much of the corridor unsafe for other modes of transportation such as biking and walking
- Proximity to freeways (as well as freight trucks idling, evidenced by high diesel particulate rates) and car-oriented development, has led to poor health outcomes for residents¹⁴
- With heavy industrial uses historically in the neighborhood, environmental toxins and hazards have plagued this community, evidenced by elevated lead levels¹⁵, infant mortality rates, etc. still affecting Black and People of Color communities generations later

OPPORTUNITIES

- Despite market challenges, new local businesses continue to open along the corridor— with support around business sustainability and resource matching, their service, stability & quality will continue to improve¹⁶
- There were 6,776 residents living along the corridor as of 2020, 5,302 of which are adults— potential customers of future businesses on the corridor.
- There is a desire for community care/community building activities activation and community-building events such as street festivals, family/child-focused activities, and upskilling¹⁷ food (restaurants and fresh foods) and recreation/programmed activities
- Cluster economies are burgeoning, such as health-related services¹⁸
- Oakland's artist and nonprofit economy generate a large tax base for the city. With a healthy nonprofit and art sector, we have an opportunity to tap into this unique culture in implementation¹⁹
- Many of the building forms have corner storefronts oriented to the street, making it attractive for commercial activations²⁰
- The neighborhood, like most of Oakland, has retail leakage that could be recouped if more of the needs of the neighborhood were addressed locally (about 90% of West Oakland's spending power, \$172,893,976, was spent outside of the neighborhood)

CHALLENGES

- Security and a general sense of safety has been noted by business members and residents as lacking²¹
- The neighborhood has been directly targeted by redlining and racist policies, the results of which have irrevocably impacted the neighborhood and specifically people of color in the neighborhood.
- More recently, speculative real estate investment has displaced many Black and POC families and residents with deeper roots/histories in the neighborhood
- In the corridor, there is immovable infrastructure making it challenging to activate and make the area feel comfortable on foot
- Sound along the corridor is much louder than similarly sized streets²²
- US Postal service and the Port of Oakland create mega-blocks that tend to be pedestrian unfriendly 25
- The last mile is challenging through the surrounding neighborhood as made clear by the large parking lot surrounding the West Oakland BART station

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Dead Frontage: Dead Frontage: Lazy frontages (or “dead frontages” as they are often called) are those of the kind found in much big-block development, multi-story car parks and the like. In these cases, pedestrians pass not alongside shops, cafes or windows, but instead by forbidding masses of concrete, security fences or someone’s garden wall.

Urban designers have been calling out this problem for some time. But recently the whims of designers are now also backed up by proper research — demonstrating that the “micro-environment” of a street can have a verifiable impact on things like pedestrian activity. [Lucy Wallwork - <http://exclusive.multibriefs.com/author/lucy-wallwork>]

Vandalism:

Community Development Corporation (CDC):

Community development corporations (CDCs) are 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are created to support and revitalize communities, especially those that are impoverished or struggling. CDCs often deal with the development of affordable housing. They can also be involved in a wide range of community services that meet local needs such as education, job training, healthcare, commercial development, and other social programs. - NACEDA https://www.naceda.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanet-blog&view=entry&category=bright-ideas&id=25%3Awhat-is-a-community-development-corporation-&Itemid=171

Blight: Blight was a facially neutral term infused with racial and ethnic prejudice. While it purportedly assessed the state of urban infrastructure, blight was often used to describe the negative impact of certain residents on city neighborhoods. This “scientific” method of understanding urban decline was used to justify the removal of Black and POC from certain parts of the city. By selecting racially changing neighborhoods as blighted areas and designating them for redevelopment, the urban renewal program enabled institutional and political elites to relocate minority populations and entrench racial segregation. [Prichett Yale Law Review - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-16/why-we-talk-about-urban-blight>]

Economic Development: Economic development is a term used to describe concerted actions taken for

the purpose of economic progress within a specific area. It is the process of generating and sustaining wealth in a community. [Complete Communities <https://www.completecommunitiesde.org/planning/sustainable/economic-development/#:~:text=Economic%20development%20is%20a%20term,to%20attract%20employers%20and%20investment.>]

Bioswales: Bioswales are vegetated, shallow, landscaped depressions designed to capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater runoff as it moves downstream. They are typically sized to treat the water quality event, also known as the “first flush,” which is the first and often most polluted volume of water resulting from a storm event. -[NACTO <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/street-design-elements/stormwater-management/bioswales/>]

Reparative Design: We define it as an intentional process, one that creates a built environment promoting wellness, economy through conservation, and a more meaningful connection to nature.

Environmental Remediation: The removal of environmental contaminants is known as “environmental remediation.” The law requires companies or organizations that are guilty of contaminating the environment to rectify the situation. Specialists in environmental remediation exist to help coordinate the process. As such, environmental remediation can consist of large-scale efforts, but it is also possible for individuals to contribute in smaller ways. - TorHoerman law

BID Business Improvement Districts (BID): Privately directed and publicly sanctioned organizations that supplement public services within geographically defined boundaries by generating multiyear revenue through a compulsory assessment on local property owners and/or businesses. 1 BIDs are managed by public or nonprofit boards, predominantly with local business representation, and often including residents and local governments as well. BIDs create collective economic benefits for their members that cannot be achieved on an individual basis. The BID model is similar to the special assessment value capture technique, as both concepts capitalize on incremental tax assessments levied on properties within a defined geographic area that are directed toward improvement purposes within the

district. BIDs often rely on other sources of revenue, in addition to the tax assessment, to fund their operations. - [FHWA Center for Innovative Finance Support https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/fact_sheets/value_cap_bid.aspx]

Merchants Association: An association representing tenants in a shopping center or other merchants' association representing the businesses in a specific area may apply for an outdoor sale permit for the members of that association by providing a list of the merchants participating, and paying a fee which shall be in lieu of and not in addition to the fee assessed against individual businesses.

[<https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/merchants-association>]

Stakeholder: Stakeholders brought into any decision or project development from the get-go are able to help provide ideas and help create potential solutions. Often, stakeholders come from varying backgrounds, and so they look at issues from differing perspectives. This enables opposing viewpoints to get expressed and discussed.

Hostile Design/ Hostile Architecture: is an urban design strategy that uses elements of the built environment to purposefully guide or restrict behavior. It often targets people who use or rely on public space more than others, such as youth, poor people, and homeless people, by restricting the physical behaviors they can engage in.

Also known as defensive architecture, hostile design, unpleasant design, exclusionary design, and defensive urban design, the term hostile architecture is often associated with items like "anti-homeless spikes" – studs embedded in flat surfaces to make sleeping on them uncomfortable and impractical. This form of architecture is most commonly found in densely populated and urban areas. Other measures include sloped window sills to stop people sitting; benches with armrests positioned to stop people lying on them; water sprinklers that spray intermittently; and public trash bins with inconveniently small mouths to prevent the insertion of bulky wastes. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hostile_architecture]

ENDNOTES

- 1 Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization, “West Oakland Visions & Strategies”. (1994), <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/West-Oakland-Vision-and-Strategies-1994.pdf>.
- 2 The Urban Displacement Project conducted a multi-stage process that culminated in the creation of an online mapping tool that highlights vulnerable BIPOC owned-businesses and a set of explore the feasibility of a permanent infrastructure for collecting data, monitoring business health, and recommending policies to support BIPOC-owned businesses. <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/>.
- 3 City of Oakland, “Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan”. (Oakland, 2018). <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/cultural-plan>.
- 4 City of Oakland, “7th Street Connection Project”. (2020), <https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/7th-street-connection>.
- 5 The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Oakland, “West Oakland Redevelopment Project Five-Year Implementation Plan”. (Oakland, 2008), 6, <https://oaklandca.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/oakca1/groups/ceda/documents/report/dowd008254.pdf>.
- 6 working group meetings
- 7 Goldov et al., “Reparative Urban Design Potentials for 7th Street”. (2021), 10.
- 8 1,936 units were created, more research needed to see if West Oakland hit their affordability targets)
- 9 Metropolitan Transportation Commission & ABAG, “Plan Bay Area 2050”. (2021), 22, 29, <https://www.planbayarea.org/digital-library/plan-bay-area-2050>.
- 10 According to LoopNet
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- 16 ACD Business Assessments
- 17 Exceptional Community Connections Consulting for Lincoln, “Resident Needs Assessment”. (2016), 13, <https://www.lincolnfamilies.org/policy-advocacy#policy>.
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- 21 Exceptional Community Connections Consulting for Lincoln, “Resident Needs Assessment”. (2016), 13, <https://www.lincolnfamilies.org/policy-advocacy#policy>.
- 22 Goldov et al., “Reparative Urban Design Potentials for 7th Street”. (2021), 10.