



Webster Green

Jack London District Neighborhood Design Charrette

07 December 2011

Land Use and Transportation Committee

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Participants

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Lower Webster Team B

- Lara Rose
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Upper Webster Team A

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- Paul Thyssen
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Upper Webster Team B

- Damon Eaves
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Floater

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Development Principles

JLDA organized a neighborhood design charrette on December 7, 2011. This was a working session to discuss and sketch ideas for a potential Webster Green connecting Chinatown to the waterfront. Participants were divided into four teams: two worked on Lower Webster (Embarcadero to 4th Street) and two worked on Upper Webster (4th Street to 7th Street). All teams were asked to address specific categories of development: character, program, features, transportation, financing, sustainability, and events. After ninety minutes of intense brainstorming, the groups came together to present their ideas and discuss outcomes. This document will present the ideas discussed.

Several development principles emerged from the four teams' work.

1. The Webster Green need not be “green.” It should be a linear park that is central to the Jack London District, and as such it must be in keeping with the character of the District, which is decidedly urban and industrial. While plantings, community gardens, and paths were all proposed there was general agreement that the Webster Green should not be a traditional park like Central Park in Manhattan or Golden Gate in San Francisco. It should be a series of spaces that embrace the post-industrial nature of the District.

2. The Webster Green should house diverse program elements while creating a unified and iconic place. Example uses included: picnic areas, a central gathering area and band shell, night market, food truck access, skate park, dog park, and community gardens.

3. Webster Green programs should reinforce existing building uses: where there are more residences, a dog park and community gardens; where there are more businesses, picnic areas.



4. Traffic patterns along Webster Street should change. The Green should house pedestrian and bike paths, while car lanes and parking need to be rethought. There was general consensus that Webster Street could be one lane southbound with one lane of parallel parking. This would free up 40-50' of additional street area to be appropriated for the Webster Green.

5. The intersection of Embarcadero and Webster needs to be made safer and simpler. Two ideas that emerged from the charrette were to: (a) make Webster one-way to the south, or (b) completely close Webster to traffic between Embarcadero and 2nd Street.

6. Webster Street between 6th and 7th Streets needs to be a better gateway to Jack London District and Alameda. Currently it is confusing and unsightly. Teams proposed a continuation of the Webster Green to 7th Street that would clarify traffic patterns and provide a welcoming front door to the District.

7. The Webster Green should be designed to host community events. Seasonal events could include: night market, small concerts, movies, holiday decorations, weddings, etc.

8. The Webster Green must be a sustainable development. It should foster inter-generational interactions, host a community garden for local restaurants and individuals, incorporate swales for rainwater and street runoff, use drought-tolerant planting to minimize water use, minimize pump and lighting energy use, and use recycled or reclaimed materials.

9. Webster Green will require imaginative financing mechanisms to pay for capital costs and ongoing maintenance. City of Oakland Redevelopment funds and federal grants were the primary funds discussed. CalTrans, the Port of Oakland, and BART are also significant property owners in the area who would benefit from the Green. Local businesses, non-profits, and residents would be a third tier of financing either as a Community Benefits District or as donations. In addition, the Green should be designed to generate some income from events such as concerts or festivals and from vendors such as food trucks.



Google Earth aerial view of the Webster Street corridor from Chinatown (up) to the waterfront (down).

Background

The idea of creating a linear park above the Alameda Tube on Webster Street has been around since at least 1999 when the City of Oakland and the Port of Oakland jointly published the Estuary Policy Plan:

“Webster Street Green”: Webster Street (between the water and I-880) should be reconfigured to create an attractive greenway that can function both as an important pedestrian route to the waterfront and as an attractive open space amenity for the mixed-use loft district that is emerging around it. The Webster Street right-of-way is adjoined by an easement over the Webster tube to Alameda. As such, it is unbuildable. By relocating the surface parking lots above the tube, the easement and street right-of-way can be designed to create the Webster Street Green.

A decade later the Palm Plaza was developed at the end of Webster Street between Embarcadero and the waterfront. Subsequent development efforts have stalled, but recent work on the Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan has identified Webster Street as an important link from Chinatown to the waterfront.

Precedents

Several types of precedents for the Green were discussed at the charrette. These were divided into the following broad categories:

- Post-Industrial Parks
- Gathering Spaces
- Linear Spaces

Examples are presented on the following pages.



Excerpted map from 1999 Estuary Policy Plan. Label 5 shows the Webster Green.

Precedents

Post-Industrial Parks



Showplace Triangle, San Francisco. Previously the intersection of 8th and 16th Streets in San Francisco, this “parklet” claims the street as park with minimal infrastructure and capital investment.



High Line, New York. Previously a derelict elevated track on Manhattan’s depressed lower west side. Recent redevelopment as a linear park has dramatically transformed the neighborhood and positively impacted property values.



Gasworks Park, Seattle. The abandoned gas plant and environmentally degraded site were reappropriated and bioremediated in the 1970’s and now serves as a play structure and fields for the public.



Duisburg North Landscape Park, Germany. Reuse of industrial plant by integrating a bioremediated landscape with vegetation. Here is a garden partitioned by the old foundations of a blast furnace.



Potemkin Meditation Space, Kurumata, Japan. Post-Industrial meditation park using simple, industrial materials - a “cultivated junk yard” in the words of the designer.



Diagonal Mar Park, Barcelona. Former industrial district along a river reinvigorated by a central park that is animated by playful sculptures, fountains, and oversized planters.

Precedents

Gathering Spaces



High Line, New York. Wood steps and a board walk create a small informal gathering space along a linear promenade.



Parc Andre Citroen, Paris. A dry garden forms a large, central gathering and play space that is surrounded by low benches that double as walkways.



Parc Andre Citroen, Paris. A small paved seating area is surrounded by raised planting beds that give it a sense of privacy and seclusion.



Victory Gardens, San Francisco Civic Center Plaza. Temporary installation of organic food production area serves as place of community engagement as well as a productive landscape.



Picnic area (Location unknown). Informal seating area surrounded by raised planter beds.



Panhandle, San Francisco. Temporary Band Shell made from recycled materials created a place for community events.

Precedents

Linear Spaces



Linear Park (Location unknown). Varied paving materials and treatments of the edges create spatial variety.



Arts District, Dallas. Curving path through linear park creates different types of spaces for solitary or community enjoyment.



Lakeshore East Park, Chicago. Simple, elegant linear promenade next to the lake uses a restrained palette of materials and elements to maximal effect.



Discovery Green, Houston. Seasonal lighting and decorations help invigorate the axial walk.



Linear Park (Location unknown). Boardwalk defines linear promenade adjacent to urban swale. Benches provide areas for small gatherings or picnics.



I-75 & I-85 Interchange, Atlanta. Simple but effective linear park where two freeways cross. Layered zones allow a variety of places to take place in very little space.

Lower Webster

Team A

Constraints

- Noise from freeway, Tube, and train
- Intersection of Webster & Embarcadero is unsafe and confusing
- Street Parking
- Physical presence of the freeway and train tracks
- Traffic study needed to see impacts on changing lane directions, reducing lanes, removing parking
- 2nd to 4th Streets lack a pedestrian scale and feel unfriendly

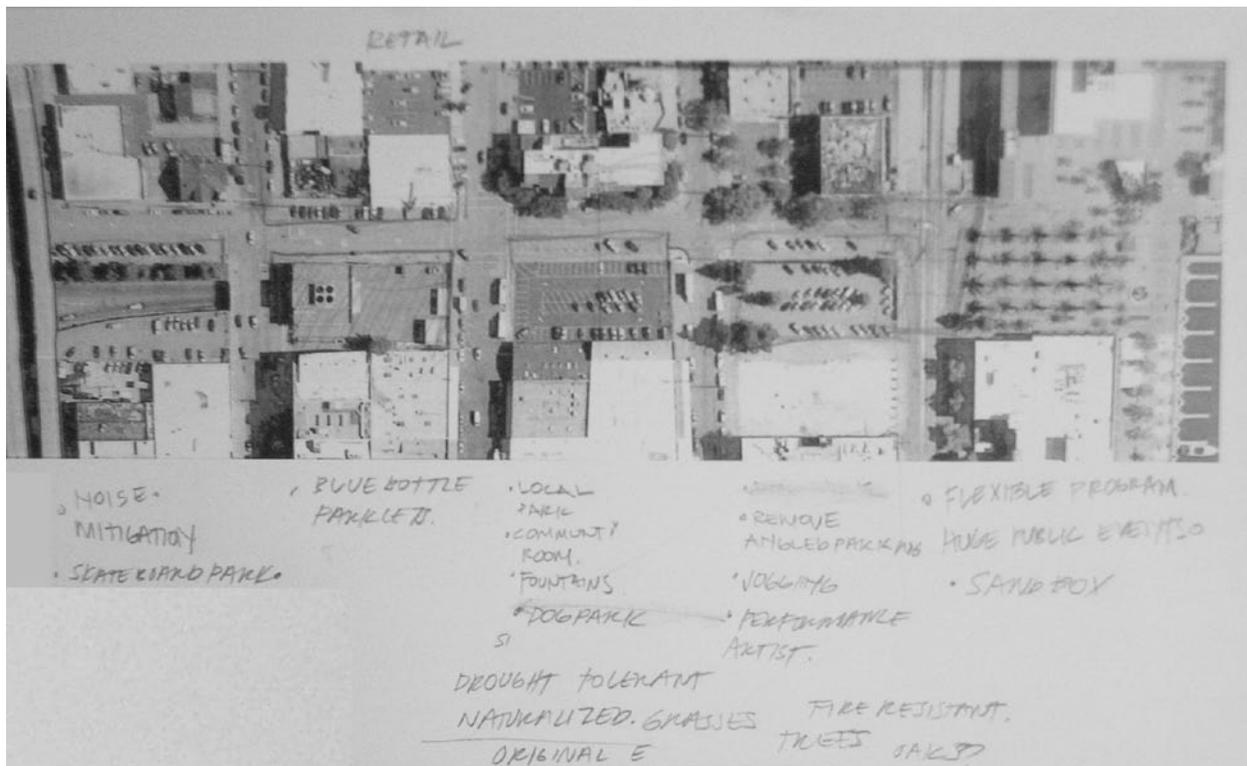
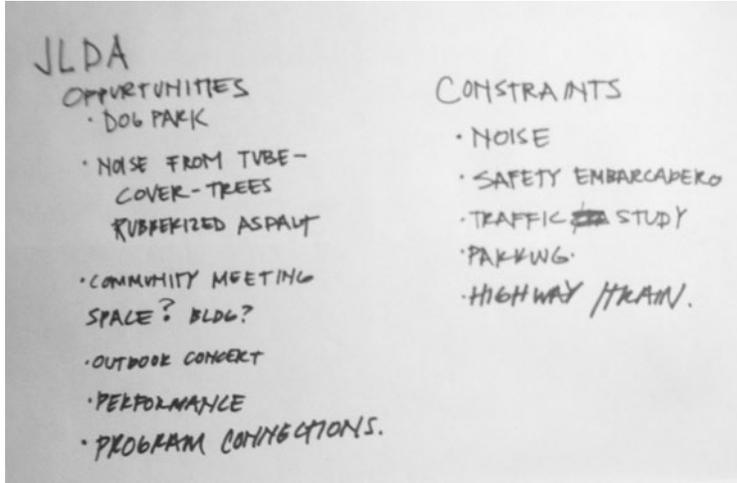
Opportunities

- Webster Green would help mitigate noise from freeway, Tube and train - cover trees and rubberized asphalt would help absorb sound
- Create a community meeting space (perhaps a community center?)
- Outdoor concert space or other performance space
- Establish connections with the Webster Green to adjacent program
- Create gradient of uses from waterfront to freeway that reflects the surrounding uses:
 - Embarcadero-2nd: Community Space for Performances or Artists
 - 2nd-3rd: Quiet Community Zone - passive community zone with picnic tables and benches
 - 3rd-4th: Dog Park
 - Parklets as appropriate to activate retail such as Ceruti Cellars, Blue Bottle Coffee and Warehouse Bar
- Create connections and overarching themes across entirety of Webster Green: Community, Ecology
 - Jogging and walking trail
 - Bike trail
 - Par course
 - Ecological Landscape ('what was here originally')
 - Drought-tolerant trees and grasses

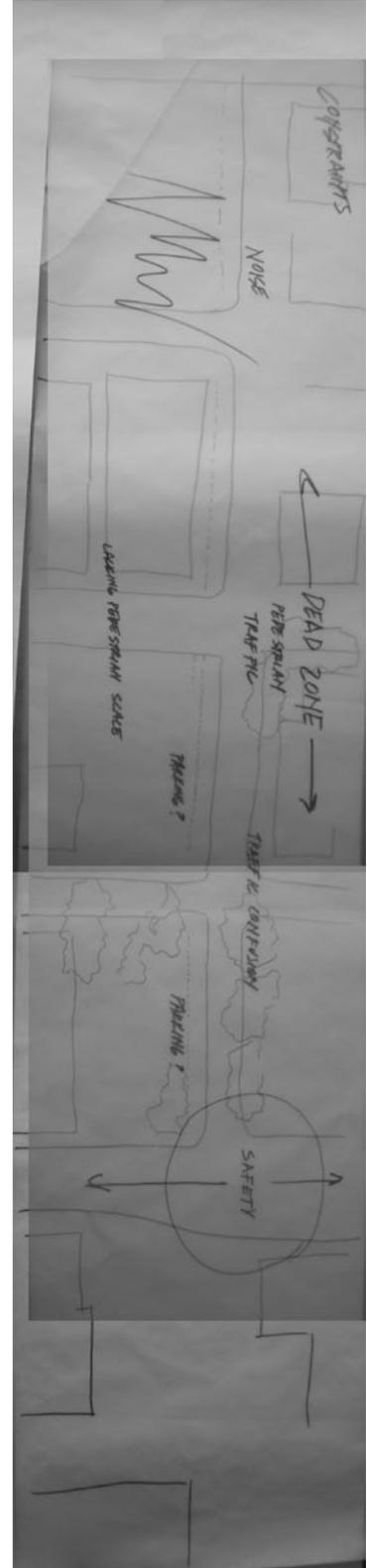
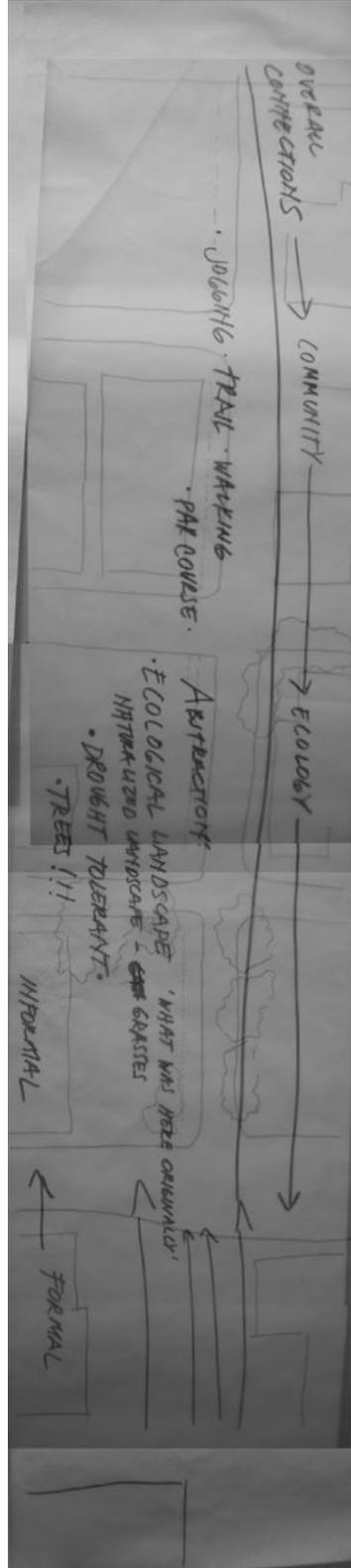
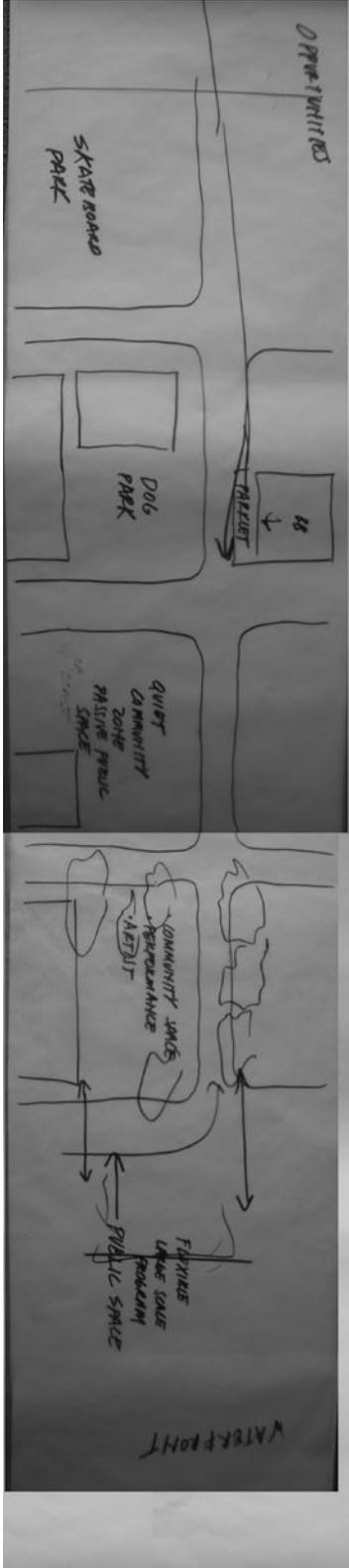


Lower Webster

Team A



Lower Webster
 Team A



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Lower Webster

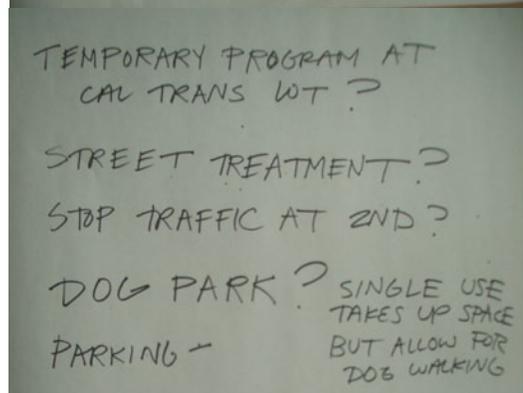
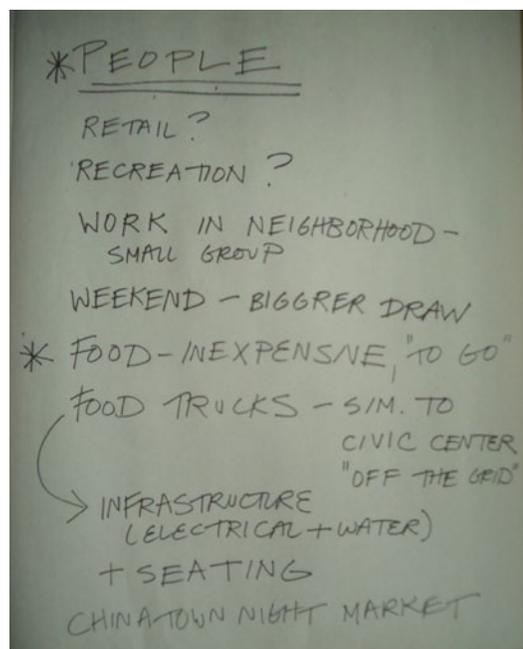
Team B

Team B echoed Team A's thoughts about creating a gradient of uses throughout the length of the Green that respond to adjacent existing uses.

They saw Embarcadero to 2nd as a zone that could connect across Embarcadero and integrate with the existing Palm Court next to Bocanova. By closing Webster to traffic along this block, they sought to eliminate the unsafe traffic conditions that currently exist while simultaneously creating continuity and connection to the waterfront for pedestrians and bicyclists. They envisioned that this zone could be home to a band shell that could house small events and a play space that expands to fill not only the existing parking lot above the Tube but also the whole of Webster Street.

From 2nd to 3rd, the Webster Green could transition to a space that caters more to the office tenants in the area. A picnic grove and a clearing for food trucks could be a major draw for neighborhood businesses and residents alike. The team emphasized that the growing trend of high quality, low cost food trucks would be in keeping with the cultural heritage of the area as a produce warehouse district. It would also create synergies among other existing establishments such as Cerruti and Blue Bottle. This area would be especially attractive to food trucks if the Webster Green were able to offer integrated utilities such as electricity, power and waste disposal.

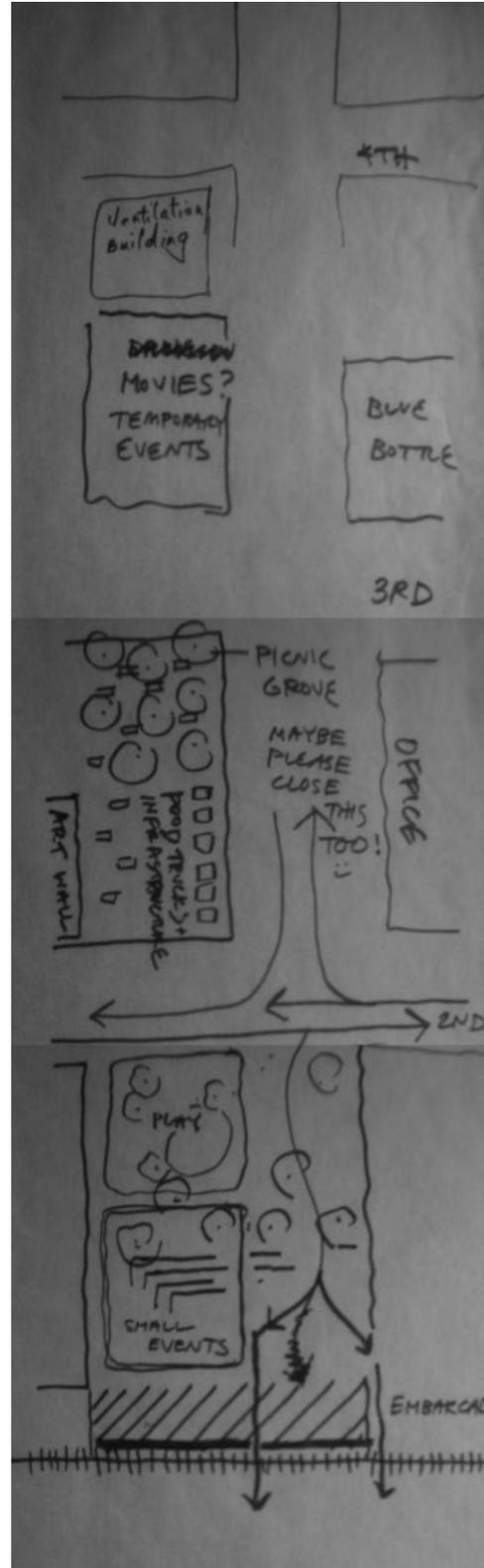
From 3rd to 4th, the group thought that the Ventilation Building working yard could be shared from time-to-time with neighborhood events such as outdoor movies or performances.



Lower Webster

Team B

KIDS? NOT MANY
 OPEN SPACE - VISIBILITY
 BANDSHELL? SOME WORRY ABOUT NOISE
 → RESTRICTED USE - LUNCH TIME
 FREE BUS - DRAW PEOPLE FROM DOWNTOWN
 → SMALL VENUE - INFORMAL, FLEXIBLE
 COMMUNITY GARDEN?
 → BUT CONCERNS ABOUT IT BEING CLOSED OFF / NOT DEMOCRATIC.
 → COULD THIS GO DOWN 4TH ST?



Upper Webster

Team A

Team A's emphasis was on extending the Webster Green all the way up to 7th Street. They described a linear promenade that would occupy parts of the Webster Tube Ventilation Yard and continue under the freeway into Chinatown. This would create physical and visual continuity between Chinatown and Jack London District. It would also provide a means for dealing with many of the problems in the area:

- Webster Tube Ventilation Building is loud and unsightly
- Webster Tube on-ramp is loud
- The I-880 Underpass is dark, dirty, and dangerous
- Traffic patterns in the block between 6th and 7th are confusing and dangerous

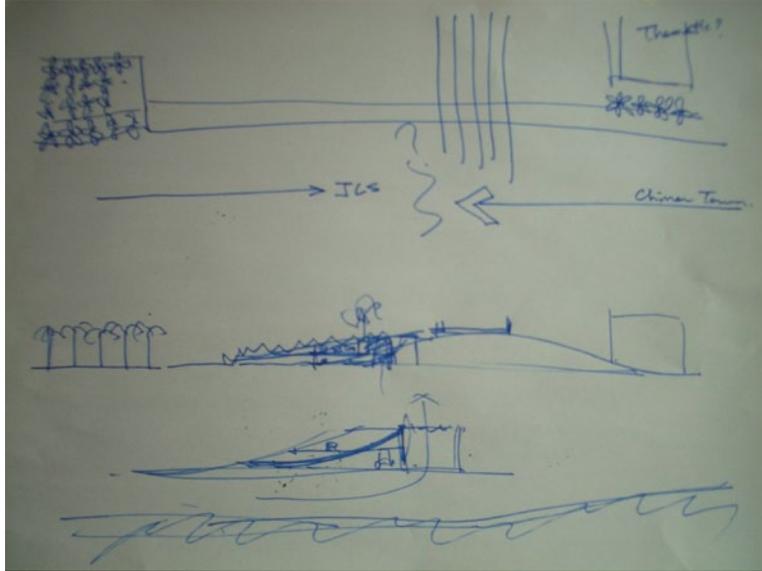
The team sought to resolve these problems by:

- Claiming some of Webster Street for the Park
- Masking the Webster Tube Ventilation Building with trees and/or vegetation
- Masking the Webster Tube on-ramp with trees and/or vegetation
- Improving the Freeway Underpass with lighting, paving, signage, art, and vegetation
- Activating uses under the Freeway, such as a dog park
- Extending the Green to form a median on Webster between 6th and 7th, thereby clarifying traffic patterns and forming a suitable gateway to both Jack London and Alameda

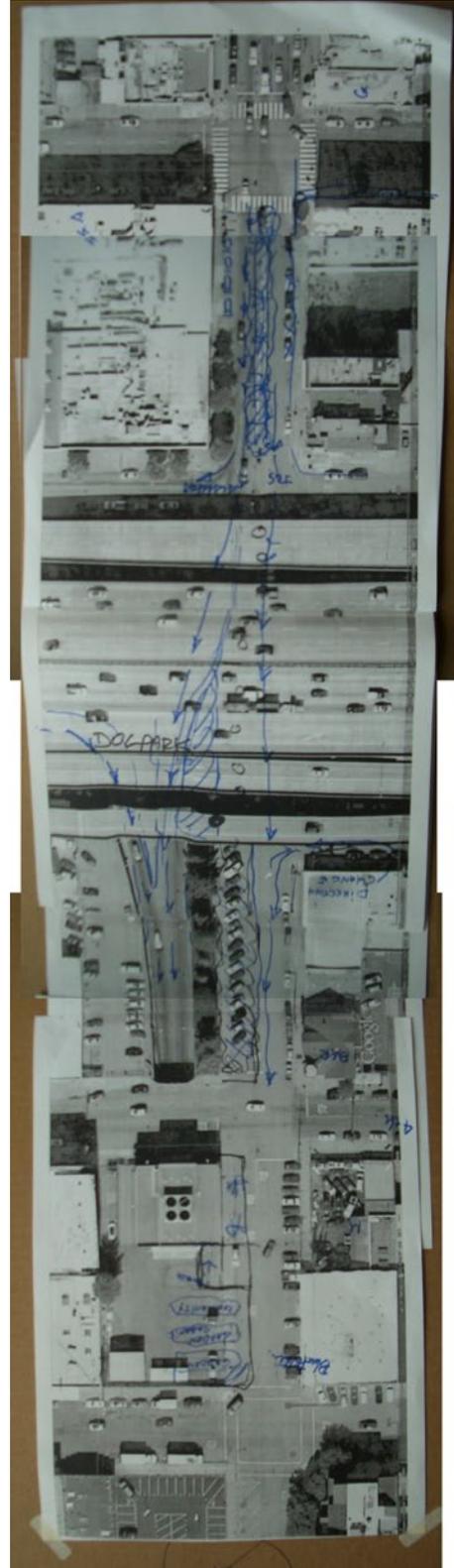


Upper Webster

Team A



Remove 1 Alameda lane
between 7th and 6th
Extend median to 7th - add trees
Possible dog park under freeway
Remove parking on North side of Webster
at 4th and 3rd.



Upper Webster

Team B

Webster Street should be one southbound lane for traffic, and the other lane should be reserved for market stalls and food trucks. Adjacent to the stalls could be a continuous swathe of park that is a series of grass dunes that could give a unique look and feel to the area. It could house bicycle and walking paths to make the whole stretch from 7th Street to the waterfront into a pedestrian-friendly area. Streetscape elements can tie the long stretch together with special lighting, signage, etc. On the other side of the street, parallel parking would be interspersed with “parklets” where appropriate. The design vocabulary of these parklets could refer back to the grass dunes of Webster Green but they would only occur as needed.

Along the dune promenade, there might be several distinct moments that lend a distinct character to the Green. For instance, the Webster Tube Ventilation Building could be used as an outdoor theater. Large-scale industrial sculptures (i.e. from American Steelworks) could populate the route and create further “destinations” along the length. The freeway could be another special moment along the Green as it gets transformed from into a “sparkly and bright and friendly” place.



Upper Webster

Team B

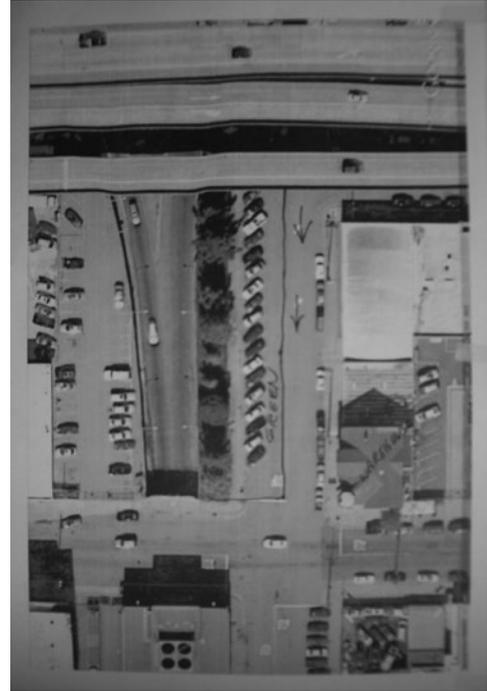
CO DESIGN - light/access for underpass at both B'way and Webster } *sparkly and bright and FRIENDLY*

WEBSTER - ATTRACTIONS
NIGHT MARKETS
AMERICAN STEELWORKS - sculptures

CORRIDOR BETWEEN 7th & 4th = GREEN and OR PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY DUNES

STREET LAMPS tying PRODUCE DEPARTMENT to JLDA

OPEN UP - A THRESHOLD, NOT BOUNDARY



Gaslight Theme

(Side View)

semi prominent shelter for kids/animal.

pedestrian dunes

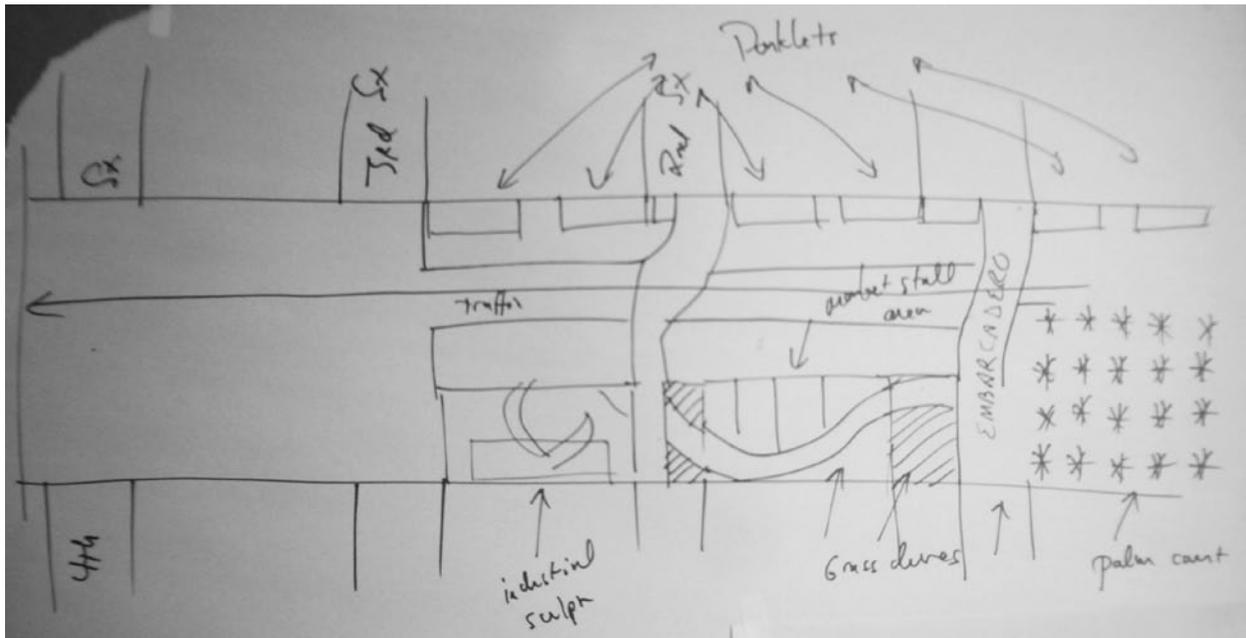
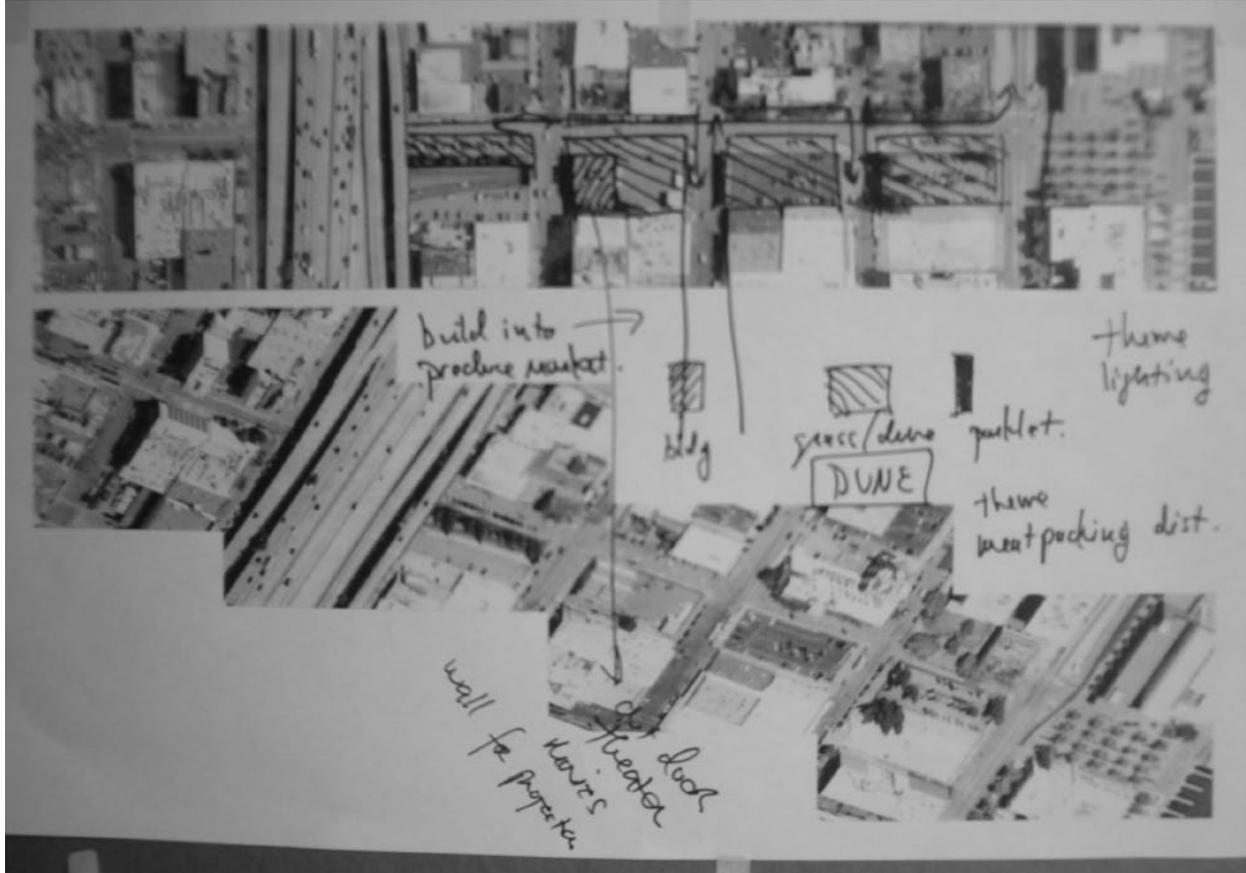
one lane one way traffic

Build on:

- + Produce market theme (Chelsea Meat packing)
- + Real Bricks street
- + pop up businesses
- + Gaslight District
- + Food trucks
- + Dunes to Grass for kids, couples
- + One Lane/One Way Street on Webster.
- + Other Lane for Market stalls
- + Be inclusive of •

Upper Webster

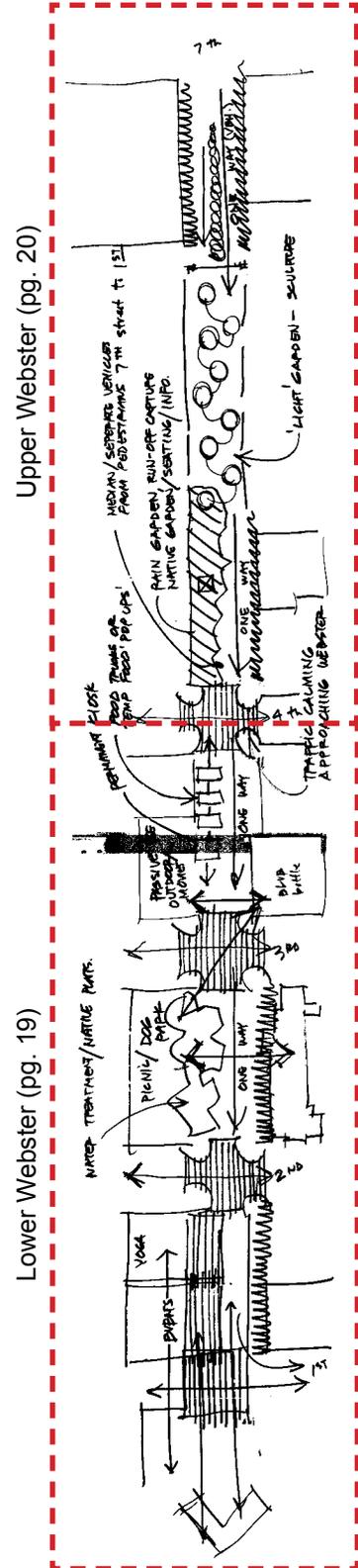
Team B



Lower / Upper Webster

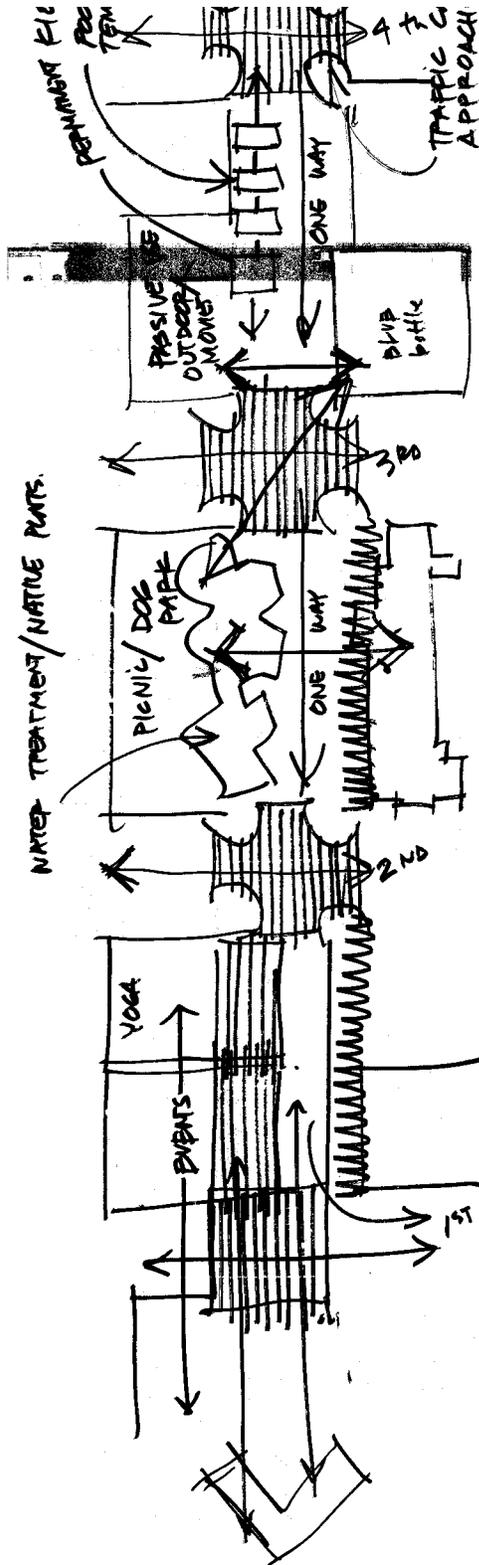
R3 Studios

Roman De Sota is the president of R3 Studios, an urban planning and landscape architecture firm located in Jack London District. Roman attended the first part of the charrette but had to leave before he could join a team. We were lucky enough to receive this submission from Roman after the event itself.



Lower Webster

R3 Studios

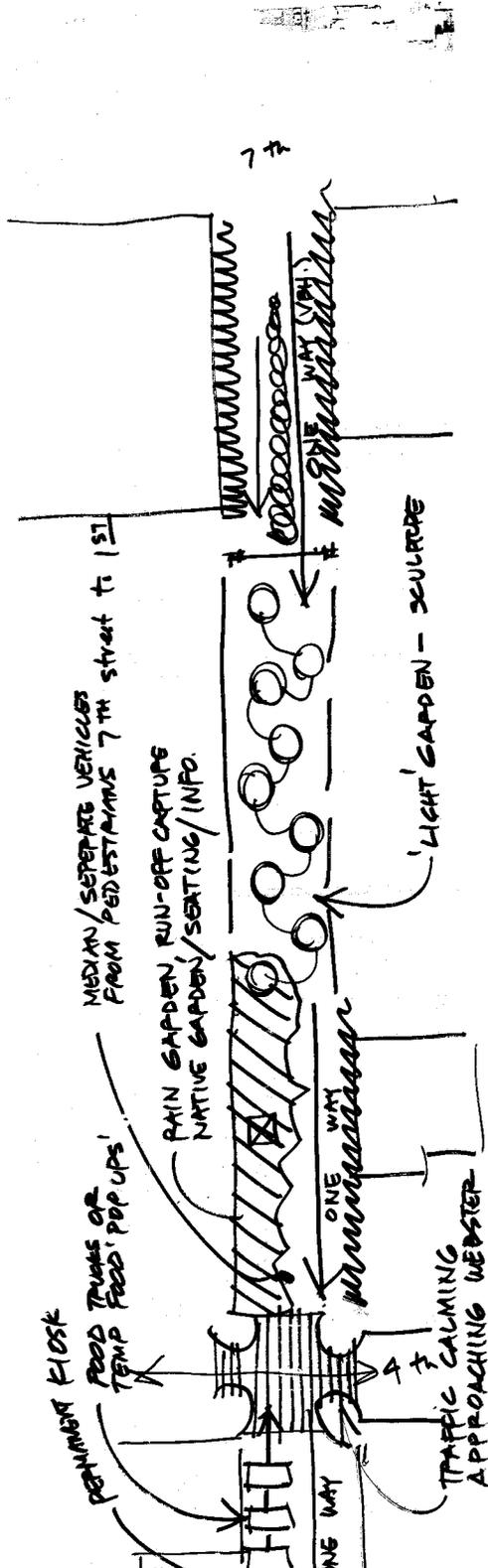


— LOWER WEBSTER — OPPORTUNITIES

1. LINKS: establish identity
2. OUTDOOR LIFE:
 1. DOG PARK
 2. PICNIC — LUNCH CROWD
 3. CONCEPTS
 4. PARK
 5. WATER TREATMENT (RAIN GARDENS)
 6. FOOD SERVICE — 'POP-UPS'
 7. ESTABLISHED COFFEE FACILITY AT MID POINT
 8. MOVIES
 9. TRAFFIC CALMING (VEH.)
 10. MEETINGS
 11. DECORATIVE THEMED LIGHTING 7th to 1st
3. ENHANCED CONCRETE/SURFACE AT INTERSECTIONS
4. CLOSE 1st STREET VEH. TRAFFIC ON WEEKENDS.

Upper Webster

R3 Studios



UPPER WEBSTER OPPORTUNITIES

1. EAST-MEETS WEST (CHILO)
CHINATOWN - JACK LONDON
2. NIGHT MARKET
3. ART
4. 'LIGHT' GARDEN / ART UNDER-PASS @ BBO
5. LIGHTED PASSAGE
6. RAIN GARDEN / NATIVE PLANTING CAPTURE FREEWAY WATER SURFACE WATER / TREATMENT
7. ONE WAY VEHICULAR TRAFFIC ON WEBSTER.
8. TREES IN MEDIUM ONLY SCULPTURE TREES LOCAL ARTIST
9. TRAFFIC CALMING AT INTERSECTIONS

Next Steps

There are several steps that can be taken in parallel towards turning these visions into reality. The major milestones we will need to clear are city approvals, funding, land procurement, design, and construction:

- Work with neighboring community groups (Chinatown, Old Oakland, Downtown) to build support for the Green.
- Work with CalTrans to determine initial feasibility and ownership rights. The Marler Johnson Highway Park Act of 1969, states that a local agency can request use of an airspace site for park or recreational purposes.
- Work with City of Oakland Planning Department to determine suitability of land use and changes to traffic patterns.
- Work with City of Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA) and Redevelopment to determine what funding is available.
- Work with City of Oakland Parks and Recreation to determine long-term management and maintenance.
- Work with a landscape architect or design-build entity to design the Green.
- Work with contractor or design-build entity to construct the Green.



While JLDA will continue to advocate for the Webster Green, we do not currently have the resources to actively steer the process. If the Jack London District forms a Community Benefits District, the Webster Green might be a suitable project for such an organization to take on.