March 2011

Webster Street Vision 2010

Alameda, California

"The vision for Webster Street
is to reinforce its role
as the heart of West Alameda life
and a major gateway to the island."

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Prepared for
City of Alameda, California

Consultant Team
Urban Community Partners
Urban Design Associates

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Comments Under Separate Covers

WESCAFE
NO PARKING
5:00AM to 6:30AM
FRUITVALE BART
VIA ALAMEDA

Introduction

The City of Alameda, in collaboration with a Consultant team, facilitated a five-month focused planning process to create a contextual planning and improvement vision for Webster Street. Previous planning efforts included the Alameda General Plan (1991), the Strategic Opportunities Analysis (2004), and the Webster District Strategic Plan (2005). The Opportunities Analysis and Strategic Plan were completed prior to the October 2008 real estate and financial market collapse, and needs required assessment market update. The scope of this study included:

- Reviewing previous planning studies
- Meeting with stakeholders and citizens
- Conducting a three-day public workshop
- Illustrating architecture and design character
- Creating a priority action for:
  - Public Realm Improvements
  - Catalyst Initiatives
- Developing a game plan for:
  - Phasing and sequencing
  - Asset management

A public presentation to City Council is scheduled for November 2010.

THE Fireside
Phone
5WVP825

Vision

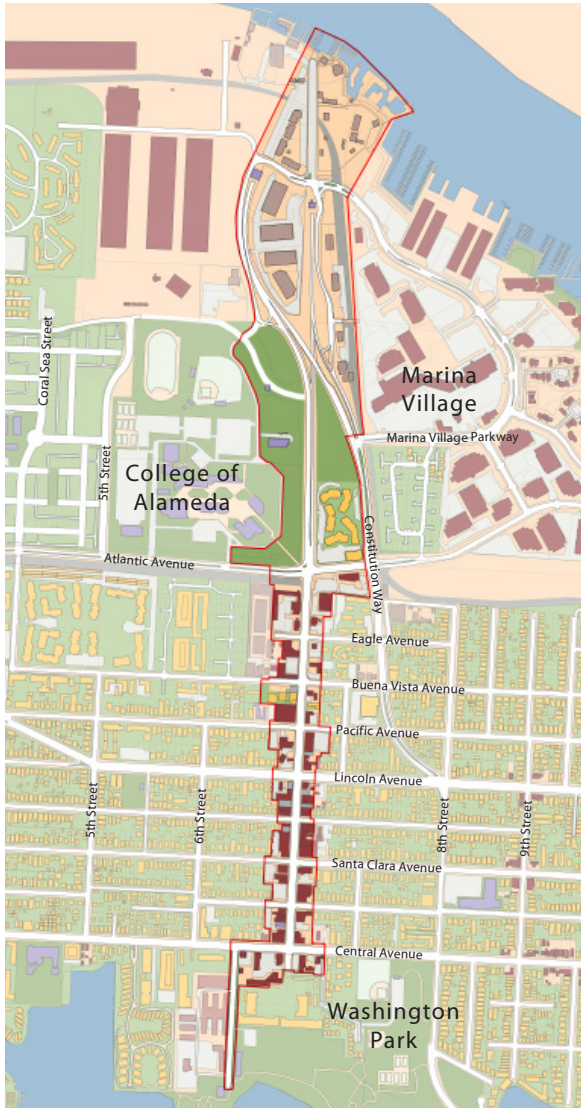
The vision for Webster Street reinforces its role as the heart of West Alameda life and a major gateway to the island. The West Alameda Business Association (WABA) and other area stakeholders are eager to see the Webster Street area become a "better" version of what it is today – a unique and eclectic commercial main street that serves a diverse population.

To bring that vision to life, the City of Alameda is proposing a Vision Plan for improving the Webster Street area that recognizes its function as a regional arterial as identified in the City's General Plan. This view book presents the proposed plan for Council consideration.

The strength of this Vision Plan lies in the synergistic effects which can be achieved by implementing a number of strategic initiatives along a main street that has been conceived as a series of complementary districts.

Recommended public realm improvements fall into several categories, each of which addresses fundamental issues that WABA members, other area stakeholders, and governmental officials identified during the planning process as important to Webster Street, its neighborhoods, and patrons. These fundamental concerns revolve around the need to provide for pedestrian enhancements, redevelopment of underutilized property, and the desire for an attractive civic gateway to Alameda.

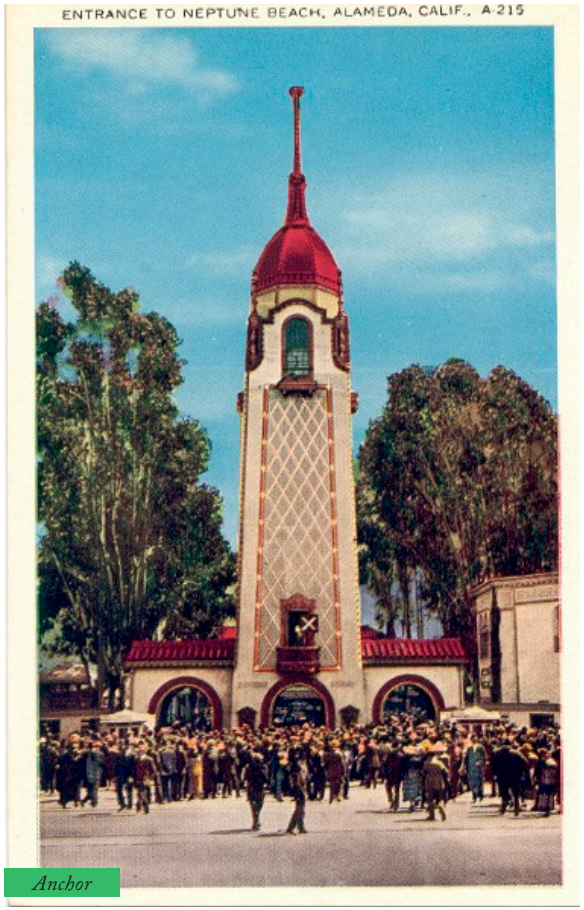
The plan also includes specific recommendations and highlights for catalyst projects identified in the study area. These projects will serve to create momentum for new development in, and revitalization of Webster Street.



Gateway

Avenue

Main Street



Anchor

Districts

Webster Street is currently conceived of as one large commercial district stretching from the Estuary to the Bay. Districts are typically defined by predominant land use, density and intensity of use, and character defining elements. When this definition is applied to Webster Street, four distinct districts actually emerge: the Gateway; the Avenue; the Main Street; and the Anchor. Advantages of identifying and promoting unique districts include encouraging variety and informing future land use decisions. Essential qualities of the four Webster Street districts include:

"Gateway" (Tubes to Atlantic Avenue)

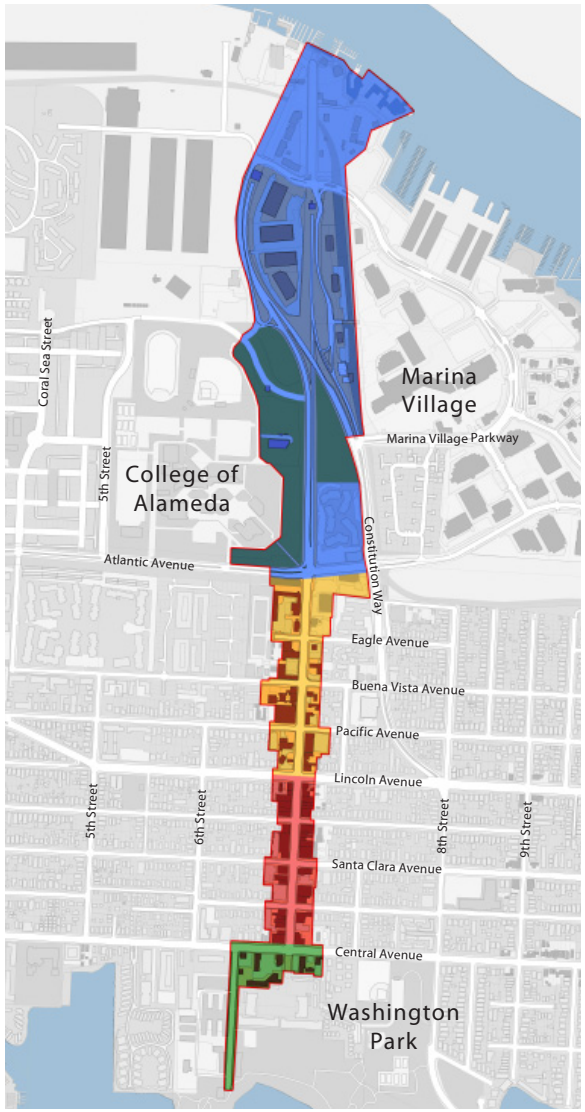
- Super blocks
- Institutional uses (education & sr. housing)
- Heavy direct access Portal to Alameda to/from Tubes
- Only direct access to Oakland and regional roadways
- Emergency route to Trauma Center in Oakland
- Caltrans jurisdiction

» "Avenue" (Atlantic to Lincoln Avenue)
- Auto oriented uses
- National brands
- Drive-thrus with joint access drives
- Dedicated off-street parking
- Eclectic architecture
- Emergency route to Trauma Center in Oakland

» "Main Street" (Lincoln to Central Avenue)
- Pedestrian-oriented uses
- One-of-a-kind local shops and restaurants
- Strong pedestrian connections
- Shared parking
- Traditional main street architecture
- Emergency route to Trauma Center in Oakland
- Access to State Route 61 along Central Avenue
- Regional Arterial General Plan Designation (providing access to the regional roadways and freeways)
- Truck route

» "Anchor" (Central Avenue to Crab Cove)
- Site of historic Neptune Beach
- Strip commercial
- Crab Cove
- Parking in front
- Terminus of Webster Street
- Emergency route to Trauma Center in Oakland

Gateway
Avenue
Main Street
Anchor

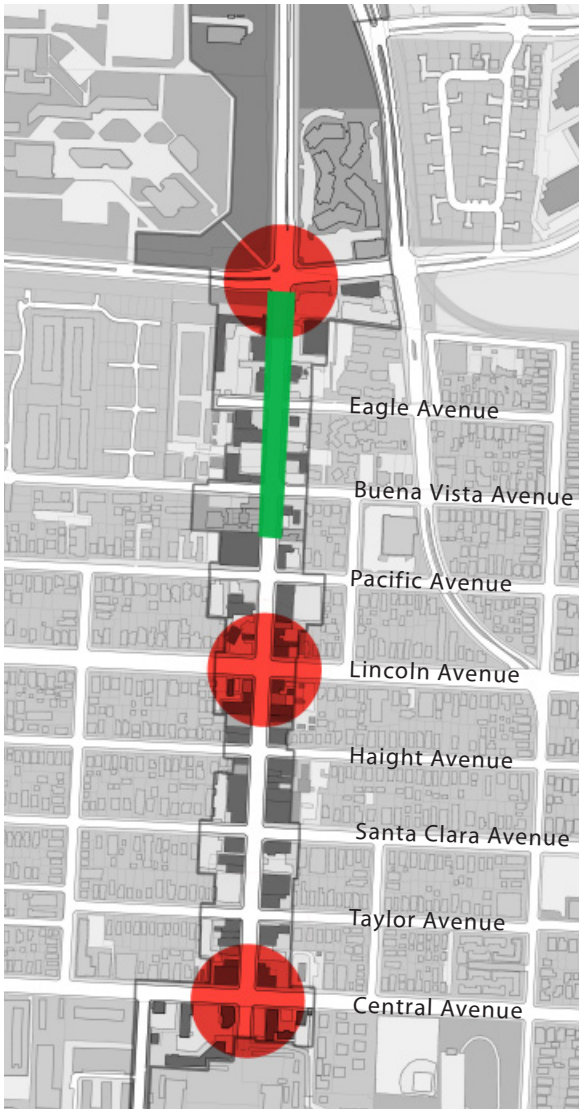


TRANS PACIFIC NATIONAL BANK
TRANS PACIFIC NATIONAL BANK
TRANS PACIFIC NATIONAL BANK
1442
TRANS PACIFIC NATIONAL BANK

Public Realm Improvements

Market forces on Webster Street are influenced in part by the design and configuration of the public realm. Current conditions present challenges to pedestrian activity in some areas. The goal of creating an appropriate gateway to Alameda and the desire to better balance vehicle and pedestrian needs are keys to uplifting the street. The Vision Plan seeks to enhance the public realm through a series of targeted improvements to streets, open space, signage, public art, pedestrian enhancements, and parking.

TOP *Existing conditions along Webster Street*



RIGHT *A menu of traffic calming solutions include:*

- Improvements at key intersections
- Extend streetscaping from Pacific to Atlantic

Streets

In West Alameda all roads lead to Webster Street. As a regional arterial, increased growth in the City has resulted in increased traffic volumes. Webster is also a critical commuter route, truck route, and the sole emergency route to the regional trauma center.

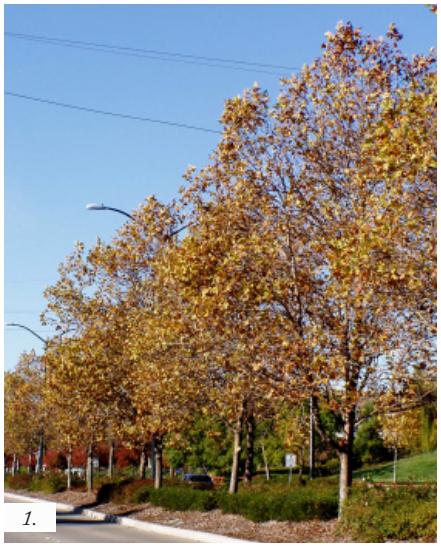
The City constructed pedestrian and transit enhancements with the Webster Street streetscape project between Central and Pacific Avenues. The three zones of a successful streetscape, the "marketing zone", "clear zone", and "amenity zone" are all well designed and crisply articulated. Elements such as curb extensions, pedestrian scale street lights, banners, street trees, and street furniture reinforce the perception that pedestrians are welcome. Extending similar concepts from Pacific Avenue to Atlantic Avenue should be pursued.

Consideration should also be given to additional pedestrian enhancements at the main intersections of Central, Lincoln, and Atlantic. These intersections handle the bulk of east/west traffic. Enhancements could include narrowing these intersections where possible and better articulating crosswalks with markings and textures. If allowed by Caltrans, the Central Avenue crosswalk on the east side of Webster should be provided.

Improvements at Atlantic should be coordinated with the implementation of the Cross Alameda Trail, connecting Alameda Point to the Fruitvale Bridge. This intersection presents a unique opportunity to better connect the College of Alameda and Alameda Landing to Webster Street. Restoration of the Central Avenue crosswalk on the east side of Webster also needs to be part of this initiative.

Finally, the City should work with Coltrans to restore the Posey Tube portal. The portal is one of Alameda's most significant historic structures and a major visual landmark. The facade has been modified over the years and some of its architectural features have been downplayed. Specific components of the restoration and clean-up should include:

1. Restoring the original decorative light fixtures at the entrance that have been replaced with "cobrahead" fixtures;
2. Cleaning the paint off the portal windows;
3. Reinstalling the Oakland neon sign in the portal windows;
4. Restoring the original color scheme; and
5. Consolidating the cluttered and confusing signage at the tube entrance.



1.

2.

LEFT *A menu of open space solutions include:*

1. Boulevard Landscape
2. Multi-Purpose Trail
3. Park Precedents
4. Streetscapes

3.

4.

Open Space

Stakeholders and citizens did not identify the creation of additional park land as a priority. Instead, they recommend improving the existing open space treatment between the Portal and Atlantic Avenue as a gateway to Webster Street and the City. There was clear consensus among all participants that addressing the landscaping in this area as a top priority.

Although significant improvements have been made at the new Wilver "Willie" Stargell intersection, the north end of Webster Street should be improved. Complicating matters is the fact that multiple stakeholders have jurisdiction for various frontages and streetscapes in this area. Interested parties include Caltrans, Catellus, the College of Alameda, the City Departments of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, and Housing, and the Department of the Interior.

With so many stakeholders and funding sources involved in driving a successful outcome, it is critical to develop a unified vision and a team approach. The consultant team's recommendation is that this process be led by the City.

Although discussed in the Streets Section of this document, extending the existing streetscape treatment from Pacific to Atlantic is also linked to this initiative.

LEFT *Gateway open space improvements diagram, depicting streetscape and park improvements*

1. Gateway landscape improvements
2. Future Alameda Trail (Alameda Point to Fruitvale Bridge)
3. Improvements to Neptune Park and edge of senior housing
4. Complete streetscapes between Buena Vista and Apezzato Parkway
5. Future Beltline Park (21-acre former rail yard)

WELCOME TO
ORCHARD DISTRICT
NEIGHBORHOOD
1 9 0 5

The
Mole
Hole
UNIQUE
GIFTS

WATSONVILLE
P
YOUTH
CENTER
COMMUNITY
CENTER

CITY HALL
DOWNTOWN
DRAKE PARK
1 9 0 5

THE
fireside

Webster Street
61

Health First
NETWORK

Signage

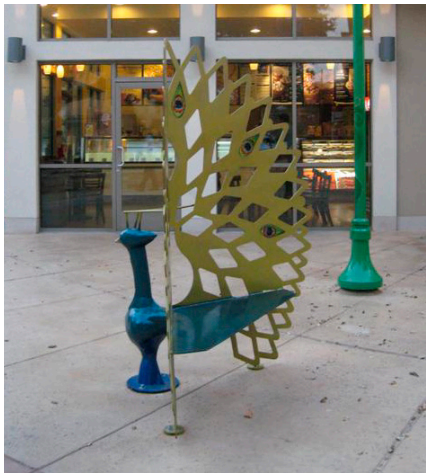
A key aspect of dining and shopping on Webster Street is first "finding it." As simple as this sounds, local business owners report that highway signs are confusing and wayfinding signage is minimal to non-existent.

The most important signage challenge exists immediately after exiting the Tubes from Oakland. On the main directional sign the words "Webster Street" are subordinate to the number "61" and obscured by lights. The City should work with Caltrans to redesign this sign to be more clear.

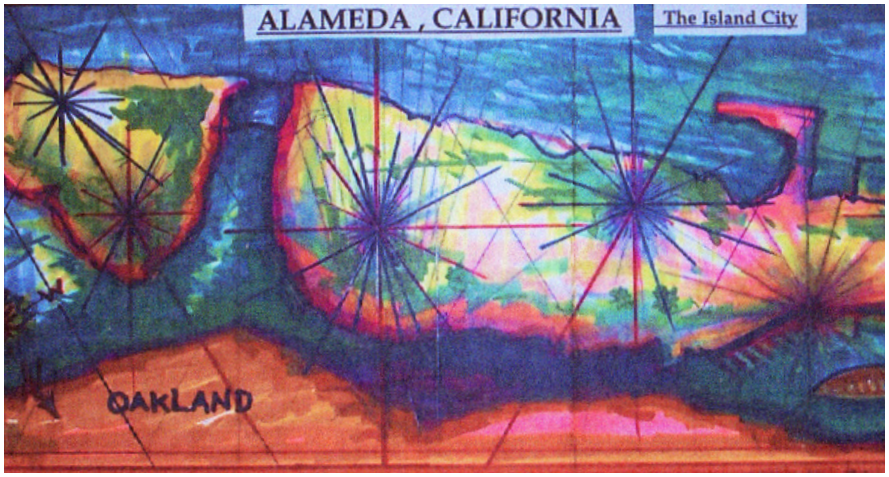
Further, "down the street" directional signage would help in finding commercial uses, public parking, and destinations such as Crab Cove. Although a minor item, this is an important part of avoiding visitor frustration and optimizing parking resources.

OPPOSITE *Signage precedents*

TOP *First sign after exiting Posey Tube from Oakland*



THAT WORKS IN THE SAME
NIGH AS THE NIGHEST
WALT WHITMAN - 1855


ALAMEDA , CALIFORNIA
The Island City
OAKLAND

Public Art

The integration of public art presents an opportunity to add interest and texture to the public realm. Along these lines, local artists are currently planning murals on the Ma Building construction barricade and the north wall of the Days Inn building. Stakeholder suggestions included integrating art into the streetscape and promoting sidewalk sculptures.

A number of residents support marking the former site of the Neptune Point Amusement Park with a new full size tower element reminiscent of the original Neptune Park Tower.

This tower would serve as a visual anchor for the entire length of the street, solidify the street's image in the minds of visitors with a feature unique to the East Bay, and may provide a further point of attraction for additional private investment along the street. Additional investigation is required to confirm that a full size tower would:

1. fit on public property;
2. not interfere with vehicle circulation (including emergency vehicle); and
3. be permitted by zoning.

A miniaturized version is another alternative.

OPPOSITE *Public Art precedents*

RIGHT *Concept for a tower at the south end of Webster Street*

NO
PARKING
WESCAFE
CUSTOM FRAMING

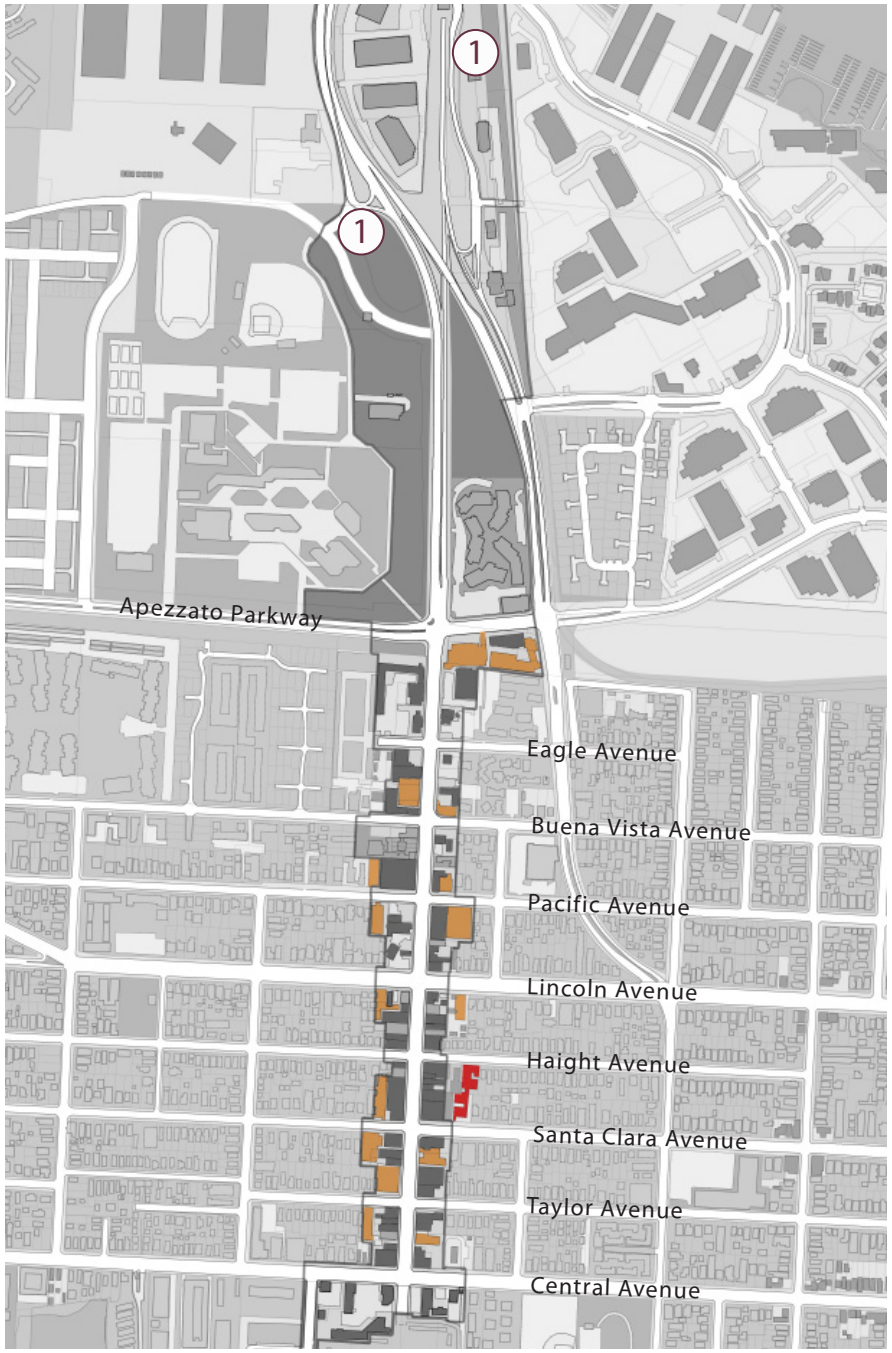
Parking

The diverse uses on Webster Street do not support a one size fits all parking strategy. In general, blocks south of Lincoln Avenue share parking resources while blocks north of Lincoln have dedicated off-street parking.

In response, the consultant team has created a menu of parking improvements. The menu includes:

1. Create park-and-ride lots;
2. Encourage a parking management plan:
   - Increase transit options
   - Improve wayfinding signage
   - Require joint parking and access agreement for development
   - Extend parking meter zones
3. Reduce City parking ratio requirements for future development;
4. Increase transit options.

In concert, these improvements allow for better utilization of existing parking assets.



1 *Create park-and-ride lots*

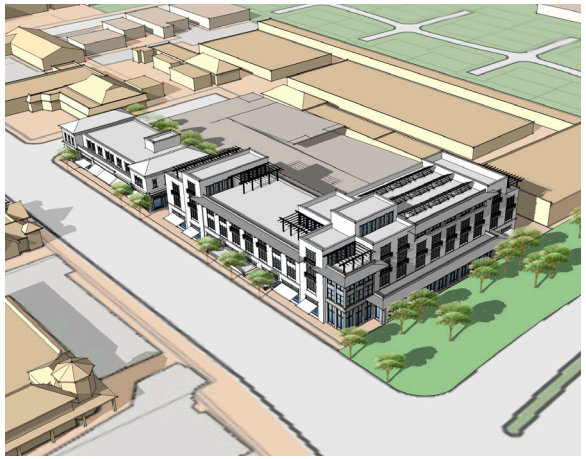
Potential parking resources

Existing city parking lot

Initiatives

In addition to recommendations for public realm improvements, the Vision Plan includes a series of high impact public/private initiatives. These initiatives are peppered along Webster Street and include creating a "town and gown" relationship with the College of Alameda, promoting paint-up/fix-up of existing, privately owned buildings, encouraging infill development on open sites, and redeveloping key opportunity sites. Together, these critical opportunities are designed to reinforce Webster Street's role as the commercial main street for West Alameda.

All of these initiatives will require participation between public agencies such as the City, private entities, property owners, and WABA.



CLOCKWISE *Design ideas for the Ma Building (courtyard); Neptune Plaza; Taylor parking lot; and Days Inn site*

A
COLLEGE OF ALAMED
ADMINISTRATION
WELCOME TO
COLLEGE of ALAMEDA
Room A-104
Registration
Enrollment
Counseling
Financial Aid

Town and Gown

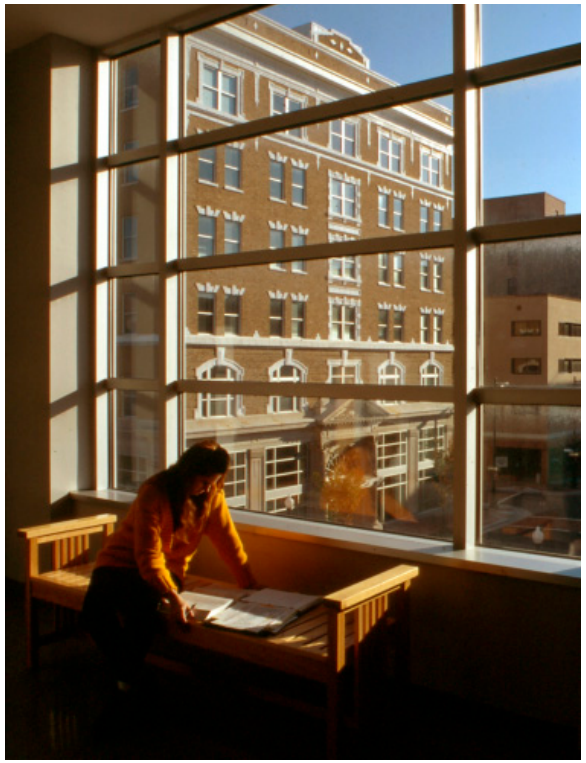
Most urban colleges have a "town and gown" relationship with the surrounding neighborhoods. The term "town and gown" refers to the two distinct communities of a college town with "town" being the non-academic population and "gown" being the college population. The best examples of town and gown mix these populations in a main street setting. In the case of Webster Street and the College of Alameda, this synergistic relationship never fully developed. It is a missed opportunity.

Vacant storefronts present a chance to locate fee based programs, such as dance classes, on Webster Street. The recently vacated Needle in a Haystack storefront is an example of the perfect candidate for this type of use. Students would benefit the street by increasing pedestrian activity and retail uses by adding a captive audience. The student would, in turn, benefit from a more rich social experience. This strategy has been used successfully as a revitalization tool in other communities.

OPPOSITE *College of Alameda*

RIGHT *Fee-based classes could brighten dark storefronts*

Flickr Attribution: JSmith Photo by Jeffrey Smith



TOP *Needle in a Haystack storefront presents an opportunity*

RIGHT *Town and Gown works in other communities*

LLOYD BAKERY
SUITES

Paint-Up | Fix-Up

A number of existing buildings along Webster Street are in need of a facade make over. In general, these properties are out of character with their surrounding context. Makeover candidates include the Ma Buildings, 1521-25 Webster Street (the Tin Building), Discount City, and Neptune Plaza. The intent is to follow the goals of the City's Facade Grant program in transforming these properties into aesthetically pleasing storefronts.

Typical recommended improvements include transparent shop windows, colorful awnings, attractive retail signage, and rich paint colors. Many citizens noted that tired facades are second only to vacant lots in depressing the commercial experience. The City is already in discussions with some of these building owners about the challenges and possible opportunities. Much work remains to be done.

LEFT *Ma Building existing conditions*

OPPOSITE *Ma Building's facade transformation*

BOTTOM *Ma Building's existing courtyard and with courtyard transformation*

TOP *Tin Building existing conditions*

OPPOSITE *Tin Building facade transformation*

BOOKS
WEBSTER BOOKS

TOP *Neptune Plaza existing conditions*

OPPOSITE *Neptune Plaza facade transformation*

NATIONS

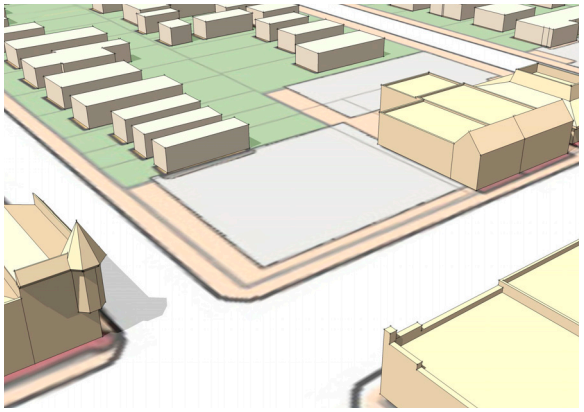
Infill

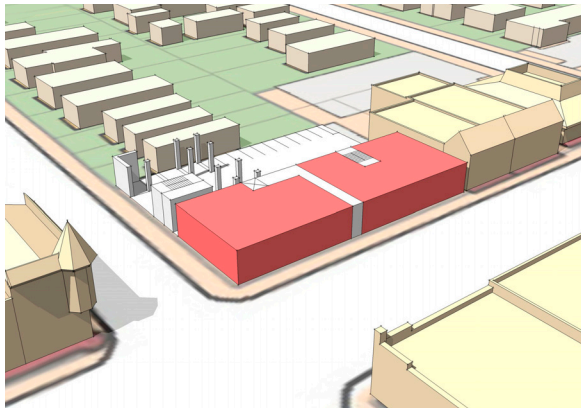
Although limited, a few infill opportunities currently exist on Webster Street. Plans are already in the works for an infill building at Pacific and Webster (next to Oteaz) and for the reconstruction of the 76 Gas Station. In addition, there is an opportunity for infill on the Housing Authority senior site facing Atlantic Avenue.

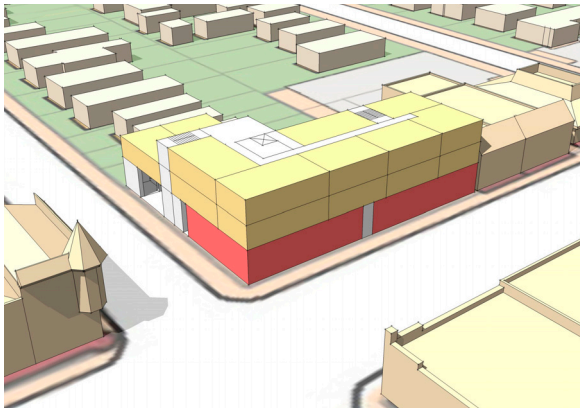
The best new infill opportunity is the Taylor Parking lot. The Taylor site presents an excellent opportunity to replace an open site in the traditional main street section of Webster. This private property is an ideal size to accommodate ground floor retail uses with housing above. Surface parking would be in the rear, screened from view.

ABOVE *Taylor parking lot before transformation*

OPPOSITE *Proposed mixed-use development complements the urban fabric of the intersection of Taylor and Webster*







ABOVE (CLOCKWISE)
Conceptual views of new development with land-use diagrams depicting levels and photograph of Taylor Parking Lot existing conditions

OPPOSITE *Model of proposed new development*

FedEx Office

Redevelopment

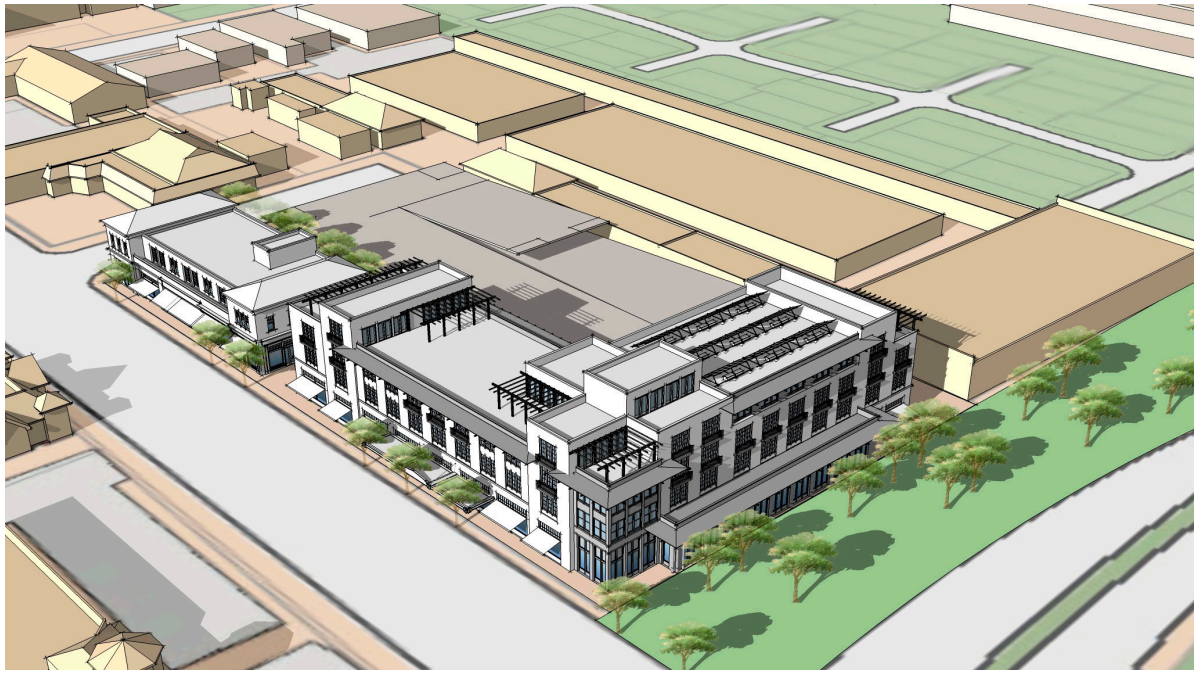
A pair of redevelopment opportunities exist on Webster Street. These opportunities include the Days Inn site and Liquor Store/Tire and Brake site. Both of these block-ends are composed primarily of uses that are in dated building formats, in the wrong location, or over-housed. The result is an underwhelming arrival on Webster Street as visitors cross Atlantic Avenue. These sites present an opportunity to transform a current weakness into a great strength.

LEFT *Existing Days Inn site*

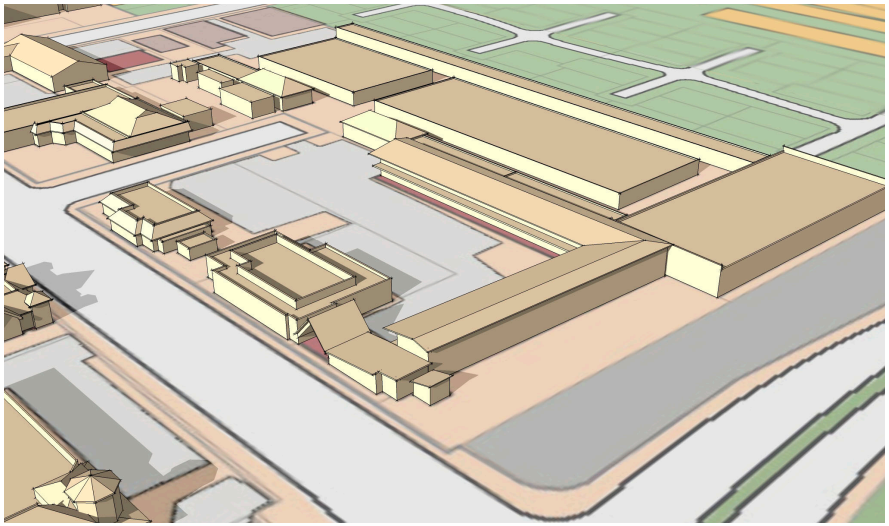
OPPOSITE *Proposed mixed-use development anchors the intersection of Webster Street and Apezzato Parkway*

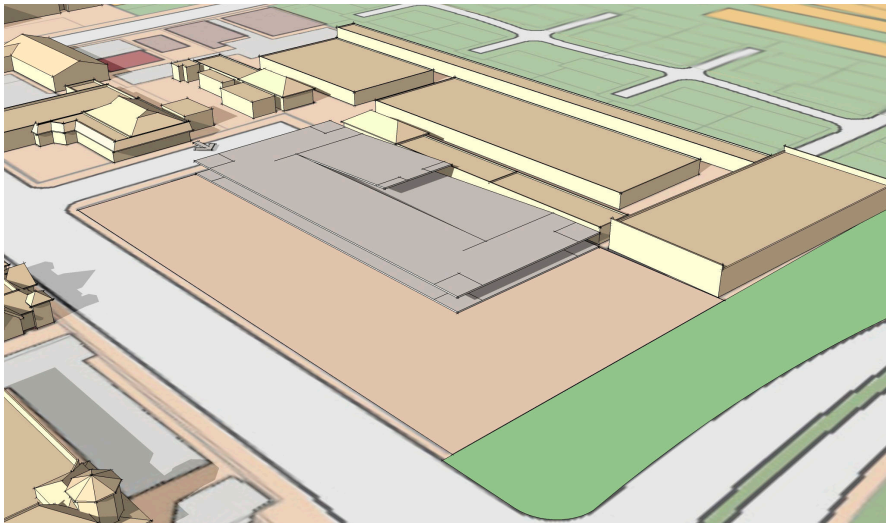
Days Inn/Burger King Site

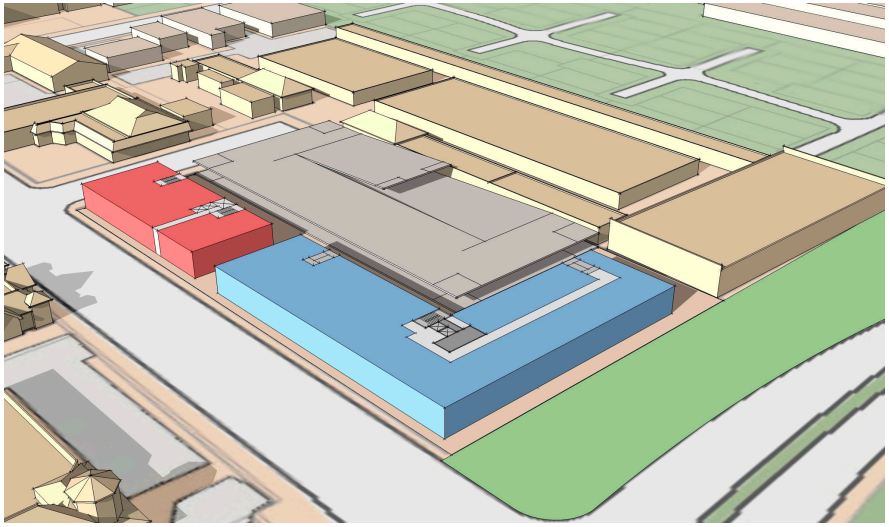
Days Inn is a single loaded building with an exterior corridor and a blank wall facing the Beltline property and future Cross Alameda Trail. Hotel chains retired this building design many years ago because it presents numerous security problems. The adjacent Burger King restaurant is also in an outdated format and is over-housed. Redeveloping this block face with updated buildings and uses would have a major impact on the perception of Webster Street.

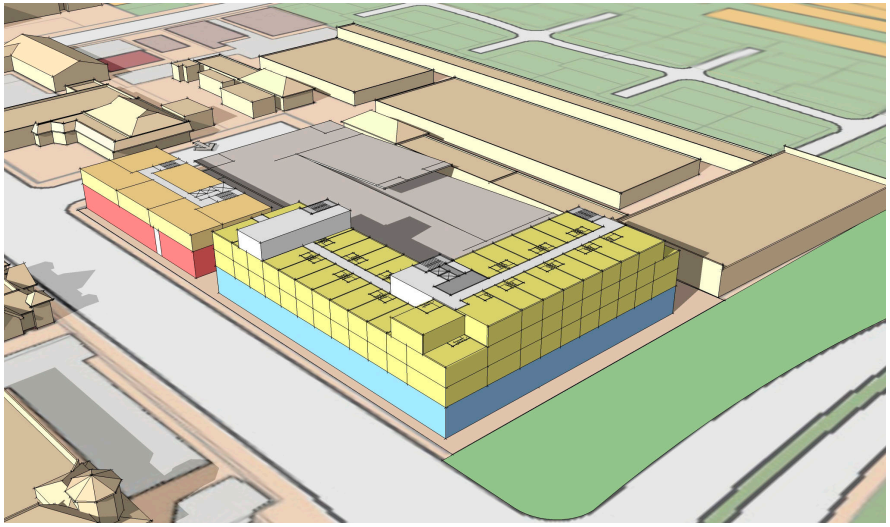


Possible new uses include retail, office, residential, and/or hospitality. Any plan should include retail windows facing the Beltline property and storefronts facing Webster Street. Stepping-down building height from Apezzato to Webster is also critical. The grand scale of the Apezzato frontage can accommodate tall buildings, but buildings along Webster should be held to no more than three commercial stories. The height limit on Webster Street would need to be amended to allow this scale of development. Parking should be screened from view in either a surface lot or parking structure.



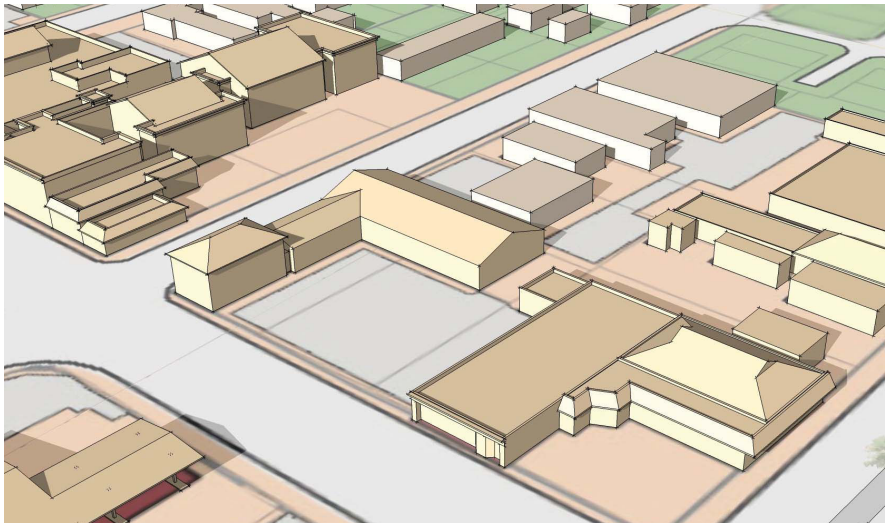


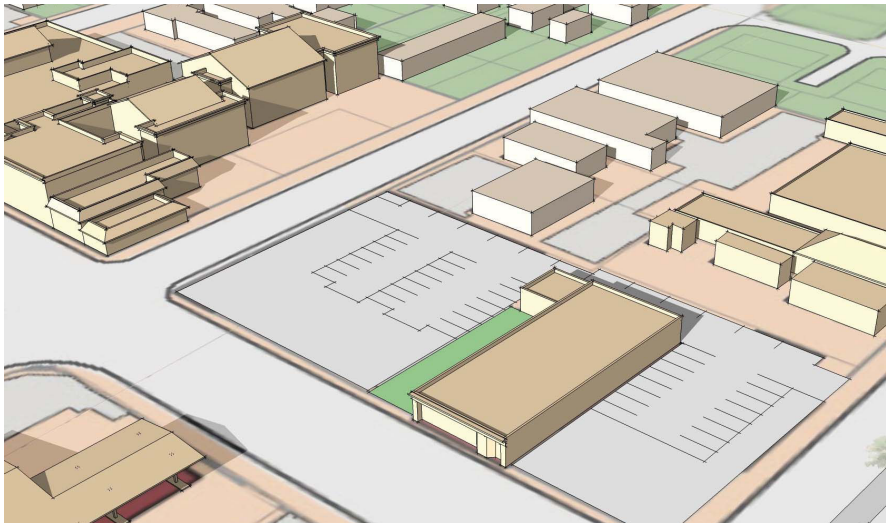


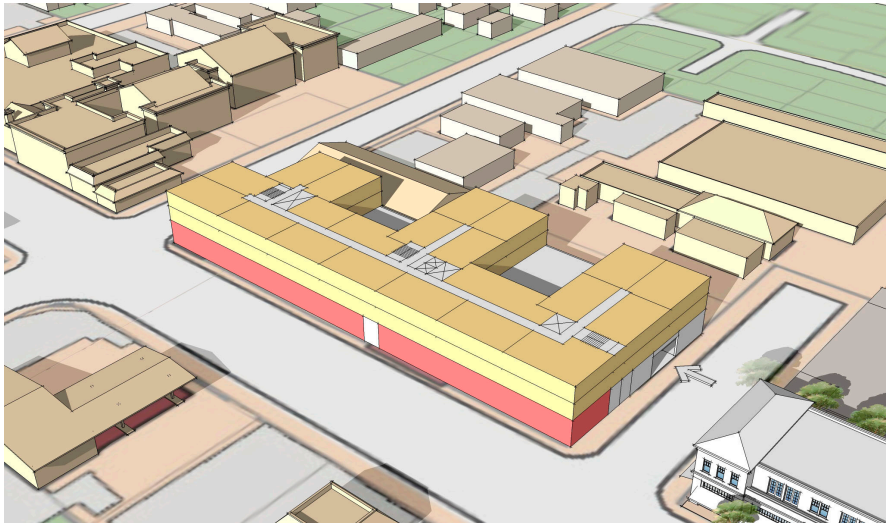


TOP *Conceptual views of new development with land-use diagram depicting alternatives*

OPPOSITE *Street view of proposed new development*







Liquor Store/Tire and Brake Site

The Liquor Store/Tire and Brake site was studied in the 2004 Strategic Opportunities Analysis prepared by EDAW. This site is more constrained than the Days Inn/Burger King property in that it includes less acreage and has an irregular configuration. Still, stakeholders sited this area as a priority candidate for redevelopment.

In general, the objective for redevelopment of this block face is to create street facing retail with possible residential or office uses above. Parking is a major consideration as dedicated off street parking is the norm in this area. It should be screened from view in a surface lot behind new buildings.

OPPOSITE *Conceptual views of new development with land-use diagram depicting alternatives*

LEFT AND BOTTOM *Existing condition of the Liquor Store/Tire and Brake site*

Webster Street Grocery List

PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

ZONING

- ☐ Entourage And Signage In The "Marketing Zone"
- ☐ Parking Requirement
  - ☐ Reduce Requirements
- ☐ Amend Building Heights
- ☐ Form-Based Code
- ☐ Joint Parking & Access Agreements

GATEWAY LANDSCAPING

- ☐ Streetscapes Between Pacific And Atlantic
- ☐ Beltline Park/Cross Alameda Trail
- ☐ Caltrans ROW
- ☐ Housing Authority Frontage
- ☐ Neptune Park
- ☐ College Of Alameda Along Webster

SIGNAGE

- ☐ Highway
- ☐ Wayfinding
- ☐ District

PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS

- ☐ Pedestrian Enhancements At Key Intersections (Atlantic; Lincoln; Central) as Appropriate
- ☐ Park-And-Ride Lots
- ☐ Car Share
- ☐ Bike Parking Facilities
- ☐ College Of Alameda Circulator
- ☐ Restoration Of The Posey Tube Portal

PUBLIC ART

- ☐ Create A Strategy
- ☐ Replica Of The Neptune Beach Tower

INITIATIVES

CREATE TOWN AND GOWN RELATIONSHIP

- ☐ Fee-Based Classes In Vacant Storefronts
- ☐ Reorient Campus To Webster Street With Extroverted Uses
  - ☐ Food Service
  - ☐ Micro Retail

PROMOTE PAINT-UP | FIX-UP

- ☐ Ma Buildings
- ☐ 1521-25 Webster Street (Tin Building)
- ☐ Discount City
- ☐ Neptune Plaza

ENCOURAGE INFILL

- ☐ Redevelopment Of Taylor Parking Lot/US Bank Site
- ☐ Rebuild Union 76 Gas Station
- ☐ Building At Pacific And Webster (Adjacent To Oteaz)
- ☐ Housing Authority Senior Site

FACILITATE REDEVELOPMENT

- ☐ Days Inn Site
  - ☐ Retail
  - ☐ Hotel With Ground Floor Retail
  - ☐ Residential With Ground Floor Retail
  - ☐ Office With Ground Floor Retail
- ☐ Redevelopment Of Liquor Store/Tire And Brake Site
  - ☐ Mixed-Use

OH YEAH, AND

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Grocery List

The Webster Street Vision includes dozens of recommendations. The Grocery List (opposite page) was developed as an implementation tool to help summarize and organize the task list. Recommendations are sorted by realm (public or private), category (zoning, gateway landscaping, etc.), and project duration (short-term, medium-term, or long-term). This is an important first step given that many of the initiatives will require multi-agency cooperation, where the City role will be as a partner.

Annual reviews of the Grocery List should be conducted by the City to:

- Check-off completed tasks
- Prioritize remaining tasks (based on projected impact, availability of funds, and public/political support)
- Add new consensus items

Published for City of Alameda, California

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