

**O M L F**  
**OAKLAND MERCHANT'S**  
**LEADERSHIP FORM**

**PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD**  
**SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**  
**IN OAKLAND**



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**Guiding Principals  
for Small Business Development in  
Oakland's Commercial Neighborhoods**

- I. Small business retail sales:
  - (1) are recognized as a major source of revenue for city government, and
  - (2) is a revenue source that is most directly influenced by city policies and practices.
  
- II. Small businesses are a core component of the well-being and vitality of all neighborhoods, both commercial and residential.
  
- III. In the absence of planning, coordination, and citizen participation, small business creation and expansion is mostly serendipity and happenstance.
  
- IV. City government works to its greatest potential of effectiveness when it is engaged in direct and continuous dialogue with its citizens, thereby establishing policies and programs that are embraced and adopted by those affected by such policies and programs.
  
- V. Quality of life, public safety, job creation, city revenues, local consumer spending, and overall image and attractiveness of the City are manifestly strengthened by a healthy, vibrant neighborhood small business sector.

**In recognition of these guiding principals, the Oakland Merchants Leadership Forum proposes the following steps as the basis of a overall strategy for making Oakland’s neighborhood commercial districts vibrant, thriving and contantly evolving .**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Small Business is Priority #1.             | Support for Oakland neighborhood small businesses shall be the core component of the City of Oakland’s economic development strategy and shall be based in part on the recognition of retail sales tax as a primary source of revenue to the City of Oakland. (Oakland has 55 neighborhood commercial districts)  |
| 2. Retail Sales Plan.                         | The City, and members of each merchant organization, shall together create a RETAIL SALES DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK for all commercial districts, components of which shall reflect the economic, social and cultural uniqueness of each neighborhood.  |
| 3. Sales Data Made Available.                 | Critical sales tax revenue data and other pertinent neighborhood commercial area information shall be made available so that local commercial area planning can be better facilitated and more strategic.   |
| 4. Parking tied to retail sales.              | City of Oakland parking policies and implementation practices shall be directly tied to the Retail Sales Development Framework, including establishing parking rates that vary according to the specific parking needs and conditions of each district. Greater use of meter-rate test areas and citizen participation shall be employed in making decisions about parking rates.   |
| 5. Merchants-City Staff Collaboration.        | The structural barriers between city staff and neighborhood districts shall become non-existent. Staff shall become directly familiar with local merchants and engage in an on-going dialogue with members of the retail small business community. City policies and actions shall not be made without the active involvement of the small business sector.   |
| 6. Active Small Business Attraction.          | City staff and merchant’s organizations shall work closely to identify and seek out small businesses according to the Neighborhood Small Business Development Framework and the recognized wishes and needs of each neighborhood, thereby ensuring a diverse and attractive shopping experience for consumers.  |
| 7. Community/City Clean-ups & Beautification. | Blight abatement, clean ups and such activities as tree planting, etc., shall be pursued as a coproduction with merchant and neighborhood organizations, and city staff, and shall be supported by the City with appropriate safety measures and use of city tools as can be made available. Beautification efforts shall have a high priority in all neighborhoods, and be based on local volunteerism and contributions. Such activities shall be on-going. |
| 8. Facade Improvement.                        | The Facade Improvement Program shall be expanded and shall reflect the cultural and existing architectural motives, if apparent, of each neighborhood. Merchant organizations and property owners shall participate in this effort in all possible ways.  |
| 9. Arts as a component of Economic Dev.       | As the arts are recognized by citizens as a tangible sign of improvement within a neighborhood, the City, working with artists and merchant organizations, shall develop a strategy as part of the Oakland Retail Sales Development Framework that will encourage the arts in each neighborhood commercial area, and also promote to Oakland citizens art as a way to enhance their neighborhood and their homes. Existing small                              |
| 10. Shopping in Oakland Promoted.             | Shop Oakland, Oakland Grown and other retail support and promotion activities shall be integrated into City efforts to expand the customer base within Oakland and the surrounding communities and to encourage people to shop in their neighborhoods as much as possible.  |

## **FIVE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF AN ACTION INITIATIVE**

The above list is not intended to be exclusive of additional concerns and priorities. As it stands, however, it is a framework of critical issues that can provide direction to OMLF's planning effort. Organizing to move the Oakland and its neighborhoods forward requires five things:

1. Broad target areas that encompasses all significant components of a planning framework and draws people together on multiple, interconnected issues.
2. Major focus on bringing all possible resources--human as well as material-- to the table, and that this is done in an atmosphere of collaboration, including city staff.
3. An ever expanding group of people who are dedicated to adding to this framework and who are determined to merge vision and action to achieve the desired outcomes.
4. A commitment to moving forward on multiple tracks or issues with an eye on their interconnectiveness and potential for shared resources.
5. A dedication to the idea that the results of this on-going effort will include all businesses, all neighborhoods, all commercial districts...that is, 100%.

## Notes from the OMLF meeting of January 25, 2011 (arranged by topic)

### Comments and observations:

#### I. WE MUST HAVE A RETAIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR OAKLAND:

- The plan must include:
  - a Retail Attraction component.
  - identifying vacancies and locations and
  - creating a list the potential businesses could use to help them find a business site.
- The plan should build on the “personality” of each neighborhood.
- The Plan acknowledges that the definition of Small Business can be different for each neighborhood, and can include corporate businesses (e.g. Gap) and franchises. This could help in the effort to reduce consumer leakage. The issues is how to accomplish this without negatively impacted local small business growth.
- We need to include a Marketing Plan for the neighborhoods, stressing, for example, the major consumer draws such as the restaurants in each neighborhood as appropriate.
- Parking must be addressed in light of small business needs across the city.
- A Business-to-Business strategy for the neighborhoods (supporting each other) needs to be included.

#### II. COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, SPECIAL DISTRICTS AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE PURSUED:

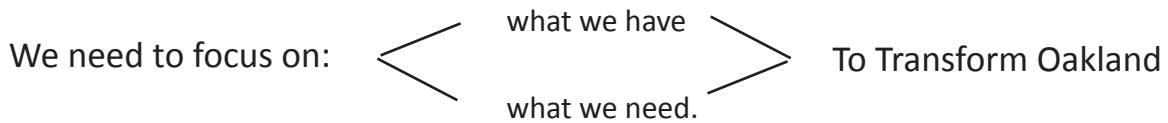
- We need to bring the County Board of Supervisors to the table for job creation and business development. (E.g. the East Bay Green Corridor).
- Need to talk to Karen Engle of EBEDA.
- Area-wide infrastructure issues need to be addressed, for example, coordinating with AC Transit on redesigning of transit routes. AC Transit’s bus lane down International Blvd and Telegraph Ave needs greater analysis to determine its impact on local businesses.
- We need to bring all the Chambers of Commerce together to seek a coordinated approach to supporting the neighborhood business community.

- ❑ One way to move issues and the Plan forward is by utilizing interns, and taking advantage of local universities and private sector analysis. This would include the Berkeley Group and Goldman Sachs.
- ❑ Dumping is at a crisis level, particularly in places like West Oakland. Cal Trans needs to be contacted about this.
- ❑ We need an Oakland Transportation Commission to help coordinate transportation concerns.

### III. Specific Thoughts and Issues Raised by Attendees:

- ❑ OMLF should be an advocate for **facade improvement** efforts in the commercial areas.
- ❑ **Code enforcement** needs to be emphasized.
- ❑ There are areas where **parking meters could be installed**, but repeated calls to the city brings no action.
- ❑ Merchants **above I-580 say they are neglected** and ignored, despite the high levels of tax dollars generated.
- ❑ **BID's city-wide** need to be supported and advocated for.
- ❑ The **OMLF Web** page needs to be linked to other sites, e.g. Open Table. The OMLF web site needs to highlight various retail sites, services and draws such as restaurants and speciality food sites, etc.
- ❑ We need to find ways to encourage **restaurants** to join together for marketing and promotion programs
- ❑ Merchants must discover ways to compensate for the impact of **the internet** on local businesses.
- ❑ Can we tap into **American Express, Visa and MasterCard** for support?
- ❑ **Managing a city-wide** Small Business Development Plan is the challenge.
- ❑ We need a **liaison in the mayor's office** for neighborhood small business issues, concerns and needs.

# OMLF notes from February 23, 2011



## 1. SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

- People need to know about the Business Assistant Center, and other existing services.
- Such services need to insure that they are tailored to small business needs, and not be generic.

## 4. WORKING WITH THE CITY OF OAKLAND

- We need to get updated on the City's Façade Improvement program.
- The city should consider imposing a blight tax. However, need to consider that the City is seen as using too heavy a hand to force people to act.
- We should write a letter to the Mayor asking her to take a position on the internet tax issue. We need to lobby for an internet sales tax.
- Small Businesses and OMLF needs a clear indication from CEDA about collaboration with the community...is it going to occur and at what level.

## 2. SMALL BUSINESSES

- Business owners often do not know what they don't know.
- They need to take advantage of tax credits in hiring, etc.
- In a small business, owners need to sell themselves, give people a "you" reason to shop. We need to stress the People-to-People aspect of local shopping, verses traveling to another community or shopping on line.
- Consider that a small business is actually part of a bigger market.

## 3. SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

- We could host a Small Business Development Fair, and also a Job Fair.
- We will host Small Business Month in Oakland in September.
- Join with other organizations such as the Berkeley Home Improvement District (Metro Lighting is a source) to transform neighborhoods.
- We need to promote business, encourage shopping in Oakland, and customer development.
- Developing a local customer base is a high priority.
- We need to develop templates for different areas, e.g. business recruitment services
- We need to be involved in PACs, redevelopment areas.
- Utilize empty stores for art. Use the windows if possible. Schools could do the art.

- IS OMLF TO BE THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO CITY HALL?**

Erin Kilmer-Neel notes, 02-23-11

1. Recruitment packet – laurel district, like San Jose – Luann
2. Need clarification for façade improvement – shifting \$ to A’s stadium? Darlene
3. Neighborhood tours
4. Green tour – home improvement – West Berkeley (Truitt & Light, Metro Lighting) West Berk Home Improvement District
5. CCA – College of Arts won’t do their windows
6. Idea - Blight tax on property owners!!!
7. To many laws not enough education
8. Get Econ dev is its core customer (Good to great)
9. OMLF has to be the one that makes the plan – not the mayor or any city administrator
10. Small business month
11. Daytime population into businesses – economic development is relationship businesses
12. Labeling yourself as a small business is not the way to do it. You’re a part of a whole
13. I Hella Shop Oakland Grown
14. Sales tax fairness – Internet – City add voice to Nancy Skinner
  - a. Letter to Mayor - Sharon Corneau, rules request to take a position
15. SBA def – 20 employees or below (20k businesses in Oak)
16. No longer have business recruitment tools like they used to be able to do
  - a. BAC – providing organizational assistance
  - b. SBDC retail program
17. City has
  - a. Sales tax data – trend an area
  - b. Demographics now
  - c. Co-star
18. Raise - status of RFP – ask Gregory
19. Listing / example – templates for associations
  - a. Darlene – collateral, graphics, printing
20. Sales tax open her office for use of tools
21. We should be heard at different levels --- planning commissioner
22. Redev PACs
23. West Oak PAC rejected by Walter Cohen – need to know that if we are working on stuff, we will be taken seriously, voice heard (related to things that we need the City for)
24. Price IS competitive with a lot of local businesses... messaging change - Oakland Grown should think about this for messaging
25. ROI – of per dollar spent on development of small biz/ districts vs. target
26. \$3mil is how much BIDs bring in
27. Businesses should advantage of tax credits for hiring locally, etc.
28. Small business university
29. Small business month – work with OCVB...like restaurant
30. Read the manifesto at City Council meeting... each person reading one point
31. Breakfasts
  - a. Chamber
  - b. Hillard
32. Merchant sponsored - Earth Day
33. Thank you to Temescal BID for food – in follow-up email

Marketing – Debit card

Business Training, Development - symposiums

Policy/Advocacy – Internet sales tax, ROI on target vs small biz/neighborhood etc.

Data Group

Fundraise

Strategy:

1. Small business support needs to be #1 component of Oakland economic development
2. Data: retail sales, etc. made available to community
3. Retail sales plan we developed – neighborhood focus
4. Parking tied to retail plan
5. Stronger city-community collaboration
6. Blight clean-up top priorities
7. Small bus attraction aggressively pursued according to plan
8. Façade improvement expanded in partnership with business.
9. Arts be tied to neighborhood economic dev
10. Shop Oakland – Oakland Grown pursued year-round.

Brain storm:

1. Get clarificatyion on façade improvement
2. Metro Lighting Group in West Berkeley – Home Improvement tour
3. Empgy stores for art
4. Empty stores for schools
5. Blight tax.
6. City tries beating people on the head
7. Getting people to do the right thing
8. Small business is core customer
9. Bus Asstiance Center – people don't know
10. Small Bus Dev Fair
11. Job Fair
12. Small Bus Monthly – need to promote business encourage shopping, customer development
13. Small bus? No, we are actually part of a gigger market. Need to sell “you.”
14. Need to development local customer base.
15. Need to look at internet sales tax
16. Where is RFP from city to OMLF?
17. Develop templates for different areas
18. Business recruitment services
19. Pre-involved in PACs Redevelopment aareas
20. Businesses need clear indication from CEDA about allocation with community.
21. Letter to Mayor regarding policy related to taxing internet sales.
22. Take advantage of tax credits in hiring, etc.
23. Focus on what we have. What we need.
24. Business owners often do not know what they don't know.
25. Is OMLF The Advisory Committee to City Hall?
26. We need to hear from Walter that he will listen to OMLF.
27. Small Business Month in September
28. Annual Dinner for fundraising – sell tables at \$2500/table to every major corporation
29. Golf Tournament fundraiser
30. Committees
  - a. Small Business Month
  - b. Business development
  - c. Local Debit Card
  - d. Public Policy Group
  - e. Data Gathering
31. Block by Block Organizing Effort, March 3, 6 p.m.

## Actions and Next Steps

1. OMLF Board must refine the “manifesto” document to insure it is a strong vehicle for stimulating action on the part of the City and the citizens of Oakland.
2. The month of September be declared Small Business Month in Oakland by the City Council.
  - a) OMLA, working with the City of Oakland and other organizations will schedule a range of activities during the month.
  - b) The September month will also be used to launch the Holiday Buy Oakland/Oakland Grown campaigns.
3. OMLF host its first annual Small Business Recognition Dinner in late September
4. Other events and activities can be created to make this a good month for drawing attention to and highlighting small business and neighborhoods in Oakland.
5. OMLF will invite the Mayor to the OMLF meeting March.

### Follow up Action Groups:

1. Small Business Month Planning Team
2. Business Support, Development and Training
3. Local Debit Card
4. Policy Group
5. Block-by-Block organizing group.
6. Data Gathering

Susan and Ada will begin to gather retail sales-related data to help launch the planning process.

### Upcoming events:

March 3, Union Hall, Block-by-Block organizing effort

March 5, Mayor’s Town Hall