

7TH STREET CONNECTION PROJECT

Engagement Summary Spring/Summer 2024



Background - Project Scope

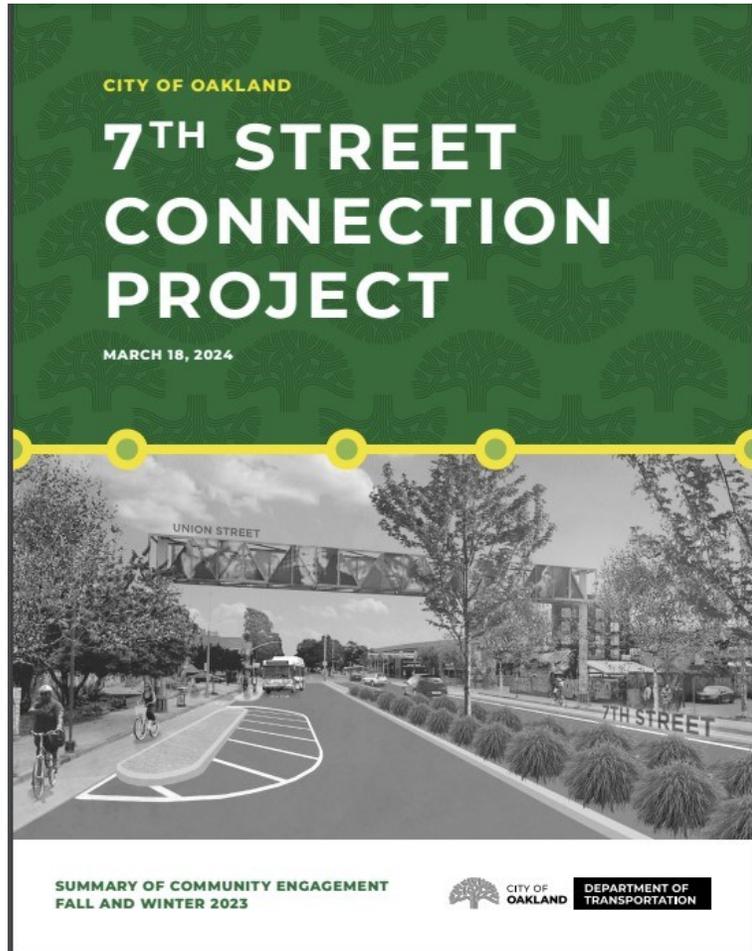
The **7th Street Connection Project** aims to reconnect West Oakland and Downtown, create safer and more comfortable ways to travel for those walking, rolling, and taking the bus, improve air quality, and reflect the rich history of 7th Street. Proposed improvements to be delivered as part of the project include:

- New or upgraded traffic signals and pedestrian signals
- Pedestrian lighting, wayfinding, and placemaking improvements
- Curb ramps, bulb-outs, and pedestrian refuge islands
- Upgraded sidewalk
- High-visibility crosswalk markings
- Protected bike lanes
- Street trees and other landscaping
- Fiber optic cable (to enable expansion of [OAK WiFi](#))



The 7th Street Connection Project is on 7th Street between Mandela Parkway and MLK Jr. Way

Background – Goals of Engagement



The 7th Street Connection Project team conducted engagement in Fall and Winter of 2023 to inform the early phases of design. This engagement focused on answering questions about community preferences on bus stop amenities, parking, bike lane design, sidewalk upgrades, and location of new trees and landscaping. A summary of this engagement can be found [here](#).

The goal of subsequent engagement conducted in Spring and Summer 2024 was to learn about preferences for **tree and shrub types/characteristics, art, historical markers, and lighting**. We also asked community members where these elements should be added.

Fall and Winter 2023 Summary of Engagement for the 7th Street Connection Project

Background – How We Gathered Feedback

In Spring and Summer 2024, various engagement activities were organized to connect with businesses, residents, and key stakeholders in West Oakland.



Pop-up event at Prescott Elementary School

Pop-Up Events

- **August 6th, 2024** – National Night Out at Defremery Park
- **September 4th, 2024** – Morning coffee hour at Prescott Elementary School
- **September 18th, 2024** – Back-to-School Night at West Oakland Middle School

Project Survey

- **June 27th – September 22nd, 2024** – Resulted in 99 responses

Business Visits

- **July 2nd, 2024** – Corridor walk to talk to businesses

Presentations

- **May 28th, 2024** – 7th Street Thrives Meeting
- **June 6th, 2024** – Acorn Neighborhood Council
- **September 9th, 2024** – Oak Center Neighborhood Association
- **September 13th, 2024** – Community Advisory Committee for OakDOT's Major Projects Division

Promotion of Project & Survey

- **10** Social media posts
- **1** e-blast

Background – Existing Art on or Near 7th Street



Artistic gateway on 7th Street near Union Street that features Malcom X, Maya Angelou, Esther Mabry, Barack Obama, and Martin Luther King, Jr. This gateway was constructed in 2011 and once included lights that changed colors. Currently, the lights do not work. Designed by Hood Design Studio. Source of image: [PGAdesign](#)



Dancing lights. Designed by Hood Design Studio. Source of image: [BART](#)



The Music They Played on 7th Street Oakland Walk of Fame. This project was started by the Bay Area Blues Society. Source of image: [BART](#)



Historical Marker on Mandela Parkway and 7th Street. Source of image: [Historical Marker Database](#)



The Music They Played on 7th Street – Oakland Walk of Fame.
Photographed by Barry Swackhamer.

ART & HISTORICAL MARKERS ON 7TH STREET



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City of Oakland Public Art Program

The [City of Oakland Public Art Program](#) defines **public art** as artworks and artplaces created by an artist, artists, and/or a collaboration of design professionals for a public place for the public to experience.

Public Art projects are funded through a 1.5% allocation from eligible City of Oakland capital improvement projects, eligible grant revenue, and from private contributions. This is authorized by an ordinance (11086 C.M.S.) that was adopted in 1989.

The Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) is an advisory body to the City Council, Mayor, Cultural Affairs Commission, and City Administrator on programs and projects related to public art in Oakland. The Committee reviews all public art projects funded in whole or in part by the City as well as projects proposed for placement in the public right of way and on City or Caltrans property.



Example of public art in Oakland. *Rainbow Power*, Rainbow Recreation Center. Artist: Johanna Poethig.

Feedback on Art

The public was asked to weigh in on their preferences for art on 7th Street by choosing among three options:

- Painting traffic signal boxes
- Painting the bike lane
- Stamped concrete within the crosswalk

Community members could choose more than one option as their preference. These options are based on what can be feasibly implemented along 7th Street through this Project.

Additional Public Art Coordination

The project team is coordinating with [City of Oakland Public Art](#) staff. While the three options listed above do not technically meet the definition of public art, the project team will explore how to implement the option that community prefers most. Additionally, the project team will work with Public Art Program staff on next steps for implementing public art along the 7th Street corridor.



Project staff presented updates on the 7th Street Connection Project and facilitated an activity to get feedback on art, historical markers, and greening at the September 12, 2024, Community Advisory Committee meeting

Feedback on Art

Below are examples of the three options for art presented to community.



Example of art on traffic signal cabinets. "Black Panther" utility box mural designed by Refa One. Located at 8th Street and Mandela Parkway



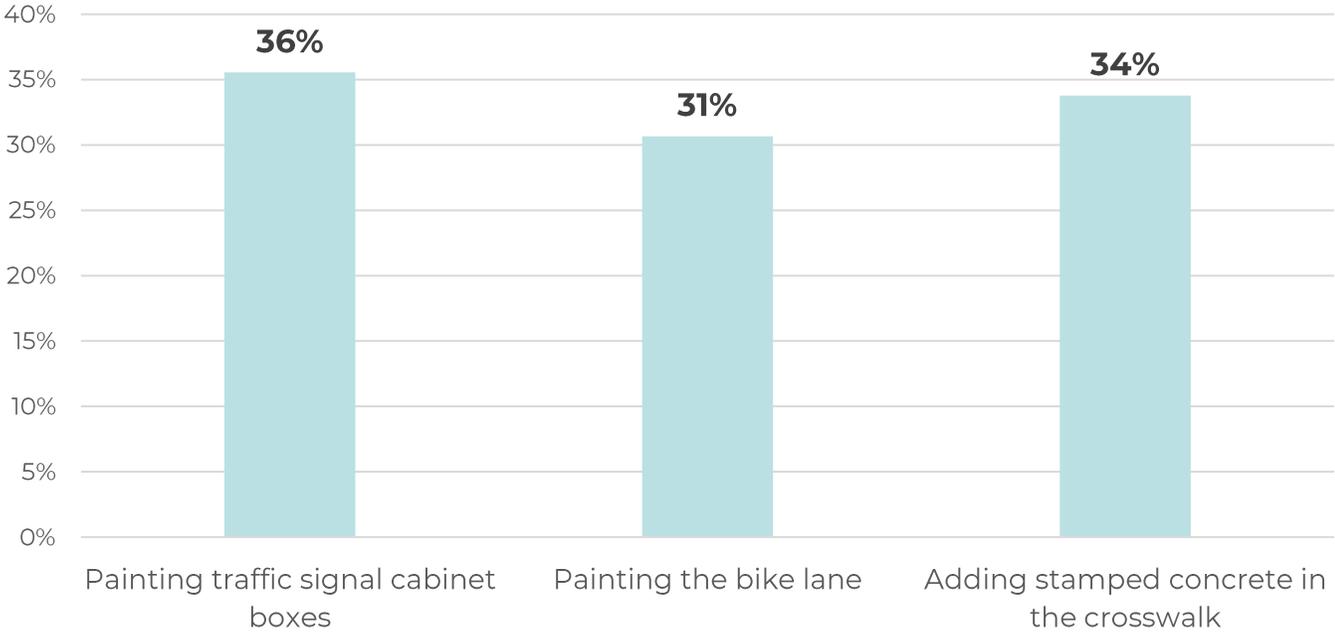
Example of painted bike lanes. 90th Avenue Scaper Bikeway. The project was designed in collaboration with Scaper Bikes Team members. Bike lane artwork designed by Roya Chagnon.



Example of stamped art within crosswalks. Pedestrian scramble on 8th Street and Webster Street in Oakland Chinatown.

Feedback on Art

What are your preferences for integrating art along the corridor?



There was nearly an even split in terms of preferences for integrating art along the corridor.

Painting traffic signal boxes was slightly more preferred (36%), followed by adding stamped concrete in the crosswalk (34%), and painting the bike lane (31%).

Feedback About Traffic Signal Boxes



Traffic signal box on Telegraph Avenue and Thomas L Berkeley Way. Source of image: Street Art SF

During in-person and virtual meetings, community members provided feedback about painting traffic signal boxes.

“Request for anything that deters graffiti. Examples such as traffic signal boxes or trash cans that have art on it rather than being solid green. There is an unsaid understanding that if there is art on something, it is not something that will be a canvas for graffiti.”

“Get art on signal boxes.”

Historical Markers

Based on previous community feedback collected during the first phase of this project, the Project team heard support for more historical markers along 7th Street.

The public was asked to weigh in on the locations of new historical markers as well as the content of new historical markers.



Example of a historical marker. This image is a Mississippi Blues Trail marker for The Blues Trail: Mississippi To Louisiana. It is located outside the Delta Music Museum in Louisiana.

Feedback on Historical Markers



Ron Dellums historical marker in West Oakland.
Photographed by Andrew Ruppenstein.

Community members shared their perspectives about historical markers.

"I like the historical plaques. 7th Street is so historical that we had a list of the businesses that were there even before the post office was built. If we could place something historical where Esther's Orbit Room used to be."

"Seems to me that it's important to note that there used to be a thriving amount of old Victorian houses that were all torn down during urban renewal. That was imposed on the residents and that's part of the legacy of the area."

"There is significant contribution not only to Oakland's civil rights history and also national civil rights history. There is information available."

Feedback on Content and Images for Art and Historical Markers

There were many overlapping themes for the content that the community would like for public art and for historical markers along the 7th Street corridor.

There was the most support for content that highlights:

- Black history and community and the history of West Oakland
- Black Panthers
- West Oakland music history (such as black jazz and blues culture) and how the corridor was once called the “Harlem of the West”
- Pullman Porters
- Images reflecting West Oakland history – people and events such as Slim Jenkins, Delilah Beasley, C.L. Dellums, Huey Newton, Esther’s Orbit Room, and sports legends such as Bill Russell
- Indigenous land and history
- Nature, floral, oak trees (specific to art)

Summary of Feedback About Locations

Community members were also asked to weigh in on the locations for where to place historical markers. Among those who answered this question, the most frequently mentioned locations (in order of highest to lowest frequency) are:

- 7th Street and Mandela Parkway
- 7th Street and Union Street
- 7th and Market Street
- There was support for putting the historical markers near BART for more visibility and pedestrian traffic.
- There was support for putting a historical marker outside of Esther's Orbit Room, but this is outside of the project limits.

There were a few comments that did not mention locations but specified that they should be placed at intersections or near bus stops where more people would be able to see them.

Staff Recommendations for Art on Traffic Signal Cabinets

The project team is exploring the feasibility of adding art to traffic signal box locations along 7th Street. The initial location recommendations are:

7th and Union – music theme

7th & Adeline – train theme

7th & Market – Black Panther theme

7th & Brush – Oakland native flora and fauna theme

7th & Castro – coordinate with undercrossing improvements project



Traffic signal cabinet on 7th Street near the intersection of 7th and Adeline Street

Staff Recommendations for Historical Markers

The project team is exploring the feasibility of placing historical markers along 7th Street. The initial location recommendations are:

7th & Mandela (Northwest or Northeast corner) – A marker recognizing the thriving Black community and land use that existed before the construction of BART, Cypress Freeway, and the Post Office. Content may include photo(s) of 7th Street from the past. If on northwest corner, the marker could also direct people to the Walk of Fame plaques on the other side of the street.

Note: there is an existing historical marker on the southwest corner of 7th Street and Mandela that is poorly maintained.

7th & Union – A marker recognizing the history of land before colonization. Tribute to the Chochenyo.

7th & Adeline – A marker with a tribute to accomplishments of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters and C.L. Dellums.

7th & Filbert – A marker celebrating sports legends from West Oakland, such as Bill Russel.

7th & Market – A marker with a tribute to Black Panthers, their founding in West Oakland, and national impact.



GREENING ON 7TH STREET



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Feedback on Trees

The project team asked community members for their opinions on trees. This feedback helps staff understand what tree characteristics are most important. The project team will use this input when selecting tree species to be planted along 7th Street.



Oakland Department of Transportation Major Projects Division's Community Advisory Committee members participating in a group activity to provide their feedback on trees and landscaping at the September 12, 2024, Community Advisory Committee meeting

Take the 7th Street Connection Project Survey about street enhancements (art, historical markers, lighting)



 **SCAN ME**

Signage that was used to promote the project survey. The survey is now closed.

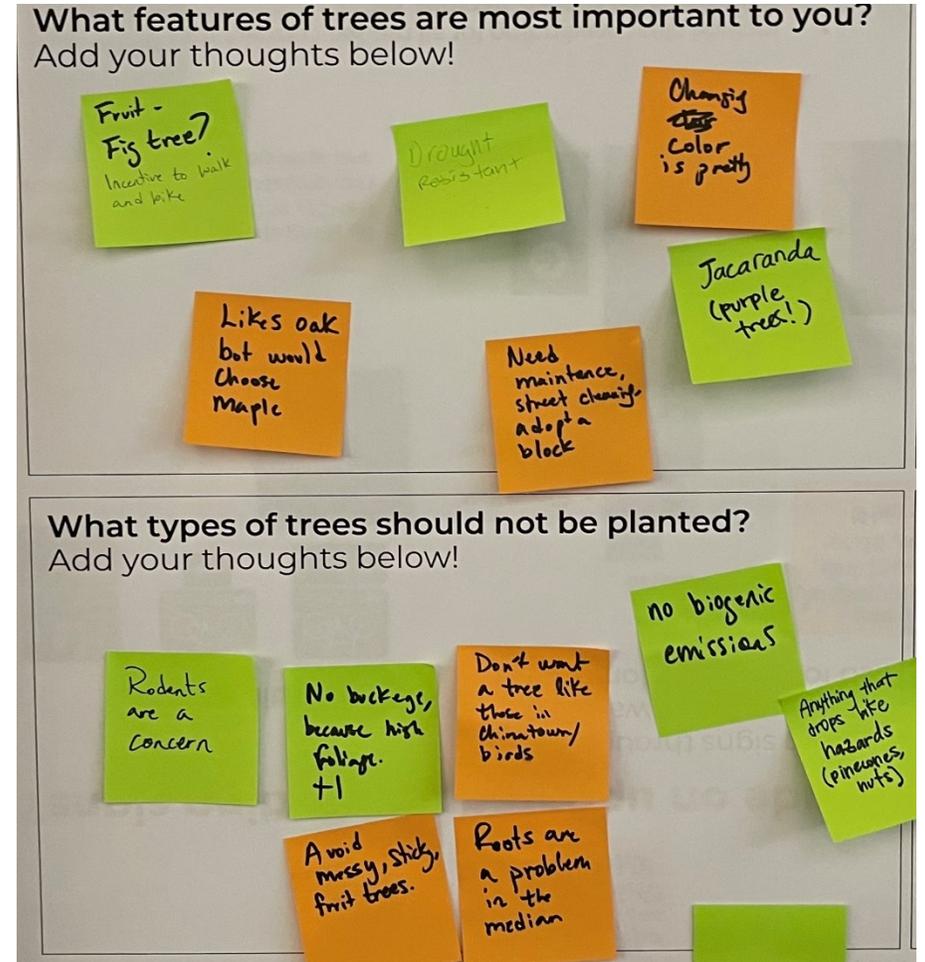
Feedback on Trees

The tree characteristics that community members prioritized included:

- Drought tolerant
- Provides shade
- Native to California
- Produces little debris
- Contributes to improved air quality

Other important community feedback on trees included:

- Give trees space to thrive and ensure roots don't damage the street
- Don't plant trees that attract rodents/pests
- Plant trees that look and/or smell beautiful
- Plant trees that are easy to maintain



Feedback collected during the September 12, 2024, Community Advisory Committee meeting

Feedback on Landscaping

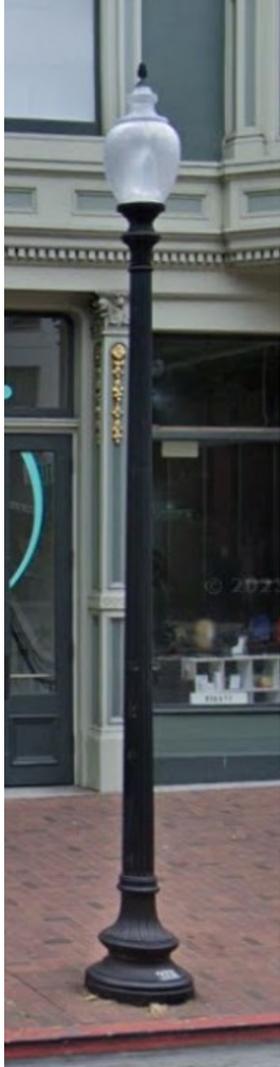
The project team asked community members for their opinions on where we should prioritize new landscaping. The project team also gathered general feedback on proposed landscaping.

Key takeaways from community members about landscaping are:

- Greenery along 7th Street is desired everywhere. Some thought 7th Street near Mandela Parkway was the most important location for new landscaping.
- Ensure new landscaping (shrubs, grasses, etc.) are not too high. New landscaping should not make it difficult to see people crossing the street.
- New landscaping should be easy to maintain and not attract rodents.



Proposed shrubs and grasses to be planted as part of the project.



LIGHTING ON 7TH STREET



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Feedback on Lighting

During engagement, the project team learned about needs for streetlights from community members. The project team asked community members where lighting should be prioritized, where existing lights don't work, and how better lighting would impact them.

Key takeaways for lighting on 7th Street included:

- New pedestrian lighting is preferred all along 7th Street and should be prioritized between the West Oakland BART Station and Union Street.
- Existing streetlights are not functioning in many locations on 7th Street, including at Mandela Parkway, Kirkham Street, Union Street, Market Street, and Brush Street.
- Safety is the top reason for better lighting. Many stated they would feel more comfortable walking if there was better lighting on 7th Street. Some specifically mentioned they often walk to BART, and lighting would improve how safe they feel at night.

Feedback on Lighting

A question in the project survey asked, “If you live on 7th Street or own a business on 7th Street, how would better pedestrian lighting impact you?”

Here are some responses to this question:

“I live on 8th and walk to BART often. Safety!!!”

“Visibility to the trucks driving through this area and to prevent collisions for cars speeding onto entrance to 880 highway ramp”

“Greatly. We get constant complaints that people feel unsafe walking from BART toward Union because it is so dark.”

“Make it nicer to stroll at night and visit businesses”



NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

Public Art and Historical Markers

The project team is coordinating with staff from the City of Oakland's Public Art Program to identify public art opportunity areas along 7th Street as well as types of public art that can be implemented. The project team has shared public feedback on the content of public art that is desired and will work with Public Art Program staff to identify local artists that can design and produce art that is consistent with community desires.

Greening

The project team has relayed the public feedback on greening to the consultant team. The consultant team is working on a revised landscaping plan, which includes tree species, locations of where trees will be planted, and locations for proposed tree removal and replacement. Community members have expressed concern about long-term maintenance of new street trees and shrubs. The project team will continue to explore strategies for maintenance.

Lighting

The project team has relayed the feedback about lighting to the consultant team. The consultant will prepare an exhibit that identifies locations for new lighting along the 7th Street corridor.

Timeline

This project is expected to start construction in 2027.

CONTACT US



Project Webpage

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Contact

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