

April 16, 2010

Oakland City Council

Dear President Brunner & City Councilmembers:

RE: Central Estuary Land Use Plan

For several years, the Chamber has argued for the conservation of industrial land in Oakland. With less than 10% of the City's land devoted to productive, job-generating, light and heavy industrial activities, industrial land in our city is becoming increasingly scarce, threatening Oakland's economic diversity and sustainability.

Moving target

Since the release of the proposed "preferred alternative" to the Central Estuary's land use plan, the options have continued to morph prolonging uncertainty about policy direction. The latest recommendation from the Community and Economic Development Committee rejected the proposed medium density housing from the Central Sub-area to protect Owens Brockway's glass container facility in favor of preserving "employment intensive" uses in the future. In contrast, more than two dozen businesses employing over 400 workers in the Eastern Sub-area are still threatened with the prospect of future residential neighbors when the Committee suggested "mixed use" at the end of Tidewater Avenue.

Recommendations

1. Keep industry separate from housing

After months of public process, the deliberations now focus on converting a small portion of the Plan Area to "mixed use." Planned residential development is inappropriate for adjacency to more than 30 businesses on Tidewater Avenue, Lesser Street, and Malat Street. The hours of work, noise of operation, and heavy truck traffic are all incompatible with residential dwellers, irrespective of what commercial activity occurs on the ground floor. We recommend you not allow "mixed use" zoning which will allow housing to be built next to companies that create jobs.

2. Promote commercial zoning compatible with waterfront

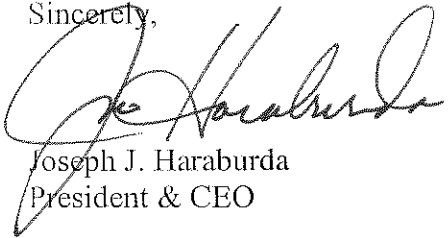
The Chamber recommends that the City Council approve modern commercial zoning for the Eastern Sub-area. Updating the zoning can help Oakland's older industrial infrastructure which needs modernization and investment. Specific options we recommend include:

- IO (industrial-office) or
- CIX (commercial-industrial mix)

Either of these approaches would ensure property owners of their land use rights, catalyze dramatic improvements in the Eastern Sub-area, and facilitate public access to the waterfront and its related amenities.

Oakland needs to focus its efforts to help companies expand and create more jobs while also attracting investment and stimulating new business creation. The City Council has a real opportunity to approve a policy which signals to investors that new business is welcome in Oakland, and which provides existing businesses with certainty that their employees' jobs are not at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Haraburda". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Joseph J. Haraburda
President & CEO

Copy: Mayor, City Administrator, CEDA Director