

LAKE MERRITT: OAKLAND'S GOLDEN GATE PARK

For decades, Oakland was a hidden gem cherished by its residents but shunned by much of the outside world. In the last few years, the burgeoning food scene and a handful of events, including the First Friday Art Murmur and OMCA Fridays, have changed all that. We're now a hot destination with all the economic benefits that entails. Businesses are thriving and Oakland's tax base is increasing

A key element in building upon these successes is to maximize the resources available in the Lake Merritt District - Oakland's urban version of Golden Gate Park. The lake and its environs are already heavily used on a daily basis and particularly so, for special events.

The attached sheet lists some of the many resources already in use, as well as those that have potential to do more. None have more potential than the Kaiser Convention Center which should, as much as possible, remain open as a public venue. A specific theme, such as Oakland's incredible ethnic and cultural diversity or its wealth of fine and performing arts, would nicely complement the Oakland Museum next door.

But, whatever the ultimate choice, the goal should be to help make the lake an even more vibrant destination for locals and for outside visitors alike - as is the case in SF. One key element would be a food court that would cater to Convention Center visitors and to the thousands of folks who visit the lake daily. Those numbers will increase exponentially once the adjacent pedestrian/bike pathway connects to the SF Bay Trail. To take advantage of Oakland's wonderful Mediterranean climate, outdoor patio seating in the architectural bays facing the lake with the A. Stirling Calder sculptures overhead would be divine.

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