



Economic Development Action Plan • 2025-2029

Economic and Workforce Development Department



CITY OF
OAKLAND



CITY OF OAKLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN • 2025-2029



Letter from Mayor Barbara Lee

Dear Oaklanders,

Oakland is a city of strength, creativity, and resilience. Time and again, our community has faced immense challenges – and time and again, we have responded with courage, compassion, and resolve. As we look ahead, I am proud to introduce Oakland’s 2025–2029 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP), a forward-looking roadmap that leverages our tremendous assets, supports our business community, creates new opportunities, contributes to fiscal sustainability, and builds the kind of inclusive, thriving city we all know Oakland can be.

The EDAP outlines a series of strategic priorities and targeted actions to stabilize and grow Oakland’s economic activity, while ensuring that prosperity is shared across all neighborhoods, and that those who have historically been left behind are centered in our recovery and future growth.

Guided by a vision of an inclusive, thriving economy that offers equitable opportunities to live, work, learn, and play in sustainable neighborhoods, this Plan is rooted in a simple but powerful idea: when Oakland’s economy grows, so do the opportunities to invest in our people. A strong economy generates fiscal revenues that allow the City to deliver better services – from safer streets and cleaner parks to more housing and resilient infrastructure. These public investments, in turn, help attract and retain businesses, support good jobs, sustain our climate, and create a virtuous cycle of opportunity and reinvestment. This is how we build a city that works for everyone.

This belief is more than aspirational. It is actionable. The EDAP outlines a series of strategic priorities and targeted actions to stabilize and grow Oakland’s economic activity, while ensuring that prosperity is shared across all neighborhoods, and that those who have historically been left behind are centered in our recovery and future growth.

But economic development isn’t something the City can do alone. It requires partnership. It requires all of us: residents, business owners, workers, entrepreneurs, community-based organizations, educators, and investors, working together toward a shared vision of an Oakland that is both vibrant and just. That is why this Plan is also an invitation to be part of a growing movement to make Oakland an even better place to live and work.

We know the path ahead will not always be easy. Like many cities, Oakland faces structural challenges, including rising costs, a structural deficit, regional inequities, real and perceived crime, and the lasting impacts of COVID and the economic disruption that persists. But we also have immense assets: an unrivaled cultural and artistic richness, a diverse and talented workforce, long-time, stable employers, and a deeply engaged community ready to build something better together.

This Economic Development Action Plan is our collective commitment to building an economy that uplifts all Oaklanders, not just a few. Let’s build the future of Oakland, and let’s do it together.

With hope and determination,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "e".

Barbara Lee, Mayor of Oakland



EWDD MISSION

The Economic & Workforce Development Department works to bring about a vibrant, innovative, globally competitive economy in Oakland. Our mission is to close equity gaps in access to jobs, business ownership and goods and services, thereby increasing Investment in Oakland to help grow vital government services.



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Introduction

The 2025–2029 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) focuses on building an inclusive, thriving economy where all Oaklanders can access opportunity and benefit from the City’s growth.

Oakland is a city defined by its resistance and resilience and celebrated for its diversity and commitment to racial equity. Yet, like many cities in America, it is facing complex economic, fiscal, environmental, and social challenges that require focused and coordinated action. In recent years, the City’s business community has experienced significant strain, navigating the impacts of economic disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rising operational costs, and challenging quality of life issues. Too many neighborhoods continue to grapple with issues related to cleanliness and safety, making it difficult for businesses to operate and grow. These challenges ripple across the local economy: job opportunities diminish, real estate activity slows, and public revenues shrink, making it harder to invest in the services and infrastructure that support Oakland’s communities.

The 2025–2029 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) has been developed to address these challenges. It is a strategic equity-centered framework to guide the City’s efforts to stabilize and expand economic activity over the next five years. It is supportive of other Citywide adopted policies, including those focused on downtown Oakland, arts and culture, and environmental sustainability. The EDAP reinforces that Oakland will be a national leader in the new climate economy by 2035. At its core, the EDAP seeks to close persistent racial and economic gaps in employment, income, business ownership, and access to resources. It focuses on building an inclusive, thriving economy where all Oaklanders can access opportunity and benefit from the City’s growth.



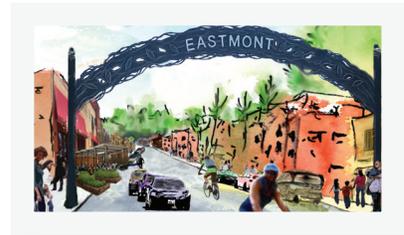
STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE EDAP

The Plan is organized around five strategic goals:

- 1. Attract and Grow Key Sectors**
- 2. Sustain and Support Businesses**
- 3. Build Oakland's Workforce**
- 4. Invest in Places**
- 5. Support Oakland's Artistic, Cultural, and Social Activities**

1. Attract and Grow Key Sectors

Target high-impact and high-growth industries, including healthcare, construction, transportation and logistics, and creative sectors, as well as subsectors that advance Oakland's climate goals, and position Oakland as a competitive, innovation-driven economy.



2. Sustain and Support Businesses

Deliver tools, technical assistance, and targeted resources to help local businesses, especially small and minority and women-owned businesses, survive, adapt, and succeed.



3. Build Oakland's Workforce

Strengthen partnerships with major employers and develop relevant and adaptable workforce pathways that connect residents to thriving-wage jobs and reduce unemployment disparities, particularly in communities that have been historically underserved.



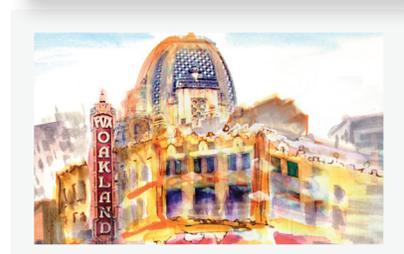
4. Invest in Places

Focus on improving the places that support Oakland's economy by facilitating investment in key business corridors and under-resourced neighborhoods, ensuring that the built environment supports economic activity and sustained community well-being.



5. Support Oakland's Artistic, Cultural, and Social Activities

Support artists, cultural institutions, and community events that drive economic vibrancy, attract residents and visitors, and reinforce Oakland's unique identity.



STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE EDAP

The work of implementing the EDAP begins with supporting the people and institutions that drive Oakland's economy every day. Businesses, especially small, locally-owned, and minority- and woman-owned enterprises, are the anchors of business corridors and the foundation of neighborhood vitality. Oakland's workforce is among the most diverse and dynamic in the country, and the City must ensure that every resident has access to meaningful, thriving-wage employment, regardless of zip code, skin color, or background. Equally essential is Oakland's vibrant arts and culture community, which fuels creativity, fosters neighborhood identity, drives tourism, and contributes significantly to the local economy.

The EDAP outlines actionable steps to help businesses grow and stay rooted in Oakland, connects residents to pathways for upward mobility, and invests in the creative expression that makes the City unique. By focusing on these core strengths, the Plan aims to foster a more resilient and equitable economy.

The built environment also plays a critical role in shaping economic opportunity. Strategic investment in real estate – both commercial and mixed-use development – can activate under-utilized spaces, attract new businesses, support community resilience, and improve quality of life. The EDAP supports growth that strengthens neighborhoods without displacing the residents, workers, and cultural institutions that make them vibrant. It emphasizes equitable investment, ensuring that improvements in infrastructure and public space benefit longtime community members while inviting inclusive new growth.

The EDAP outlines actionable steps to help businesses grow and stay rooted in Oakland, connects residents to pathways for upward mobility, and invests in the creative expression that makes the City unique. By focusing on these core strengths – and encouraging thoughtful development that reinforces rather than replaces community – the Plan aims to foster a more resilient and equitable economy, one that reflects Oakland's values and advances opportunity for all.

This Plan also reflects an understanding of the virtuous cycle of economic development: when businesses succeed, they create jobs and generate revenue. That revenue enables the City to invest in critical services and infrastructure, which in turn enhances Oakland's appeal as a place to live, work, and invest. A stronger economy strengthens the City's fiscal health and capacity to serve its residents. The 2025–2029 Economic Development Action Plan sets the course for doing just that.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



To ensure long-term success, EWDD committed to five guiding principles that respond to community input and serve as a foundation for decision-making and implementation, helping to enhance accountability, build trust, and navigate complex trade-offs and competing priorities.

- 1. Advance a Just and Equitable Economy:**
close racial equity gaps and promote fairness
- 2. Be Responsive, Accountable and Transparent:**
build trust through open communication
- 3. Use Data, Informed by Community Experience:**
make informed decisions using facts and local knowledge
- 4. Cultivate Community Partnerships:**
strengthen partnerships with local leaders, businesses, foundations, and nonprofit organizations
- 5. Align with Other City Policies and Strategies:**
build on the priorities outlined in adopted City plans for housing, climate, culture, the built environment, and community safety

CELEBRATING OAKLAND'S ASSETS

Highlighting Oakland's assets is essential to developing an action plan that leverages the City's inherent advantages and opportunities. Oakland's strengths reflect its unique geography, diverse population, rich cultural life, and evolving economy. These assets are the foundation for long-term, inclusive growth.

STRATEGIC LOCATION AND CONNECTIVITY

- ▲ Centrally located in the Bay Area with direct access to regional highways, bridges, BART, AC Transit, ferry services, and national passenger rail networks (e.g., Amtrak).

GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION HUB

- ▲ **Port of Oakland:** Ninth busiest container port in the U.S., connected to 14 major shipping lines and supporting over 98,000 jobs and \$174 billion in annual economic activity. Nearly 20 miles of working waterfront serve as a hub for maritime industry, clean energy infrastructure, and public access.
- ▲ **Oakland International Airport:** Serves over 11 million passengers annually via 13 airlines and 48 nonstop destinations, expanding Oakland's global reach for business and tourism.
- ▲ **Rail:** Terminus for Union Pacific and BNSF railroads, offering seamless freight movement and national supply chain access.

INDUSTRIAL AND INNOVATION CAPACITY

- ▲ Expansive industrial and warehouse zones position Oakland for continued growth in advanced and custom manufacturing, life sciences, clean tech, and research and development.
- ▲ Through a \$15M grant from the Last Mile Federal Funding Account, administered by the California Public Utilities Commission, Oakland Connect will expand access to reliable, high-speed internet in East and West Oakland.

Oakland's strengths reflect its unique geography, diverse population, rich cultural life, and evolving economy.



- ▲ In partnership with the Kapor Foundation, more than \$2 million for inclusive technology was secured to help expand STEAM education, build career pathways, and lay the groundwork for responsible AI practices that center equity and transparency.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT MOMENTUM

- ▲ Oakland was the first Bay Area city to receive California's "Pro-Housing" designation in December 2022.
- ▲ Since 2015, more than 18,900 housing units have been permitted.
- ▲ Measure U has committed \$350 million to affordable housing with the final allocation expected in FY 26/27—the largest investment in the City's history.
- ▲ Increased supply has made much of Oakland's market-rate housing accessible to households earning 80–120% of Area Median Income.

MODERN, MULTIMODAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- ▲ More than \$50 million in local government capital projects are funded annually, including street repaving, safety improvements including for people walking and biking and near schools and transit hubs, and ADA-compliant sidewalks and curb ramps.
- ▲ Since 2020, Oakland has secured over \$200 million in grant funding for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.
- ▲ Infrastructure upgrades include 17 miles of new bikeways and over 210 miles of street resurfacing since 2019, as well as the Leimert Bridge Seismic Retrofit.

HIGHLY-EDUCATED AND GROWING CONSUMER BASE

- ▲ Oakland has a population of nearly 430,000, and as of 2023, 47% of residents held a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ▲ Oakland is home to six colleges and universities.
- ▲ Nearly half of all households earn more than \$100,000 annually, reflecting a strong and growing consumer base.



EXPANSIVE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

- ▲ Thousands of acres of parks, trails, and athletic fields across the City promote public health, community activity, year-round recreation, and access to nature for all.
- ▲ Voter-approved initiatives enabling renewal of \$100M+ worth of infrastructure in our parks, open spaces, and recreation centers.

VIBRANT ARTS, FOOD, AND CULTURAL LIFE

- ▲ Oakland's creative industries are globally recognized, with a thriving arts, music, and culinary scene.
- ▲ Named the #1 Best Food City by *Condé Nast Traveler* in 2024 and 2025.
- ▲ Home to Roots & Soul soccer teams and the Oakland Ballers baseball team, both of which are models of community-centered sports entertainment.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

The five goals of the EDAP were developed through a combination of regular and ongoing stakeholder engagement, focused work sessions, data-driven analysis, and alignment with existing City policies and priorities. The City engages regularly with the chambers of commerce, business improvement districts (BIDs), merchant associations, Oakland's Workforce Development Board, and community and professional organizations to surface the most pressing economic challenges and opportunities facing Oakland's business and workforce communities. This input was analyzed alongside key economic indicators and racial equity metrics to ensure the Plan addresses persistent disparities in income, education access, employment, and access to resources.

The goals also reflect and build upon the City's adopted planning frameworks, including the **General Plan** (2045 General Plan Update is underway) and **Housing Element**, the **Cultural Development Plan**, the **Equitable Climate Action Plan**, and area-specific strategies such as the **Downtown Oakland Specific Plan** and other Specific Plans. Additionally, the EDAP's

development was shaped by a robust and honest assessment of where Oakland stands in the current market and real estate development cycle. And finally, the Plan is focused on what the Economic & Workforce Development Department controls or influences while trying to be realistic about the City's current fiscal and staffing capacity.

The result is a strategic framework that is both grounded in community needs and aligned with the City's long-term vision for equitable, sustainable growth.

These partnerships are not only vital for delivering results but also for aligning resources, addressing systemic disparities, and building toward a more resilient and equitable economy that serves all Oaklanders.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Each goal in the EDAP has been shaped through ongoing and focused stakeholder engagement, and future input will continue to guide its implementation. Inclusive engagement – meaning engagement that is centered on the priorities and experiences of Oakland residents, workers, and business owners – has helped identify service gaps and inform strategies to direct resources where they are most needed. This approach creates feedback loops that promote transparency and accountability, ensuring the Plan remains responsive and adaptive over time.

Collaboration and deep community partnerships are essential to the Plan's success. Implementation relies on a broad coalition that includes businesses, Business Improvement Districts, Chambers of Commerce, real estate developers, artists and culture keepers, cultural institutions, merchant associations, Visit Oakland, and key agency partners such as BART, AC Transit, the County, and the Port of Oakland. These partnerships are not only vital for delivering results but also for aligning resources, addressing systemic disparities, and building toward a more resilient and equitable economy that serves all Oaklanders.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The five goals, and the related actions and sub-actions of the EDAP are aligned with the Economic & Workforce Development Department's (EWDD) organizational structure, with each goal reflecting the work of one or more divisions within the Department, thereby embedding the Plan's goals and actions into EWDD's day-to-day activities. The EDAP includes an implementation matrix that assigns the lead EWDD division for each action, the timeline for completion, and specific performance measures. It also identifies other Departments whose partnership is required to accomplish the actions. This matrix will be a key tracking tool to measure the success of the EDAP.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EDAP

Following this introduction, the EDAP provides a more detailed overview of the Racial Equity Framework that informs all aspects of the Plan. Then, the five strategic goals are each described in more detail in distinct chapters and include the actions and sub-actions that will be taken to achieve them. The EDAP implementation matrix is described above and presented at the end of this document.

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Racial Equity Framework



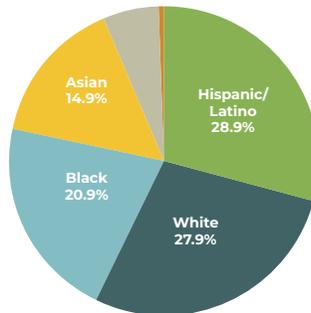
Racial equity is not only a moral imperative, but an economic one as well. A **2018 study by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Altarum** found that eliminating racial disparities in health, education, incarceration, and employment could add \$8 trillion to the U.S. economy by 2050. Locally, the Bay Area Council Economic Institute estimates that achieving wage equity would inject \$55 billion annually into the Bay Area economy.

Consumer spending underpins economic growth nationally, and this spending is increasingly driven by Black, Latinx, and Asian Pacific Islander communities. Collectively, these groups represent 72% of Oakland's residential population (see **Figure 1**). Additionally, 39% of households in Oakland speak a language other than English at home (see **Figure 2**). Taken together, this data confirms that closing racial gaps in access can unlock economic growth, attract investment, and strengthen neighborhood resilience in Oakland.

Figures 1 and 2: Race Distribution and Languages Spoken at Home

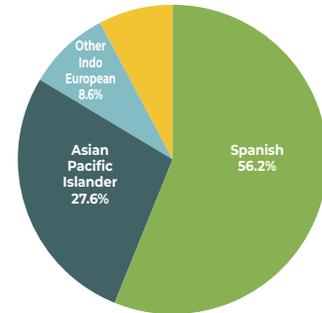
RACE DISTRIBUTION

Two or more races alone 6% ▼ ▼ Some other race alone .7%



LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Other Languages 7.6%



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023

RACIAL EQUITY APPROACH

Since 2018, the City of Oakland has used a Racial Equity Framework to evaluate major policy and planning efforts. The **Oakland Equity Indicators Report** documented deep disparities in economic outcomes by race and geography, including gaps in unemployment, poverty, business ownership, and financial health. These findings guided investments in communities historically overlooked by public services and helped shape neighborhood-based programs for more equitable economic development. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this approach deepened, prioritizing emergency support for communities hit hardest by health and financial disruptions.

The EDAP builds on this progress, adopting a place-based strategy that focuses on closing service and investment gaps in under-resourced neighborhoods. Oakland's racial equity approach is embedded in each goal of the plan:

1. Use Data to Identify Disparities

Apply disaggregated equity indicators, such as income, business ownership, and unemployment rates, to guide targeting and track progress.

2. Follow Oakland's Inclusive Engagement Policy

Engage impacted communities through culturally responsive, multilingual, and accessible outreach.

3. Address Service Disparities

Focus investments in areas with persistent underinvestment, using data and community insight to eliminate barriers to opportunity.

4. Deliver a Resilient Inclusive Economy to All Oaklanders

Prioritize neighborhoods where people live and work, supporting community wealth building, educational and employment access, and safe, walkable business corridors.

5. Build Community Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms

Co-create solutions with residents, businesses, entrepreneurs, and youth to ensure transparent implementation and iterative learning.

DATA-LED, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN EQUITY INDICATORS

The EDAP emphasizes equitable implementation over five years, using indicators to guide continuous learning and improvement. By focusing on Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities, the plan works to reverse generations of disinvestment and exclusion. Key strategies include expanding access to capital for small entrepreneurs, addressing income and employment disparities, and transforming vacant or under-utilized spaces into productive business and cultural assets. These interventions aim to build a more vibrant economy while preserving Oakland's cultural identity and ensuring that every resident has a path to prosperity.

As the City continues to face fiscal constraints, including recent cuts to cultural and economic development programs, equity-driven investments become even more essential. By aligning public resources with community needs and measurable equity goals, Oakland can make targeted, lasting progress despite budget limitations. The following indicators summarized in **Figure 3** are selected from the “Economy” theme of the **2018 Oakland Equity Indicators Report**.¹ EWDD continues to track some of these indicators while others have been supplanted by more meaningful data or to accommodate changes in data availability. Selected indicators will help guide implementation of the EDAP.

Figure 3: Economy Themed Equity Indicators from the 2018 Equity Indicators Report

INDICATOR	FOCUS AREA
Business Ownership	Disparities in ownership rates between Black and White Oaklanders
Long-term Business Vacancy	Correlation between vacancies and race/ethnicity of census tracts
Disconnected Youth	Youth ages 16–24 not in school or work, by race
Labor Force Participation	Gaps in labor market access, by race
Unemployment	Racial disparities in unemployment
Median Household Income	Income ratio between Black and White households
Poverty	Percent of population below the federal poverty level
Employment in High-Wage Industries	Representation by race in high-paying sectors
Living Wage (*)	Likelihood of earning at least a living wage job
Participation in Workforce Programs	Access to training for unemployed residents

¹ See pages 20 – 40 of the 2018 Oakland Equity Indicators Report.
 (*) The term “Thriving Wage” now replaces the term “Living Wage.”

GOAL 1



Attract and Grow Key Sectors

OPPORTUNITY

Oakland's central position within the larger regional economy, coupled with its diverse talent base and a robust transportation network, creates strong potential to attract and grow business and employers in key industries. Goal #1 is designed to target high-impact and high-growth sectors, including the healthcare industry, transportation and logistics, creative industries, and sectors that advance Oakland's climate goals, while positioning Oakland as a competitive, innovation-driven economy that recognizes the impact of technology across sectors. Targeted industry development can diversify the City's economic base, expand access to quality employment, help keep pace with economic shifts, and enhance the City's long-term fiscal stability. Progress towards Goal #1 creates the economic foundation and resources needed to advance the City's other four goals.

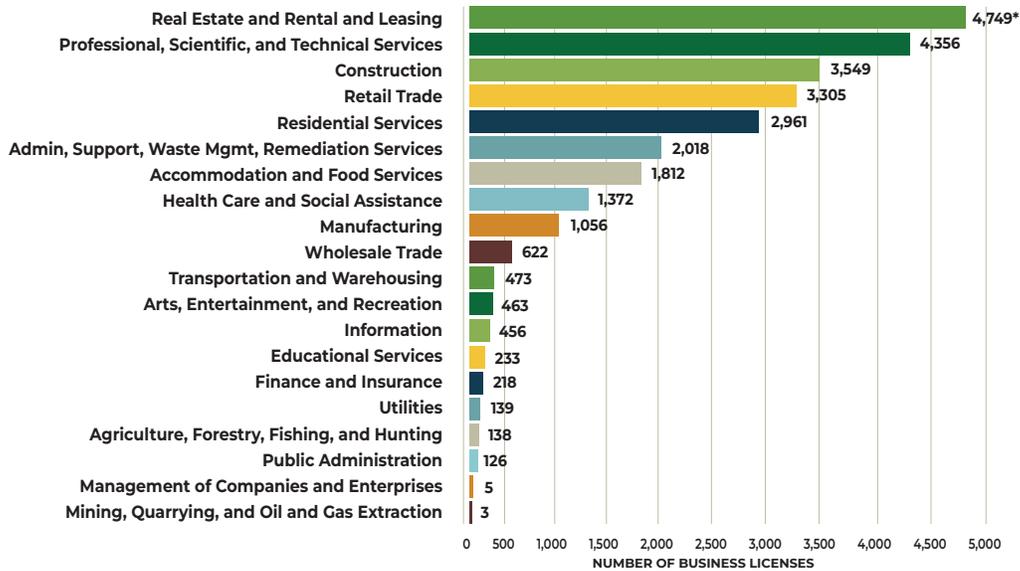
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Oakland's economy is diverse, which helps make it more stable and resilient over the long term. As the eighth-largest city in California and the largest in the East Bay, Oakland has long served as a regional hub for trade, services, business partnerships, and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, with a legacy rooted in defense, manufacturing, and the creative industries, Oakland continues to play a leading role in sectors critical to California's sustainable future, as described in **Oakland's Equitable Climate Action Plan** (adopted by City Council in 2020) and as outlined in the **State Economic Blueprint** (February 2025).

The strengths and opportunities within Oakland's economy can be seen in the number of businesses and employees in each sector. **Figure 4** shows the top three sectors by number of businesses are Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (4,749 businesses), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (4,356 businesses) and Construction (3,549 businesses).

Employment in Oakland by sector is shown in **Figure 5** where the top three sectors are Health Care and Social Assistance (44,029 employees), Transportation and Warehousing (20,015 employees), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (15,630 employees).

Figure 4: Number of Businesses by Sector, 2023

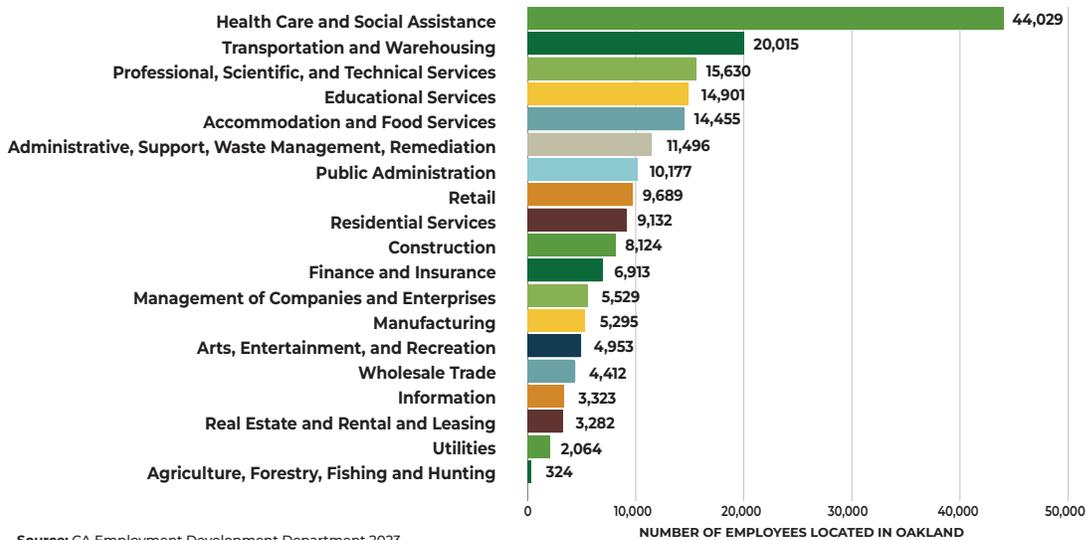


*Total does not include 20,341 Residential Landlords

Source: Oakland Business Tax & License Application, 2023

The Professional and Technical Services sector is Oakland's second largest business sector and third largest employment sector. This sector includes consulting firms, technology companies, and management services that are advancing innovation in climate technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, life sciences and food production. This sector also includes components of the creative economy including media, architecture, design and production businesses.

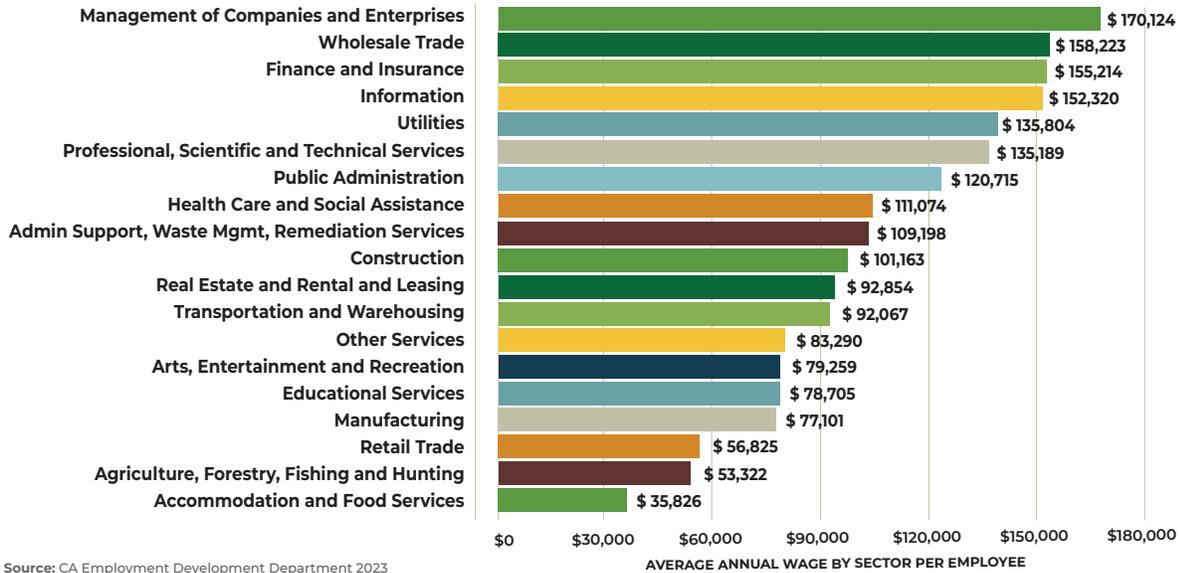
Figure 5: Number of Employees by Sector, 2023



Source: CA Employment Development Department 2023

Oakland's employment trends reflect the broader rise of the Bay Area as a global hub for innovation. Oakland is home to major institutions employing between 500 and over 5,000 people across growing sectors such as healthcare, education, transportation and warehousing and over the last 15 years has seen significant job growth in management, finance and IT sectors. These employment sectors have contributed to a steady influx of higher-skilled, higher-wage jobs into Oakland, further strengthening its position in the regional and State economy. Many Oakland-based employers are leaders in high-wage sectors. Specifically, major employers such as Kaiser, PG&E, Clorox, and Sutter Health support thousands of jobs across high-wage industries, as shown in **Figure 6**. Kaiser and Sutter Health are categorized in Health Care and Social Assistance; PG&E is within Utilities; and Clorox is within Management of Companies and Enterprises.

Figure 6: Average Annual Wage by Sector per Employee, 2023



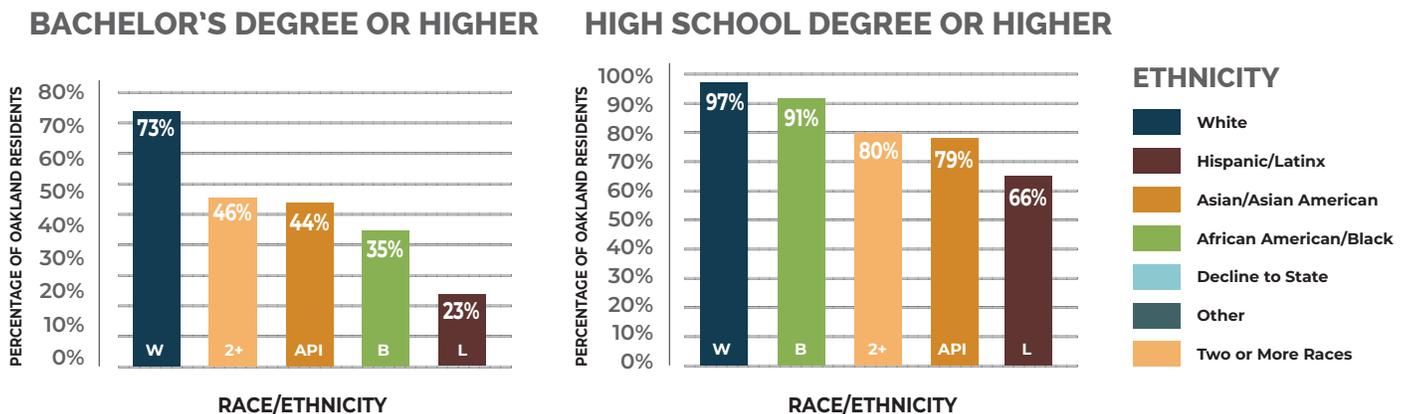
RACIAL EQUITY INDICATORS

While Oakland's economy is growing, the benefits are not equitably distributed. Communities of color, particularly Black Oaklanders remain underrepresented relative to the resident population in business ownership, leadership, and high-wage jobs in the leading growth sectors. Structural barriers in access to capital, commercial space, and education and hiring pipelines exclude many local business owners and workers. Without targeted strategies, these disparities may widen as Oakland becomes more attractive to outside investors and companies.

Figures 7 and 8 present educational attainment by race/ethnicity. The objective is to note the link between education, employment opportunities, and wage potential and recognize the disparate rates of educational attainment by race/ethnicity, particularly when measuring bachelors' degrees and higher. Lower levels of educational attainment can lead to lower wages.

The racial equity work of Goal #1 is to identify and grow high-wage industries in Oakland and overlay workforce training programs, as identified in Goal #3: Build Oakland's Workforce, to ensure opportunity and outcome, especially for Black and Latinx workers.

Figure 7 and 8: Educational Attainment by Race, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023



ACTIONS AND SUB-ACTIONS

Despite Oakland's strategic location, industrial legacy, and a dynamic workforce, the City has faced additional challenges in fully capturing investment from high-growth industries, relative to San Francisco and the South Bay. Aging infrastructure, inconsistent public services, and under-coordinated regional business attraction efforts challenge Oakland's potential as a business destination. Without focused strategies, Oakland risks missing out on regional, statewide, national, and even international opportunities.

To harness its strengths and close the equity gaps, EWDD will focus on the following actions to attract and grow key industries:



A. PURSUE SECTOR-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES TO CATALYZE INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT GROWTH

EWDD will drive sector-specific strategies that attract investment and support growth in key industries shaping Oakland's future.

1. To further strengthen Oakland's innovation ecosystem, EWDD will partner with sector-based incubators and accelerators and support financing initiatives that advance businesses in food production, the creative and cultural industries, technology and responsible AI, climate, energy, and infrastructure.
2. EWDD will coordinate with PG&E to deliver a new substation to East Oakland and potentially other providers of electrical power to enhance capacity and resiliency for future development.
3. EWDD will coordinate with Visit Oakland and hospitality sector representatives, Bay Area Host Committee, local businesses, chambers of commerce, and workforce and real estate partners, and other City Departments to plan for major projects and events, such as the World Cup in Summer 2026 and Super Bowl LX, that will bring global visibility, visitors and economic opportunity to the City.
4. Working with Planning and Building, EWDD will help identify zoning policies to meet the evolving needs of key industries, including but not limited to technology and high-connectivity infrastructure.
5. In partnership with trade and logistics experts, EWDD will provide technical assistance to businesses navigating import/export markets and connect them to resources like the Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ). Additionally, EWDD will apply for Foreign-Trade Zone Board approval to reorganize the City's FTZ to an Alternative Site Framework (ASF) to streamline site activation, enhance flexibility, and expand access for local companies.



B. DEVELOP A BUSINESS ATTRACTION PLAN TO PROMOTE OAKLAND'S ASSETS AND ATTRACT INVESTMENT

EWDD will develop and implement a comprehensive business attraction plan that showcases Oakland's strengths as a premier destination for investment and innovation.

1. EWDD will lead the creation of a marketing strategy and promotional materials that highlight the City commercial and visitor-serving assets, anchor and growth sectors, skilled workforce, and development opportunities.

2. In collaboration with Planning and Building, Public Works, and the Department of Transportation, EWDD will influence infrastructure planning through the General Plan Update and Capital Facilities Element to support long-term economic development goals, with a particular focus on identifying opportunities to increase energy capacity, battery storage, and sustainable transportation.
3. EWDD will coordinate with major public landowners including the Port of Oakland, BART, Alameda County, Caltrans, and others to develop joint strategies for activating key sites.
4. Working closely with Oakland's real estate sector, EWDD will promote high-impact development opportunities such as the Oakland Coliseum, West Oakland Research and Development (R&D) sites, and other large, privately-owned opportunity sites, to invite investment and advance job creation and economic growth in alignment with community needs.
5. In coordination with Visit Oakland, aim to be host of one to two mid- to large-size conferences focused on key sectors.



C. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS TO GROW WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN KEY SECTORS TO ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO GOOD JOBS AND GROWING WAGES FOR ALL OAKLANDERS

EWDD will strengthen Oakland's economy by building deep, sustained partnerships with employers in key sectors.

1. EWDD will establish Employer Advisory Councils that bring together major employers, educators, training providers, and community organizations to design sector-based initiatives that expand employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for Oakland residents.
2. In collaboration with workforce service providers, local agencies, and businesses, EWDD will help create apprenticeships, internships, and career pathways that directly address skill gaps in high-demand fields such as healthcare, manufacturing, resilient clean energy, and construction.
3. EWDD will support industry-specific events and collaborative forums that connect employers with workforce and education partners, fostering innovation, alignment, and long-term opportunity across the City's diverse economic landscape.

GOAL 2



Sustain and Support Businesses

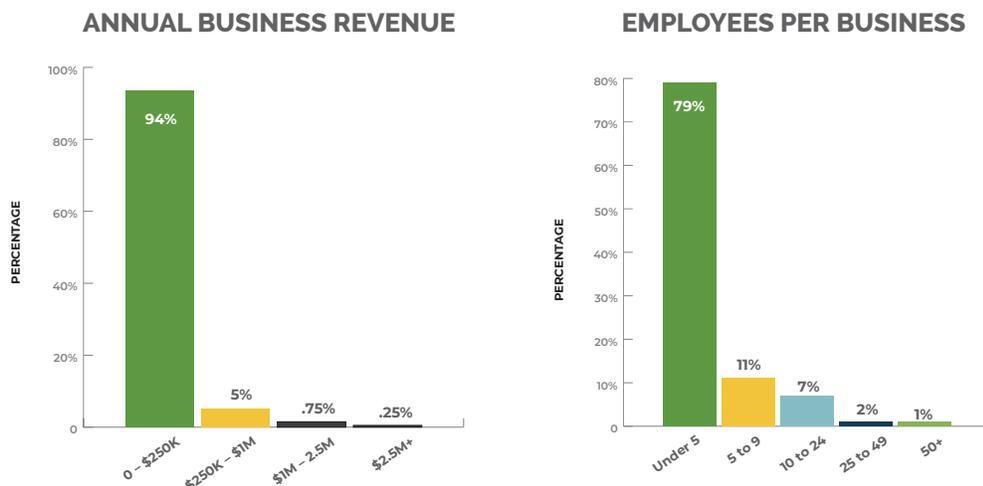
OPPORTUNITY

Oakland’s businesses, particularly small, local, and minority- and women-owned enterprises, play a critical role in generating employment, maintaining neighborhood character, and circulating capital within the local economy. Strengthening support systems for these businesses can improve resilience, reduce displacement, and advance inclusive economic development outcomes.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Oakland’s economy is anchored by small businesses. According to an analysis of self-reported data in the annual Business Tax & License application, the City processes approximately 54,000 business licenses each year, indicating a stable business community where openings and closings, or churn, are a regular occurrence and a natural part of commercial activity. **Figure 9** shows how more than 90% of Oakland businesses have fewer than ten employees, and most generate less than \$250,000 in annual revenue. Oakland’s entrepreneurial character is well established, in 2023, the City ranked 11th nationally for self-employment overall and 5th for women’s self-employment.

Figure 9: Oakland Business Size, 2023



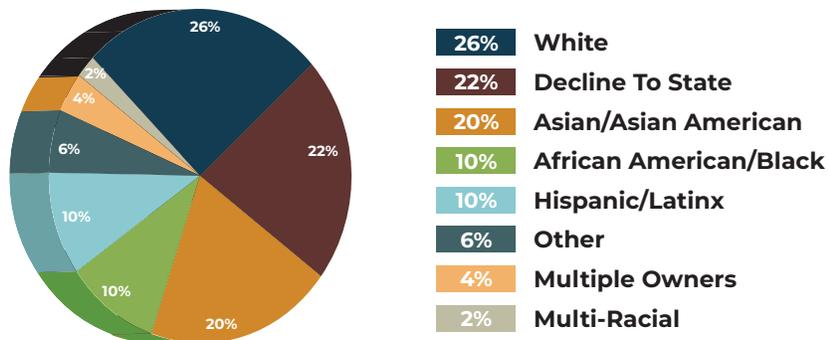
Despite these strengths, structural challenges persist. Many businesses, particularly small and emerging firms, continue to face barriers in accessing capital, navigating permitting processes, securing affordable commercial space and insurance, and responding to regulatory requirements. High vacancies and the poor conditions in some business corridors remain significant concerns for stakeholders. Business owners and residents consistently cite cleanliness, safety, and the activation of empty storefronts as top priorities. Vacant properties often attract illegal dumping and crime, undermining neighborhood vitality. Community feedback prior to and during EDAP engagement sessions strongly emphasized the need to fill vacancies and reduce the time and cost associated with opening or expanding a business. Since 2018, EWDD has embedded business assistance services in six neighborhood libraries, providing direct support to an average of 300 businesses annually.

RACIAL EQUITY INDICATORS

Persistent racial disparities in business ownership and access to capital continue to shape the landscape for small businesses in Oakland. **Figure 10** indicates Black and Latinx entrepreneurs each own 10% of Oakland businesses, compared to 26% owned by White business owners and 20% by Asian business owners. However, for Black and Latinx entrepreneurs, these rates fall well below their share of the City’s population. Of Oakland’s population, 20.9% are Black and 28.9% are Latinx. Black- and Latinx-owned businesses face disproportionate barriers to financing, often operating with limited reserves and reduced access to traditional lending institutions. These inequities constrain business survival and growth, especially in under-resourced neighborhoods where small businesses play a central role in community stability and wealth generation.

To address these disparities, the City integrates racial equity indicators into its business support strategies, prioritizing interventions that reach historically underserved entrepreneurs and business corridors. This includes targeted outreach, expanded access to culturally competent technical assistance, and partnerships with community-based lenders and support organizations. Some examples include the City’s work to evolve its procurement programs to expand access for small, local, and underrepresented businesses, and to coordinate business outreach around local contracting opportunities. EWDD’s Corridor Safety and Ambassador Program focuses investment in high-priority commercial corridors to support businesses in areas of the City where there has been historic underinvestment.

Figure 10: Business Ownership by Race, 2023



Source: Oakland Business Tax & License Application, 2023



ACTIONS AND SUB-ACTIONS

A. SUPPORT A CLEAN, SAFE, AND INVITING PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

EWDD will facilitate ongoing efforts to create clean, safe, and welcoming business environments that attract investment and support thriving business corridors.

1. EWDD will coordinate closely with key City departments, including the Department of Transportation (OakDOT), Public Works, and OPD, to improve the cleanliness of streets and sidewalks and ensure enforcement of illegal or unpermitted activity in business corridors.
2. In collaboration with community-based organizations, merchant associations, business improvement districts (BIDs), property owners and other economic development partners, EWDD will support vibrant business districts by bringing temporary activations, events and enhanced services to create active and inviting spaces. Specifically, EWDD will allocate funding approved in the 25/26 and 26/27 Biennial Budget towards Corridor Safety Ambassadors and Entertainment and Activation Zones.
3. Leveraging City resources and partnerships, EWDD will work to secure additional state, regional, and private investments to support cleanliness, safety, and corridor activation programs.



B. ASSIST BUSINESSES BY HELPING TO NAVIGATE CITY SERVICES

Navigating City systems and processes can be complex, particularly for small and emerging businesses. Clear guidance, cross-departmental coordination, and targeted support are essential to reduce barriers and promote equitable business success.

1. EWDD will act as a liaison between businesses and City departments to help ensure businesses have the information and assistance they need to succeed. This involves working with other City departments and relevant regional agencies as appropriate, to help businesses comply with regulations that impact business operations.
2. EWDD will continue to facilitate inter-departmental coordination, with support from the City Administrator, to streamline zoning and building processes and permits for businesses.
3. In coordination with the Department of Workplace and Employment Standards (DWES) and Finance, EWDD will share procurement assistance resources to help small contractors fairly and equitably compete for City contracts.



C. PROVIDE REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES TO ENGAGE WITH THE CITY

Ongoing communication and collaboration between businesses and City government help build trust and ensure that City services meet community and business needs.

1. Expand EWDD's business outreach by attending and participating in regular meetings of the business community, such as meetings of BIDs, corridor and sector business associations and chambers of commerce to share and receive information, maintaining active digital communication, and providing timely responses to business inquiries and requests for help.
2. In coordination with the Mayor's Office, convene regular business roundtables to gather input and improve City services in high-priority commercial areas.

3. Connect businesses with City partners to share resources across multiple platforms and in different languages (e.g., Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic) to ensure access to information for non-English speaking business owners.
4. EWDD will support other City departments and partners to pursue projects and pilots that provide opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses to demonstrate leadership in growing sectors (i.e., creative industries and climate).



D. ASSIST WITH SITE IDENTIFICATION AND BUSINESS LOCATION SERVICES

Helping businesses find the right locations and supporting property use strengthens business corridors and reduces vacancy.

1. Assist businesses with property searches, relocation, acquisition, ownership advice, and support, and connect businesses with brokers active in Oakland.
2. Using the budget approved in the 25-27 Biennial Budget, explore a program that seeks to fill vacancies by offering temporary permits and flexible uses for ground-floor sites and community facilities.



E. CONNECT BUSINESSES WITH CAPITAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Access to funding is crucial for business growth and sustainability, especially for small businesses and those owned by Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander entrepreneurs.

1. Leverage private, Federal, and State incentives, grants, and financing to attract capital to Oakland (e.g., California GO-Biz programs).
2. Attract, develop, and distribute grants, subsidies, and low-interest loans through City-sponsored programs. For example, EWDD was awarded a \$3.56 million grant in partnership with Family Bridges through the State's Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (C.R.I.S.E.S) Act Grant Pilot Program.
3. Support community-led grant proposals by providing data, program design assistance, and partnership opportunities.
4. Consider developing a tax-incentive business attraction program, such as a sales-tax rebate program, to attract new retail businesses to Oakland or to expand or establish a second location in Oakland.
5. Connect Oakland businesses with finance organizations to expand access to funding.
6. Advocate for improved access to affordable, inclusive, and quality insurance coverage for businesses in Oakland.

GOAL 3



Build Oakland's Workforce

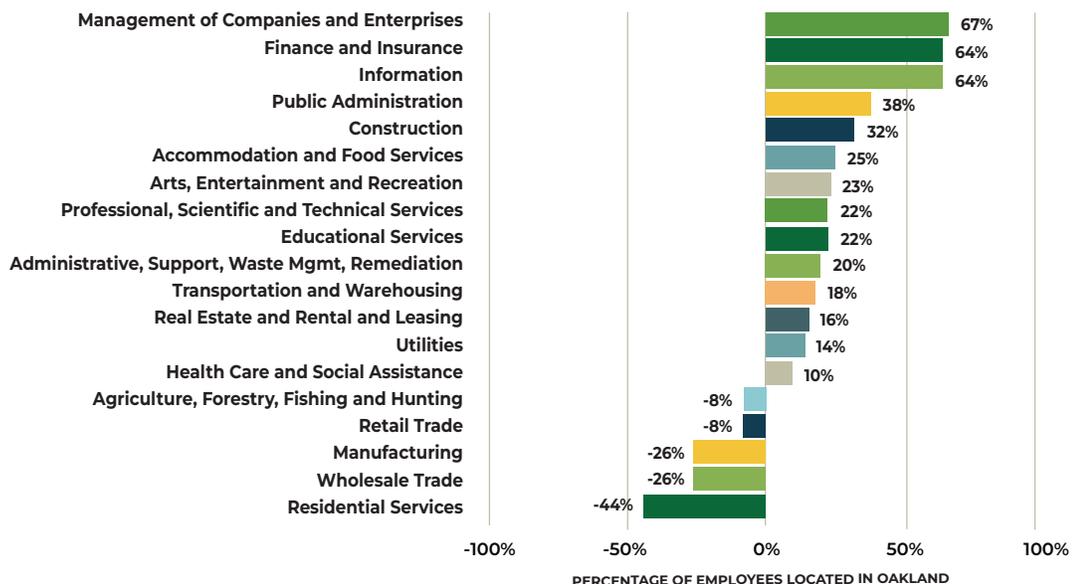
OPPORTUNITY

A strong local economy depends on a skilled, inclusive, and adaptable workforce to promote economic mobility. Persistent disparities in employment and income limit economic mobility for many Oakland residents and constrain the City's economic potential. Building a more inclusive workforce system that connects individuals to thriving-wage jobs and in-demand skills is essential to addressing these gaps and meeting the evolving needs of local businesses and employers.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Oakland's employment base has continued to grow annually, including through the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the number of employers in Oakland exceeded 23,000, supporting nearly 193,000 jobs. Job growth since 2010 has been steady across a mix of traditional and emerging industries. Notably, the highest growth occurred in knowledge-based and finance-related fields.

Figure 11: Change in Employment by Sector, 2010 - 2023



Source: CA Employment Development Department 2023, Oakland

Meanwhile, consistent growth in construction, accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation reflects the City’s steady housing and population growth which has sustained the ongoing recovery in creative and service-based industries. This diversity strengthens Oakland’s labor market and creates opportunities across a wide range of education and skill levels. **Figure 11** documents the sectors that have grown the most in terms of employment: Management of Companies and Enterprises (67% growth between 2010 and 2023), Finance and Insurance and Information (tied with 64% growth), and Public Administration (38% growth).

The Oakland Workforce Development Board (OWDB) plays a central role in connecting job seekers with employment pathways while helping local employers meet their workforce needs. Guided by the **High Road Training Partnership (H RTP)** model, the OWDB advances programs that prioritize both economic inclusion and job quality. This includes a strong emphasis on work-based learning, such as on-the-job training, transitional employment, and employer-customized training, and is intended to align workforce preparation with actual hiring needs. The OWDB also focuses on building career pathways in priority sectors, including healthcare, transportation and logistics, construction, information technology, the creative economy, and climate, with long-term potential for advancement and wage growth.

RACIAL EQUITY INDICATORS

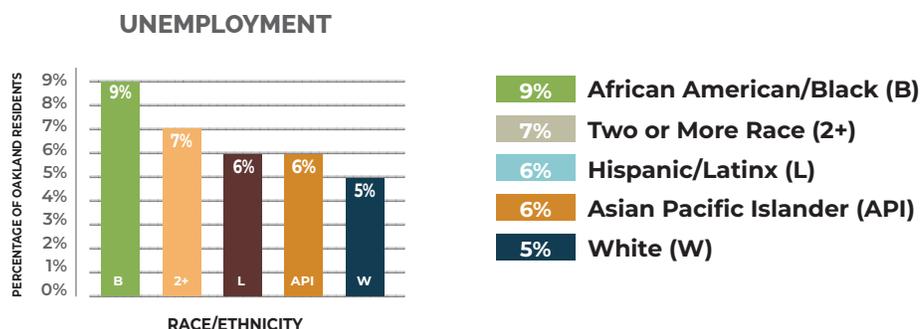
Despite overall gains in employment, deep disparities persist in Oakland’s labor market. Communities of color, particularly Black, Latinx, and Indigenous residents, continue to face higher unemployment, lower wages, and limited access to the support systems that enable career advancement. These groups are also more likely to face skill displacement due to AI/automation in the absence of focused attention on creating access to more resilient skills across industries (e.g., AI literacy, advanced digital, and uniquely human skills).

As shown in **Figure 12**, which documents unemployment by race, Black Oaklanders are more likely to be unemployed than any other race, while White Oaklanders are the least likely race to be unemployed. These inequities are rooted in systemic barriers such as education access, discriminatory hiring practices, and gaps in transportation, childcare, and housing stability.

Oakland’s workforce system responds to these disparities by centering equity in its program design and delivery. OWDB prioritizes services for youth, low-income residents, and individuals facing employment barriers. Through partnerships with community-based organizations, the City provides wraparound supports, from stipends and paid work experience to transportation assistance and healthcare access, to help job seekers overcome systemic challenges. Programs like the Bay Tech Career Initiative (BTCI) are designed to connect residents from underrepresented backgrounds to growing sectors, such as IT, by equipping them with in-demand skills and linking them directly to employer networks.

By targeting resources where they are needed most, the City aims to narrow racial disparities in employment outcomes and ensure that economic recovery and growth are shared equitably across all communities.

Figure 12: Unemployment by Race, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023



ACTIONS AND SUB-ACTIONS

Through the actions below, EWDD is committed to investing in businesses, employers and residents by expanding access to job training, employment services and career pathways that align with industry needs in a rapidly evolving economy.



A. DELIVER JOB TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH TO INCREASE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT SUSTAINED EMPLOYMENT FOR OAKLAND RESIDENTS

Oakland's workforce programs are designed to connect residents—particularly those who are unemployed, underemployed, or disconnected from the labor market—with the training, services, and support they need to access and retain good jobs.

1. Promote Oakland's American Job Centers of California (AJCCs) as a key resource for job seekers by integrating them into all workforce development-related programming.
2. Support youth-focused initiatives, including year-round and summer job placements, career exploration, and financial literacy. Continue to partner with the Mayor's Office to support the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program.
3. Identify skills and employment gaps in rapidly-evolving sectors, and expand job training and employment services through partnerships with workforce providers, educational institutions, labor organizations, and employers to address skills gaps and improve access to high-quality, equitable employment.



B. ENHANCE BUSINESS AND EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT TO CREATE TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT INTENTIONALLY OPEN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS

Employer partnerships are critical to ensuring that workforce services meet real-time labor market needs and create clear pathways into household-sustaining careers for Oaklanders.

1. Convene regular business roundtables in priority sectors such as clean energy and electrification, healthcare, logistics, transportation, and technology.
2. Collaborate with employers to design and scale demand-driven training, apprenticeships, internships, and career advancement pathways.
3. Expand on-the-job training incentives and promote hiring tax credits to encourage inclusive hiring and upskilling.
4. Deliver rapid response services to assist companies and workers affected by layoffs or plant closures.



C. ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE EQUITY AND ENSURE OAKLANDERS HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY, ESPECIALLY THOSE LIVING IN GEOGRAPHIC AREAS DEALING WITH THE MOST COMMUNITY STRESSORS

An equitable workforce system must prioritize those who have been historically excluded from opportunity. EWDD coordinates with partners to ensure services meet the needs of those facing the greatest barriers.

1. Prioritize service delivery in communities with high rates of unemployment, poverty, and systemic disinvestment.
2. Collaborate with other City departments and public agencies, such as Alameda County Social Services and Oakland Housing Authority, to align and scale services.
3. Improve access to wraparound supports (such as transportation, housing, and childcare) for residents who face employment barriers.



D. IMPLEMENT SPECIAL WORKFORCE INNOVATION INITIATIVES TO COORDINATE WITH EDUCATION, BUSINESS, AND WORKFORCE PARTNERS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Innovative pilot programs allow Oakland to test new models that connect residents with high-opportunity sectors and respond to changing workforce needs.

1. Deliver the CA Volunteers Job Corps program (Oakland Forward), focused on employment and training for 16–30-year-olds.
2. Support industry-specific efforts like the Marine Trade and Water Transportation Career Initiative and Bay Tech Career Initiative to build access in key sectors.
3. Continue the Day Laborer Program to support informal and precarious workers with stable, supportive job opportunities.

GOAL 4



Invest in Places

OPPORTUNITY

Place-based strategies focused on catalytic new development and physical improvements, aligned with community needs, can help attract new businesses and additional investment in Oakland's business corridors. Successful implementation of this Goal offers the added benefits of encouraging activation of public spaces, increasing community connections, and supporting equitable growth without displacing long-standing residents or institutions. .

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Like most cities, Oakland is in a period of transformation as the economy continues to shift from challenging market and real estate dynamics. Oakland's plan to build more housing and commercial space has brought in new residents, businesses and opportunities. Between 2018 and 2023, Downtown gained over 5,200 housing units and welcomed more than 10,000 new residents. Educational institutions like Samuel Merritt University, Oakland School of the Arts, and Laney College bring additional foot traffic with over 21,000 students and staff, while cultural venues like the Fox and Paramount Theatres estimate a total patron count of 6,000 on event nights. Together, residential growth, business diversity, and flexible zoning policies are shaping downtown Oakland into a dynamic, mixed-use neighborhood that extends beyond the traditional 9-to-5 economy. While Downtown office vacancy rates have increased due to added supply and pandemic impacts, this mix of uses strengthens the local economy.

The EDAP's 4th goal – to invest in places – reinforces this momentum. Investments in public spaces, cultural institutions like the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts, and catalytic projects like the new Samuel Merritt University Campus in Downtown and the Oakland Ballers' stadium at Raimondi Park in West Oakland are helping catalyze private investment. Housing production plays a critical role in these efforts—supporting mixed-income communities and providing proximity to jobs for teachers, artists, hospitality workers, and others who make up the City's workforce.

Figures 13, 14, and 15 present rent and vacancy trend data from 2010 through 2024 for three primary real estate classes: retail, office, and industrial.

OFFICE

- Office rents have been declining since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Despite this overall trend, Downtown Oakland rents remain higher than the Citywide and East Bay averages, even though vacancy rates in Downtown are elevated.

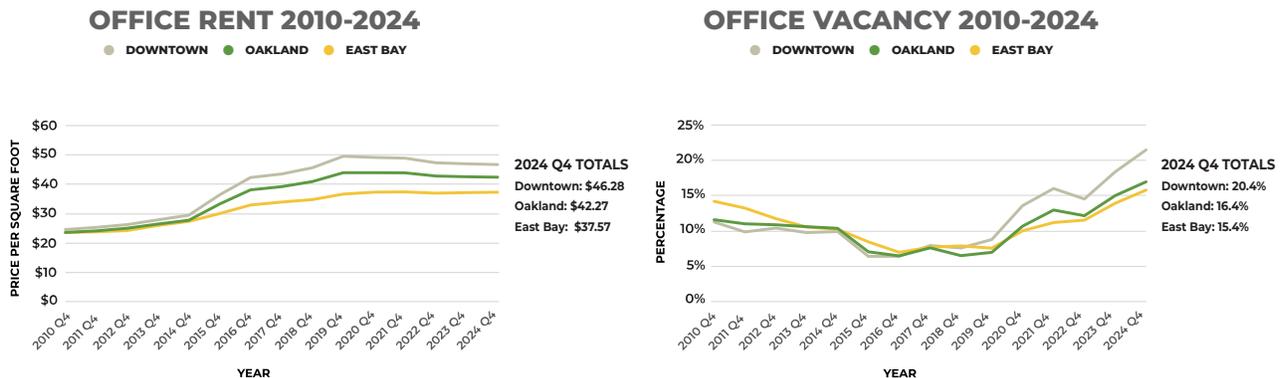
INDUSTRIAL

- Industrial rent for both Oakland and the East Bay has been steadily increasing for the past decade. While recent prices have reduced slightly, the trend also shows consistently higher prices than the East Bay for Oakland industrial property between 2010 and 2024. Vacancy rates have been more in-line with the East Bay. Downtown has very little industrial stock skewing the vacancy data.

RETAIL

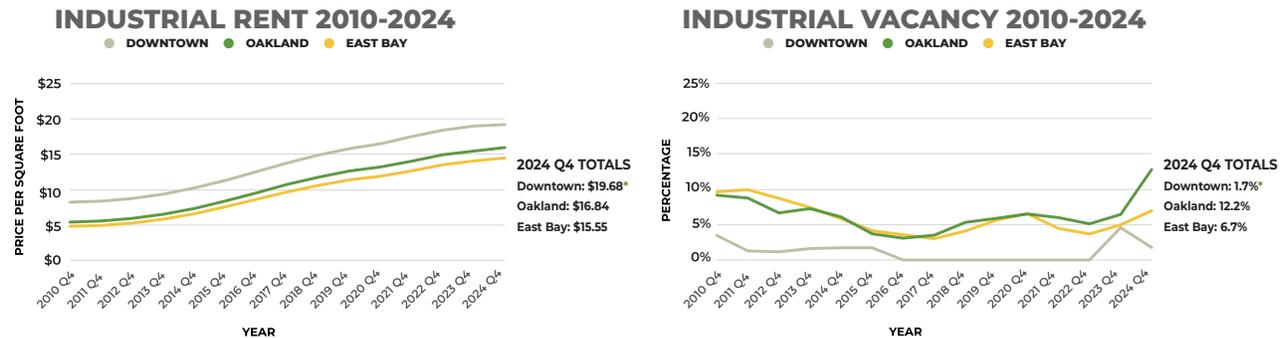
- Retail rents in Downtown Oakland are competitive and vacancies are relatively stable and aligned with the region. Since 2018, Downtown Oakland's retail rent has been consistently higher than both the East Bay and Citywide averages, signaling that Downtown remains a strong location for retail despite broader market challenges.

Figure 13: Office Rent and Vacancy Data, 2010 – 2024



Source: CoStar 2024

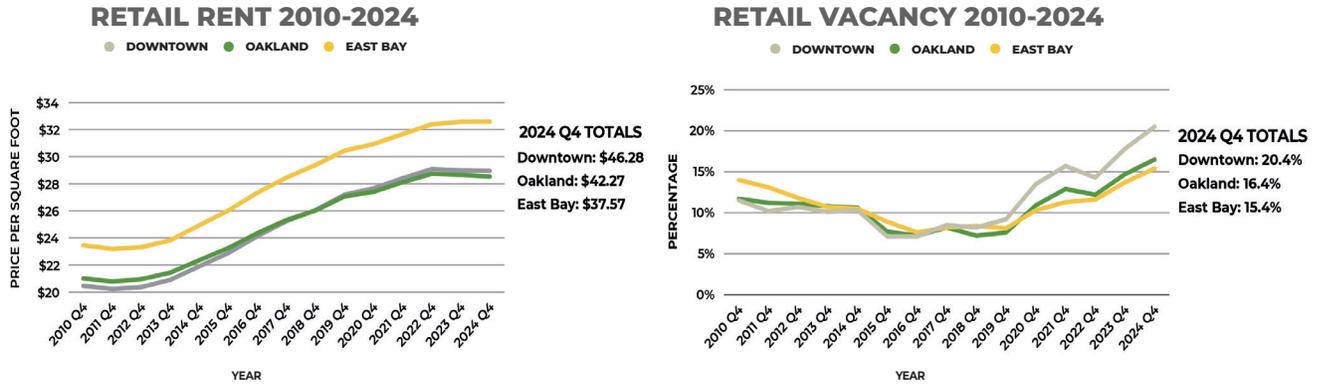
Figure 14: Industrial Rent and Vacancy Data, 2010 – 2024



* Downtown has very few Industrial properties.

Source: CoStar 2024

Figure 15: Retail Rent and Vacancy Data, 2010 – 2024



Source: CoStar 2024

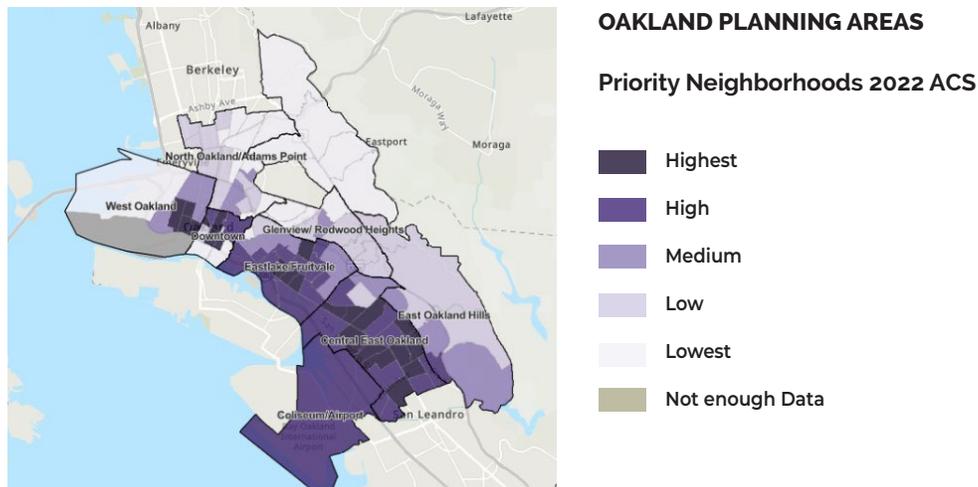
RACIAL EQUITY INDICATORS

Oakland’s economic geography reflects a legacy of racialized policies, including redlining, urban renewal, and decades of underinvestment, that have disproportionately harmed Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color. Other City plans and strategies note that geography strongly shapes access to opportunity. Historical exclusion of communities of color from education, employment, and homeownership has led to their concentration in neighborhoods with limited access to public services, quality schools, and economic mobility.

As part of the *Environmental Justice Element of the City’s General Plan*, 48 Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities were identified. These EJ Communities are low-income areas disproportionately impacted by pollution, socioeconomic vulnerability, and adverse health impacts. When mapped, the 48 EJ Communities align with OakDOT’s Geographic Equity Toolbox Priority Neighborhoods map (see **Figure 16**), which identifies Oakland’s high and highest priority neighborhoods. Both the EJ Communities and OakDOT’s Geographic Equity Toolbox map serve to identify Oakland communities with high numbers of residents who are low-income, rent burdened, disabled, 65 or older, and with low-educational attainment and lower rates of internet in the home.

Figure 16: GIS OakDOT Geographic Equity Indicators – Priority Neighborhoods Layer

OakDOT Equity Toolbox link: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/57b194ffec8c4a7f949ec17682b819a>:

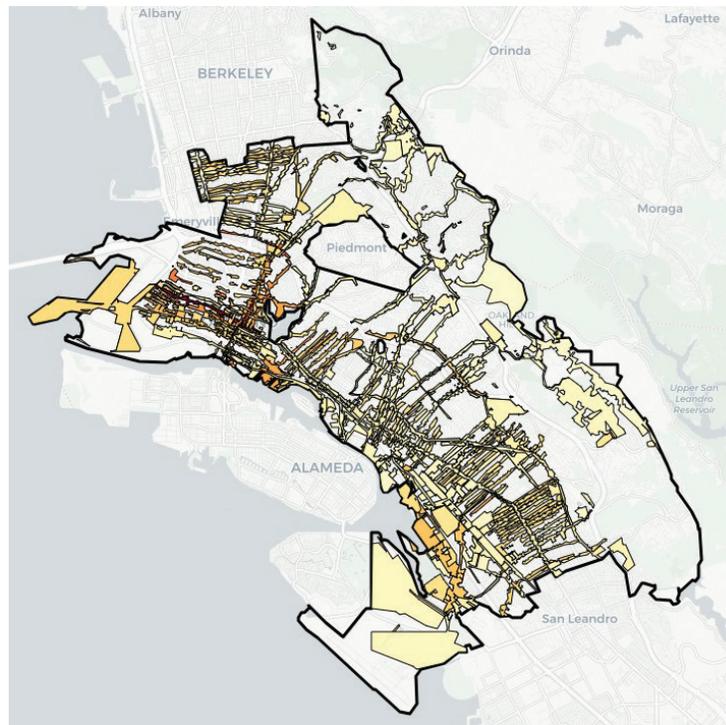


Layered into this body of analysis, **Figure 17** shows where businesses are located in Oakland using data from 2023 Business Tax and License Applications and the CA Economic Development Department. Some business corridors, especially those in areas of historical underinvestment, face high vacancy rates and public safety challenges. Data from the City's 311 system shows that the majority of complaints relate to illegal dumping, vandalism, and abandoned vehicles, all of which directly affect small business vitality and contribute to vacancies.

This analysis, in which business corridors are evaluated alongside the data for vacancy, crime, illegal dumping and similar 311 complaints, enables the City to determine Priority Business Corridors. In these areas, a racially equitable strategy prioritizes allocation of resources into communities most affected by historic harm.

Merchant groups are actively working with the City to address these issues through storefront activation, security improvements, and beautification efforts. Focused strategies from EWDD aim to reduce vacancies, support small businesses, and improve corridor safety and functionality.

Figure 17: Oakland Business Corridors, 2023



Source: City of Oakland Business Tax & License Application, 2023
CA Employment Development Department, 2023



ACTIONS AND SUB-ACTIONS

To support investment in place-based strategies, the City will pursue coordinated actions that leverage public land, support private investment, and strengthen business corridors as vital hubs of community and economic activity.



A. ENABLE THE CONDITIONS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING WORKING WITH BUSINESSES AND DEVELOPERS TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE

EWDD will help foster a healthy development environment by helping projects navigate the permitting process and encouraging interdepartmental coordination. These efforts aim to remove barriers, promote investment, and grow a more responsive, inclusive business climate.

1. Steward private development projects through City processes such as permit navigation from concept to occupancy.
2. Coordinate with the Planning and Building Department to update policies and regulations for evolving business needs, including fast-tracking permits.
3. Work across City departments on site preparation and infrastructure improvements that enable new investment, recognizing that investment in housing, technology, climate and transportation infrastructure supports Oakland's growing workforce.
4. In coordination with the Planning and Building Department, establish real estate stakeholder roundtables or a working group to co-develop strategies that accelerate responsible new development.



B. PURSUE PUBLIC/PRIVATE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC PROPERTY TO CATALYZE POSITIVE CHANGE AND INVESTMENT

EWDD will lead and support mixed-use and housing projects on public land that reflect community priorities, catalyze local economic activity, and expand access to affordable homes for Oaklanders.

1. Consistent with the City's Housing Element, use City-owned property to develop new affordable housing, and also identify sites for catalytic commercial development.
2. Coordinate with the Port, County, Caltrans, and other regional agencies to unlock and develop other publicly owned land.



C. MANAGE THE CITY'S REAL ESTATE ASSETS TO GENERATE REVENUE AND MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

EWDD will strategically manage the City's real estate portfolio to produce revenue while activating underutilized spaces to meet urgent community goals such as housing, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and neighborhood revitalization.

1. Generate revenue through strategic leasing, licensing, asset management, and the disposition of City-owned properties.
2. Seek temporary uses on City-owned land to create activity and provide community benefits and services until sites are ready for permanent development.
3. In coordination with other departments, explore public financing tools to address capital improvement needs for City real estate assets.



D. WORK WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES, PROPERTY OWNERS, AND CORRIDOR BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS TO STEWARD CLEAN, SAFE, ACTIVE PLACES AND SPACES

EWDD will partner with local business groups, community organizations, and other stakeholders to create and implement corridor development strategies that stabilize small businesses, reduce vacancy, revitalize and steward public spaces, and increase access to essential goods and services.

1. Convene and/or meet regularly with local business organizations and other stakeholders to establish a management plan for their business corridor. For example, EWD currently works with the Uptown Arts and Entertainment District businesses addressing issues related to the nighttime economy.
2. Develop business corridor stabilization and activation plans with community partners in High and Highest priority neighborhoods, including the Hegenberger corridor.
3. Leverage partnerships, City services, and public financing tools to help implement community-led corridor and place-based development strategies.

GOAL 5



Support Oakland's Artistic, Cultural, and Social Activities

OPPORTUNITY

Centering cultural equity as a core strategy allows Oakland to strengthen its distinct identity while positioning itself as a national model for inclusive, community-rooted cultural and economic development. As outlined in Oakland's cultural plan, **Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan**, the City's artists, cultural practitioners, and civic and cultural institutions are foundational to Oakland's identity, economic vitality, and neighborhood resilience. By investing in and supporting artistic and cultural activity and events, Oakland can uplift its diverse cultural heritage, grow the capacity of its arts and culture organizations, and activate spaces that foster belonging.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Oakland's creative economy is both a major economic driver and a cultural asset. Local creatives generate jobs, attract tourism, and stimulate spending across sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. Defining the creative economy, however, can be challenging. The California Arts Council Creative Economy Working Group aligned around **a mix of industry codes** identified by Upstart Co-Lab that can be used to describe businesses engaged in the inputs, production, and distribution of creative products relevant to the definition of Creative Businesses. Businesses and employers involved in art, design, hospitality, manufacturing, and technology make up the foundation of the Creative Industries in Oakland. **Figure 18** presents the number of creative sector businesses in Oakland by sector, and **Figure 19** presents the number of creative sector employees by sector. The data underscores the economic importance of Oakland's food and beverage scene.

Each job in Oakland's creative sector has a multiplier effect. Based on findings reported by CVL Economics in the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Economic Indicators Report, for every 100 jobs in the creative economy, an additional 14 jobs are supported, and \$21 million is contributed to the regional economy each year.²

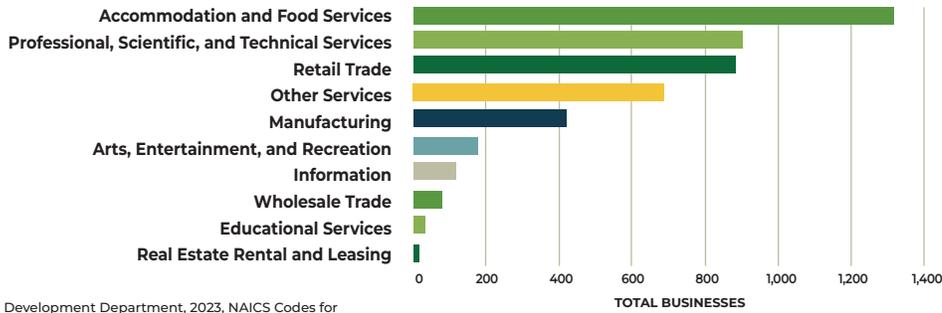
Creative businesses also play a pivotal role in activating Oakland's streets, parks, and public spaces, drawing over 3.4 million visitors and generating \$583 million in spending in 2024 alone according to Visit Oakland. Through the City's Cultural Affairs and Special Activities divisions, more than 300 permitted events and grant-funded projects supported local artists, performers, and cultural enterprises in the same year.

While the broader East Bay region saw a 1.6% decline in Arts and Entertainment employment and a 5% drop in Accommodation and Food Services jobs between 2020 and 2024,³ Oakland's creative sectors have shown strength over the long term. From 2010 to 2023, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation employment increased by 23%, and jobs

² Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Oakland/East Bay Economic Indicators Report, prepared by CVL Economics, March 2025, page 40.

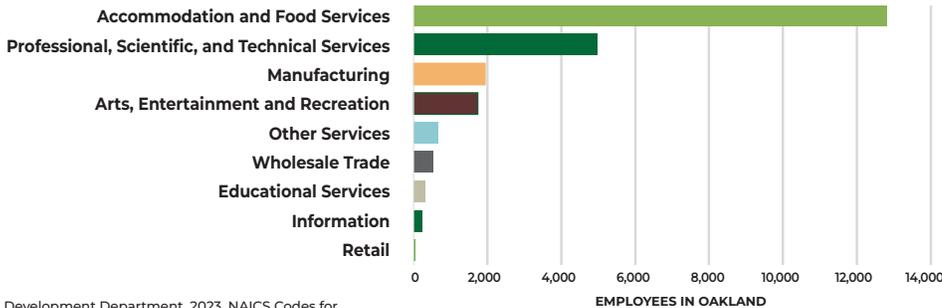
³ Ibid, page 25.

Figure 18: Creative Sector Businesses in Oakland, 2023



Sources: OCA Employment Development Department, 2023, NAICS Codes for Creative Businesses; UpStart Co-Lab, 2025.

Figure 19: Creative Sector Employees in Oakland, 2023



Sources: OCA Employment Development Department, 2023, NAICS Codes for Creative Businesses; UpStart Co-Lab, 2025.

in Accommodation and Food Services rose by 25%. Regional forecasts anticipate a 57% increase in arts and recreation jobs by 2030, potentially adding over 14,000 new positions.⁴

Despite this positive trajectory, the City’s fiscal constraints have recently resulted in significant cuts to arts funding. This puts added pressure on already vulnerable artists and organizations, many of whom still operate informally due to high costs and limited access to affordable space. In response, Oakland is updating land use policies, developing the framework for a Cultural District Program, and leveraging public assets to expand opportunities for arts, maker-space and other forms of creative production. These efforts are essential to preserving Oakland’s creative legacy and ensuring that its cultural economy remains inclusive, resilient, and globally recognized.

RACIAL EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

Oakland’s cultural landscape is inseparable from its racial and ethnic diversity. Generations of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and immigrant communities have created and sustained the City’s most iconic cultural institutions, festivals, and movements. These communities have used art to tell their stories, resist injustice, and build connection—contributions that remain foundational to Oakland’s social and economic life today. Protecting cultural expression is central to advancing racial equity.

Equitable place-making must also recognize and support cultural preservation as a form of economic resilience, ensuring that Oakland’s neighborhoods retain their identity, histories, and creative businesses. Cultural anchors - such as legacy businesses, community institutions, and cultural venues - are essential to neighborhood vitality and economic inclusion. Oakland’s economic development strategies must support these assets by stabilizing rents, providing flexible space for artistic and cultural uses, and enabling ownership models that keep cultural wealth in the community. Partners like the Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) and Community Vision are critical. By embedding cultural preservation into place-based planning, the City can help ensure that economic growth strengthens—not displaces—the communities that have long defined Oakland’s identity.

Prioritizing access to funding, permitting, and public venues—alongside neighborhood-based cultural programming—ensures that all residents see themselves reflected in Oakland’s creative future. Cultural preservation is not simply about memory; it is a strategy for equity, resilience, and long-term economic vitality.

⁴ State Economic Blueprint, page 59, February 2025.



ACTIONS AND SUB-ACTIONS

Oakland's economic development strategy recognizes that culture, community, and commerce are deeply interconnected. By investing in arts and culture, supporting vibrant public spaces, and creating inclusive opportunities for local businesses, the City can foster a thriving creative economy and stronger neighborhoods. The actions invest in, support, and develop the people and places that make up Oakland's creative economy.



A. INVEST IN CULTURE, ARTS, AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

EWDD will support Oakland's creative economy by investing in the infrastructure, programming, and policy frameworks that sustain artists, cultural organizations, and creative businesses. The following actions ensure that Oakland's cultural identity continues to thrive while driving economic inclusion and neighborhood vitality.

1. Seek additional funding for and manage a cultural grants program for arts organizations, community festivals, and local creative projects, as resources allow.
2. Coordinate with leaders representing major visitor-attracting cultural facilities (e.g., Oakland Museum of California, Chabot Space and Science Center, Children's Fairyland, etc.) to plan for future capital needs in conjunction with the General Plan Update.
3. Administer the City's Public Art Program (1.5% of Capital Improvement Projects) and the Public Art in Private Development Program (0.5% for residential and 1.0% for non-residential) and encourage additional private investment in art for public spaces.
4. Work with Visit Oakland to promote the City's arts and culture events and happenings.



B. FACILITATE SPACES FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND CELEBRATION

The following actions support safe and inclusive access to public and private spaces where Oaklanders can gather, celebrate, and express shared cultural identities. By reducing permitting barriers and deepening community partnerships, EWDD will position Oakland as a dynamic place to live, create, and celebrate.

1. Promote inclusive and accessible community gatherings by streamlining access to local venues, parks, and outdoor spaces.
2. Coordinate with City departments to issue timely permits for events, festivals, and film productions.
3. Provide planning guidance and link arts and cultural organizations to technical assistance and available public resources.
4. In coordination with community partners, EWD will support the preservation of cultural spaces through site matching, promotion of temporary uses, and referral to stabilization services.
5. Develop and implement a framework for Cultural and Entertainment Districts in alignment with the Culture of Belonging Plan and the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan.



C. SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS AND VENDOR PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

EWDD will promote inclusive economic participation by ensuring that Oakland’s cultural and social activities provide real opportunity for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and vendors—especially those historically underrepresented in the formal economy.

1. Connect Oakland’s creative businesses and vendors to financial resources, technical assistance, permitting guidance, and location referrals.
2. Encourage short-term leasing, pop-up retail, and flexible commercial uses through property owner engagement.
3. Partner with the hospitality, entertainment, and event sectors to ensure local businesses benefit from major cultural activities.



D. INCREASE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ACTIVATION OF PARKS, STREETS, AND VACANT SPACES

The following actions advance economic development by transforming underutilized public and private spaces into hubs of cultural and commercial activity. EWDD will lead efforts to coordinate City services and community partnerships that turn empty storefronts, streets, and parks into inclusive and vibrant destinations.

1. Leverage parklets, temporary street closures, public markets, and permitted events to drive commercial corridor activation.
2. Explore the creation of a temporary use permit in the Planning Code to reduce long-term vacancies and promote creative interim uses.
3. Build capacity among community development organizations to market local neighborhoods, connect entrepreneurs to space, and support community property ownership.
4. Coordinate interdepartmental services to ensure that events, activations, and installations are clean, safe, and welcoming.

Implementation Matrix Summary

GOAL AND ACTION	PERFORMANCE METRICS	LEAD	PARTNERS	DATES
1. Attract and Grow Key Sectors				
◆ A. Pursue sector-specific strategies to catalyze investment and support growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase in # of businesses and employment in key sectors (e.g., healthcare, information and technology, construction, creative economy, transportation and logistics) 	EWD	PBD; GOBiz; East Bay EDA; Port; Chambers	Ongoing
◆ B. Develop a business attraction plan to promote Oakland's assets and attract investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> availability of digital and/or print assets to be used for promotion 	EWDD	PBD; OPW; OakDot; Visit Oakland; Chambers; Real Estate Brokers; Bay Area Host Committee; Transit Agencies; County	2026/27 and updated annually thereafter
◆ C. Build partnerships to grow workforce development opportunities in key sectors to ensure equitable access to good jobs and growing wages for all Oaklanders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of employer advisory councils; # of industry-specific events and collaborative forums; # of individuals employed in key industries, following workforce intervention 	EWDD	Education Partners; Workforce Service Providers; Business Associations	2025/26 and ongoing
2. Sustain and Support Businesses				
◆ A. Support a clean, safe, and inviting place to do business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stability or growth of business licenses; # of key business corridors with active business associations; 311 call and response data; OPD crime data; vacancy rates 	All City Departments	Corridor business associations	Ongoing
◆ B. Assist businesses by helping to navigate City services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of businesses assisted through the Neighborhood Business Assistance Program 	EWDD	PBD; OakDot; OPW	Ongoing
◆ C. Provide regular opportunities for businesses to engage with the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of business partnership events; # of businesses participating 	EWDD	Mayor's Office; CAO; PBD; Business associations and business support organizations	Ongoing
◆ D. Assist with site identification and business location services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of sites matched; # of new commercial permits; # of businesses receiving concierge assistance with permitting, planning, building, and site selection 	EWDD	PBD; Real Estate Brokers; Corridor Business Associations	Ongoing
◆ E. Connect businesses with capital and financial assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of businesses assisted w/ referrals; # of grants, loans received; # and \$ of cannabis grants awarded 	EWDD	Banks; FinTech Firms; Community Development Financing Institutions (CDFI)	Ongoing

Implementation Matrix Summary

GOAL AND ACTION	PERFORMANCE METRICS	LEAD	PARTNERS	DATES
3. Build Oakland's Workforce				
◆ A. Deliver job training and employment services for adults and youth to increase workforce participation and support sustained employment for Oakland residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of participants enrolled, trained, and placed in employment 	EWDD	Training Community-Based Organizations; Employers	2025/26 and ongoing
◆ B. Enhance business and employer engagement to create training programs that intentionally open employment opportunities for residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of employers engaged in on the job training; # of placements made at 12 months; # of people retained after 1 year of employment 	EWDD	Training Community-Based Organizations; Employers	2025/26 and ongoing
◆ C. Establish partnerships to advance equity and ensure Oaklanders have opportunities for economic security, especially those living in geographic areas dealing with the most community stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of partnerships with community and economic development orgs; # of participants served in priority zip codes 	EWDD	PBD; Education and Supportive Housing partners	2025/26 and ongoing
◆ D. Implement special workforce innovation initiatives to coordinate with education, business, and partners to improve employment support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of participants that are enrolled and placed in sector specific initiatives 	EWDD	OFCY; DVP; Economic Development Organizations; Community-Based Organizations	2026/27
4. Invest in Places				
◆ A. Enable the conditions for private sector development including working with businesses and developers to improve the business climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit processing times; # of instances of site/concept assistance provided; # landlord/tenant referrals; reduction in vacant sqft over time; \$ sales tax revenue generated by Council District and BID 	EWDD and PBD	Real Estate community; Corridor business organizations	2025/26 and ongoing
◆ B. Pursue public/private real estate development on public property to catalyze positive change and investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of Below Market Rate (BMR) units on City-owned land in the pipeline; sq.ft. of commercial and institutional development on City-owned land in the pipeline 	EWDD	HCD; Developer Community	2025/26 and ongoing
◆ C. Manage the City's real estate assets to generate revenue and meet community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of leases/licenses under active management; \$ rental revenue received/generated 	EWDD	Agency Partners	2025/26 and ongoing
◆ D. Work with local businesses and property owners to steward clean, safe, active places and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stability or growth of # of business licenses; # of key business corridors with active business associations; amount of grants awarded for Corridor Safety Ambassador Program; reduced vacancies over time 	EWDD	Corridor business associations and individual businesses	2025/26 and ongoing

Implementation Matrix Summary

GOAL AND ACTION	PERFORMANCE METRICS	LEAD	PARTNERS	DATES
5. Support Oakland's Artistic, Cultural, and Social Activities				
◆ A. Invest in culture, arts, and creative industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of cultural funding grants/subsidies provided or supported; # of cultural organizations served; # of public art projects under management; # of film permits issued 	EWDD	Mayor's Office; philanthropic partners; Oakland artists and culture keepers	Ongoing as resources allow
◆ B. Facilitate spaces for community connection and celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of special event and entertainment venue permits issued; # of community special events through Special Events Permits (SEP) (in certain zip codes/priority neighborhoods) 	EWDD	OPRYD; OPW (KOCB); OPD; OFD; local event producers	Ongoing
◆ C. Support local business and vendor participation in cultural and social activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of businesses supported for events from vendors to brick and mortars 	EWDD	Corridor business associations and individual businesses	Ongoing
◆ D. Increase economic development through activation of parks, streets, and vacant spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of sites activated through permits or licenses or leases, including parking lots, vacant lots, City property 	EWDD	OPRYD; OPW (KOCB); OPD; OFD; corridor business associations	Ongoing

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Appendix A: Inclusive Community Engagement

Several major themes emerged as EWDD engaged with stakeholders throughout the planning process and in the course of service delivery, many which are interrelated and dependent on City service coordination. Overall, stakeholders expressed a desire to partner with the City to implement solutions.

The City of Oakland launched a two-year strategic planning process in June 2023 to develop a comprehensive five-year Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) and to guide the priorities of the Economic and Workforce Development Department.

This appendix is organized in three parts. **Section 1** summarizes the community engagement activities carried out during the planning process and highlights the major themes that emerged from stakeholder meetings and public events. **Section 2** outlines ongoing

engagement efforts, and **Section 3** provides an overview of prior stakeholder input and their recommendations.

Over the past eight years, stakeholder recommendations for economic development have remained remarkably consistent across City-led focus groups, business roundtables, and advisory task forces. While Oakland's core economic challenges have endured, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified many of these longstanding issues and further underscored the need for coordinated action.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR THEMES:

- ▲ Public Safety
- ▲ Cleanliness
- ▲ Real Estate and Property
- ▲ Supporting Businesses
- ▲ City Government
- ▲ Arts, Culture and Entertainment
- ▲ Communications, Marketing and Increasing Foot Traffic
- ▲ Access to Capital

1. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A complete list of stakeholders who contributed to this planning process is provided in Attachment C. The 2025 Economic Development Action Plan also incorporates recommendations from the Oakland Economic Recovery Advisory Council (OERAC), a diverse coalition of community partners convened in 2020 to support Oakland's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To develop the 2025 EDAP, EWDD staff carried out a range of engagement activities including:

- ▲ Presentations and discussions with business and community groups, including all chambers of commerce, business associations, advocacy organizations, higher education institutions, community-based organizations and neighborhood meetings.
- ▲ Briefings with City leadership, including City Council offices, the City Administrator, department directors and key staff.
- ▲ Participation in mayoral townhalls focused on Economic and Workforce Development priorities.
- ▲ Sector-specific convenings with employers representing the healthcare and transportation and logistics, and higher education sectors, lenders, community development finance institutions, and small business advocates.
- ▲ “Oaktalkx” small business engagement sessions and survey, designed to elevate the voices and experiences of local business owners with city leadership.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Stakeholders emphasized that public safety is foundational to economic development—safe parking, effective crime reduction, and basic city services (lighting, paving, responsiveness) are prerequisites for a thriving business climate.

Businesses and customers expressed safety concerns in commercial areas due to car break-ins, robberies, and overall physical conditions. Business owners and operators also cited increased expenses related to security to keep workers and patrons safe, as well as the economic impact of break-ins as barriers to success and investment.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

“Customers’ cars are not safe. Subsidized safe parking was the best thing the City did.”

“Government can and should get out of the way for so much of planning and zoning, but solve the public safety crisis, pave the roads, turn the lights on. Do the basics.”

“Allow events and vendors in parks, streets and vacant lots for prosocial activation. Activate every sidewalk in front of a business.”

“Fund employment pathways to support neighborhood commercial zones.”

“We solve problems as business owners; how can we lead in finding solutions that actually address what we are going through?”



CLEANLINESS

Business owners emphasized that Oakland's reputation and economic vitality are undermined by widespread blight, including trash, graffiti, poorly lit corridors, and neglected vacant buildings. These conditions make employees and customers feel unsafe and diminish activity in commercial districts.

Vacant properties are seen as major contributors to dumping, vandalism, and crime, and reducing vacancies is viewed as essential to creating clean and safe business environments. Business owners see art and placemaking, especially business-led efforts, as effective tools for beautification and graffiti prevention.

Cleanliness and safety should be intentionally planned into the city's infrastructure. Owners stressed that transportation and planning agencies should map and improve key walking and shopping pathways, ensuring lighting, greenery, and pedestrian safety are prioritized across commercial zones.

Overall, stakeholders want the City to support business-led activation and invest in basic environmental improvements that immediately elevate the experience of operating and visiting Oakland's business districts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

“Vacant buildings attract dumping, graffiti and crime. Reducing vacancies should be a core strategy to create clean and safe places to do business.”

“Art is a tool for beautification and prevents graffiti.”

“Businesses should lead place making.”

“Pedestrian safety is a business priority.”

“Lighting and greenery would make an immediate change in all the business areas.”



REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY

Business owners and stakeholders stressed that Oakland needs a clear property investment and activation strategy to strengthen its commercial real estate market, especially in a down market with significant vacancies. Long permitting timelines make lease negotiations difficult, and businesses want more flexibility in planning, zoning, and allowable temporary uses to activate vacant buildings and land.

Vacant properties and underutilized ground-floor spaces, especially in newly built mixed-use buildings, are seen as major drags on economic activity. Stakeholders want the City to help repurpose vacant land, support predevelopment financing, and upgrade commercial buildings so they are leasable and attractive to new tenants. They also emphasized the high costs of bringing buildings up to code.

There is strong demand for tenant and landlord leasing support, recognizing that many small businesses and property owners lack brokers or representation. Stakeholders want matchmaking between landlords and prospective tenants, and assistance navigating land use requirements. They also suggested identifying “troubled properties” and working through barriers to reactivation.

Capital improvements—lighting, paving, street enhancements—are viewed as critical to making buildings marketable and supporting leasing. Businesses also expressed interest in partnering with the City to help market vacancies.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

“Flexibility and temporary uses help activate the building stock rather than leaving it vacant.”

“The economic development strategy needs to include a property investment strategy.

How can we market buildings on streets that are less known?”

“Predevelopment continues to be a financing challenge.”

“How much can land use strategy do for the economy? Does Oakland have a plan for upgrading commercial buildings to attract new business?”

“It is hard to negotiate a lease when it takes a long time to get a permit.”

“Flexibility and multiple use of all buildings is so important in all this uncertainty.”

“Businesses can help market vacancies on their corridors because we know prospective tenants and the landlords.”



SUPPORTING BUSINESSES

Business owners emphasized that the current climate, marked by crime, homelessness, rising insurance barriers, and declining sales, has created unexpected and unsustainable costs. A secure and predictable business environment is seen as the essential foundation for retaining and attracting businesses.

Stakeholders stressed the need to strengthen Oakland’s economic base by expanding sales tax-generating businesses, supporting the growth of food and essential services (restaurants, grocery stores) near new housing, and improving sector-level understanding of local supply chains to better capture spending within the city.

They highlighted major untapped tools for business growth, including Oakland’s underutilized Foreign Trade Zone, which could stimulate investment if opened to more operators, and energy generation and storage, which could be used as a competitive advantage to attract new firms.

Businesses also underscored the importance of supporting early-stage entrepreneurship: vendors, pop-up markets, and neighborhood-based commerce are critical entry points into the business lifecycle and key to neighborhood identity and revitalization.

Finally, participants noted that insurance has become difficult or impossible to obtain due to insurance redlining, putting additional stress on business survival and deterring investment.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

“ *Our Foreign Trade Zone is underutilized; it should be a mechanism to stimulate investment. Bring more operators in to manage the Zone, especially in this time of uncertainty.”*

“Understanding how different sectors support and encourage business supply chains is fundamental to capturing local spending.”

“Focus on restaurants and grocery stores for all this new housing, the new residents need more options for basic needs.”

“There are many vendor opportunities in Oakland. A business can get started easily, if they know what to do.”

“Bring back all of Oakland’s neighborhoods, there are generations of stories in the neighborhood businesses.”



CITY GOVERNMENT

Businesses want the City to streamline permitting, reduce regulatory burdens, and provide clearer, earlier guidance, particularly on Fire, Building, Planning, and Zoning requirements, to prevent costly delays and failed financing efforts. Stakeholders stressed the need for stronger internal coordination across City departments so businesses do not have to navigate fragmented processes on their own.

They also called for easier access to procurement opportunities, consistent attention to business corridors from all City agencies, and a more reliable, customer-focused approach to helping businesses open and operate. Participants emphasized that the City should better communicate its successes, not only business closures, and play a more active role in attracting capital and partners for development.

Overall, business owners described current systems as overly complex and time-consuming, noting that navigating City processes can feel like “75 steps” and too often jeopardizes otherwise viable projects.

PUBLIC COMMENTS



Businesses need support to get through regulation and compliance.”

“Coordinate City departments and policy internally so businesses do not have to do it, it’s too expensive.”

“Businesses need to know about Fire inspections and requirements first thing, start training tenants to work backwards from Fire and Building, Planning and Zoning are the easy part.”

“Continue to make procurement easier for local businesses to participate.”

“Tell the story of how the City made it easy for businesses. We just highlight when a business opens but we do not say what City teams did to help it open.”



ARTS, CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

Stakeholders emphasized that Oakland’s diversity, its cultures, identities, and artistic communities, is a core economic strength. They called for a clear plan to protect and expand arts and cultural spaces, treat artists as businesses, and provide incentives, rebates, and permanent funding (such as an arts and culture tax) to support the creative sector. Participants highlighted the need for coordinated efforts across institutions, better organization of creative pipelines, and intentional housing solutions to keep artists in Oakland.

They also urged the City to permit more cultural events in parks and public spaces, activate neighborhood amphitheaters, and use artists and influencers to tell Oakland’s story. Strengthening the “business of art,” improving affordability, and building sector-wide coordination were recurring priorities.

On communications and marketing, stakeholders want a unified, positive narrative about safety, coordinated PR campaigns using local business networks, and strategies to enhance in-person customer experience. They stressed the need to promote major assets such as the Coliseum/Hegenberger area, attract student housing and academic institutions, and increase foot traffic through conferences, expos, and culturally rooted local events. Safety and the perception of safety remain essential to encouraging residents and visitors to engage with Oakland’s cultural districts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

“Arts and Culture are two different things; Culture is embedded in race and ethnicity.”
“Different backgrounds, identities and cultures come together to create our diverse economy, that’s Oakland’s superpower.”

“Protect the places where art happens, develop a plan for arts and cultural spaces.”

“Treat artists like businesses, they bring additional value to every project.”

“We need rebates and incentives to help boost the creative industries.”

“Oakland needs an arts and culture tax to provide permanent funding for creative businesses.”

“Pay artists and influencers to tell Oakland’s story, it’s their story too.”

“Intentional housing for artists so we can stay here.”

“This sector needs much more coordination. How can we all support each other’s work?”



COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND INCREASING FOOT TRAFFIC

Stakeholders emphasized the need for a unified, positive message about safety and a shared approach to telling Oakland’s story, one that involves the City, businesses, and community voices. They stressed that the customer’s in-person experience, including the surrounding environment of business districts, is central to effective marketing.

Participants called for expanded business conferences, expos, and culturally rooted local events to boost foot traffic and visibility. They recommended coordinated PR campaigns that leverage local businesses’ networks, along with tailored investment and marketing strategies for specific commercial corridors.

Stakeholders also urged the City to proactively promote major assets such as the Coliseum and Hegenberger corridor and to attract student housing and academic institutions citywide. Ensuring both real and perceived safety is essential to encouraging new residents and visitors to explore and support local businesses.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

“Oakland needs a united, positive message about safety.”
“Our big sites should be promoted, the Coliseum is a huge asset, why doesn’t the City act like Hegenberger is the 2nd largest tax center in Oakland [second to Downtown]?”

“Bring more student housing and academic institutions into Downtown and all over Oakland.”

“Prioritize business conferences, expos and similar events, including smaller, local events too like Black trade shows or Oakstop’s Blackout Market.”



ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Stakeholders stressed that equitable business growth depends on equitable access to investment, yet many Oakland businesses, especially the smallest and most underinvested, face major barriers to financing. Years of compounded crises, falling foot traffic, and high rents have left businesses financially fragile, while persistent crime and vandalism increase lending risk and make insurance difficult or impossible to obtain.

Participants highlighted that businesses now must work much harder to secure financing and need stronger guidance, technical assistance, and intensive support to become loan ready. Rising operational costs, including energy bills, further strain neighborhood-serving businesses. Overall, the current environment demands more robust, targeted capital and support strategies to help businesses survive and grow.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- “All businesses can grow equally if they can get equal access to investment.”
- “Businesses have to work harder for financing, they need a lot more guidance and support in this economic environment.”**
- “Foot traffic has fallen but rents haven’t which means businesses can’t pay all their bills.”
- “Underinvested businesses need more intensive support to be loan ready.”
- “The smallest businesses, who are most important to the neighborhood, can’t make their energy payments.”
- “Many businesses in Oakland are struggling to find insurance coverage due to increasing incidents of vandalism.”

2. REGULAR BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Since the last strategy, EWDD has built ongoing opportunities for dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders. Rather than relying on one-time outreach, we maintain continuous feedback loops that strengthen the City’s responsiveness and ensure historically underrepresented voices are included in planning efforts.

EWDD now supports more than 20 business corridors, including 10 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and a variety of established and emerging business groups, through regular engagement and monthly interdepartmental working groups. These groups often bring together City staff, agency partners, property owners, business owners, and community organizations to coordinate efforts and address shared challenges. EWDD supports the following areas and initiatives:

LOCATION	ENTITY/NEIGHBORHOOD
West Oakland	▲ 7th Street Thrives
	▲ Prescott / Raimondi Park
Downtown	▲ Uptown Arts and Entertainment District
	▲ Old Oakland
	▲ Lakeside
East Oakland	▲ Clinton Park and San Antonio Park
	▲ Hegenberger East Oakland Gateway
	▲ Asociación de Comerciantes de Fruitvale (Fruitvale Business Association)
	▲ Elmhurst
	▲ Havenscourt
Citywide	▲ Chambers of Commerce
	▲ Business Improvement District Alliance
	▲ Visit Oakland Tourism Bureau



Each corridor group is encouraged to create a tailored service plan and track 311 requests to resolve urgent public service needs. These collaborative forums support place-based problem-solving on issues such as crime, cleanliness, and infrastructure, while advancing broader economic and community development goals.

Business leaders continue to articulate the core public services needed to sustain foot traffic and vibrancy in entertainment districts and commercial corridors. Their commitment is evident in their own investments in clean and safe efforts and shared infrastructure, demonstrating a strong model of partnership and shared responsibility in Oakland's economic development.

3. PREVIOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A. Oakland Equitable Recovery, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the local economy leading to significant economic uncertainty and the need to rapidly adapt policies to support recovery and resilience. The subsequent **Economic Recovery Plan** was prepared in 2021, guided by the **Oakland Economic Recovery Advisory Council (OERAC)**. The Advisory Council included nearly 50 of Oakland's closest agency, community and economic partners whose central question was: "How should we define a resilient and equitable economy that works for all Oaklanders for the long term?"

The following is a summary of the OERAC's recommendations which informed the 2021 Plan:

1. Financial Support

- ▲ Provide support to businesses in commercial lease and rent negotiations.
- ▲ Provide financial support to small business recovery, particularly BIPOC businesses.
- ▲ Sustain Oakland's artist and cultural organizations.

2. Local leadership

- ▲ Partner on recovery investments with community-led and serving organizations.

3. Health and Safety Guidance

- ▲ Ensure uniform safety guidance and PPE use in businesses across Oakland.

4. Capacity Building

- ▲ Increase space available for businesses and cultural activities.
- ▲ Expand equity programs and support industry efforts to reduce disparities.
- ▲ Close the digital divide for businesses and workers.
- ▲ Deploy a buy local campaign and online marketplace/B2B Platform.
- ▲ Support ongoing participatory research on the needs of Black-owned businesses.
 - Support research on the needs of Black, Indigenous and other POC-owned business owners during and post-COVID.
 - Commit resources to gathering the quantitative and qualitative data needed to center equity and target resources effectively.
 - Recognize the structural barriers to capital for Black-owned and other POC-owned businesses and design programs to address them.

5. Social Safety Net

- ▲ Provide immediate cash assistance and guaranteed income.
- ▲ Develop and support policies for healthcare, childcare, and eldercare for long-term unemployed.
- ▲ Engage youth, unemployed workers, and the region on a recovery strategy.

B. Advancing Racial Equity in Oakland's Small Business Ecosystem, 2019

The Greenlining Institute founded the Small Business Advisory Group to support the City's **2018-2020 Economic Development Strategy** racial equity objectives. The roundtable included technical assistance providers, community lenders, ethnic chambers, and small business advocates. For small business owners of color, entrepreneurship remains a critical wealth-building tool providing a pathway to self-determination and the middle class. In Oakland and nationally, entrepreneurs of color face significant barriers in starting and scaling their business due to the racial wealth gap, among other barriers.

Specific recommendations for the City to support a healthy and more inclusive small business ecosystem that allows entrepreneurs of color to thrive include:

- ▲ Prioritize the creation of a thriving economy by investing in the Economic and Workforce Development Department and Business Assistance Center.
- ▲ Re-envision the Business Assistance Center into a great resource for Oakland's small business owners.
- ▲ Collect data on the rate of commercial displacement across Oakland.
- ▲ Explore the implementation of commercial tenant protections.
- ▲ Utilize data collection platforms to track the state of Oakland's small business community.
- ▲ In line with the vision of the 2018-2020 Economic Development Strategy and the Race & Equity Ordinance, align all city plans so they all contain a racial equity lens.
- ▲ Support worker-owned cooperatives.
- ▲ Expand transparency and community engagement opportunities as the Economic Development Strategy and other strategic plans are implemented.
- ▲ Encourage positive behavior from financial institutions operating in the city to address the threat of commercial displacement, to which entrepreneurs of color are most vulnerable.

C. Oakland Small Business Task Force, 2017

In 2017, Oakland City Council established a Small Business Task Force to discuss the issues affecting local and small businesses. The 2017 Small Business Task Force presented ten (10) short-term and long-term recommendations:

- ▲ Re-establish a Small Business Commission.
- ▲ Recharter, Revamp & Retool the Business Assistance Center.
- ▲ Improve Small Business Data Collection, Analysis and Insight.
- ▲ Advance a Small Business Marketing Campaign.
- ▲ Improve Permitting Process for Small Businesses.
- ▲ Craft Public Safety Strategy for Small Businesses.
- ▲ Provide Subsidies and Financial Support.
- ▲ Build Equity into City's Business Improvement District (BID) Strategy to Address District Inequality.
- ▲ Explore Programs to Support Commercial Rent Planning & Stabilization.
- ▲ Ensure Workforce Development Programs Meet Business Needs.



Appendix B: Overview of City of Oakland Policy

As Oakland faces financial challenges, it is committed to fostering a thriving and equitable community. The City emphasizes transparency, accountability, and a compassionate approach to public needs ... to balance immediate demands with future growth, prioritizing fiscal responsibility and economic development to build resilience and lasting equity for all residents.”
 —Vision City of Oakland Strategic Plan 2025-2029

The EDAP is designed to align with the City’s broader policies, plans, and strategies to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic development. To shape its goals, actions, and sub-actions, EWDD reviewed a range of guiding documents including city policies, plans, and strategies. These documents underscore that economic development is a shared responsibility across City departments and community partners—creating opportunities for collaboration that advance equitable growth in Oakland’s commercial districts.

This overview provides a table of each relevant document, with a narrative description of the document purpose and enumerates the relevant policy, services, and/or recommendations that informed the EDAP.

CITY POLICIES, PLANS, AND STRATEGIES REVIEWED:

1. Downtown Oakland Specific Plan	2024
2. Oakland Workforce Development Strategic Plan	2024
3. Environmental Justice Element & Appendices, General Plan Update 2023	2023
4. Economic Analysis of Oakland’s Industrial Lands	2023
5. Housing and Community Development Action Plan	2023
6. Re-imagining Public Safety	2021
7. Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Community Needs and Assessment & Racial Equity Analysis	2024 2021
8. Equitable Climate Action Plan	2020
9. Belonging In Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan	2018
10. Oakland Equity Indicators	2018
11. Oakland Economic Development Strategy	2018

1. DOWNTOWN OAKLAND SPECIFIC PLAN, 2024

Downtown Oakland is a dynamic regional hub of culture, ideas, employment, housing, and transit that welcomes our entire community. Growth is accompanied by bold strategies to protect vulnerable community members, businesses, and cultural organizations from displacement and to afford them opportunities for expansion and enhancement. Investment around transit stations and their vicinities creates active gateways into downtown and out to Oakland's communities. Downtown is a leader in innovative resilience and adaptation around social, climate, and economic change.

The Downtown Oakland Specific Plan establishes policies to ensure downtown development over the next 20 years centers racial equity and serves the broad needs of the entire Oakland community. Plan policies include: pathways to economic innovation; measures to protect residents, businesses, and community institutions from displacement; strategies for a welcoming public realm that is safe, engaging, and inclusive; and approaches to reduce disparities in accessing opportunity and improving one's quality of life. While there is an undeniable urgency to achieve these goals, the process has taken the time needed to hear the voices of the community, explore new ideas, and advance a plan that reflects the actual values of Oaklanders.

A. Economic Development Policies

- ▲ **Policy E-1.2** - Encourage Development of Downtown Hotels: Explore updates to zoning regulations that encourage the development of hotels and hospitality space in the downtown area, to enhance tourism and reduce pressure to convert existing residential hotels to boutique hotels.
- ▲ **Policy E-1.4** - Land Trust/Master Lease Program: Provide affordable space for businesses through intermediary leases. Use new programs to potentially offer long-term leases to allow tenants to make capital investments to build out the spaces to meet their needs.
- ▲ **Policy E-1.5** - Establishing Arts & Cultural Districts: Establish a program to create additional arts and culture districts in downtown, like the existing BAMBD, with special land use regulations and other support for businesses serving the goals of the districts.
- ▲ **Policy E-1.7** - Supporting Businesses Owned by Women and People of Color: Support small businesses and businesses owned by people of color and women through ongoing implementation of targeted business support.
- ▲ **Policy E-1.8** - Supporting Worker-Owned Cooperatives: Consider adding points for City contracting and procurement for worker-owned cooperatives and develop educational programming and technical support to help form or convert existing businesses to worker-owned cooperatives.
- ▲ **Policy E-2.4** - Ground Floor Artisan Production Spaces: Review and revise zoning and other City requirements to allow artisan production uses in ground-floor commercial spaces so that tenants can make and sell products in the same space.
- ▲ **Policy E-2.7** - Pop-Up & Temporary Uses: Activate vacant storefronts and empty lots with retail and arts uses by supporting short-term "popup" uses that temporarily occupy these spaces without conditional use permits.
- ▲ **Policy E-2.8** - Ground Floor Vacancy Requirements: Require new development projects to include a plan for how ground floor storefront spaces will be used if vacant for an extended period of time.
- ▲ **Policy E-2.9** - Low-Cost Retail Storefronts: Allow and encourage the creation of flexible smaller retail storefronts and build out of basic tenant improvements as a means of providing lower-cost spaces for entrepreneurs.

- ▲ **Policy H-1.6** - Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District: Explore the creation of a new downtown value-capture mechanism, such as an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD), with a significant portion of this new long-term revenue stream dedicated to affordable housing retention and production.
- ▲ **Policy M-1.2** - Oakland Pedestrian Plan and Oakland Bicycle Plan: Implement the pedestrian and bicycle programs/policies for Downtown Oakland detailed in the 2017 Oakland Pedestrian Plan and 2019 Oakland Bicycle Plan, with attention to connectivity between residential, workplace, and green/recreational space.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ELEMENT & APPENDIX, SAFETY ELEMENT, GENERAL PLAN UPDATE 2023

The General Plan is a policy document and establishes a citywide vision and consistent direction for future development. It reflects community priorities, values, and includes supporting goals, policies, and implementation measures to achieve the community's vision. The General Plan Update is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for all Oaklanders to work together to create a visionary blueprint for our City's future over the next two decades. The update will occur in two phases, guided by a set of core principles rooted in equity.

Historical and ongoing governmental and industrial practices have led to, and continue to generate racially inequitable outcomes, and longstanding environmental injustices in Oakland. The Environmental Justice Element of the City of Oakland's General Plan, serves as the foundation for achieving equity and environmental justice when planning for future growth and development in Oakland. California Law requires specific topics, also called "Elements," to be covered in a general plan. Required elements include land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety.

- ▲ Under SB 1000, Oakland has to adopt an Environmental Justice Element, either standalone or interwoven with other Elements, at the same time that the Housing and Safety Elements are updated, with required adoption currently projected for early 2023. The Environmental Justice Element should include objectives and policies that:
 - Reduce health risks in disadvantaged communities,
 - Promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process, and
 - Prioritize programs that address disadvantaged communities' needs.
- ▲ The 2004 Safety Element (amended in 2012) establishes the General Plan policies to minimize risk and protect people, property, and the environment from environmental hazards in Oakland and provide policies to reduce exposure.

A. Economic Development Recommendations

- ▲ Make intentional investments to increase and diversify economic growth and living wage jobs in an inclusive and equitable manner that focuses on neighborhoods and their unique needs.
- ▲ Support the development and retention of small business startups and new firms, particularly POC/women/veteran owned businesses, by providing assistance with business planning, expansion, and access to capital.
- ▲ Encourage occupancy of existing buildings with incubators for specific industry/trade groups and for artisans and craftspeople, where small startup businesses can share existing facilities and equipment.
- ▲ Continue to use the public procurement process to stimulate small business development, prioritize certified underrepresented business enterprises, including businesses owned by people of color, women, LGBTQIA+ community members, veterans, and individuals with disabilities, and locally-owned businesses in particular, and coordinate with anchor institutions such as universities, hospitals, public agencies, and school districts to help launch new products and services.

- ▲ Continually assess business workforce needs and other requirements and use the findings to assist in developing a qualified workforce that meets the demands of established and emerging business.
- ▲ The City shall partner with educational institutions, employers, and community-based organizations to develop a local labor force with skills to meet the needs of the area's businesses and industries, and address barriers to workforce participation and access to training.
- ▲ Support education and training in entrepreneurship and social enterprise as an alternative pathway to traditional jobs.

3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF OAKLAND'S INDUSTRIAL LANDS, 2023

As part of the General Plan Update, the Industrial Lands report evaluates economic and market conditions and trends specific to Oakland's industrially zoned lands. Oakland's industrial lands planning areas stretch along the City's waterfront south of the Bay Bridge to, and inclusive of, the Oakland International Airport. Covering roughly 20% of Oakland's land area, 75% of its waterfront, and served by excellent transportation infrastructure, the area represents a tremendous opportunity for the city to foster sustainable economic growth.

This report is designed to inform the land use policies and alternatives that will be considered as part of the City of Oakland's (City) General Plan Update. The purpose of this study is to present a broad-based overview of existing conditions in the industrial lands, prospects for continuation of present uses, and potential opportunities and obstacles to respond to longer-term economic changes. The City may need to heavily regulate and ultimately downsize industrial activity in targeted locations to allow for transition to alternative uses, consider if alternative, non-industrial lands are available to support the City's housing development goals.

While the industrial lands have played an important role in Oakland's economic evolution for over century, growth in the area has also exposed generations of residents to environmental hazards, particularly among disadvantaged communities of color.

- ▲ Industrial lands represent a vital economic asset for the City. However, with about 15% of the city's jobs and three percent of its housing units and residents, the area is characterized by relatively low intensity development patterns and land uses.
- ▲ Employment in the industrial lands has remained stagnant over the past two decades, and only one-fifth of these jobs are filled by residents and only 40% by persons of color.
- ▲ Goods movement-related sectors currently represent the predominant industry cluster in the industrial lands, largely attributable to the facilities and activities of the Port of Oakland. A renewed emphasis on goods movement related activity within the industrial lands could facilitate more logistics-related land uses, such as warehousing, cold storage, and services related to international trade.
- ▲ Modernizing the industrial lands toward denser, cleaner job centers, emphasizing growing sectors such as biotechnology and clean energy will require a range of investments, including economic development initiatives related to de-carbonization, job training, and infrastructure as well as land-use policy changes to attract growing sectors not well represented in Oakland.
- ▲ Transitioning portions of the industrial lands into denser mixed-use neighborhoods with housing, commercial (e.g., retail, hospitality, entertainment) and recreation amenities.

4. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN, 2023

The 2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan outlines how Oakland HCD will administer \$350 million in affordable housing dollars, a portion of Measure U's total \$850 million, over the years following its approval by voters in November 2022. It also incorporates strategies to address the City's homelessness and housing affordability crises.

- ▲ Oakland's annual target for producing new affordable housing units has increased to 1,283 units, up from 595 units per year in the 2015-2022 period. By 2031, 3,750 of Oakland's newly developed units must be affordable to low-income households, and 6,511 units must be affordable to very low-income households.
- ▲ When applying a racial equity lens to this data, additional disparities become apparent. Whereas Black or African American residents represent 21% of Oakland's population, they make up 59% of the City's unhoused population—a clear disproportionate rate. This disparity highlights an opportunity for the city to focus its efforts and address housing market failures, homeless system challenges, and long-standing discrimination.
- ▲ Oaklanders at imminent risk of homelessness may be the smallest group, but they require some of the most immediate interventions in order to prevent entry into homelessness. These residents often hold a combination of the following identities and experiences:
 - Black males between the ages of 35 and 55
 - doubled up in housing units
 - without formal lease agreements
 - previously unhoused
 - veterans
 - prior involvement with the criminal justice system
 - mental health and/or substance use challenges
- ▲ Projections from All Home estimate approximately 12,000-13,000 Oakland households are in need of homelessness prevention services.
- ▲ As of May 2023, Oakland HCD offers four Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA) programs to administer its affordable housing funds including:
 - New construction of affordable housing
 - Acquisition and Conversion to Affordable Housing (ACAH)
 - Homekey for the conversion of hotels and motels into homeless-serving housing
 - Preservation/rehabilitation of buildings within the City's existing portfolio

A. Alignment With Economic Development

Oakland HCD will also work with its city partners to examine opportunities for streamlining and efficiency.

- ▲ Oakland HCD will work in partnership with City leadership to identify policy and administrative solutions for innovation. This will include an ongoing partnership with Oakland's Planning and Building Department to prioritize affordable housing projects and streamline the permitting process and explore how land use changes can better support affordable housing development.
- ▲ HCD is also working with the Economic and Workforce Development Department to determine how public lands can be utilized for affordable housing projects and ensure market rate and large-scale developments are leveraged for the production of affordable housing.

5. REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT, 2021

In June 2020 the Oakland City Council (Council) approved a FY 2020-21 budget that trimmed the Oakland Police Department (OPD) budget by \$14.6 million. Additional reductions were made in July 2020 pursuant to a proposal put forward by a group of City Councilmembers dubbed the Equity Caucus.

In response to ongoing concerns expressed by the community and reflecting the Council's commitment to meaningfully answering the call for change throughout the City, on July 28, 2020, the Council adopted a resolution creating the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force "to rapidly reimagine and reconstruct the public safety system in Oakland by developing a recommendation for Council consideration to increase community safety through alternative responses to calls for assistance, and investments in programs that address the root causes of violence and crime (such as health services, housing, jobs, etc.), with a goal of a 50% reduction in the OPD General Purpose Fund (GPF) budget allocation."

Councilmembers Loren Taylor and Nikki Fortunato Bas were designated as Co-Chairs of the Task Force, with membership comprising nominees from each Councilmember, the Community Policing Advisory Board, the Public Safety Services Oversight Commission, the Police Commission, the Budget Advisory Commission; and the Oakland Youth Advisory Commission. Membership was specifically sought from impacted communities and reflecting relevant experience.

On March 17, 2021. In total, 88 recommendations were adopted by the Task Force these were consolidated to a final 48.

A. Economic Development Recommendations

- ▲ Transfer special event duties out of OPD and create an Oakland specific Crowd Control Ordinance
- ▲ Establish a collaborative hub for public safety centered on a new Department of Public Safety.
- ▲ Transfer 911 call center out of OPD and invest in cross-functional teams and MACRO to address behavioral health issues.
- ▲ Create a civilian Community Ambassadors program to respond to nonviolent, non-mental health incidents.
 - The program should include: a staffing strategy that prioritizes BIPOC Ambassadors; service delivery that prioritizes low-income BIPOC neighborhoods; encouraged compliance (rather than punitive enforcement); restorative justice; and community stewardship
 - The City should establish coordinated Public Works Street Safety/Custodial Steward Teams to serve as alternate targeted commercial district safety ambassador patrols. Existing public work staff (in consultation with SEIU) would be provided special violence de-escalation training and enhanced pay to work in 6 pilot neighborhood commercial districts/ busy streets and adjacent parks areas. These street teams would work in coordination and communication with community partners as well as other city staff including OPD as necessary.
- ▲ Revitalize commercial corridors and transform unused vacant lots.
 - Hire local Black and brown residents to transform unused surplus land and vacant lots into safe spaces for community-led space activation including urban greening, community gardens, pop-up markets for small businesses, public showcases for local artists, and recreational opportunities for youth and families.
 - Reallocate \$300,000 of OPD General Fund budget each fiscal year to reduce hotspots for crime and revitalize commercial corridors by rehabilitating small business storefronts, increasing street lighting, and hiring local residents to improve sidewalk cleanliness in neighborhoods most impacted by crime.
 - Site improvements to storefronts including façade, windows, and door repairs as well as installing security systems will reduce environmental signals that make criminal activity more likely in low-income commercial corridors. Improving street lighting and sidewalk cleanliness increase public safety and public health by encouraging foot-traffic and more watchful eyes throughout the community, which are strategies for deterring crime.

- Move traffic enforcement personnel and responsibilities out of Oakland Police Department and into Oakland DOT, allowing unarmed civil servants to enforce traffic laws as has been done in other countries (England, New Zealand, Canada). Have OakDOT focus on high injury corridors rather than high crime neighborhoods as OPD currently does.
- ▲ Increase access to affordable and nutritious food.
- ▲ Create a civilian Department of Cannabis and investment in equitable development of the cannabis industry.
- ▲ Invest more in programs, services, and spaces for young people.
- ▲ Free access to employment and entrepreneurial support to apply for jobs, start and sustain small businesses. This can include expanded and deepened programming for the department as well as grants to local nonprofits that can support community members in this way.

6. OAKLAND FUND FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, COMMUNITY NEEDS AND ASSESSMENT 2024 & RACIAL EQUITY ANALYSIS, 2021

The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) is a voter-approved program that funds services and programs for children and youth in Oakland. This report, a Community Needs Assessment (CNA), analyzes the current state of children, youth, and families in Oakland. It highlights the challenges they face, including economic hardships, safety concerns, and social emotional and mental health issues. The CNA also focuses on racial equity, gathering disaggregated data to understand the needs of underserved communities. The CNA is anchored by the voices, experiences, preferences, and needs of youth, parents, caregivers, and community members who participated in several community input forums that were hosted to inform this report.

The Community Needs Assessment and Racial Equity Analysis (CNA-REA), conducted in late 2020 and early 2021, aims to understand and present findings regarding the current experiences of youth 0-21 in Oakland, with a particular focus on data that reveal racial, economic, place-based and other types of inequity.

Key findings of this Community Needs Assessment & Racial Equity Analysis include:

A. Early Years Education

- ▲ Approximately 8,165 youth are foreign born. The increase of newcomers in Oakland (especially Arabic and Mam-speaking populations) highlight the need for culturally responsive programs and bilingual staff.
- ▲ In 2023, 30% of Oakland newcomer children did not attend preschool, and another 34% were cared for by a family/friend/neighbor before going to kindergarten. Children who were English learners (but not newcomers) were almost twice as likely to not go to preschool or to have care from a family/friend/neighbor than children who were not newcomers or English learners. This data speaks to a significant lack of accessibility to formal day care or preschool supports for children who are newcomers or English learners.
- ▲ Nearly one in three children in Oakland does not go to preschool or day care, or are cared for by a friend, family, or neighbor. This number is higher among low-income communities, newcomer or English-language-learner communities, and communities of color, especially Latino communities—where nearly half of children stay home or access informal supports. The county is significantly expanding the number of subsidized slots for early childcare and improving the quality of this education due to the new funding from Measure A and Measure CC.
- ▲ Since 2020, the number of young children (0–5) has decreased by 6% and the number of older teenagers (1,519) has increased by 9%.

B. Dramatic Racial and Geographic Disparities in Access to Resources and Outcomes

- ▲ Youth and adults who identify as African American / Black or Hispanic/Latino experience poverty at disproportionately higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups. While Latinos represent 16% of the overall youth population, they represent approximately 29% of all youth experiencing poverty. Similarly, while Black people represent 14% of the overall youth population, they represent approximately 26% of all youth experiencing poverty. Racial disparities in poverty rates remain relatively unchanged from 2020.
- ▲ Youth growing up in neighborhoods in East and West Oakland face the highest levels of poverty, environmental stressors, and arrests, and the poorest outcomes for early development, health, school success, and transitions to adulthood. Schools located in these neighborhoods serve students with the most compounding needs, often with fewer resources to do so.
- ▲ About a quarter (27%) of middle and high school students in OUSD reported that they had experienced the loss of a friend or family member to violence (2022-2023 data). As seen in Figure 28 of the report, African American students reported losing a loved one to violence at the highest rates (47%).

C. Many of Oakland Children and Youth Experience Frequent Stress and Trauma

- ▲ Youth cited experiences with and trauma from violence, racism and discrimination, neighborhood conditions that are unhealthy and unsafe, high levels of poverty, and major stressors on youth mental health such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation.
- ▲ African American students continue to be suspended in OUSD at disproportionate rates. The suspension rate of African American students is more than twice as high as the rate for all students, as seen in Table 7 in the report. Similar to the trend with chronic absenteeism, over the last three years, students who received free/reduced lunch were suspended at much greater rates than those who did not receive free/reduced lunch (4% vs 1%).

D. Massive Disparities Persist in Children and Youth's Readiness for, Engagement, and Success in School

- ▲ The majority of Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) students are not considered ready for Kindergarten, ready for high school, or ready for college and career. Rates for each show racial and geographic disparities, and the measures themselves compound other types of disparities.
- ▲ Transition-aged youth balance competing priorities in their transition to adulthood as they strive to take care of themselves and their families, while getting on a path to self-sufficiency.
 - Many youth struggle to transition into college, job training, and full-time employment as they age out of the school system and other services, facing a competitive job market, high barriers to entry for career pathways, high housing prices, and an immediate drop in wraparound support availability.
 - Black/African American youth 16-19 are twice as likely to be disconnected from both school and work, compared to their white peers.
- ▲ There is a need to center family and community to support thriving children and youth.
 - Youth, parents, providers, and community members have solutions to the challenges youth and families are facing, and should be active participants in investments in youth wellbeing.

E. Economic Development Findings and Recommendations

- ▲ In 2022, there were 1,298 youth ages 16-19 who were disconnected from school and work in Oakland. The total number of Oakland youth ages 16-19 years old who are disconnected from school and work increased from 2020 to 2022, though the percentage has stayed relatively consistent at 7-8%
- ▲ In 2018-19, over 60% of all rising 9th grade students in OUSD were determined to be not ready for high school based on the criteria above. As shown in Figure 20 in the report, there are large disparities by race/ethnicity in terms of students being ready for high school. For example, only 23% of African American 8th grade students were ready for high school compared to 70% of Asian students.
- ▲ OUSD students graduate from high school at rates well below those of their peers across Alameda County and California as a whole. At the same time, the 76.6% graduation rate for OUSD's class of 2020 represents a substantial increase over the 70.3% rate for the class of 2017 and the 63.4% rate for the Class of 2015. The overall graduation rate is 74% for OUSD students. Over the last five years, the graduation rate of Latino students has been below the overall average graduate rate.
- ▲ There are substantial disparities among different groups of 11th grade students meeting standards in core academic skill areas. For example, Black/ African American and Latinx students scored well below their White, Asian, and Filipino peers while less than 3% of English Language Learners met or exceeded standards in either English language Arts or Math. Students whose parents were college graduates were twice as likely to be proficient on either test than their peers whose parents were not high school graduates.
- ▲ Data available from the California Department of Education for OUSD's Class of 2018 indicate that 58.5% of students who completed high school that year enrolled in a college or university, both 2-year and 4-year within 12 or 16 months of completing high school. This compares to the 71% of their peers throughout Alameda County, and 65.8% throughout California.
- ▲ Almost half of middle (41%) and high school students (50%) reported planning to attend a four-year college after high school. The next-largest portion of students didn't know what they planned to do after high school. Among high schoolers, Hispanic/Latino and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students reported that they don't know what they want to do after high school or want to work after high school at the highest rates compared to other ethnic groups. They also reported wanting to go to a four-year college or university at the lowest rates compared to other ethnic groups.
- ▲ Youth are interested in job training and leadership opportunities that build their résumés, such as internships, research, and community-service opportunities. Young people enjoy and want hands-on, experiential leadership and career-exploration opportunities, especially in the fields of health, law, and engineering. They particularly value opportunities based in Oakland with short travel times from their home. Job security and being able to earn a living wage are important factors that young people think about when assessing opportunities and programs.
- ▲ Young people discussed how competitive the job market is and recommended mentors who could guide and link youth to resources as they prepare for life after high school. Financial responsibilities can be barriers to program participation. Paid internships are important to youth not only because they allow them to contribute to their household's needs but also because they allow them to obtain job and leadership experience.

- ▲ Transition-aged youth and youth who are out of school can struggle with higher rates of unemployment, paired with increased responsibility for taking care of themselves and possibly others. Some opportunity youth are caring for younger siblings, their own children, or other family members, which can be barriers to seeking stable employment but also can make retaining sustainable employment all the more urgent.
- ▲ Among transitional aged youth ages 18-24 in the San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley metropolitan area, 47.1% live below the poverty level and 6.8% were unemployed. Unemployment rates were higher for young women and for African Americans. Economic downturns hit youth particularly hard. Especially for those who age out of the foster care system, who are housing insecure, or otherwise find themselves needing to financially support themselves, finding a stable, living-wage job can be all the more urgent.

7. **EQUITABLE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN, 2020**

In 2018, Oakland City Council passed a Climate Emergency and Just Transition Resolution, calling for an urgent climate mobilization effort to reverse global warming, rapidly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and be more resilient in the face of intensifying climate impacts. This includes creating good green jobs, reducing pollution, and helping Oaklanders to thrive. The 2030 ECAP is the City's roadmap to bring about an equitable transition to a low-carbon economy. The goal of this ECAP is to identify an equitable path toward cost-effectively reducing Oakland's local climate emissions a minimum of 56%, transitioning away from fossil fuel dependence, and ensuring that all of Oakland's communities are resilient to the foreseeable impacts of climate change, by 2030.

A. **Economic Development Recommendations**

- ▲ B-1 Eliminate Natural Gas in New Buildings
- ▲ B-2 Plan for All Existing Buildings to be Efficient and All-Electric by 2040
- ▲ B-4 Reduce Lifecycle Emissions from Building Materials
- ▲ B-5 Require All Major Retrofits of City Facilities to be All Electric
- ▲ TLU-4 Abundant, Affordable, and Accessible Public Transit
- ▲ TLU-6 Establish Temporary and Permanent Car-Free Areas
- ▲ TLU-7 Rethink Curb Space
- ▲ TLU-10 Expand Zero-Carbon, Shared-Use Bus and Van Service
- ▲ A-1 Fund Creation and Operation of Resilience Hubs
- ▲ A-6 Expand and Protect Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
- ▲ CR-2 Expand and Protect Tree Canopy Coverage
- ▲ CR-3 Rehabilitate Riparian Areas and Open Space
- ▲ CR-5 Assess Feasibility for Sequestration Incubator
- ▲ MCW-1 Eliminate Disposal of Compostable Organic Materials to Landfills
- ▲ MCW-2 Strengthen Infrastructure and Partnerships for Edible Food Recovery
- ▲ MCW-4 Support the Reuse, Repair, Recovery, and Refurbishment Economy
- ▲ MCW-5 Expand Community Repair Resources
- ▲ MCW-6 Establish Deconstruction Requirements

8. BELONGING IN OAKLAND: A CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2018

Oakland's Cultural Development Plan seeks to reimagine the purpose of Cultural Affairs for the City, to redefine the domain of its work so that it is more relevant to the Oakland of today, and to enhance its approach to help catalyze the City's efforts to establish equity and well-being for all. The cultural planning process began in April 2017 with a research and discovery phase that included individual interviews and small group meetings with over 70 people, and an extensive field literature and City document review.

There are disparities among people, neighborhoods, and institutions that keep Oakland from being a fully fair and just city—particularly those underlain by race. To achieve equity, not only must disparities in access to and allocation of resources be addressed, but also the barriers built into both the physical and policy landscapes of Oakland. A new understanding of culture in the context of equity building can create powerful tools for surfacing the “habits of mind” and practices that keep disparities in place, and for finding creative strategies to remove them.

Members of the cultural community voiced concerns about shrinking investments in the cultural sector, both by the City and in the field generally; retention of cultural spaces in an over-heated real estate market and the lack of adequate performance and exhibition venues; and the need for more equitable funding for disinvested communities. Other frequently mentioned issues included bureaucratic barriers to accessing funding and finding solutions, establishing cultural districts to promote and protect creatives and tangible and intangible cultural legacies, and community benefits agreements as features of new developments.

A. Economic Development Recommendations

▲ Cultural Spaces

- Maintain the position of the Policy Director for Arts Spaces to facilitate cross-departmental and City-community relations that are relevant to the creation and retention of robust cultural spaces in Oakland
- Work cross-departmentally and with community partners to develop policy changes to mitigate displacement and to enable local cultural assets to thrive.
- Support naturally-occurring and Oakland-appropriate forms of technical assistance and convening that strengthen local capacity to address cultural space issues.

▲ Neighborhood Places

- Strengthen community capacity for self-determined cultural expression.
- Strengthen Cultural Affairs capacity to reorient to asset-based approaches.

▲ Civic Cultural Commons

- Strengthen the Public Art Program's capacity to responsibly manage/monitor ongoing and new public art projects and initiatives, and steward the City's collection of public art.
- Strengthen the Public Art Program's ability to advocate for cultural equity.
- Review Cultural Affairs' support of community expression in the civic commons.
- Revise, as appropriate, policies and procedures to strengthen community input and transparent, culturally-equitable decision-making and resource allocation.
- Expand support to individual artists and cultural practitioners through an opportunity to embed creative fellows into a variety of departments to foster cultural equity across the work of the City.



▲ **Strengthening the Cultural Ecosystem**

- Perform a cultural and racial equity impact analysis of current programs, policies, and procedures and explore asset-based approaches.
- Explore longer-term solutions to equitable cultural resource allocation.
- Strengthen the Cultural Funding Program's capacity to reorient grantmaking and technical assistance support toward cultural equity and asset-based approaches.

▲ **Building Infrastructure for Cultural Equity**

- Finalize the hiring of the approved administrative position to support the reactivation of the Cultural Affairs Commission.
- Reanimate the Cultural Affairs Commission with a clear charge and work plan aligned with the new cultural equity vision and purview of Cultural Affairs.
- Align Funding and Public Art Advisory Committees' charge, membership, and work plans with the work plan with the new cultural equity vision, implementation strategies, and Cultural Affairs Commission's charge and scope of work.
- Strengthen technology infrastructure to build efficiencies, establish baselines, and track progress of cultural equity goals.
- Strengthen communications capacity to support both internal and external relations.
- Explore steps to make Cultural Affairs an independent department in order to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration.
- Research potential City revenue streams for strengthening Cultural Affairs' resource base and infrastructure to more effectively address cultural and racial equity and build community capacity for cultural expression.
- Join learning communities and build common cause related to the value of cultural equity to achieving community well-being.



Appendix C: Acknowledgements

The authors and planning team extend our sincere appreciation for the collective commitment, effort, and generosity that made this plan possible. We are grateful to the many allies who shared their time and expertise, especially the business, civic, and community leaders whose valuable insights shaped the City's Economic Development Action Plan and who will continue to guide its implementation.

We would especially like to thank SPUR for the thought partnership and facilitation support as the Plan was developed.

Mayor

Mayor Barbara Lee

Oakland City Council

Council Member At Large, Rowena Brown

District 1 Council Member Zack Unger

District 2 Council Member Charlene Wang

District 3 Council Member Carroll Fife

District 4 Council Member Janani Ramachandran

District 5 Council Member Noel Gallo

District 6 Council Member Kevin Jenkins

District 7 Council Member Ken Houston

Past Oakland City Council Members

Council Member At Large, Rebecca Kaplan

District 1 Council Member Dan Kalb

District 2 Council Member Nikki Fortunato Bas

District 7 Council Member Treva Reid

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Planning and Building Department

Community and Agency Partners

7th St Thrives

Alameda County Latina Chamber of Commerce

Bay Area Organization of Black Owned Businesses

Black Cultural Zone

Building Operators Managers Association

Community Bank of the Bay

Comunidad y Comerciantes de Fruitvale

Dimond Improvement Association

Downtown Oakland Association

East Oakland Gateway Business Association

ESO Ventures

Family Bridges

ICA Fund

Kapor Center

Jack London Improvement District

Koreatown/Northgate Community Benefit District

Lake Merritt/Uptown Community Benefit District

Lakeshore/Lake Park Business Improvement

Management District

Latino Chamber of Commerce

Laurel District Association

Main Street Launch

Montclair Village Association

Oakland African American Chamber

Oakland Builders Alliance

Oakland Chinatown Business Improvement District

Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce

Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

Oakland Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce

Oakland Workforce Development Board

OakTalkX Participating Businesses:

- Dan Pitcock of Roberts Electric Company, Inc.
- LaTorra Monk, Oaklandia Cafe x Bakery
- Neftali Rosado Jr, SafeTight Security
- Sareeta Young, BlkReels
- Shauncy Jackson, Oakland Don't Play
- Weldon Hall, OakLabs

Pacific Community Ventures

Prescott Market

Real People's Fund/Project Runway

Restore Oakland

Rockridge Business Improvement District

Self Help Credit Union

Small Business Administration

SPUR

Temescal Telegraph Business Improvement District

The Spanish Speaking Unity Council of Alameda, Inc.

TMC Financing

Trybe Family, Inc.

Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative

Visit Oakland

Working Solutions

Apologies if there is anyone we missed mentioning here; it is inadvertent.

[BACK TO TOC](#) 



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