

Options for How We
Stabilize and Grow



**OAKLAND
GENERAL PLAN**

Creating Tomorrow, Together

Appendix A: Planning Context

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Appendix A: Options for Stabilization and Growth Planning Context

This Appendix provides additional background information on work completed, current planning initiatives, and other considerations that informed development of the Options and will continue to shape the General Plan Update process.

1.1 Work Completed to Date

Major General Plan work that has been completed thus far is described and the relevant documents linked below.

Phase I

- **Background Information and Resources.** ([link](#))
- **Environmental Justice and Racial Equity Baseline.** ([link](#)) *Identifies and delineates disparities by race and by geography which may be present in the social, economic, and environmental factors that can be influenced directly or indirectly by the General Plan.*
- **Map Atlas.** ([link](#)) *Maps, charts, and figures showing current (2025) conditions in Oakland.*
- **Economic Trends and Prospects Baseline Analysis.** ([link](#)) *Evaluation of economic and market trends that will inform land use policies and alternatives.*
- **Visioning Survey Report.** ([link](#)) *Summary of findings from General Plan Update visioning survey conducted June-July 2022.*
- **Vision and Guiding Principles.** ([link](#)) *Working vision statement and guiding principles to guide development of the 2045 General Plan.*
- **6th Cycle Housing Element Update.** ([link](#)) *Policy framework to meet housing needs for different incomes and demographic groups between 2023-2031.*
- **Safety Element Update.** ([link](#)) *Policy framework to guide the public decision-making process on addressing natural and human-caused hazards.*
- **Environmental Justice Element.** ([link](#)) *Policy framework to reduce pollution burdens on Oakland's most vulnerable communities and achieve equity and environmental justice when planning for future growth and development in the City.*
- **Racial Equity Impact Assessment.** ([link](#)) *Assessment of the potential racial equity impacts of the proposed goals and actions in the Safety and Environmental Justice elements.*
- **Phase 1 Draft Environmental Impact Report.** ([link](#)) *Analysis of environmental impacts and mitigation measures for Phase 1 of the General Plan Update.*

- **Economic Analysis of Oakland’s Industrial Lands.** ([link](#)) *Evaluation of economic and market conditions and trends specific to Oakland’s industrial land.*

Phase 2

- **Phase 2 Citywide Survey Report.** ([link](#)) *Summarizes the results of a citywide survey prepared for the kickoff of Phase 2 of the General Plan Update.*

1.2 Related Planning Initiatives

SPECIFIC PLANS

Six specific plans within the past 10-15 years provide greater specificity for future development and public improvements for several neighborhoods within Oakland. These plans are summarized in greater detail in the Map Atlas. The General Plan provides an opportunity to update aspects of these specific plans as needed to reflect the current community vision.

- **Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (2024).** ([link](#)) This plan seeks to create policy guidance for Downtown Oakland as it continues to redevelop, focusing on economic opportunity, housing needs and homelessness, transportation, cultural arts, public space, and social equity.
- **Coliseum Area Specific Plan (2015).** ([link](#)) This plan seeks to transform 800 acres around the Oakland Alameda County Coliseum into a state-of-the-art mixed-use district with a sports, entertainment, and science and technology focus, new housing, and a pedestrian-friendly environment. At the time this plan was prepared, the area was home to the Oakland Raiders, Golden State Warriors, and Oakland A’s, all of whom have since departed to locations outside Oakland.
- **West Oakland Specific Plan (2014).** ([link](#)) This plan focuses on economic development and quality of life improvements in West Oakland, with a particular focus on revitalizing underused industrial and commercial parcels along I-880, and supporting transit-oriented development around the West Oakland BART station.
- **Lake Merritt Station Area Plan (2014).** ([link](#)) This plan seeks to foster the area around the BART station as a walkable and bikeable neighborhood with housing, jobs, services, retail, and additional recreational space.
- **Broadway Valdez District Specific Plan (2014).** ([link](#)) This plan envisions a transformation of the City’s former auto row, just north of Downtown, into a pedestrian-friendly, retail and employment destination anchored by a diverse array of housing.
- **Central Estuary Area Plan (2013).** ([link](#)) This plan addresses conflicting land use priorities and infrastructure deficiencies along the estuary shoreline and within surrounding neighborhoods, with a goal of developing the area into a vibrant destination that supports a mix of uses. Public space and public access to the shoreline is a key focus. Note: the Central Estuary Area Plan is different than the Estuary Policy Plan (1999), which is the current Land Use Element for much of the land along the Oakland Estuary. The

document balances the roles of the City of Oakland and the Port of Oakland's activities along the waterfront.

COMMUNITY-LED PLANS

In addition to City-led Specific Plans, several community-led neighborhood plans also establish visions and desired improvements for Oakland's future.

- **Rise East 10-Year Plan** ([link](#)). The Rise East 10-Year Plan is a roadmap of five core investable strategies to make deep, lasting improvements in the 40x40 neighborhoods of East Oakland (from Seminary Ave to the Oakland-San Leandro border, from MacArthur Blvd. to the Bay) for current, future and legacy residents. The Plan grew out of a community-led vision to develop a Black Cultural Zone in East Oakland and represents a collaborative effort between community-based organizations, community members, public and private sector institutions, and philanthropic partners.
- **East Oakland Neighborhood Initiative (EONI)** ([link](#)). The East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative is a partnership between the City of Oakland Planning Bureau and twelve community-based organizations focused on equity-based planning for Deep East Oakland. The Plan identifies primary concerns, goals, and priorities for East Oakland residents and stakeholders, and focuses on next steps for achieving those priorities through grants and implementation of community projects.
- **West Oakland Community Action Plan (WOCAP)** ([link](#)). The WOCAP, adopted in 2019, is a partnership between the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. The WOCAP lays out a series of short-term strategies to reduce pollution in the community. The City has authority for implementing many of the strategies identified in the WOCAP. The work to explore land use tools to address emissions, as well as the research and existing conditions assessment of poor health, air pollution and industrial lands will serve a bridge to the General Plan Update.

Note: this list is not comprehensive.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS

Vision 980

I-980 is an interstate freeway that runs for 1.6 miles between I-880 and I-580 just to the west of Downtown Oakland. The freeway was built between 1968-1985 to facilitate smoother traffic and a direct connection into Downtown Oakland for suburban commuters in predominantly white suburbs. Its construction required the taking of 42 acres of land, and led to the destruction of 503 houses, 155 trees, four churches, 22 businesses, and 142 jobs in predominantly Black/African American neighborhoods of West Oakland.¹ The freeway created a physical barrier between West Oakland and Downtown that made it difficult to move between the two neighborhoods on foot or by bike, exposed residents to increased levels of traffic through a surplus of freeway on-and off-ramp infrastructure, and contributed to West Oakland residents' exposure to much higher per capita rates of air pollution than experienced by other Oakland and California communities. A relic of

¹ <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-4/d4-projects/vision-980>

car-oriented development at the time, many people believed I-980 development would bring positive changes to the city. However, for many Oakland residents, the freeway serves as a painful monument of segregation and discrimination resulting from past planning decisions.²

In 2020, the Biden Presidential Administration's USDOT identified I-980 as a candidate for its "Reconnecting Communities" grant program, which sought to rectify damage caused to urban communities nationwide as a result of freeway construction. Caltrans, California's Department Of Transportation, received one of these grants. At the time of this workbook's publication, Caltrans is leading a planning study called Vision 980, which seeks to identify the future Oakland residents – and former residents who were affected by its construction – hope to see for the freeway. Some of the possibilities include:

- Increasing housing supply and economic opportunities near the freeway
- Capping the freeway to expand open space and decrease pollution
- Filling in the freeway trench with a surface boulevard to expand development potential
- Improving public transit connections along and across the freeway
- Redesigning roadways and over/underpasses to make it easier and safer for people to walk, bike, and take transit across the freeway

Link21

Link21 is a regional transportation initiative that seeks to transform the 21-county Northern California Megaregion's passenger rail network into a faster, more efficient, affordable, and more integrated system by connecting BART with Northern California's regional rail networks (i.e., commuter, intercity, and high-speed rail). The core of the project is a new transbay passenger rail crossing between San Francisco and Oakland that could unlock economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits for residents and businesses throughout the Megaregion. Link21 is a collaborative effort between BART, Capitol Corridor, and other partners, and has been identified as a priority in the California State Rail Plan, MTC's Regional Rail Plan, and ABAG's Plan Bay Area 2050.

Link21 is currently in its planning alternatives stage, wherein several concepts to meet the project's goals are being considered. Concepts vary in terms of what type of rail service – i.e., broad gauge (BART) vs. standard gauge (regional rail) tracks - will be used for the new transbay tunnel, where new stations would go, and where transfers between different services are envisioned.

Link21 could create new or transfer regional transit stations at the following locations in Oakland:

- 12th Street (transfer)
- West Oakland (transfer)
- Downtown Oakland (new station, closer to West Oakland)
- Jack London (transfer or new)

² <https://www.segregationbydesign.com/oakland/freeways>

- San Antonio (new)
- Coliseum (transfer)

The project could also impact Oakland's transportation network by creating a new station in Alameda, enabling Alameda residents to access the island without driving through Oakland, and by establishing a high frequency rail connection between the two cities.

I-580 Truck Access Study

Since I-580 was built in the 1960s, trucks weighing more than 9,000 pounds have been prohibited from traveling on the freeway, causing a disproportionate amount of heavy truck traffic through West Oakland, leaving fewer air quality and other impacts to the wealthier communities in the Oakland hills. While removing the truck ban has been proposed several times over the years, Caltrans, in partnership with the City of Oakland and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), has recently initiated the first study to ever formally address the possibility of removing the truck ban.

The study seeks to answer the following question: How would removing the truck weight restriction (aka truck ban) on I-580 affect safety, efficiency, reliability, and traffic speed along the I-880 and I-580 corridors, and how would this change impact public health equity for nearby communities?

Answering this question will create an opportunity to reevaluate the purpose of the truck ban, find common ground for its potential repeal, address existing issues of inefficient traffic flows for the impacted communities and logistics industry, and alleviate disproportionate health impacts for underserved communities of color within the study area. The project will consist of comprehensive community engagement focused on communities most impacted by the truck ban, a racial equity assessment, health assessments for noise and air quality, and traffic studies for the I-580 and I-880 corridors to understand current traffic conditions and the impacts that a potential repeal of the truck ban would have on future traffic patterns.

Regional Projects' Relationship to the General Plan

The infrastructure projects described above have major regional implications. Given the significant costs associated with new infrastructure, the impact of changing federal priorities, and need for robust community engagement processes for each, it is difficult to forecast when or whether these projects would be realized.

Nevertheless, it is important for the community to weigh in on these issues. The City of Oakland would be in a stronger position to advocate for specific outcomes related to regional transportation plans if a community vision for the projects has been articulated in the General Plan. For example, Oakland's recently adopted Downtown Oakland Specific Plan, while deferring to the Vision 980 process, indicates preference towards an I-980 alternative wherein the freeway is undergrounded or made into a surface boulevard. The Plan further identifies potential parks and new housing that could be built on the newly available land under that scenario.

The Preferred Plan will explore potential transportation impacts that could result from retiring I-980 or Link21's construction in further detail. The Project Team is not considering truck ban implications as part of transportation modeling at this time.

OTHER INITIATIVES

A General Plan is a high-level policy document with specific legal requirements, focused on the physical growth and development of the city. It is not intended to cover every issue facing Oakland. The following chapter presents a brief overview of some of the important initiatives that are happening outside of but relevant to the General Plan Update process and underscore many of the priorities of the General Plan. The planning processes and documents described below will inform policy development for the General Plan, so that the efforts support one another.

Addressing Equity

In 2016, the City established the Department of Race and Equity (DRE) to advance racial equity. The DRE supports staff across City departments to implement the equity mission of the City: to intentionally integrate, on a citywide basis the principle of fair and just in all the City does to advance equitable outcomes for all residents of the City of Oakland.

Affordable Housing

Oakland's dual crises of housing affordability and homelessness have been consistent themes throughout the outreach process. For many residents, affordable housing is the top priority, especially for low-income households, seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children. The 2023–2031 Housing Element, adopted during Phase 1 of the General Plan Update, sets goals and outlines a housing action plan to develop 26,000 new units at a range of income levels. This includes 3,750 low-income units for households earning 51 to 80 percent of the area median income, and 6,511 very low-income units for households earning up to 50 percent of the area median income.

The City's Housing and Community Development Department (City HCD) is the primary agency responsible for providing housing services to Oaklanders and administering funding for affordable housing in the city (i.e., land acquisition, preservation of existing units, and construction of new units). City HCD works with tenants, developers, homeowners, community land trusts, and service providers to forward their mission of making sure all Oaklanders have safe and affordable housing.

Arts and Culture

Art and culture are important parts of Oakland's history and identity and a key economic driver in the city. Oakland is a hub for artists and cultural workers and boasts one of the largest populations of artists on the West Coast. The arts draw thousands of people to Oakland each year. In 2018, the City adopted a cultural plan, *Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan* ([link](#)), to support the role of culture in building a healthy and equitable city, in which all Oakland residents feel a sense of belonging in their communities and have access to the arts.

Implementation of *Belonging in Oakland* has led to, among other things, the Just City Cultural Fund, a funding partnership with local philanthropic partners, to support collaborations between

cultural and social change organizations and an artist-in-residence program in city government, the Cultural Strategists in Government program, which embeds artists and culture workers in City departments to inform public policy

The Cultural Affairs Division, housed in the City's Economic and Workforce Development Department, is Oakland's primary agency responsible for supporting cultural vitality and implementing the cultural plan. The division includes the Public Art Program, which commissions and supports public art across Oakland; cultural support programs to support artists and cultural organizations through grantmaking (when funding is available); and technical assistance and resource referrals and professional development programs for artists and arts organizations. The Division also supports local cultural institutions, including the Oakland Museum of California, Children's Fairyland, Chabot Space & Science Center, and the Oakland Asian Cultural Center. Moving forward, the Division will also lead a program to support to creation of new cultural districts in Oakland and help implement programs related neighborhood activations in line with recent budget priorities.

Climate Action and Sea Level Rise

Adopted in 2020, the Equitable Climate Action Plan (ECAP) ([link](#)) outlines actions that the City and its partners will take by 2030 to equitably reduce Oakland's climate emissions and adapt to a changing climate. All planning policies and regulations, as well as permit and project approvals, must be aligned with ECAP goals and priorities. The ECAP addresses sustainability, greenhouse gas reduction, and adaptation to the impacts of climate change through several key topic areas: land use and transportation, buildings, material consumption and waste, City leadership, and the Port of Oakland. Major goals of the plan include cost-effectively and equitably reducing greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 56 percent compared to 2005 levels, 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. The plan emphasizes strategies that support good green jobs (particularly for residents who face barriers to full employment); reduce pollution, waste, and car usage; electrify buildings and the transportation network; and expand and protect open space and green infrastructure that removes carbon and increases resilience to natural hazards.

The Sustainability and Resilience Division of the City Administrator's Office tracks Oakland's progress related to climate goals and targets. The team fosters collaboration with staff across all City Departments and with community leaders and experts on equitable climate change mitigation and adaptation. Resources and information about Oakland's sustainability initiatives are available on the City website: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/sustainable-oakland-1>.

The City is also addressing how to protect its shoreline from sea level rise. [The Downtown Oakland Specific Plan created a new Sea Level Rise Combining Zone as a pilot to potentially be improved on and expanded through the General Plan Update](#). Building on its Sea Level Rise Roadmap, the City is currently working to incorporate guidelines from BCDC's Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan and the State of California's most recent Sea Level Rise Guidance, released in 2024, into its own Subregional Shoreline Adaptation Plan.

Fiscal Health and Economic Development

By law, Oakland is required to balance its budget every two years. However, rising costs and slower-growing tax revenues have created a long-term structural deficit. Most of the City's funding for police, fire, parks and street maintenance, and a wide range of social services comes from taxes (i.e., property, sales, hotel, business license, real estate transfer, and voter-approved taxes), in addition to fees and grants. Notably, much of the tax money collected in Oakland goes to other local government agencies that provide public services (i.e., the Oakland Unified School District), and not directly to the City.

In the past, Oakland has balanced its budget by cutting services, something the City hopes to avoid in the future. To stay financially stable, therefore, Oakland must both make the most of current revenue sources and explore new ones. While some of this work happens outside the General Plan (i.e., through the biannual budgeting process), the Plan can support long-term solutions by guiding inclusive economic growth and attracting new development, especially important when federal funding sources are uncertain. Potential strategies include supporting Oakland's existing key tax generators, particularly generators of sales tax, and encouraging construction of new homes and businesses to bring in additional taxes and fees. As the Bay Area's economy evolves with increasing concentration of jobs in technology, R&D and healthcare, there is desire for Oakland to capture its fair share of regional prosperity and high-paying local job opportunities by making sure the City's land use and other policies support these critical economic sectors and tax generators.

Oakland is facing new and continued challenges, such as a recent downturn in the real estate market and high interest rates that make new investment and development challenging, ongoing office vacancies due to increased remote and hybrid work policies, and the complex nature of addressing crime. In addition, while one-time federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds received in late 2020 helped mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic on the City's budget, today the City faces significant structural budget deficits that must be addressed in other ways.

EWD has begun work on a new economic development strategy, the 2025-2030 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP), which will focus on growing the City's economy in an equitable way and present strategies for increasing revenue and addressing the City's budget deficits.

Slow Streets and Active Transportation

The City of Oakland's Department of Transportation (OakDOT) leads the City's efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and support transit. OakDOT led the planning processes for Oakland's 2019 Bicycle Plan ([link](#)) and 2017 Pedestrian Plan ([link](#)). These documents are considered part of the LUTE and establish goals, policies, and actions related to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the city. The Bicycle Plan will be updated concurrently and in collaboration with the General Plan Update.

One of the major initiatives that OakDOT is currently undertaking is developing a citywide network of slow streets based on the 75 miles of neighborhood bike routes proposed in the 2019 Bicycle Plan. Slow streets are for pedestrians, bicyclists, and micro-mobility users with limited local access for motor vehicles. Slow streets provide public spaces for residents in Oakland's neighborhoods for

human-powered movement and play. The planning initiative comes out of the Covid-19 pandemic, which sparked people’s imaginations for neighborhood streets that prioritize people. OakDOT is coordinating with the Project Team to reflect slow street classifications in the LUTE. More information about the slow streets planning process is available on the project website: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/Government/Oakland-Improvement-Projects/Oaklands-Slow-Streets-Essential-Places>

Technological Changes

Several major trends are shaping how Oakland must plan for the future. The continued rise of e-commerce and shifting consumer habits highlight the need to reimagine how aging commercial properties—often marked by empty storefronts and large surface parking lots—can present opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment. Cities can transform them into vibrant places that support local shops and restaurants while adding housing, jobs, entertainment, and green space. At the same time, online shopping and delivery services are creating more demand for curbside drop-off and pick-up zones, especially in dense urban areas, often competing with transit, bike infrastructure, and street parking. Planning for safer, more efficient curb management will be key to supporting both businesses and residents.

Oakland must also address growing needs related to electrification and decarbonization. The City is committed to electrifying its buildings and transportation sector to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals. To do so, Oakland will need to upgrade and add new renewable energy infrastructure to meet increasing demand. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and data centers also require large amounts of power and may need dedicated planning to ensure sufficient grid capacity and resiliency, as well as sustainable use of resources.

Finally, autonomous vehicles (AVs) are expected to impact how people move through the region. Autonomous taxis have already been commercially deployed in several parts of the Bay Area. Oakland can begin planning for AV infrastructure and policy to ensure these technologies support, rather than hinder, the City’s goals for a safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation network.

Urban Forestry and Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure, also referred to as green stormwater infrastructure, refers to a variety of practices and engineered facilities that use plants, soil, and other natural materials to remove pollutants and allow stormwater to absorb into the ground. These features help prevent flooding and reduce the amount of polluted water that enters the city’s water bodies. Examples include rain gardens (also known as “bioretention”), pervious pavements, green roofs, and stormwater treatment tree wells. Green infrastructure also has many environmental, social, and economic benefits, making it a priority for community members and policy makers.

The Environmental Justice Element adopted in GPU Phase 1 includes policies to increase tree canopy coverage and green infrastructure in areas that are underserved or at higher risk of stormwater impacts. In addition, Oakland has a 2019 Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plan ([link](#)) and 2024 Urban Forest Plan ([link](#)). These plans are the key documents for ensuring that all Oaklanders can share the benefits of green infrastructure and trees. These plans establish maintenance plans and budgets, as well as policy guidance on how to prioritize areas for new projects.