



# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Alexa Jeffress  
Director, Economic &  
Workforce Development

**SUBJECT:** Challenges Facing Oakland Small  
Businesses

**DATE:** October 11, 2021

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City Administrator Approval

Date: Oct 14, 2021

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On The Challenges Facing Oakland Small Businesses As The Economy Reopens, Including The Chronic Conditions Posed By The Rise Of Homeless Populations, Crime And Blight.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On September 16, 2021, the Rules and Legislation Committee approved a request by Councilmember Noel Gallo for an informational report on the challenges facing small businesses as Oakland's economy reopens following state and local health orders that restricted business activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report shares data gathered from recent business surveys conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the Oakland Economic Recovery Advisory Council, and outreach to the business community to inform the 2021-2022 Economic Recovery Plan, which is available at: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/economicrecovery>. This report also shares information gathered from other City departments regarding the impacts of homelessness, crime, and blight on Oakland's business community.

This report first addresses the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including staff's efforts in implementing the priority actions from the Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2022. It also addresses the challenges posed by blight, unsheltered population and public safety, including staff's efforts underway to address such issues, and concludes with a summary of resources available to help businesses reopen.

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

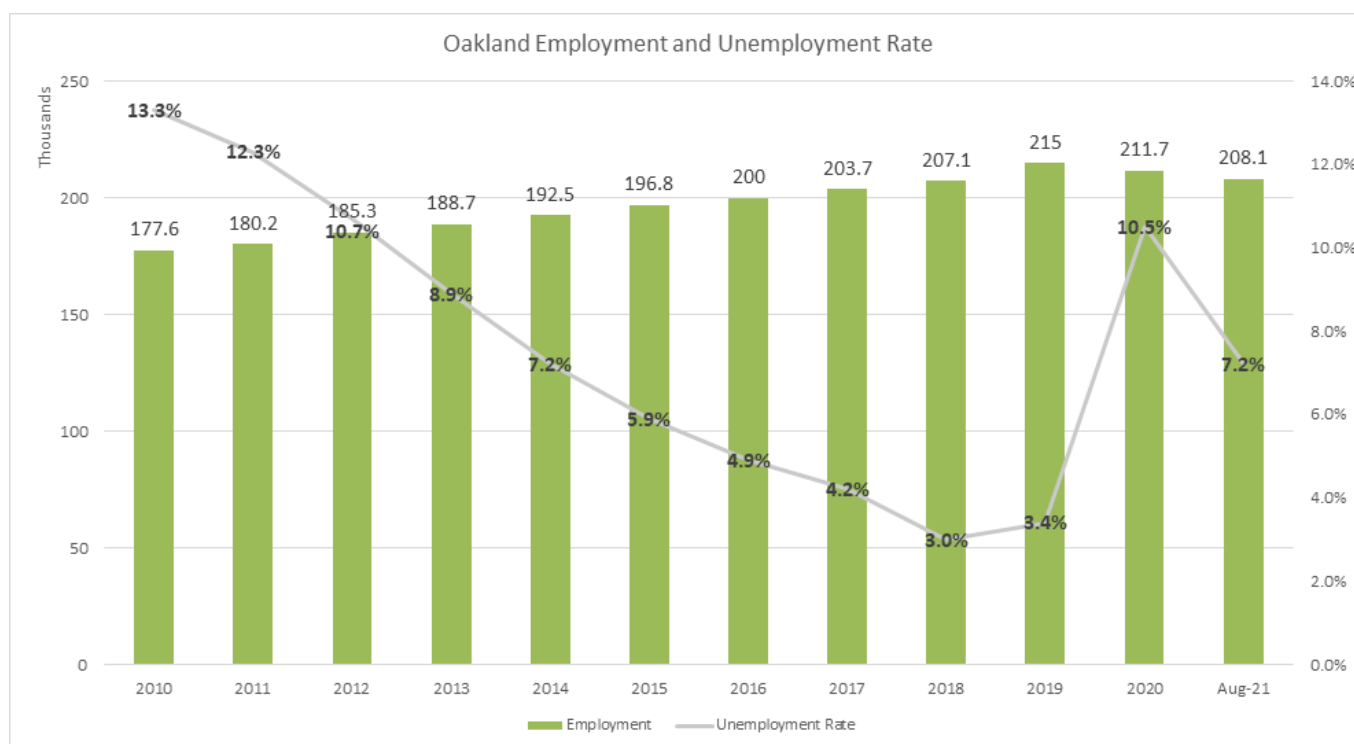
### *Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Oakland Businesses and Workers*

The City of Oakland's 2018-2020 Economic Development Strategy established three high-level objectives: increasing economic productivity, improving economic security, and reducing racial

wealth disparities.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, despite tremendous growth and record low unemployment, Oakland had moved just 2 percent towards the City’s adopted economic goal of increasing Black and Latino household wealth. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Oakland’s economy, and the impacts fell heavily on Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) households and on women, worsening existing disparities.

Oakland’s unemployment rate increased from an annual average of 3.4 percent in 2019 to peak at 16.6 percent in April 2020 during the pandemic, with an average unemployment rate of 10.5 percent for all of 2020. Oakland’s unemployment rate had returned to 7.2 percent as of August 2021, which is lower than the annual unemployment rates recorded for 2010 to 2013 after the Great Recession (see **Figure 1**). However, data shows that the recovery has been uneven, and job losses persist for lower wage workers, whereas employment for workers earning above \$60,000 annually had nearly recovered as of January 2021.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Oakland Employment and Unemployment Rate 2010-2021**



Small businesses, particularly businesses in the arts and entertainment, retail, restaurant, and personal service sectors and those that rely on tourists, experienced the most severe impacts from the pandemic and resulting shelter-in-place orders. As of February 2021, 37.2 percent fewer businesses in Oakland were open compared to the previous year, based on an absence

<sup>1</sup> City of Oakland Economic Development Strategy, 2018-2020.

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/economic-development-strategy>

<sup>2</sup> Oakland Economic Dashboard 2020. <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/quarterly-economic-dashboard>.

of financial transactions.<sup>3</sup> According to recent data from the East Bay Economic Development Association (East Bay EDA), more than 11,860 business locations in the East Bay had momentarily or permanently discontinued business activities between March 2020 and July 2021, although the rate of business closure has slowed since the start of 2021. The period from January through June 2021 showed a 40 percent reduction in the rate of East Bay business closures, or 516 closures per month, down from an average rate of about 900 closures per month during the first six months of the pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

### *The City's COVID-19 Economic Response*

The COVID-19 crisis shifted the Economic & Workforce Development Department's (EWDD) focus to emergency response - supporting Oakland's small businesses, nonprofits, artists, and vulnerable workers during the pandemic. Since March of last year, EWDD staff have supported nearly 3,600 workers, small businesses, vendors, artists, and non-profit organizations suffering economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic with grants, protective equipment, technical assistance, and other support programs.

The City's COVID-19 Business Response and Recovery program began with the launch of a business resource web page for all federal, state and local resources on March 11, 2020. Two days later, an impact survey in five languages went live to gather data directly from businesses. By early April, over 1,100 surveys were returned, and staff worked with the UC Berkeley Hass School of Business to analyze the data. Informed by this data, some of the City's early actions included:

- Commercial eviction moratorium legislation.
- Grant programs for small businesses, home-based businesses, nonprofits, and individual artists.
- Weekly business emails in 5 languages to 8,500 recipients with information on available resources.
- Free, streamlined permitting through the Flex Streets program for business use of public space for sidewalk cafes and parklets, as health orders prevented indoor operations.
- Convening the Oakland Economic Recovery Council, an advisory group that recommended policies and strategies to facilitate an equitable economic recovery.
- Engaging business support partners to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and support services.
- Offering Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act-funded grant and other programs to support individuals, businesses, and organizations at risk of displacement.

### *Challenges Facing Oakland Businesses in Accessing Stimulus Funding*

In response to the economic shutdown, the Federal government and State of California have made historic investments in small businesses with unprecedented budget allocations. Oakland small business owners have had access to these investment dollars through programs such as

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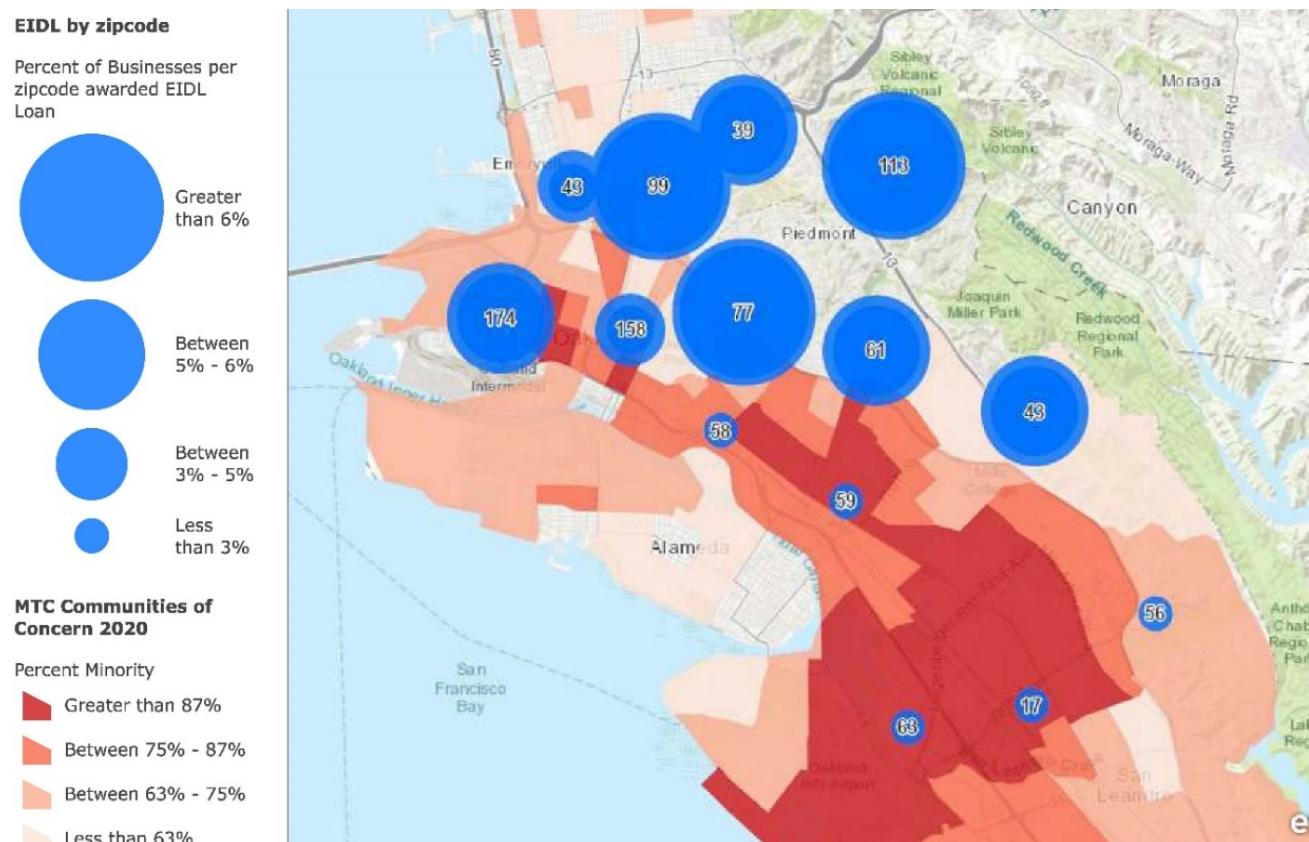
<sup>3</sup> <https://tracktherecovery.org/>

<sup>4</sup> East Bay EDA – Business Impacts. <https://eastbayeda.org/covid-business-impacts/>

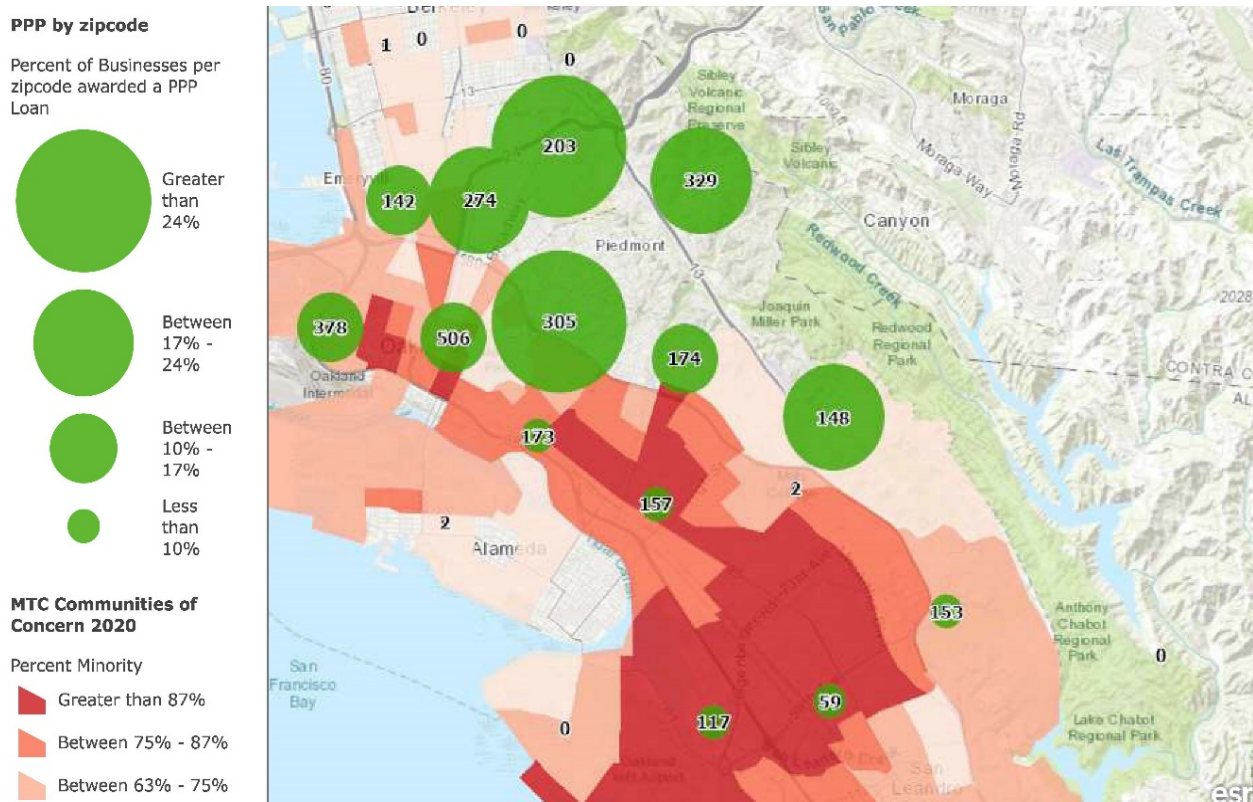
the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), Restaurant Revitalization Fund, Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, the California Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program and the California Rebuilding Fund.

However, despite targeted outreach by City staff, community and banking partners, businesses in areas where more than 75 percent of residents are people of color were substantially less likely to receive Federal PPP and EIDL loans in 2020. **Maps 1 and 2** below show the number of EIDL and PPP loans made in proportion to the number of businesses located in each ZIP Code, highlighting the areas that are majority people of color. These funds do not include the CARES Act funds distributed by the City.

**Map 1: Distribution of Businesses Receiving Economic Impact Disaster Loans (EIDL) by ZIP Code and Area Demographics**



## Map 2: Distribution of Businesses Receiving Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding by ZIP Code and Area Demographics



City relief efforts prioritized businesses that were unable to access early rounds of PPP and other stimulus funding. More than 2,200 individuals, businesses and organizations at risk of displacement received nearly \$17.5 million in emergency funds through City CARES Act-funded grant programs.<sup>5</sup> Of the individuals receiving grants, more than 86 percent were people of color, and the recipients generally represented the racial and geographic diversity of Oakland.

New data shows that recent PPP rounds in 2021 were more successful at reaching BIPOC and women-owned businesses than earlier rounds.<sup>6</sup> However, more focused efforts are still needed to support businesses in deep East Oakland, particularly unbanked businesses, to ensure they benefit from future programs and access available capital.

<sup>5</sup> City of Oakland Overview of CARES Act Expenditures, [https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/21-0402- CARES-Act-Info-Memo-with-attachments\\_2021-04-03-004652.pdf](https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/21-0402- CARES-Act-Info-Memo-with-attachments_2021-04-03-004652.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> "SBA's Paycheck Protection Program reached more Black, women business owners in 2021" by Andy Medici, San Francisco Business Times, August 9, 2021. <https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2021/08/09/sba-ppp-loandata-forgiveness-business.html>

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

### **Challenges Facing Small Businesses: The 2021-2022 Economic Recovery Plan**

Building from the lessons learned in 2020 and grounded in the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, EWDD recently released the Economic Recovery Plan, a one-year action plan to direct EWDD's priorities during the COVID-19 economic recovery period. The goal is a more equitable and inclusive economy, with an emphasis on closing race and gender disparities and helping BIPOC- and women-owned small businesses and lower-wage workers recover from the pandemic.

In developing the Recovery Plan, City staff engaged the business community through one-on-one conversations and an online survey during the first and second quarters of 2021. In addition to the Oakland Economic Recovery Advisory Council, ten business service organizations, including Oakland's multicultural chambers of commerce and Visit Oakland, 48 small businesses (72 percent owned by people of color and 64 percent women-owned) and three community service organizations across the city (East, Downtown, and West Oakland) contributed their ideas for the Plan.

Overall, small and mid-size businesses reported that they are "optimistic" (average rating of 2.8 out of 5) of a positive national economic recovery over the next 12 months. As noted above, many businesses reported that they still have not received Federal, State, or local stimulus funds.

Overall, small businesses stated their top three priorities as:

1. Financial Assistance (grants/loans)
2. Public safety
3. A City-wide marketing plan to encourage local spending

Despite outreach by staff and partners, many business owners reported a lack of contact and support. The Economic Recovery Plan prioritizes deepening the City's outreach and response.

### **The Recovery Plan's Five Priorities Areas and Actions Underway**

#### ***1. Financial Readiness and Stability – Equitable Small Business Support***

In response to reports that many small businesses faced barriers in accessing stimulus funds, EWDD is working to increase capital flow to small businesses, with a focus on supporting BIPOC and women-owned businesses in the flatlands. The immediate goal is to shrink racial and geographic gaps in access to financing by supporting small businesses in getting capital ready.

At the time this report was written, outreach has focused on providing information about and sharing resources available from our support partners to apply for the California Small Business

COVID-19 Relief Grant Program<sup>7</sup> (grants from \$5,000 to \$25,000) and the Targeted EIDL Advance and Supplemental Targeted Advance<sup>8</sup> (grants of up to \$15,000 from the Small Business Administration).

In September, EWDD launched the Remote Business Assistance pilot. Through December 2021, City staff will be available at five neighborhood library branches to help business owners with steps to starting a business or expanding an existing business as well as addressing challenges with their current business model. Thirty-minute appointments are available at the following Oakland Public Library branches:

- West Oakland – every other Monday morning
- 81st Avenue – every other Tuesday evening
- César E. Chávez – every other Wednesday evening
- Golden Gate – every other Thursday morning
- Eastmont – every other Friday afternoon

These locations were selected based on suitability of available City facilities, anticipated interest within the business community, and equitable access for previously under-served neighborhoods. Appointments are by advance reservation only. More information is available at: <http://www.oaklandca.gov/RemoteBAC>.

## *2. Equity in Contracting and Grant Making*

Inclusive business participation in government procurement is an important way the City can help infuse income and jobs into the community. However, small businesses have reported difficulties in accessing government contracting opportunities - contracting requirements may be onerous, liability insurance requirements may create a barrier, and cash flow requirements may make it infeasible for some small businesses to purchase materials and hire staff before being able to invoice the City for their work.

EWDD is supporting the interdepartmental effort, led by the City Administrator's Office and Department of Workplace and Employment Standards (formerly Contracts and Compliance) to increase access for local BIPOC and women-owned businesses and nonprofits to participate in government contracts.

## *3. Social Cohesion and the Creative Economy*

In addition to hurting sales at local businesses and cancelling cultural events, the pandemic has kept Oaklanders away from each other and from the community-building connections that contribute to social cohesion and are essential to a vibrant, resilient city. EWDD's Cultural Affairs Division, under the cultural plan goal of "Belonging in Oakland" is working to support this part of the recovery.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/coronavirus-2019-covid-19-business-and-worker-resources#california-small-business-covid-19-relief-grant-program>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/targeted-and-supplemental-targeted-eidl-advances>

<sup>9</sup> <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/oak070756.pdf>

With additional funding from City Council as part of the 2021-2023 biennial budget, the Cultural Affairs Division is expanding the Neighborhood Voices program to support the recovery of Oakland's creative economy, including additional funding for festivals, with a focus on encouraging and tracking applications from ZIP codes 94601, 94603, 94605, 94606, 94607, and 94621, which rank high in Oakland's Community Stressors Index.<sup>10</sup>

City staff are also supporting the expansion and development of community markets that provide opportunities for vendors, artisans, artists, and makers with Council-directed grants to community market organizers. The Special Activity Permits Division, which was recently transferred to EWDD, is working with Cultural Affairs and other City departments to streamline the special events process and remove barriers to encourage more arts, festivals, markets and other cultural events.

#### *4. Growing Demand and Investment*

As the economy reopens, businesses have expressed a desire for a citywide marketing campaign to encourage consumers to shop, spend, and dine locally. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Business Organizations are essential partners in attracting shoppers and marketing local businesses. In addition to encouraging shopping at existing businesses, the pandemic did not diminish the City's strong fundamentals and advantages as a business location and the City is also uniquely poised to attract new business and investments from outside Oakland to expand the local economy. The City's marketing efforts will target investment in businesses located in industrial areas, which bring a higher proportion of accessible living wage jobs than businesses in commercial areas.

City staff are running an expanded "Think Oakland First" year-round marketing campaign to encourage consumers to shop locally. The City also recently released an Industrial Baseline Study to provide baseline information and analysis on Oakland's industrial land and business assets and is developing a business attraction strategy focused on industrial lands<sup>11</sup>. With additional funding from City Council in the recent budget, City staff will also work to streamline and clarify the BID creation and renewal process and support new BIDs and merchant organizations in the flatlands.

#### *5. Workforce Development*

Although many local businesses are currently hiring, some restaurant, entertainment and other jobs may not return, and BIPOC workers are overrepresented in industries with high employment losses. The Economic Recovery Plan sets an immediate goal of upskilling and reskilling low-wage workers who have been displaced or are at high risk of displacement to reduce racial disparities in unemployment, while also leveraging state and local funding to expand opportunities for Oakland's youth to access training and find good local jobs.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/oakland-community-stressors-index>

<sup>11</sup> [https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Info-Memo-Industrial-Land-Study\\_Current-Conditions\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Info-Memo-Industrial-Land-Study_Current-Conditions_-_Final.pdf)



During the COVID-19 pandemic, EWDD's Workforce Development Division pivoted to online offerings to keep delivering services. The Division conducted three virtual jobs fairs, operated "Rapid Response" services online for laid off workers, and launched Metrix, a new free online job training platform in multiple languages with \$30,000 in CARES Act Funds.<sup>12</sup> Since its launch in early 2021, 972 registered users have completed 1,766 hours of training and taken 2,762 courses. Unemployed and underemployed Oakland residents can also access the City's network of America's Job Center of California (AJCC), supported by federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds.<sup>13</sup>

With additional funding from City Council in the recently adopted budget, Workforce staff is working to increase the number of adult jobseekers trained through Oakland Workforce Development Board-funded training programs and supporting job training and placement in fast-growing industries including Healthcare, Construction, IT, and Hospitality, consistent with the current Local Workforce Development Plan.<sup>14</sup> EWDD has also hired an Executive FUSE Fellow for fiscal year (FY) 2021-2022 to complete an asset mapping and evaluation of all city-wide adult and youth employment programming to align strategies and identify opportunities.

### **Impact on Businesses from Blight, Unsheltered Populations and Public Safety**

#### Blight

EWDD staff has heard from business owners and BIDs that graffiti, illegal dumping and other forms of blight are negatively impacting Oakland's commercial districts. These conditions may discourage shoppers from visiting a commercial district, frustrate business owners and cause disinvestment.

Maps in **Attachment A** show OAK 311 data for select commercial districts by fiscal year since July 2019. Service categories include requests for illegal dumping, graffiti, homeless encampments, environmental enforcement, abandoned vehicles and meter repair. While requests have been reported in all of Oakland's commercial corridors, some of the highest concentrations of requests are found in Chinatown, Seminary/Bancroft/Eastmont, Elmhurst and West Oakland.

At the direction of the City Council as a policy priority, the Administration created an Abandoned Auto Task Force to develop and implement recommendations for reducing the number of abandoned autos on the streets of Oakland. This problem, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, represents the second highest complaint to Oak 311 from many East Oakland neighborhoods, second only to illegal dumping. There are multiple contributors to this concern:

- people abandoning old cars that are not drivable, some of which are stripped of useful parts;
- businesses (licensed and unlicensed) that buy, sell, or repair vehicles and use the street to store and work on them;

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/free-online-courses-help-you-prepare-to-get-back-to-work>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/worker-resources-offered-at-oakland-american-jobs-centers-of-california-ajcc>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/2021-24-local-plan>

- unsheltered persons who have no other place to live;
- during the pandemic, many people simply left their car unmoved on the street for long periods as they telecommuted due to shelter-in-place advisories.

When vehicles are being dumped, repaired, or stripped on the street, it leaves visible and hazardous blight, blocks sidewalk and driveway access, can create traffic safety visibility issues, and attracts dumping and other illegal activity. When vehicles are essentially being stored on the street, it takes away valuable parking spaces and in neighborhood commercial areas, has a direct impact on access to small businesses that rely on parking availability. The task force is evaluating current staffing levels to address these vehicles, streamlining the response process through new reporting mechanisms, and reducing the number of complaints through courtesy notices to vehicle owners who simply are not moving their cars and generating a large volume of complaints to Oak 311 that must be addressed.

In the instance of businesses using the street for storage or to repair vehicles, the task force is pursuing an approach that includes enforcement of zoning rules but also recognizes that a business may need help becoming licensed or has growing commercial real estate needs. An important goal of the task force is for the City to educate violators about the impact of their actions on the community, and help businesses become legal, and/or relocate to more suitable locations whenever possible. This problem-solving approach will likely reduce enforcement burdens and avoid fines and penalties that a struggling business cannot afford. The task force includes representatives from the Oakland Police Department, the Department of Transportation, Planning and Building, EWDD, the City Attorney's Office, and the City Administrator's Office. For further information, please refer to the Informational Report entitled "Abandoned Auto Task Force" dated October 12, 2021, scheduled to the October 25, 2021, Special Public Works Committee.

### Unsheltered Populations

According to most recent available data, the Alameda County 2019 Point-in-Time Count, a total of 4,071 individuals experiencing homelessness were counted in Oakland on January 30, 2019, an increase of 1,310 individuals (+47 percent) from 2017. The population of persons experiencing homelessness in Oakland represented over half (51 percent) of the total number of persons enumerated in Alameda County during the 2019 Point-in-Time Count (8,022).<sup>15</sup>

In October 2020, the City Council adopted an Encampment Management Policy (Resolution No. 88341 C.M.S.) which identified public property locations within 50 feet of a retail business, or 50 feet from the main entrance and any emergency exits from all other businesses as High-Sensitivity Areas.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of the policy is to protect and serve all Oaklanders and to balance the interests of housed and unhoused residents as well as the business community. The Policy designates parks with playground structures or tot lots or that host City-sponsored programs or classes for children as Highest Sensitivity areas. Limited resources dictate that the EMT must prioritize its intervention activities.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/documents/2019-city-of-oakland-point-in-time-count>

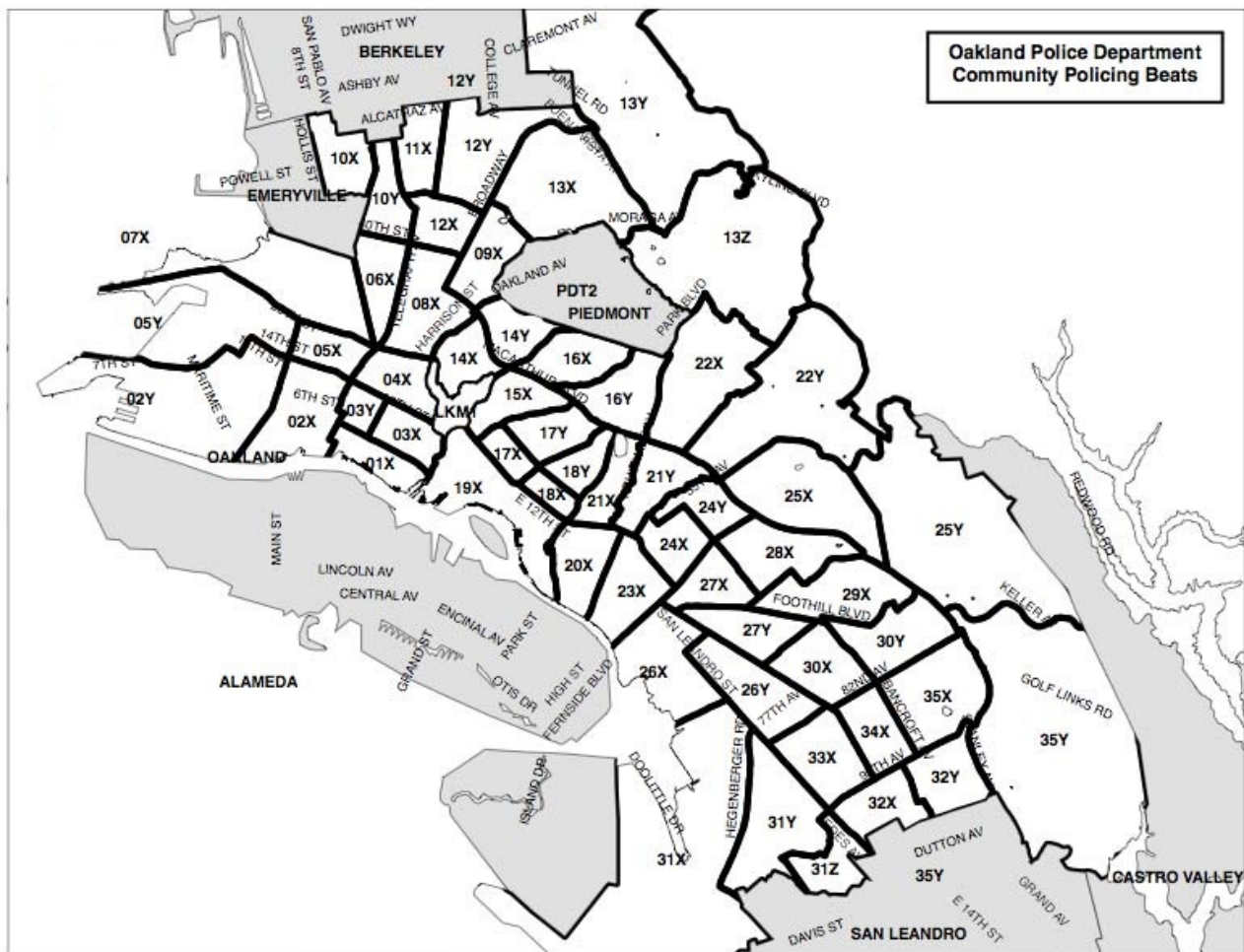
<sup>16</sup> <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Encampment-Management-Policy-88341-CMS.pdf>

The Encampment Management Team tracks all known encampments and prioritizes interventions based on health, safety, and size issues. The Team provides sanitation services and regular trash pickup. The encampment management cleanup schedule can be viewed at: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/homeless-encampment-cleanup-schedule>.

### Public Safety

The Oakland Police Department records crime data by Police Beat. Many of Oakland's longer commercial corridors (i.e., International Boulevard, MacArthur Boulevard, San Pablo Avenue, etc.) are segmented among several Police Beats. In some cases, the two sides of a commercial corridor within the same block are in separate Beats. This segmentation makes data analysis by corridor challenging. **Map 3** below shows the Police Beats in Oakland.

**Map 3: Police Beats**



EWDD staff reviewed data by Police Beat (see **Attachment B**) and calculated the percentage change in crime reported between FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21. While several Police Beats that include commercial corridors experienced double digit drops in reported crime, others saw

increases. Of the 57 Police Beats across Oakland, 38 saw a reduction in crime reported. The 19 Police Beats that saw an increase in reported crime are concentrated in Central East Oakland and Deep East Oakland.

The number of blocks within a Beat and the number of businesses found within each Beat vary. Some of those commercial areas that saw increases in crime are shown in **Table 1**, below:

**Table 1: Police Beat Change in Reported Crime FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21**

Police Beat	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	% Change
13Z-Montclair/Piedmont Pines/ Central Hills	402	417	3.73%
16X-Lakeshore Ave./Trestle Glen/ Crocker Highlands	167	175	4.79%
20X-Jingletown/part of Fruitvale District	811	871	7.40%
21Y-Upper Fruitvale	530	551	3.96%
22Y-Woodminster/Redwood Heights/ Crestmont/Bret Harte	529	549	3.78%
27X-Fairfax	482	532	10.37%
27Y-Seminary	551	711	29.04%
34X-Elmhurst	615	730	18.70%

Resolution No. 88717 C.M.S., as amended and adopted on June 24, 2021, appropriated \$150,000 to fund cameras in business corridors in Council District 6 and Council District 7. Installation of security cameras funded by the City in the public right-of-way will need approval from the Privacy Advisory Commission. Previous efforts to install cameras in the Chinatown district were frustrated by this process, with acquisition of the security cameras ultimately pivoting to private sector funding.

Several other City efforts are under way to address public safety concerns. Recently, City staff launched the Neighborhood Enhanced Service Teams (NEST) program to focus interdepartmental services on Police Beats with high levels of gun violence. On August 31<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, City staff walked the 30X and 34X Police Beats. Over the two days, staff engaged 700 residents through in-person conversations, and about 2,500 other homes received a packet with information about City services from various City departments, including flyers on the Metrix employment training platform and EWDD business resources. EWDD staff joined the team focusing on International Boulevard, the main commercial corridor that straddles both beats. EWDD staff also engaged with businesses to educate them about the Flex Street Initiative with a focus on identifying barriers to using this program. Insight from these in-person surveys will be reported when staff return to City Council with a report and proposed legislation for a long-term Flex Streets program.

The Community Ambassador Pilot Program, coordinated by the Department of Violence Prevention, aims to help reduce violence, restore feelings of security and hope, and create an integrated, coordinated model for public safety and community wellness that benefits the residents, unhoused, merchants, workers, and visitors in Oakland's most vulnerable communities. The FY 2021-22 Community Ambassador Agencies grant awards and neighborhoods are shown in **Table 2** below.

**Table 2: Community Ambassador Agencies - FY 2021-2022**

<b>Community Ambassador Agency</b>	<b>FY 2021-22 Award</b>	<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Council District</b>
Laurel District Association	50,000	Laurel	4
Family Bridges	75,000	China Town	2
East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC) as fiscal sponsor for Trybe Inc	75,000	East Lake	2
Black Cultural Zone	250,000	Eastmont	6
First African Methodist Episcopal Church	125,000	West Oakland	3
Unity Council	125,000	Fruitvale	5
Social Good Fund as fiscal sponsor for BAY-Peace	50,000	North Oakland	1

Community Ambassador Pilot Program goals include:

- Establish and nurture strategic relationships with community members that include multi-generations (i.e., youth to elders), residents/neighbors (including the unhoused), workers, merchants/shopkeepers, churches, schools, and most importantly those who are directly impacted by violence (i.e., victims, survivors, perpetrators, and their close friends/family members).
- Become experts about community resources and violence prevention/intervention services available to connect and navigate community members to assistance and support when impacted by violence and trauma.
- Create and maintain a visible, consistent, and welcoming presence in communities most impacted by violence so that community members recognize Ambassadors as trusted and credible messengers of peace and sources of support and information and know how to access their assistance when needed.

### **Resources Available to Help Business Reopen**

Given the ever-changing availability of grants and other support programs, frequent update emails to businesses serve as a conduit to share the latest information with Oakland small businesses and the partners that support them.<sup>17</sup> Current resources are also posted on the City's Business Resource web page and Business Reopening web page, which can be accessed from: <http://www.oaklandbusinesscenter.com>. Businesses can register to receive updates that are distributed in five languages at: <https://oaklandca19202.activehosted.com/f/8>.

As stated above, through December 2021, businesses can make an appointment to meet with City staff at five neighborhood library branches. Staff will be available to help business owners with understanding the steps to starting a business in Oakland or expanding an existing business as well as addressing challenges with their current business model. Visit: <http://www.oaklandca.gov/RemoteBAC> for more information or to schedule an appointment.

<sup>17</sup><https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/coronavirus-2019-covid-19-business-and-worker-resources#orders-releases-and-past-updates>

California's Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA), part of the Governor's Office of Business Economic Development (GO-Biz) recently launched [calosba.ca.gov](https://calosba.ca.gov) – a website that connects California's small business community with critical resources available through the State-funded small business technical assistance program and other state resources.

Regarding the availability of Building Permitting Services, the Oakland Planning and Building Department (PBD) intends to resume in-person service when the Civic Center Plaza re-opens to the public on January 3, 2022. A web page dedicated to PBD's re-opening is being prepared and will be promoted by email newsletter and via the City's social media accounts. In the interim, staff continue to work in the office and remotely, processing applications received via Accela, Digital Inbox (file transfer site) and email. When meetings are required, staff engage with applicants over Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

**Accela Enhancements:** Early this year, PBD released 12 permit applications in Accela, the City's permit application and land use management system, enabling residents and businesses to apply for these permits online. The applications that may be applied for via Accela include mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) applications, solar installations, zoning clearances, re-roofing permits and several others. An overview of the permits currently available through Accela is available at: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/services/online-permit-center>. In November 2021, PBD will launch two new record types that will allow applicants to apply for nearly all other project categories in Accela. This will improve efficiency, since staff will no longer have to transcribe this information from applicant submittals, and increase transparency, as the applicant will receive a record number that can be used to track the project. Furthermore, having information recorded directly into Accela allows PBD staff to utilize the software's workflow and reporting functionalities to more quickly assess issues with permit processing. This advancement will be announced on the City's website and will be communicated through PBD's e-mail newsletter distribution list.

**PBD Website Improvements:** In August, PBD rolled-out the first round of "project landing pages" to assist applicants with their projects. The goal is to have landing pages for common project types that will enable an applicant to see all of the requirements for a given project and to be able to move from that page to either submitting their application directly in Accela, or to create an appointment with PBD staff using Qmatic, the customer queuing and management platform, as appropriate. Project landing pages may be accessed here: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/services/get-started-on-your-project>. More pages are planned to be released in October and November and will include topics such as window replacements and commercial improvements. In addition to the project landing pages, PBD recently created an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) page to provide greater visibility into ADA requirements under the Building Code. The new ADA Accessibility requirements page can be accessed here: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/americans-with-disabilities-act-ada-compliance>.

**Appointments:** PBD previously used Qmatic to queue members of the public seeking permitting services from the department. PBD is currently working with Qmatic to launch an online appointment system that will enable staff and members of the public to schedule virtual and in-person appointments. More information about Qmatic will be distributed when the improvements are ready to launch in advance of the planned re-opening in January 2022.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with this informational report. For Economic Recovery Plan Priorities that do not have current City budget or other funding identified, EWDD will explore public-private partnerships to secure grant funding and in-kind support.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

In addition to the data gathered from more than 1,100 Oakland businesses through surveys during the pandemic, and the convening of the Oakland Economic Recovery Advisory Council, 10 business service organizations, including Oakland's multicultural chambers of commerce and Visit Oakland, 48 small businesses (72 percent owned by people of color and 64 percent women-owned) and three community service organizations across the city (East, Downtown, and West Oakland) contributed their ideas for the Economic Recovery Plan. The Economic Recovery plan is available to the public at: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/economicrecovery>.

### **COORDINATION**

In addition to EWDD, information for this report was provided by the Planning and Building Department, Oakland Police Department, Public Works Department, Human Services Department, Department of Violence Prevention and the City Administrator's Office.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Economic:** The Economic Recovery Plan will promote equitable economic development in Oakland and work to support existing Oakland small businesses by connecting them to ongoing funding sources and support programs, making government contracting and grantmaking more equitable, investing in social cohesion, growing demand for goods and services offered in Oakland, attracting new businesses that create good jobs and nurturing Oakland startups.

**Environmental:** Encouraging local employment, business ownership and local spending can reduce vehicular emissions. Increasing local retail sales and investment through building purchases will also generate additional sales tax and real estate transfer tax to support the City's Equitable Climate Action Plan (ECAP).

**Race & Equity:** The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Oakland's economy, and the impacts fell heavily on BIPOC communities and on women, worsening existing disparities. The overall goal of the 2021-2022 Economic Recovery Plan is a more equitable and inclusive economy that works for all Oaklanders, with an emphasis on closing race and gender disparities and helping BIPOC- and women-owned small businesses and lower-wage workers recover from the pandemic.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On The Challenges Facing Oakland Small Businesses As The Economy Reopens, Including The Chronic Conditions Posed By The Rise Of Homeless Populations, Crime And Blight.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Alexa Jeffress, Director, Economic & Workforce Development Department at [ajeffress@oaklandca.gov](mailto:ajeffress@oaklandca.gov) or (510) 238-3653.

Respectfully submitted,



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ALEXA JEFFRESS  
Director, Economic & Workforce Development  
Department

Prepared by:  
Harry Hamilton, Marketing Coordinator  
Business Development Division  
Economic & Workforce Development  
Department

Attachments (2):

A: 311 data select commercial districts FY 2019-20 to FY 2021-22

B: Oakland Police Department Crime Data by Police Beat FY 2019-20 to FY 2021-22