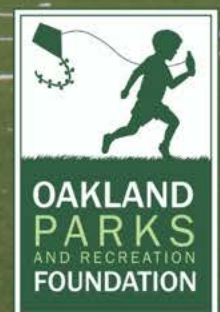


PARKS AND EQUITY:  
**THE PROMISE OF  
OAKLAND'S PARKS**

2020

A SURVEY OF OAKLANDERS' PARK  
EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES



# Land Acknowledgment

Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation (OPRF) acknowledges that it is located on and works for land that is part of the unceded homeland of the Chochenyo Ohlone peoples. OPRF recognizes that this land continues to be the home of Ohlone people, who are flourishing members of Oakland and Bay Area communities.

OPRF recognizes that the Ohlone are the first residents and stewards of this land.

This acknowledgement demonstrates OPRF's commitment to increasingly understand and act on a responsibility to encounter its place on native land, realign its present participation in colonial settler practices and genocidal legacies, amplify Indigenous voices, and stand in solidarity with local Indigenous communities.

This acknowledgement is a living document that will grow and change as OPRF deepens its commitment to, and understanding of, right relation with the Ohlone people, with all people subject to racism and other forms of oppression, and with the land, waters, air, and natural life of Oakland and beyond.

Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation pays its respects to the Ancestors, Elders and Relatives, past, present, and future, of the Ohlone people.

*This acknowledgement draws from the Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgements guidance website, the Centers for Educational Justice and Community Engagement at UC Berkeley, the California College of the Arts, and Kanyon CoyoteWoman at acorn.wiki.*



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# A COVID ERA PREAMBLE

The analysis for this report began during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, under the California shelter-in-place mandate. At that time, Oakland found itself navigating unprecedented waters, with the health and economy of all at stake. Also unprecedented, at least for this generation, was a nearly universal awakening to the human imperative to be outdoors, to play, and have access to nature. COVID-19 also revealed that park systems provide essential civic and social infrastructure, as recreation centers repurposed to distribute food, provide childcare for essential workers, and learning hubs for school children. Accordingly, one of the important decisions Oakland made at this time was to keep its parks open.

**...the pandemic and the latest surge for racial justice require that our public services and public spaces become part of the solution rather than perpetuating the problems.**

The pandemic thus reminded us of something that has been true all along: parks are essential to the health and wellbeing of people and communities. As we come to understand that parks deliver even more - that they augment safety, resilience, equity, environmental justice, and opportunity - we come to understand that our parks are part of the larger solution, bringing a deeper resilience that not only helps us make it through COVID-19 but enables us to thrive after.

We must stand for our local park system. Oakland's passage in March, 2020, of Measure Q to augment park maintenance was a statement of public trust and affirmation of the public's belief in our parks; it is critical

to honor that trust and carry the stewardship mandate forward even as Oakland experiences pandemic stressors.

Yet, "the efforts to protect residents from COVID-19 have demonstrated just how unevenly public space is distributed throughout urban America. While we are permitted to go outdoors under stay-at-home orders, whether it's truly safe depends on where you live." (Walker, 2020) In Oakland, for example, the crowds at Lake Merritt that strained public health practices were in part the not-surprising consequence of years of absolute and inequitable divestment from our parks system, such that many neighborhood parks don't feel safe or are in a state of disrepair. A successful rebound from COVID-19 must therefore involve commitment to environmental justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, with a focus on dismantling and repairing the harms wrought by the long reach of structural racism.

This survey is the first in 25 years to ask Oaklanders for their perspectives and experiences of their parks. Conducted just a few unsuspecting months before the pandemic, from September to December 2019, it provides a prescient vision, affirmation, and roadmap needed to navigate our changed world. And so, our hope is that this report will galvanize our public - and our public officials - to envision and invest not merely in a pandemic recovery but also in a rebound that includes and elevates our parks.







# INTRODUCTION

*True to the very philosophy of public parks and recreation is the idea that all people – no matter the color of their skin, age, income level or ability – have access to programs, facilities, places and spaces that make their lives and communities great. Parks and recreation truly build communities – communities for all.*

**-National Recreation and Park Association**

Oakland’s parks are vital public spaces for connecting with nature, socializing, exercising, and participating in cultural, civic and economic activity. As neighborhood hubs, the City’s parks can provide social and environmental benefits to their communities, including increased health and wellness, community safety and connection, youth engagement, cultural and economic vitality, environmental conservation and climate resilience. In this manner, Oakland parks have the capacity to help correct environmental injustices, generate positive, transformative life experiences, and provide inclusive spaces for all of Oakland’s communities.

Parks provide these community benefits best when they are activated, meaning well-maintained, safe, equitably accessible, fully utilized and beloved. (Figure 1)



**Figure 1:** Activated parks benefit people and communities

However, when communities with the greatest need for the benefits provided by parks are those with the least access to activated parks, then social, health, longevity, and economic disparities widen, reinforcing structural inequities and racism. Parks therefore are not neutral spaces but instead function at the fulcrum of environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (eJEDI). This dynamic means that activating parks is an important part of countering Oakland’s legacy of racism and discrimination and promoting a positive, just and equitable future.

It is because of this central role that public space and public services play that, in 2016, the City of Oakland created the Department of Race and Equity “to intentionally integrate ...the principle of ‘fair and just’ in all the City does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities.” (GARE, 2016) In 2018, the Department published its Equity Indicators Report, (ODR&E, 2018) to “better understand the impacts of race, measure inequities, and track changes in the disparities for different groups over time.” The City intends for this equity framework to be used by staff and the community “to guide and inform policies that address these disparities.” (ODR&E, 2018)

***The question becomes: Is Oakland delivering the promise of its parks?***



Unfortunately, OPRF's 2018 report, "Continuing Crisis," found that Oakland parks are contributing to social and economic inequity, as parks in the areas of the city with the greatest need were in the worst condition (or the neighborhood was without a park at all). The survey gave an overall rating for park conditions of C+ for 2018, as it was in 2016, and quality parks and infrastructure were not equitably distributed.

***Parks provide community benefits best when they are activated, meaning well-maintained, safe, equitably accessible, fully utilized and beloved.***

perspectives of Oakland's parks. Through this report, 1,334 Oaklanders, across race, income, gender, age, and neighborhood, shed light on the current distribution of community benefits and ramifications for equity across the city.

What this survey found was bigger than an assessment of park conditions; it uncovered a shared vision for parks and potentially for the City itself, where parks and community are healthy, just, connected, culturally and economically vibrant, engaging for youth, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable. In near unison, participants backed this vision with a call for more investment in parks and recreation programming, and a willingness to support elected public servants who commit to flourishing parks for all Oaklanders. This widespread support stems from participants' clarity that Oakland parks need to be safe and clean, with well-maintained and accessible bathrooms and abundant opportunities for activity so that all Oaklanders can benefit from them.

It was resoundingly evident, however, that significant barriers are preventing Oaklanders from equitably benefitting from their parks. Participants reported that poorly-maintained grounds, deplorable bathroom conditions, safety concerns, encampments, and unsafe routes to parks deterred them from visiting or fully enjoying their parks.

The gap between vision and current conditions represents a tremendous missed opportunity for elevating the quality of life and benefiting communities in Oakland. However, the pandemic and the latest surge for racial justice require that our public services and public spaces become part of the solution rather than perpetuating the problems.

This report reinforces why park stewardship and investment are essential to counter historically embedded racial and economic injustices in Oakland in a way that advances environmental justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (eJEDI) (See Appendix I & II for our eJEDI framework and glossary). It should inform policy and practice for more equitable access to the benefits conferred by public parks. In short, parks - as centers of urban resilience - are where solutions can start, providing essential public places and complete neighborhoods that deliver benefits for Oakland's diverse people and cultures to thrive.

OPRF's 2018 report emphasized that the failure of Oakland to ensure its city parks are activated – via safe, clean, open and accessible green and recreation spaces, with clean, functional bathrooms and maintained grounds and lighting - amounts to a failure to deliver on the promise of parks.<sup>1</sup>

OPRF's current report, conducted citywide from September 21 to December 31, 2019, aligns with this equity initiative, as it is the first time in 25 years (City of Oakland, 1996-a) that Oaklanders were asked to speak to their experiences and

***the commitment to safe, inclusive and beloved parks for all is no less than a commitment to the civil right to equal, fair, safe access to public space***

---

<sup>1</sup> These findings have been conveyed in twelve surveys conducted by OPRF (previously published by Oakland Parks Coalition), as well as in the 1996 resident survey for updating the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation (OSCAR) element of the General Plan. (City of Oakland, 1996-a)



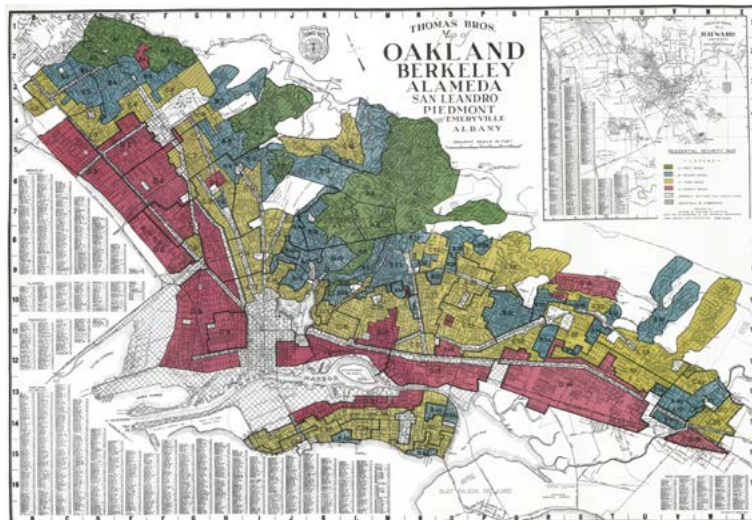
# OAKLAND PARKS: A HISTORY OF EMBEDDED INEQUITY

Oakland is a vibrant city that can also be dramatically unjust. These inequities are rooted in the long reach of racist policies and practices creating profound social disparities. For example, the redlining maps of 1930s Oakland (Figure 2) reflect the explicitly racist practices of housing mortgage lenders that were upheld by the federal and local governments.

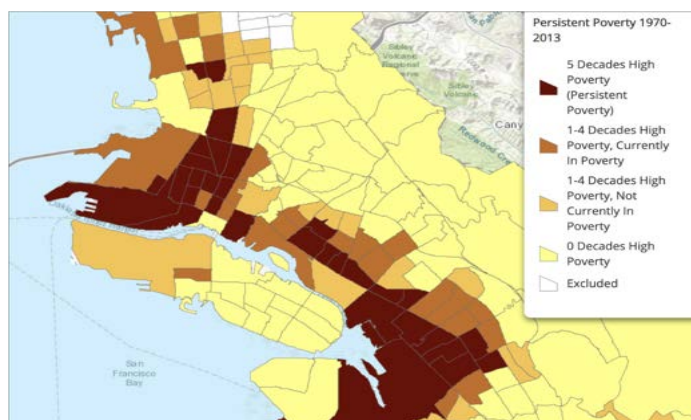
Redlining and other racist practices underlie the persistent poverty, divestment, and lack of access to adequate housing, environmental health, and economic opportunity that characterize these neighborhoods today (Figure 3). (B. Mitchell., n.d.) (ACDSI, 2020) For example, in a measure of neighborhood access to healthy financial institutions in Oakland, majority non-White resident zip codes had a bad-to-good financial institutions ratio three times higher than majority White resident zip codes. (USCB, 2016-b), (ODR&E, 2018) Housing units in predominantly non-White zip codes were twice as likely to report habitability complaints than those in majority White zip codes. (Oakland Planning and Building Dept, 2017) (USCB, 2016-b), (ODR&E, 2018) Nearly 20 percent of Black/African American Oaklanders do not have use of a car, three times higher than the rate for White Oaklanders, limiting access to social and economic opportunity and to essentials such as grocery stores, hospitals, and parks. (USCB, 2016-a), (ODR&E, 2018).

These disparities are not abstract, they are a matter of life and death. The life expectancy of Black/African American Oaklanders in West Oakland is 14 years shorter than White Oaklanders in the hills, (Alameda County, 2020) due in part to disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards including pollution, unsafe housing, and heat. Historically-redlined areas also are as much as 7 °C (10.8°F - 12.6°F) hotter than non-redlined counterparts, as they lack trees and green park spaces. Heatwaves are the deadliest weather event, and this temperature increment is enough to measurably increase health and mortality risks, which will rise over time as climate change intensifies. (Hoffman et al., 2020) The average rate of preventable hospitalizations in non-White zip codes is double the rate in White zip codes. (ODR&E, 2018)

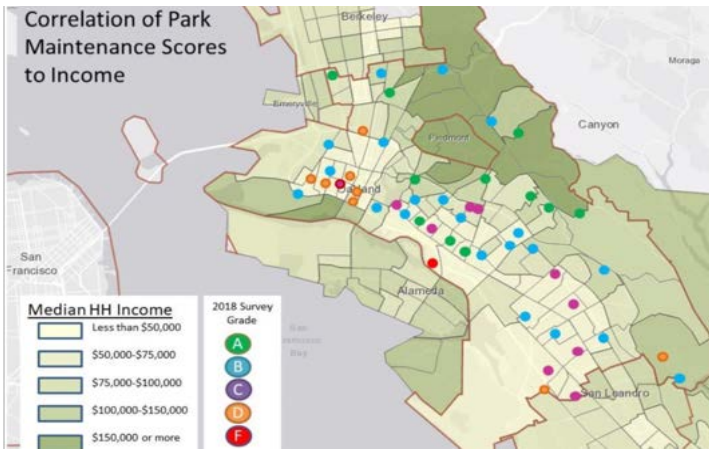
Disparities in park access contribute to these conditions. Levels of park maintenance, amenities, and green space correlate to income and education (Nesbitt et al., 2019) as well as race, gender, age, and location. White residents live closer to areas with more tree coverage; (Browning & Rigolon, 2018) seniors, constituting 20% of the population, are only 4% of park visitors; (Cohen & Leuschner, 2017) (Moore et al., 2010) teen boys outnumber teen girls in parks (65%, 35%); 4 of 100 teen girls play a sport in a park compared to 38 of 100 teen boys; (City Parks Alliance, 2019) and women, children, and elderly are more deterred by park safety and poor maintenance, (Rosso et al., 2011) leaving parks in these areas under-utilized. (Park et al., 2018)



**Figure 2.** 1937 Thomas Brothers Homeowners' Loan Corporation\* Map, depicting mortgage industry redlining policies of the 1930s rate for White Oaklanders - limiting access to Source: (Source: Nelson et al., 2020)



**Figure 3.** Areas of Persistent Poverty in Alameda County 1970-2013 Source: ACDSI, 2020



**Figure 4.** Correlation of park maintenance scores to income (Source: OPRF, 2018)

Figure 4, from OPRF’s “Continuing Crisis” report, maps these dynamics to Oakland, showing how parks and facilities in the neighborhoods where park benefits could have the greatest impact are in the worst condition. It shows how lack of municipal resources in underserved neighborhoods widens the equity gap and perpetuates the legacy of environmental injustice within Oakland’s formerly redlined areas. (Roe et al., 2016) Other research also shows that municipal services are inequitably distributed, for example, parks in low-income areas may have less than half the number of weekly sponsored activities (compared to higher-income areas) despite having the same quantity and type of physical facilities/amenities. (Cohen & Leuschner, 2017)

What this situation reveals is that, rather than being neutral spaces, parks exist at the fulcrum of justice, either elevating equity or driving disparity. (Figure 5)

When parks are safe, well-maintained, equitably accessible, and actively used, they help people thrive. But when people are deprived of park space or their parks are unwelcoming or in disrepair, parks can contribute to crime, blight, inactivity, isolation, and real or perceived threats to safety. (Mieszowski, 2012) Because these conditions fall along race and/or class lines, investment in parks becomes a question of whether a city will dismantle, or perpetuate, structural racism.

Underlying inequities and overt and institutionalized racism draw parks into the narrative of unjust and unsafe public spaces. Throughout Oakland, divestment in parks is both a cause and effect of neighborhood decline and loss, which can take decades of community resilience and effort to rectify. (Dirks, 2015) (CANRA, 2020) Impacts are not limited to neighborhoods; they reverberate throughout the city as well. At Oakland’s arguably most iconic site, Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park, the 2018 incident of a White visitor calling potentially lethal police force onto Black visitors for barbecuing (Mezzofiore, 2018) and the 2020 hate crimes of hanging nooses and effigies (CBS San Francisco, 2020) matter not only in their own right, but because they occurred in park space at Lake Merritt, which represents the public commons *writ large* as well as representing the diverse nature of Oakland in particular. It is from this past and present that the commitment to safe, inclusive and beloved parks for all is no less than a commitment to the civil right to equal, fair, safe access to public space.



**Figure 5:** Parks and the fulcrum of justice

Equity in access to flourishing neighborhood and city parks is a part of reversing racial disparities and realizing the benefits that are the promise of our parks. (City of Oakland, 2020b) The Oakland Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) defined the challenge: “We must safeguard our diverse communities and cultural legacies while forging new socially and environmentally just futures,” moving forward through justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. (PRAC, 2019)

Oakland’s parks are part of this solution, providing essential public places for Oakland’s diverse people and cultures to thrive. They are part of complete neighborhoods that enable residents to readily meet daily needs. This neighborhood context is where activated parks can most immediately benefit the community. Communities already understand what parks can do for people and communities, as time and again their actions to revitalize neighborhoods, claim heritage and civil rights, and care for their children and youth, start with or include parks. (OPRF, 2020b) (Dirks, 2015) (Mezzofiore, 2018) (Oakland North, 2019)

# PARK BENEFITS: THE JUSTICE POTENTIAL

## Health and Wellness

Access to safe and well-maintained parks with their greenspaces and recreation amenities is a recognized path to disrupting systemic health inequities and promoting wellness. (NYU Langone Health, 2018) (OPRF, 2018) Multiple health benefits including mental health benefits arise from easy proximity to green urban spaces and can decrease health disparities by up to 40% (Owen et al., 2010) (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005) (Roe & Aspinall, 2011) (R. J. Mitchell et al., 2015) Childhood play at the parks creates positive transformational experiences, reducing risks of future depression or poor mental health. (Bethell et al., 2019) Even the presence of parks and greenspaces can lower risks of heart disease, obesity, and mortality. (James et al., 2016; Lachowycz & Jones, 2011; Richardson et al., 2013)

## Community Safety and Connection

By providing busy, safe, and inclusive green and recreational spaces, parks can increase safety (Shepley et al., 2019) (Bogar & Beyer, 2016) and promote social connection and a deep sense of belonging for people who frequent the parks or live nearby. (Wolf & Rozance, 2013) In turn, close-knit communities generally have lower rates of reported crime, fewer calls to the police, (Maruthaveeran, 2015) and less risky behavior by children and teens. (Wolf & Rozance, 2013) Interactions with nature in local parks and playgrounds with friends and neighbors can build familiarity, friendship and social interaction across age, race, cultures and backgrounds. (Keniger et al., 2013) (Haluza et al., 2014)

## Economic and Cultural Vitality

Park-generated public savings (e.g., in healthcare, stormwater management, energy conservation, and air quality improvements) can bolster municipal revenues and spur private investment and increased local job opportunities. (City Parks Alliance, 2019) Investing in park restoration, stewardship, and community engagement events catalyzes and diversifies park use and subsequent economic returns. Parks are the recognized public spaces for art, music, markets and fairs, and civic and cultural expression, elevating and celebrating diversity and culture, which in turn can contribute to economic vitality. (Winter et al., 2020) (City Parks Alliance, 2019) (Harnik, 2014)

## Environmental Protection and Climate Resilience

Parks and greenspaces provide crucial environmental benefits and protect against the impacts of climate change, making neighborhoods more livable and resilient and contributing to a sustainable planet. Greenspace filters rainfall, improving water quality and protecting against flooding. Rain gardens reduce urban runoff by nearly half. (R. F. Hunter et al., 2019) Urban tree canopy provides cooling during heat waves, cleans the air and reduces noise pollution. (US EPA, 2014) Recreation centers represent a network of resilience hubs that can provide filtered and cooled air for fires and heatwaves, and relief during disasters, from fires to earthquakes to pandemics. (City of Oakland, 2020a) Equally important, parks also provide spaces for biodiversity preservation and conservation. (City Parks Alliance, 2019) (Sadeghian & Vardanyan, 2013)

## Youth Opportunity and Positive Alternative

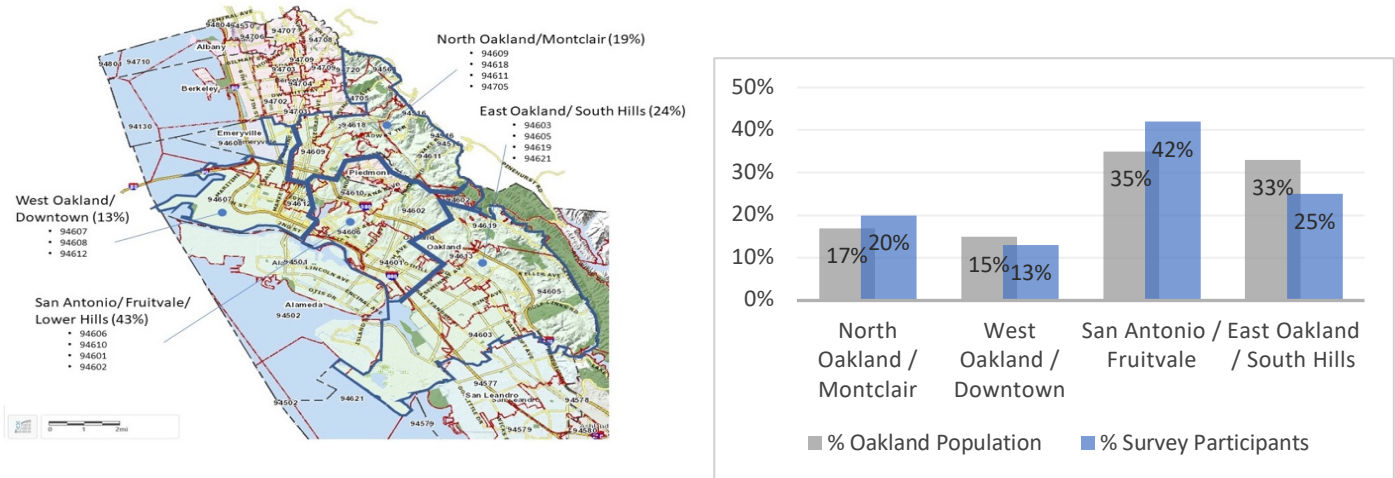
Children and teens account for nearly half of all park users in the United States, (Cohen & Leuschner, 2017) becoming lifelong beneficiaries as positive park experiences impact their future health and wellbeing. Growing up playing, laughing, and generally having a good time in parks and playgrounds has been associated with better mental health later in life, alongside the concurrent benefits of a physically active childhood. (Bethell et al., 2019) The opportunity for physical activity that parks provide has been found to be especially important for urban youth, (Babey et al., 2008) and programming has been shown to especially increase physical activity among girls, who otherwise are disproportionately inactive compared to boys. (City Parks Alliance, 2019) Parks and recreation centers also provide safe places for academic support, nutrition, job skills development and various activities that offer positive alternatives for youth.



# METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to create a quantitative and qualitative citywide assessment of Oaklanders’ perspectives, experiences, and use of the city’s municipal parks. The survey used an observational design, surveying Oakland residents over the final quarter of 2019 (September 21 to December 31 through online outreach and in-person convenience sampling. (OPRF, 2020a) The City of Oakland’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Development (OPRYD), Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, and Department of Race and Equity provided feedback on the sampling method and questionnaire design. Surveys were provided in English, Spanish, and Chinese at libraries, recreation centers, farmers’ markets, community meetings, festivals, and online through the OPRF, OPRYD, and Oakland City Council member websites and listservs, OPRF board member emails, and various community groups. Sampling continued until the participant distribution neared Oakland’s population distribution. See Appendix V for methodology and sample details.

## Participant profile



**Figure 6.** Participant distribution by zip code and city area (1,334 participants)

Over the course of three months, 1,334 people participated in the survey. While not all participants answered all questions, the distribution of the participants roughly mirror that of Oakland’s general population. Participants resided fairly evenly across all City Council Districts. Because zip codes span multiple Districts, for place-based analysis this survey instead used four main areas of the city: San Antonio-Fruitvale/Lower Hills (42%), East Oakland/South Hills (25%), North Oakland/Montclair (20%) and West Oakland/Downtown areas (13%). Figure 6 shows that the survey’s residential distribution approximates Oakland’s.

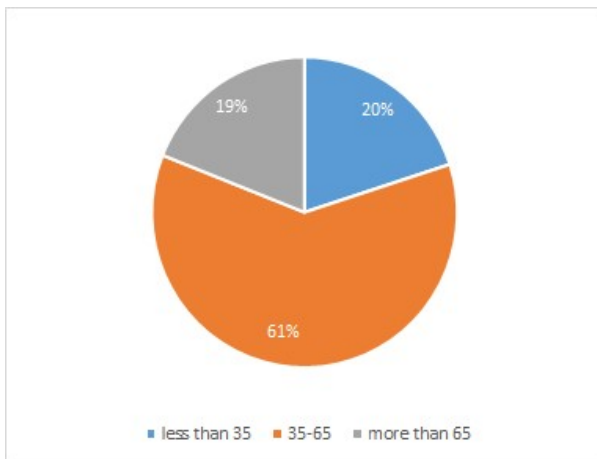
Table 1 provides a participant demographic profile, organized by the four main areas of residence used in the survey.

Overall, half of survey participants identified as: Black/African American (14%), Indigenous/Native American (2%), Latinx/Hispanic (16%), Asian/Pacific Islander (11%), or Middle Eastern/ North African (1%) (collectively, BILAM), with 6% identifying as mixed-race/ethnicity without specification. White participants constituted 49% of participants.

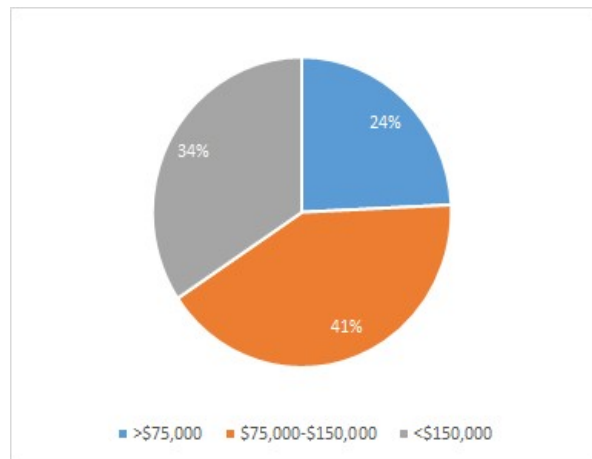
**Table 1.** Total participation and area-based participation by race, gender, age

	Total % Survey / % Oakland*	East Oakland / South Hills	West Oakland / Downtown	Fruitvale / San Antonio	North Oakland / Montclair
<b>Race (1,095 participant responses)*</b>					
Black/African American	14% / 24%	44%	17%	28%	10%
Indigenous /Native American	2% / 1%	29%	5%	43%	24%
Latinx/Hispanic	16% / 16%	41%	8%	42%	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11% / 16%	23%	15%	44%	19%
Middle Eastern/North African	1% / -	25%	13%	38%	25%
White/Caucasian	49% / 36%	16%	12%	47%	24%
<b>Gender** (1,065 participant responses)</b>					
Female	71% / 52%	27%	13%	39%	20%
Male	29% / 48%	22%	12%	49%	17%
<b>Age (1,131 participant responses)</b>					
<35 years	20% / -	28%	15%	41%	15%
35-65 years	62% / -	26%	13%	39%	22%
>65 years	18% / 12%	23%	9%	51%	17%

\*6% of participants self-identified as mixed race without specifying, as compared to 7% in Oakland. Source: Source: Oakland, California Population 2020 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs) \*\* 2% reported non-binary / non-conforming / other



**Figure 7** Survey participation by age (1,198 participants)



**Figure 8** Survey participation by income (885 participants)

As illustrated in Figure 7, two thirds of participants (61%) were between 35-65 years of age, with 20% under 35 years, and 19% over 65. In Oakland, the mean household income is \$76,469. (Data USA, 2019) In this study, annual household incomes ranged from less than \$30,000 to over \$150,000: 24% earned less than \$75,000 and/or had earned less than \$150,000 with more than four members in their household; 41% earned \$75,000-150,000 a year with a household of four or fewer members; and 34% earned over \$150,000 a year. (Figure 8) More than a third of participants did not provide annual income, though the non-response pattern suggests low income participants were more likely to omit this information.

There were some significant differences in characteristics within groups of participants. For example, 76% of participants under 35 years identified as BILAM participants while BILAM participants constituted 43% of participants older than 35. Higher-income participants more frequently identified as White (63%), whereas 19% of the lowest income group identified as White. Participants who were in the lowest income group were more likely to report parenting or caring for children in their home (64%) compared to 37% and 44% of participants in the medium and higher-income groups and slightly more parents identified as BILAM participants (58%). There was no significant difference by race between male-identified participants and female-identified participants.

## Analyses and Inference

Comparative analyses were conducted by area, race, gender, age, and income. Even so, inference is limited by the sampling method. Findings are reported for large differences, generally of at least 10 percentage points with less than a 1% chance that the difference is due to chance ( $p < .01$ ).

In the case of analyses by race, both a two-way comparison of BILAM participants (Black/African American, Indigenous/Native American, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African) and White participants and a six-way comparison of these groups were conducted. The two-way comparison helps to surface the ways that participants may have different experiences based on race. The 6-way comparison was made, even as some group sizes were too small for robust analysis, to endeavor to make all of Oakland's communities visible, especially those who are often under-represented or ignored, and to not perpetuate marginalization.

### Why focus on Race?

Race matters, it has a profound and overarching impact on life outcomes. Working towards equity means identifying the root causes of disparity that impact people of color, in addition to addressing barriers impacting poor people in general. If the analysis does not take the impacts of race into account, it will fail to reveal needs specific to people of color, the resulting action will likely not address those issues, and will leave the people of color behind. . .

- adapted from City of Oakland Department of Race and Equity, Oakland, CA/Demographics



## Is Oakland delivering the promise of its parks?

Parks can increase health and wellness, community safety and cohesion, cultural and economic vitality, youth engagement, climate resilience and environmental protection. Parks provide these benefits best when they are fully activated, meaning they are well-maintained, safe, equitably accessible, fully used, and beloved.

The question becomes: Is Oakland delivering on the promise of its parks? To answer this question, this survey assesses the elements of park activation: maintenance, safety, accessibility, utilization, and love.

Even as the findings highlight disparities that can no longer be tolerated, the survey also produced remarkable findings in terms of uniformity of positive experience and perspective. In a place as diverse as Oakland, that solidarity should capture attention and imagination.

For this reason, the Findings section begins the assessment of the park promise with a look at the incredible love that Oaklanders have for their parks, because it's when solutions come from a place of love and its transformational, inspirational, joyful resonance, that they have the most impact. And at the end of the day, transformative and inspiring experiences are what parks are all about.

## Park Love is strong in Oakland: shared vision for parks and Oakland

*“Los parques deben ser una herramienta para unir una comunidad marginada y oprimida... The parks should be a tool to unite a marginalized and oppressed community...”*

We love parks when we have a vision for their full capacity, when we support investing in and caring for them, and when we have a passion for them. Participants - across race, neighborhood, income, age, and gender - presented a unified vision of parks' potential that can extend to the City of Oakland itself: A community that is healthy, connected, culturally and economically strong, positive, resilient and environmentally sustainable.

Fully 95% of 1,153 survey participants agreed (with strong agreement over 70%), that activated parks, i.e., parks that are well-maintained, safe, equitably accessible and fully used:



- **Improve Oaklanders' health and wellness**
- **Strengthen Oakland communities, culture, economy**
- **Help keep Oakland's children and youth safe, provide positive options**
- **Are good for all Oaklanders and build a more just city**
- **Protect and care for the environment (94%)**

Their message is clear: how we care for our parks is how we care for our people.

## A vision of resilience through parks and recreation centers

*“I wish we could do more permaculture practices in our parks to help keep the biodiversity.”*

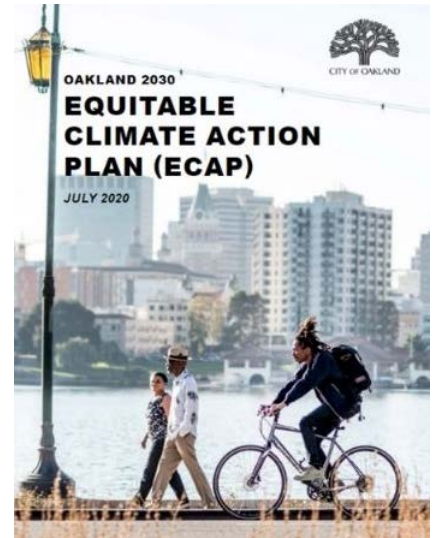
The vast majority of participants (88%) also recognize that Oakland's parks and recreation centers can play an important role in providing clean and cool air, flood protection, and other supports that make frontline communities resilient to increasing hazards and disasters related to climate change, pandemics, earthquakes, and fires, agreeing that:



- **Oakland's Recreation Centers should provide relief and assistance during heat waves, smoke days, floods, fires and earthquakes (1,002, 88%)**

These resilience functions are especially important because health and social disparities both increase vulnerability to and are a source of heightened health impacts of climate change. (CA Dept of Public Health, n.d.) Oakland’s Equitable Climate Action Plan 2030 (ECAP) shares this view and crafts a robust role for parks and recreation in climate resilience. (City of Oakland, 2020b) On environmental merits alone, recreation centers can play an important role in a sustainable future, even recognized in the 1996 OSCAR element of the General Plan, (Policy Rec 4.2), which encourages park practices that “conserve energy and water, promote recycling, and minimize harmful side effects on the environment.”

Support for green resilience infrastructure was high among all participants, across race, income, age, and location. East Oakland/South Hills participants most strongly supported these roles (94%), followed by San Antonio/ Fruitvale (88%), West Oakland (86%) and North Oakland (80%). Support was also highest among the lowest income group (94%), followed by 89% and 83% among mid and high- income groups, respectively. Support also modestly tracked to age, with highest support among participants under 35 (93%), followed by participants 35-65 years (87%), and over 65 years (84%).



These findings raise equity and generational justice issues, as failing to invest in parks now exacerbates social inequities and creates economic burdens and increased climate vulnerability for future generations.

## Strong support for investment in parks, recreation, culture

*“More parks & community spaces. Love what we have but the City is growing. We need more outdoor space.”*

*“Many recreation centers need more support for repairing physical infrastructure, updating play structures, and more usable open space.”*

Increased investment can spur park usage, which in turn confers community benefits. For example, each element added to a playground can increase park use by 50%, augmenting exercise and transformative experiences. (City Parks Alliance, 2019) A recent study found that increasing park acreage, tree canopy, and targeted investments in park infrastructure in areas facing park deficits could increase life expectancy and significantly benefit the health of Latinx and Black residents. In Los Angeles, these investments amounted to an increase in life expectancy of almost 118,000 years for this population. (Prevention Institute, 2020)

In Oakland, though, the Parks, Recreation & Youth Development Department is one of the most underfunded departments in the City. Further, Oakland spends less on and engages fewer private and philanthropic dollars for its parks and recreation than comparable cities and receives a score of 31 out of 100 for investment and 37 out of 100 for park acreage. (The Trust for Public Land, 2020)

But survey participants see a role for the park system in building a vibrant future for Oakland and they support dedicated investments in citywide and neighborhood parks. Of 1,146 survey participants, the vast majority strongly agree or agree that Oakland should invest more in:



- **Parks, fields, pools, and recreation facilities (94%)**
- **Art, events and cultural activities in Oakland parks (78%)**
- **Recreation Centers, to keep them open seven days a week (77%)**

*“Revitalizing these parks would show pride of ownership, encourage communities”*

In fact, support for more investment in park and recreation facilities was universally high, with no difference across race, gender, age, neighborhood area, or income level.

## More arts and culture in Oakland parks

*“. . . more information and history about indigenous people who lived - and continue to live - here, whether it's in a kiosk kind of setting with photographs or other art.”*

*“More partnerships with community music - schools, symphonies, the Oakland Community Orchestra.”*

A strong majority across all participants supported increasing art, events and cultural activities in Oakland’s parks, with the greatest support from East and West Oakland participants (84% and 81%, respectively), followed by San Antonio/Fruitvale (76%) and North Oakland (70%).



- **Participants under 35** most offered their support (87%), followed by those 35-65 (78%). A majority of those over 65 also were in support (69%) and were more unsure (14%) than in disagreement.
- **Low- and mid- income** participants more frequently supported increasing arts and cultural activities in parks compared to those with the highest income group (90% and 80%, compared to 71%).
- **BILAM participants** more frequently supported increases than White participants (88%, 70%), although White participants expressed uncertainty (14%) more than disagreement.

## More access to recreation centers

*“It’s a shame that the recreation center building is closed most evenings and weekends.”*

Support for keeping recreation centers open seven days per week was also high among all participants, with no significant difference by residential area or age. BILAM participants expressed support more frequently than White participants (85%, 71%), as did participants in the lower and middle- income groups (87% and 79%) compared to 70% of the highest income group. Participants from the higher income group expressed more uncertainty (22%), which may indicate limited familiarity with centers rather than a lack of support.

Oaklanders greatly value parks and recreation facilities as essential social and cultural resources. Those with structural disadvantages related to income and race have a clearer view of this value.



## A Passion for parks

*“I love them all in their own unique way!”*

Passion for parks, measured in part by community buy-in and stewardship, is an important factor in whether parks advance equity. For example, our 2018 report observed that high-scoring parks in the city’s lower income neighborhoods tend to be those with active volunteer organizations, where City resources are supplemented by community resources.

In a remarkable expression of passion, commitment and connection to Oakland’s parks, more than 900 participants (over 70%) wrote in additional comments about their parks. Providing this level of extra effort to a survey is extraordinary.

Oaklanders want their voices heard about parks. They also are willing to express this passion through democratic action.



- **Most (92%, 947) participants were more likely to vote for representatives who strongly support investment in park**

We’d like to give a shout out to the neighborhood groups that invest their time and energies to improve conditions in their parks. There are dozens of groups attached to parks, some of which have been working together for decades. Some of these groups meet on a monthly basis, others on designated workdays throughout the year. They weed, rake, plant, paint, tile, plant trees, etc.

- OPRF, Continuing Crisis, 2018

## Maintenance, safety, access, use: citywide and neighborhood

*“I HATE that I have to drive to find a park that feels safe, has basic amenities, and functioning playground equipment”*

The survey looked at participants’ experience of both Oakland parks citywide and neighborhood parks, which participants self-defined but are generally understood to be near the home and can be smaller, including mini or pocket parks. This distinction was made for various reasons. For example, some people overcome limitations in their neighborhood parks by travelling elsewhere, and some opt to frequent a park not near where they live but where they work or take children for sports, etc. In contrast, the focus on neighborhood parks recognizes that it is within their neighborhood that parks can have the most immediate impact, either for neighborhood betterment, or conversely, as a catalyst for disparity.

Neighborhoods are also one of the places where structural inequities and historical discrimination appear. For example, this study found that participants residing in East Oakland frequently had a different experience of and different access to neighborhood parks. It also found that parents / guardians who brought children to the parks were disproportionately impacted as well.

### Barriers for participants who bring children to parks vs those who do not bring children

#### Barriers

Poor park maintenance	64% vs 51%
Poor bathroom conditions	70% vs 44%
Safety in parks	52% vs 42%
Unsafe routes to parks	18% vs 11%

*“Sometimes trash cans overflowing & broken glass in playground sand areas, no restrooms or locked restrooms mean you can only stay for a short time at the park, especially with kids.”*

### Physical access for East Oakland/South Hills participants vs participants from other areas

Live < 1/2 mi of most frequently visited park	31% vs 41%-52%
Travel > 2 miles to most frequently used park	32% vs 14%-22%
Walk to most frequently visited park	25% vs 48%-61%
Drive to most frequently visited park	58% vs 28%-41%
Have unsafe routes to neighborhood parks	46% vs 25%-29%
Most frequently visited park is also their neighborhood park	35% vs 50%-61%

*“I drive out of my neighborhood to go to parks farther away, because the ones near me don’t feel safe.”*

# Poor maintenance impedes park activation

*“Even the parks in Oakland that used to be taken care of are now in disrepair with garbage everywhere.”*

*“If a park isn’t clean and safe enough for kids, it becomes off limits for families.”*

*“I would love to take my kids here, I really would, but I can’t because of the needles.”*

Maintenance is a gatekeeper to park access, safety, and use. (Hamilton et al., 2017) (Metropolitan Council, 2014) These effects can be experienced differently by gender, with one study finding that signs of poor park conditions were associated with 49% fewer female visitors while attractive parks had 146% more. (Knapp et al., 2019) Where fewer resources are dedicated to stewarding and maintaining greenspace, parks fall into disrepair. Accumulated litter, drug paraphernalia, closed or dysfunctional bathrooms, overgrown vegetation, encampments, and graffiti deter full and safe use of parks, forfeiting the community health and wellness benefits for those who stay away.



In Oakland, park maintenance services have faced extreme budget curtailment since Proposition 13 passed in 1978.

Calls for restoring services have continued for decades. Even the 1996 OSCAR Element of the General Plan Policy Recommendation 4.1 called for prioritizing ongoing, systematic maintenance of all parks and recreation facilities “to prevent deterioration, ensure public safety, and permit continued public use and enjoyment.” OPRF and its predecessors have documented declining park conditions in 12 surveys, in 2018 labelling it a “continuing crisis.” For example, average scores for field conditions declined from 3.1 in 2016 (“B”) to 2.7 (C+) in 2018.

***95% experience barriers to park use and four of the top five barriers to parks visits and use were maintenance-related***

As noted earlier, parks are drivers of equity and disparity depending upon their conditions, and this circumstance is playing out in Oakland. OPRF’s 2018 survey found that parks in the city’s higher income neighborhoods were more likely to receive “A” and “B” maintenance scores, while the “D” and “F” parks were generally located in economically disadvantaged or gentrifying neighborhoods. It noted, “The disparities are even more troubling when specific facility types are considered. For example, children’s play equipment in District 3 parks received a cumulative score of 1.80 (a D+) while play equipment in District 4 parks received a cumulative score of 3.86 (A-).

. . . it has been more than 50 years since our park maintenance resources were at their zenith. . . Park maintenance staffing is only 60% of what it was in 1970, when there were 175.33 FTEs allocated. Park maintenance staff was particularly hard hit by the 2008 recession. Staffing dropped to its lowest point in 2012 when the FTEs numbered only 80; however, the recent gains came at a sacrifice of skilled gardener positions [with a] downward spiral of skilled gardeners from a once high of 91 to the current level of 34.

- Continuing Crisis: The 2018 Report on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks

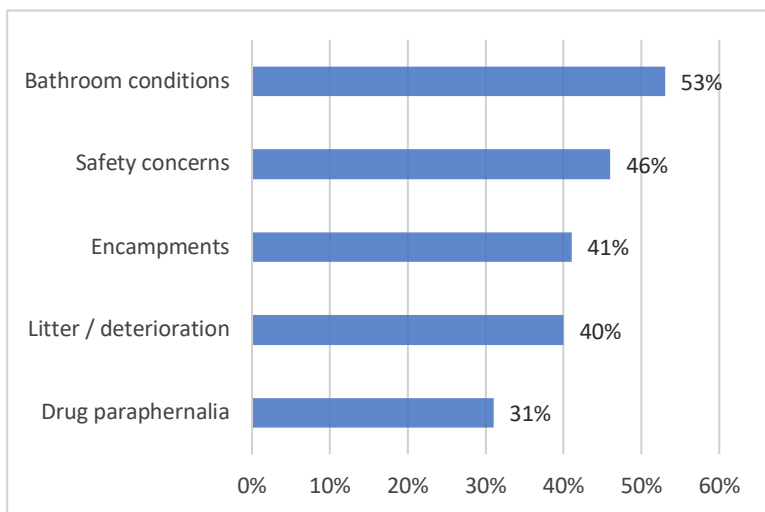
In March 2020, a large majority of voters passed Measure Q to secure funding for augmented park maintenance based in part upon the understanding of how important maintenance is for parks to serve communities well.

Measure Q, while insufficient, is still urgently needed:



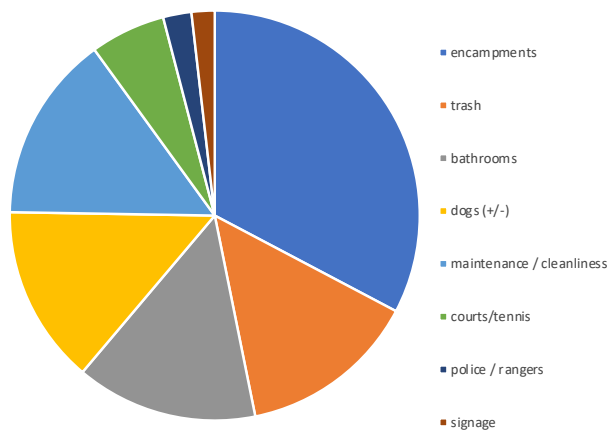
- **More than half of study participants (737, 55%), with no difference by race or gender, reported that poor park maintenance was a barrier to their ability to visit or fully utilize and enjoy Oakland’s parks.**

Of 1,167 participants, 95% reported at least one barrier to park activation had kept them from fully accessing, enjoying, and using Oakland parks. Notably, in addition to safety concerns, four of the top five barriers to parks were maintenance-related, including deteriorated bathroom conditions, encampments, litter, and drug-related litter. (Figure 9)



**Figure 9.** Barriers to visiting and full utilization of parks

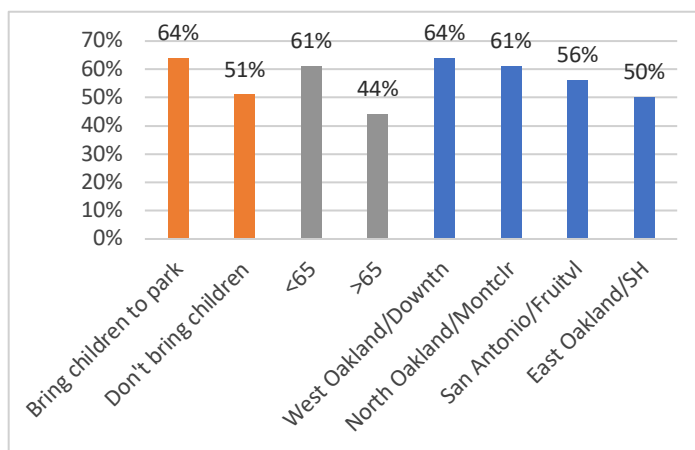
These quantitative findings were reinforced by more than 700 write-in remarks. Figure 10 presents the number of times participants wrote in about a particular issue or barrier.



**Figure 10.** Write-in comments on issues for park improvement

Those more likely to report maintenance barriers included participants bringing children to visit parks, participants under 65, West Oakland participants, and those in the mid-income group: (Figure 11)

- **Participants bringing children** were 13 percentage points more likely to report maintenance barriers (64%, 51%)
- **Those under 65** were 17 percentage points more likely to report maintenance barriers (61%, 44%)
- **West Oakland participants** reported maintenance barriers more than other areas (64%)



**Figure 11** Variation in experience of maintenance barriers



## **Straight talk on park maintenance**

The issues are clear and Oaklanders are well aware: too many of Oakland's parks are littered, dirty, run-down, and broken.

*"Most of the issues I see are around garbage/litter and the state of the restrooms"*

*"Most all parks in Oakland are neglected. The parks are dirty and the play equipment is in terrible condition, broken and marked up with graffiti"*

*"Very sad that lawns are allowed to die and leaks not to be fixed for months endangering trees"*

*"Lighting, many parks in Oakland get very dark after hours and the lights in many of them do not work"*

*"The field is full of lots of pit holes and makes it dangerous for active sports like soccer"*

*"Donde yo vivo hay un parque a dos cuerdas de casa pero no es tan seguro está muy sucio y no hay baños y vive mucha gente en el parque. There is a park 2 blocks from where I live but it is not very safe, it is really dirty, there are no bathrooms, and there are a lot of people living in the park."*

Strikingly, Oaklanders acutely register the significance of these conditions. They clearly understand that poorly maintained parks are a marker for equity:

*"Parks around good neighborhoods often clean and nice. Other parks seem unsafe"*

*"There are parks in deep east and north/west Oakland that are not as well maintained that I avoid"*

*"The homeless have taken over our local park. But I notice Snow Park is kept homeless-free. Did OAKLAND shrink to just a few blocks Downtown or something? Is there going to be investment in parks outside of the Downtown area?"*

and a signal for how a city cares about its people:

*"It looks like the City does not care about the park - or neighborhood"*

*"The parks and centers are not clean. It seems as though the city doesn't think it's important"*

*"I see expensive EV charging stations have been added, but the children's playground is filled with garbage"*

Some participants used strikingly strong language to describe conditions, especially with regards to bathrooms, litter, and drug paraphernalia, including some calling conditions, "disgusting," "filthy," "unsanitary," and "unsafe".

Indeed, they raise the possibility that at least some of our parks face no less than a public health and safety crisis:

*"I have found more needles and poop than would have ever seemed possible. It is a public health risk and not helping anyone."*

The consequence? Park activation declines, contributing to a downward spiral and loss of community benefits:

*"If a park isn't clean and safe enough for kids, it becomes off limits for families"*

*"Trash, needles and generally unsanitary & unsafe conditions make me, my family and friends use the parks much less than we used to."*

*"Defecation/urination in and on play structures, unsafe conditions including known needle sticks have made me stop using certain parks altogether and are some of the primary reasons I go to parks outside of Oakland "*

The request is clear:

*"Clean up the parks! We don't feel safe!"*

The take home message: Maintenance matters.

## The bathroom crisis

*“Many parks lack a clean bathroom or a bathroom at all. It makes it tough to spend a decent amount of time in a park with a child.”*

*“We always have to travel outside our neighborhood to find parks that are in good condition—playgrounds, working bathrooms, etc.”*

*“The bathrooms were full of graffiti and filthy. Had I known the horrible conditions... I would have opted out.”*



During OPRF’s 2018 survey, only 65% of free-standing bathrooms were fully accessible. In terms of conditions, the average grade ranged from C- to C+, on par with 11 other OPRF studies showing the log-jammed nature of this crisis.

This current study looked at the impact of these conditions, finding that dilapidated and inaccessible bathrooms were a uniformly pronounced barrier to park use, with no significant difference by gender, race, income, or area of residence. Restrooms were too often locked, dirty, considered unsafe, or absent altogether, and generated hundreds of comments from survey participants about how these conditions prevent visiting or fully using and enjoying Oakland parks. Of note:

People who went to the park for children were 26% more likely to cite bathroom conditions as barriers to visiting or fully using and enjoying the parks compared to other participants, regardless of race, age, income and neighborhood (95%CI:21%-32%). Of the 470 participants bringing children to parks, 70% cited this barrier compared to 44% of 864 other participants. The

bathroom crisis poses a barrier to park use for the majority, but especially prevents children from fully benefiting from the developmental benefits of parks and the positive, transformative experiences parks offer.

## Encampments curtail park access but it’s complicated

*“Drug use and homeless encampments are a big deterrent. Very sad because I love my neighborhood park.”*



Encampments have become widespread in Oakland parks and the city has struggled to alleviate the situation. In 2019, the City of Oakland planned to add 700 beds, but it was estimated that 2000 more would be needed to assist the rising homeless population. (Pena, 2019)

**Almost half (42%) of participants cited encampments as a barrier to visiting or fully utilizing or enjoying Oakland parks.**

- **In West and North Oakland**, half of the survey participants identified encampments as a barrier to full park access, followed by 44% in the San Antonio / Fruitvale area and (30%) in East Oakland
- **Middle-income** more than lowest income participants cited encampment barriers (48% vs 33%)

Variations by race/ethnicity were also found, with Indigenous/Native American (54%), Asian/Pacific Islander (45%) and White participants (45%) more likely to cite encampments as a barrier to full park access, compared to Black/African American (36%), Latinx/Hispanic (31%), and Middle Eastern/North African (20%) participants.

### **Encampments: Public space in private use**

Encampments in parks were of widespread concern, with hundreds of write-in remarks made about them. The issues are complex and the need for responses to be human and dignifying is essential. At the same time, encampments clearly present a barrier to full use of Oakland parks. Some participants held this complexity:

*"I love the parks. I'm sad that they need to be used by the homeless, but I have no problem co-existing with the homeless if it's safe and sanitary"*

But there is alarm about the extent of the problem:

*"There are several parks where the homeless have essentially taken over the park and/or recreation areas."*

A multitude of examples detailed the many impacts of encampments, including dissuading people from visiting all together, for example:

*"I couldn't have my daughter's birthday party at a park this year because they all have homeless encampments"*

The concern is not only for safety and ability to use the parks, but also for a deep jeopardizing of civic space and what the public commons represent:

*"The parks are not for the people anymore"*

The request for a solution is heartfelt, urgent, and at times perhaps indignant with an underlying belief that Oakland could do better:

*"Buscar una solución para las personas sin hogar que se están instalando en los parques / Search for a solution for the people without homes who are moving into the parks"*

*"SF enforces their laws around [encampments], so why doesn't Oakland?"*

## **Safety, access, and utilization**

All elements of park activation interact and this survey took a blended approach to assessing access, utilization, and safety, creating a park promise scorecard for these elements. Table 2 presents the scorecard for all participants, and Table 3 does so by participant demographics. Neither parks in general nor neighborhood parks score high, though parks on a citywide basis scored better than neighborhood parks.

On a scale of 1-4, citywide parks scored an average of 2.9 ("Good") while neighborhood parks averaged a 2.5 ("Needs Improvement"). Of great concern, neighborhood parks were widely viewed as having inadequate security, receiving a score of 1.9, ("Severe Problem"). There was little variability by demographics in how citywide and neighborhood parks were scored.

***"We love Oakland parks! They are critical for healthy kids, healthy sleep, better learning, job performance"***



**Table 2.** The Parks Promise Score for Access, Utilization and Safety

The Promise of Parks	Score	Grade
<b>Citywide</b>		
I can easily access good walking/jogging paths in Oakland parks	3.0	Good
I can easily access good places to relax, socialize, and enjoy nature in Oakland parks	2.9	Good
I can meet neighbors and build community in Oakland parks	2.9	Good
It is easy to access good places for exercise in Oakland parks	2.8	Needs Improvement
<b>Total City Parks Promise Score</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>		
My neighborhood park has good places to relax, socialize, enjoy nature	2.7	Needs Improvement
I can easily and safely walk or wheelchair to my neighborhood park	2.6	Needs Improvement
My neighborhood park has good spaces or equipment for exercise	2.4	Needs Improvement
There is good signage about rules, events in my neighborhood park	2.3	Needs Improvement
My neighborhood park has plenty of good organized activities	2.2	Needs Improvement
My neighborhood park has good security	1.9	Severe Problem
<b>Total Neighborhood Parks Promise Score</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>

Score: 1-4; Assessment: 1.0-1.9 = Severe Problem 2.0-.2.8 = Needs Improvement 2.9-3.5 = Good 3.6-4.0 = Excellent



**Table 3.** Parks Promise Utilization and Access Scorecard by demographics

	Citywide Park		Neighborhood Park	
	Score*	Grade	Score	Grade
Overall	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement
East Oakland / South Hills	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.3	Needs Improvement
North Oakland / Montclair	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.5	Needs Improvement
San Antonio / Fruitvale	3.0	Good	2.6	Needs Improvement
West Oakland / Downtown	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.5	Needs Improvement
All People of Color	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement
Black/African American	2.7	Needs Improvement	2.4	Needs Improvement
Indigenous/Native American	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.6	Needs Improvement
Latinx/Hispanic	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.5	Needs Improvement
Middle Eastern/North African	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.3	Needs Improvement
White/Caucasian	3.0	Good	2.6	Needs Improvement
Female	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement
Male	3.0	Good	2.7	Needs Improvement
<35 years	2.8	Needs Improvement	2.4	Needs Improvement
35-65 years	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement
>65 years	3.1	Good	2.7	Needs Improvement
<75k	2.6	Needs Improvement	2.3	Needs Improvement
75k-150k	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement
>150k	2.9	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement

Score: 1-4; Assessment: 1.0-1.9 = Severe Problem 2.0-.2.8 = Needs Improvement 2.9-3.5 = Good 3.6-4.0 = Excellent

# Safety in parks: longstanding and ongoing concerns

*“...I’ve seen IV drug needles there, folks have been shot there, dead bodies have been found there, folks have been held up there. I’d love for this park to be safer and better maintained. It should be a real beacon - a gathering place in the neighborhood.”*

*“Safety for women is an issue. Some parks, I won’t go alone to, even during the day. That shouldn’t be.”*

Real and perceived safety concerns can significantly impact park utilization. In one study, even a single gun-related violent crime per 10,000 people within one mile of a park in a 6-month period was associated with a 13.5%-15.8% reduction in park use and park-based physical activity, reaching up to 40% for seniors. Homicide rates also significantly relate to lower park use. (Han et al., 2018) Crime can disproportionately limit children’s use of parks, especially among girls and women. (Marquet et al., 2019) (Marquet et al., 2020) (Derose et. al., 2019)

Park safety is a long-standing concern in Oakland, even cited, for example the 1996 OSCAR element of the General Plan found that, “the problem of park safety is especially germane. . .” Since then, Oakland parks have lost significant funding, as well as all of the Park Rangers.

Not surprisingly, it is also a persistent concern: Nearly half (46%) of all participants reported that safety concerns presented a barrier to visiting or fully using and enjoying parks in Oakland, with no difference by area of residence or income in terms of the frequency of reporting this problem. The impact of safety concerns did vary for other participant groups:

- **Participants who bring children** to the park as a main reason for visiting parks were more likely to report safety as a barrier (52%) than others (42%). Perhaps related, those 35-65 more frequently cited safety concerns (51%) followed by those under 35 (47%) and those over 65 (33%).
- **Half of women and BILAM participants**, compared to 40% of men and White participants, experienced safety as a barrier to visiting or fully utilizing and enjoying Oakland parks.

## Security in neighborhood parks is of significant concern

“Having places to gather, recreate and interact are the essential elements of ‘collective efficacy,’ or the ability of local residents to build safe communities”

- Martin Neideffer, captain of the Sheriff’s Office Youth and Family Services Bureau (Hegarty, 2020)

Safety in neighborhood parks is a widespread concern, receiving a score of 1.9 (Severe Problem).

**Over half (53%, 580) asserted their neighborhood park’s security was inadequate, across race, income, age, area**

Over a quarter strongly disagreed neighborhood parks had good security, and only 20% agreed. (Figure 12) Men scored security slightly higher (2.1, Needs Improvement) than women (1.9, Severe Problem).

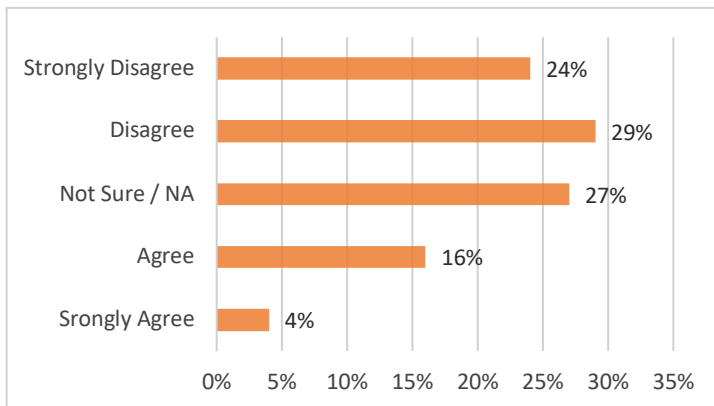


Figure 12. My neighborhood park has good security



## Park accessibility: It depends

To benefit from their parks, people need to be able to access their parks. What this access means in conventional terms relates to physical dimensions, such as proximity and walkability. Additionally, although this report does not cover universal design, our parks also need to be welcoming for those with different levels of physical and motor abilities.

### Access as proximity to park: most but not all are near

Most (64%) of 1,127 participants reported living within one mile of the park they visit most frequently, with nearly half of all participants (43%) traveling less than a half mile (roughly a 10-minute walk). For this reason, Oakland received an 83 out of 100 for accessibility from The Trust for Public Land's ParkScore. Nevertheless, the need for improved park access exists, with many participants reporting that park needs are not fully met nearby.

*"We need a playground in our neighborhood!"*

*"Put more areas in!! We need more green space here."*

Indeed, nearly a quarter (22%) of participants lived far - over 2 miles - from their most frequently visited park, and another 11% reported living 1-2 miles from the park they visited most frequently. There were not significant differences in distance travelled by gender, race, income, or age. However, based on information from 1,069 participants, there were differences by residential area:

- **Only one third (31%) of East Oakland/South Hills participants** lived within a half mile of the park they visit most frequently, compared with North and West Oakland (41% and 46%) and San Antonio/Fruitvale (52%).
- **Moreover, another third of East Oakland / South Hills participants** more often had to leave their neighborhood altogether, travelling over two miles from their home to reach the park they visited most frequently (32%, compared to North Oakland, 21%; West Oakland, 22%; and San Antonio/Fruitvale, 14%).

*"We love the parks but drive to go to certain ones instead of walking to the one that is a block from us! Because it is not kid friendly - even if there is a play set. It is not kept up, not enough trash cans, too many loitering of people smoking at times, old play equipment."*

Aside from those living in the East Oakland/South Hills area, people generally lived within walking distance of the park they most frequently visited, suggesting that closer proximity is associated with improved access to parks, which in turn suggests that those who have activated parks near their homes are best positioned to benefit from them (barring gentrification). However, park access by proximity is inequitably distributed, meaning benefits are also inequitably distributed, with those in East Oakland/South Hills travelling the farthest to reach the park they frequent most.

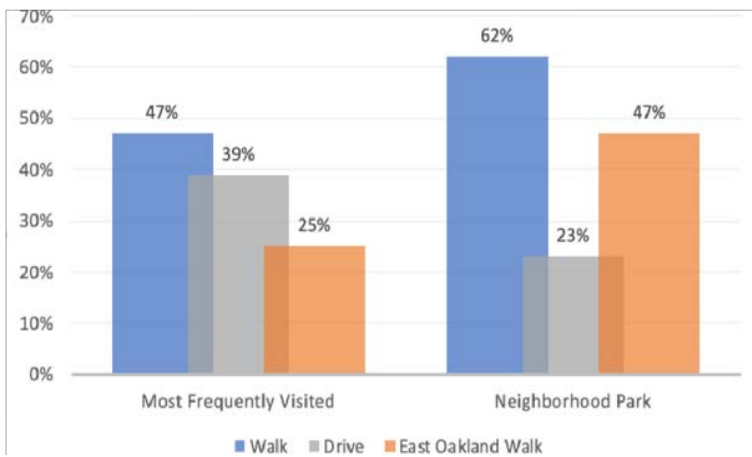
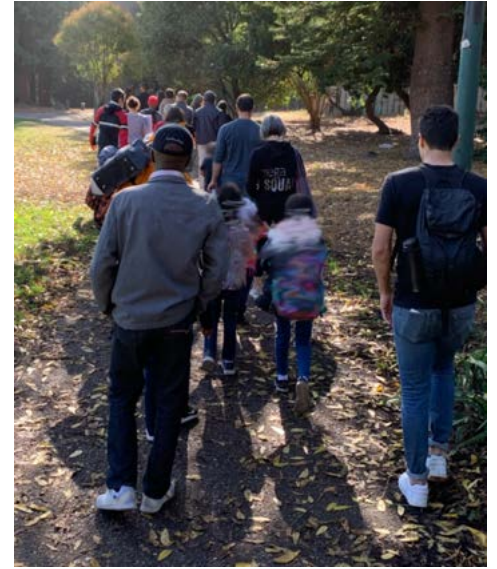
***Park access by proximity is inequitably distributed, meaning benefits are also inequitably distributed, with those in East Oakland/South Hills travelling the farthest to reach the park they frequent most***

## Access as walking to parks: Not for East Oakland

Studies show that proximity is not the only influence on park accessibility; some evidence suggests that walkability (and park features) are more influential, (University of Arizona, 2019) (Van Cauwenberg et al., 2017) especially for neighborhood park usage in low income settings. (Vaughan et al., 2018) Because residents of low- income neighborhoods more often do not have a car, walkable park access is an equity indicator.

Nearly half (47%) of 1,140 participants reported walking as the most common mode of travel to their most frequented park, (47%), with driving reported by 39%. Men were more likely than women to walk (51%, 46%), bike (7%, 2%), skateboard, and were less likely to drive (32%, 43%) to the park they visited most frequently. Participants in the lowest income group were less likely to drive compared to those in the highest, (33% vs. 43%) and more likely to take the bus (9% vs .4%).

Participants from East Oakland/South Hills reported less walking to their most frequented park (25%), and more driving (58%) than participants from North and West Oakland and San Antonio/Fruitvale, (48%, 51%, 61% for walking and 41%, 28%, 31% for driving, respectively). This finding is consistent with East Oakland/South Hills participants reporting greater distance to travel. (Figure 13)



**Figure 13** Comparison of walking and driving to most frequented park and neighborhood park, all participants and East Oakland

Half of participants (542, 50%) reported that the park they attend most frequently is also their neighborhood park, though this varied significantly by area:

- **Of participants from East Oakland / South Hills**, only 35% reported their frequented park was their neighborhood park, compared to 61% of participants living in San Antonio / Fruitvale, and 50% in North Oakland / Montclair and West Oakland / Downtown.

Walking was the most common way to reach neighborhood parks (62% of 1,111), with highest levels for participants from the Fruitvale/San Antonio neighborhood (71%), those in the highest income group (69%) and White participants (67%).

- **Participants from East Oakland/South Hills** were less likely to report walking (47%) to their neighborhood park.
- **Participants from the lowest income group** compared to the middle and high groups were also somewhat less likely to walk (43%, 50%).

Vehicle use was the next most frequent mode of transportation to neighborhood parks (23%), highest among participants from East Oakland/South Hills (37%) and those over 65 (33%), with no significant difference by gender, race, or income.

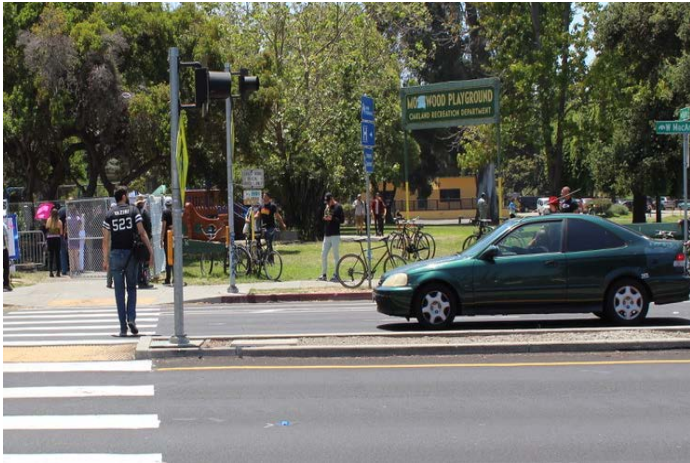
Combining findings from walking and distance to parks, along with park utilization patterns, raises other implications. Though 53% of BILAM participants visited parks for the natural settings, only 38% went for the walking, hiking, or jogging trails, which tend to be in less accessible parks in the hills. Combined with previously noted statistics that BILAM Oaklanders own cars less frequently than White Oaklanders suggests that this group may have less exposure to immersive experience in nature and receive less of its profound benefits. In comparison, 63% of White participants visited parks for the trails, able to go to their most frequently visited park on foot as often as by car (51%, 50%).

## Access as route safety to parks: unsafe routes keeping people away

*"It's hard to get to the park because it takes a long time to walk and my kids can't ride their bike/scooter because the roads and sidewalks are so poorly maintained."*

The Trust for Public Land found in their 2020 Oakland ParkScore that 89% of Oaklanders live within a 10-minute walk of a park; this news is good. However, even when people live near enough to walk to parks, their routes can be dangerous, and this survey found unsafe routes to be a barrier to full park access. Overall, 185 (14%) of participants reported that unsafe routes to parks in Oakland had inhibited their full access to parks. However, access to safe routes varied among participants:

- **Participants who bring children to parks** were twice as likely to cite unsafe routes as a barrier: 18% of 470 compared to 11% of 860 others.



- **Participants under 65** were more likely to cite unsafe routes as a barrier (17% of 974) than those over 65, (4% of 224) perhaps because the former group contains parents who may have concerns for child safety on the streets, while seniors in this survey were more likely to use cars.
- **BILAM participants** were twice as likely than White participants to report unsafe routes as a barrier to park use: 19% of 549 compared to 9% of 546. Experiencing barriers to park use due to unsafe routes were most frequently reported by Latinx/Hispanic (23%), Asian/Pacific Island (22%), and Middle Eastern/North African (40%) participants, followed by Black/African American (14%) and Indigenous/Native American (13%) participants.

## Unsafe routes to neighborhood parks: structural inequity in action

The hazard of walking to neighborhood parks is reflected in the scorecard, with an average score for safe routes to neighborhood parks being 2.6 (Needs Improvement). A large portion of all participants (31%) could not easily or safely walk or wheelchair to their neighborhood park, regardless of age or income.

- **Of East Oakland/South Hills participants**, nearly half (46%) reported unsafe routes to neighborhood parks compared to 25%-29% for participants of other neighborhoods and scored this metric lower (2.4).
- **BILAM participants** more frequently reported that they did not have a safe route to their neighborhood park compared to White participants (36%, 25%), though both groups gave it a Needs Improvement rating.

Park access, as measured by walking to the park, is impaired by neighborhoods that do not have nearby parks, such as in East Oakland/South Hills, and by dangerous routes. Car use also seems associated with area of residence and income level, suggesting that using cars to reach parks relates more to necessity than preference, for example due to unsafe routes.

While White participants were equally likely to give a poor rating to their route safety, they were less likely to cite unsafe routes as a barrier to park use, suggesting that they may have means, such as use of a private vehicle, to overcome the barrier more than other participants. To the extent that unsafe routes increase car use, safe routes and nearby parks also have implications for greenhouse gas emissions and climate change mitigation.

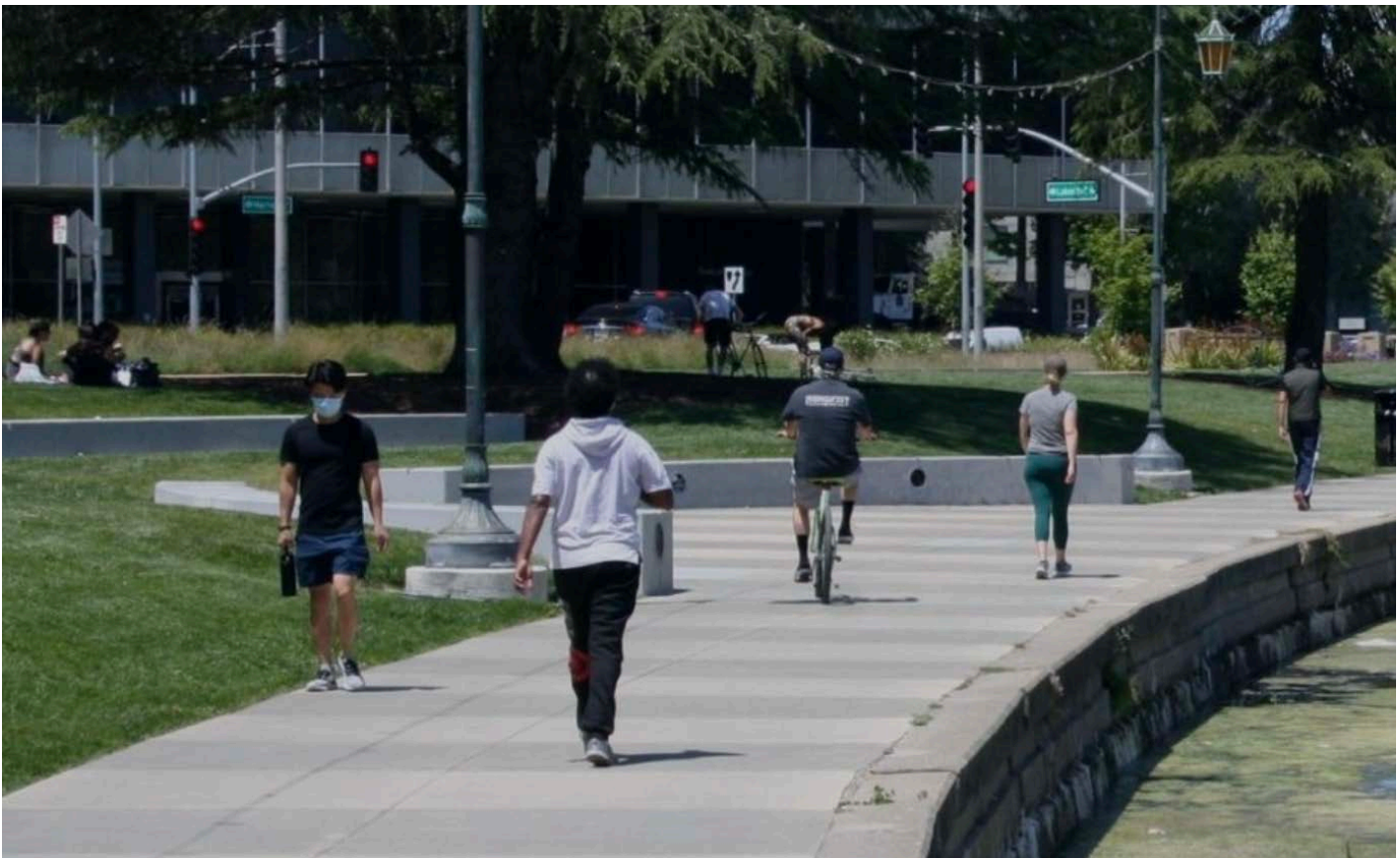


*Courtesy of: saferoutespartnership.org*



**Table 4:** Route safety to neighborhood parks

I can easily & safely walk or wheelchair to my neighborhood park	% n= 1,093	Differences by race/ethnicity group and neighborhood
Strongly Agree	22%	Of those strongly agreeing, 28% were White compared to 18% BILAM participants. Only 14% of those from East Oakland strongly agreed, compared to 28% for other areas. No differences by income or age
Agree	35%	
Don't Know	12%	
Disagree	19%	31% disagree or strongly disagree, with no differences by age or income. BILAM participants disagree more frequently compared to White participants (36%, 25%), and 46% of participants from East Oakland compared to other areas (25-29%)
Strongly Disagree	12%	



## Other forms of accessibility

Accessibility factors beyond proximity and walkability should also be considered to ensure that parks are part of the solution for communities. (Szaboova et al., 2020)

### Access through park information: a missed opportunity

*"More information online about access to Oakland parks, hours. . ."*

*"More program advertisements. I am not aware of events hosted at centers"*



Knowing about activities and opportunities in parks is a measure of their accessibility. The most common ways participants received information about events and activities in parks were word-of-mouth (459, 34%) or social media (408, 31%), followed by online sources (290, 21%). However, 267 (20%) participants reported that they did not receive any information about park events. This was especially the case for people under 35, with 30% not receiving any information about activities in parks.

Activity in parks can increase significantly when there is good display of information about park usage rules, or orientation, such as provided by signs, maps, banners, directional and motivational signs. Park signage about activities can increase park use by 62% and physical activity in park by 63% more hours. (Cohen, Han, Nagel, et al., 2016) Another study found park investments in marketing, outreach and especially increased signage could increase park users by 37% and physical activity 39%. (Cohen et al., 2013)

With regards to providing adequate signage and other forms of visual communication in the parks, Oakland's neighborhood parks scored low, receiving an average score of 2.3 (Needs Improvement). This assessment was consistent for all participant groupings, but participants younger than 35 were more likely to assert or strongly assert that their neighborhood park did not provide good signage compared to those over 65 (51% vs. 33%).

### Access through inclusion

Parks are more accessible when they are inclusive, and parks are a powerful way that people generate a sense of belonging. For example, in the City of Oakland's 2018 Cultural Development Plan, Lake Merritt/Lakeside Park was at the top of the list of places where Oaklanders most felt a sense of belonging. (City of Oakland, 2018) This survey reinforces the finding that parks offer a place where people feel they belong.

One hundred eighty participants (13%) reported not feeling comfortable or welcome in Oakland parks as a barrier to visiting, fully enjoying, or fully using the parks, although participants in the highest income group were 4 times more likely to report not feeling welcome as a barrier to park use (17% vs. 4%).

Even so, participants, with near consensus, only moderately agreed that they can meet neighbors and build community in Oakland parks, providing this measure with a score of 2.9. Those in the lowest income group scored this measure of connection and belonging lower, with a 2.5 compared to both higher income groups (2.8).

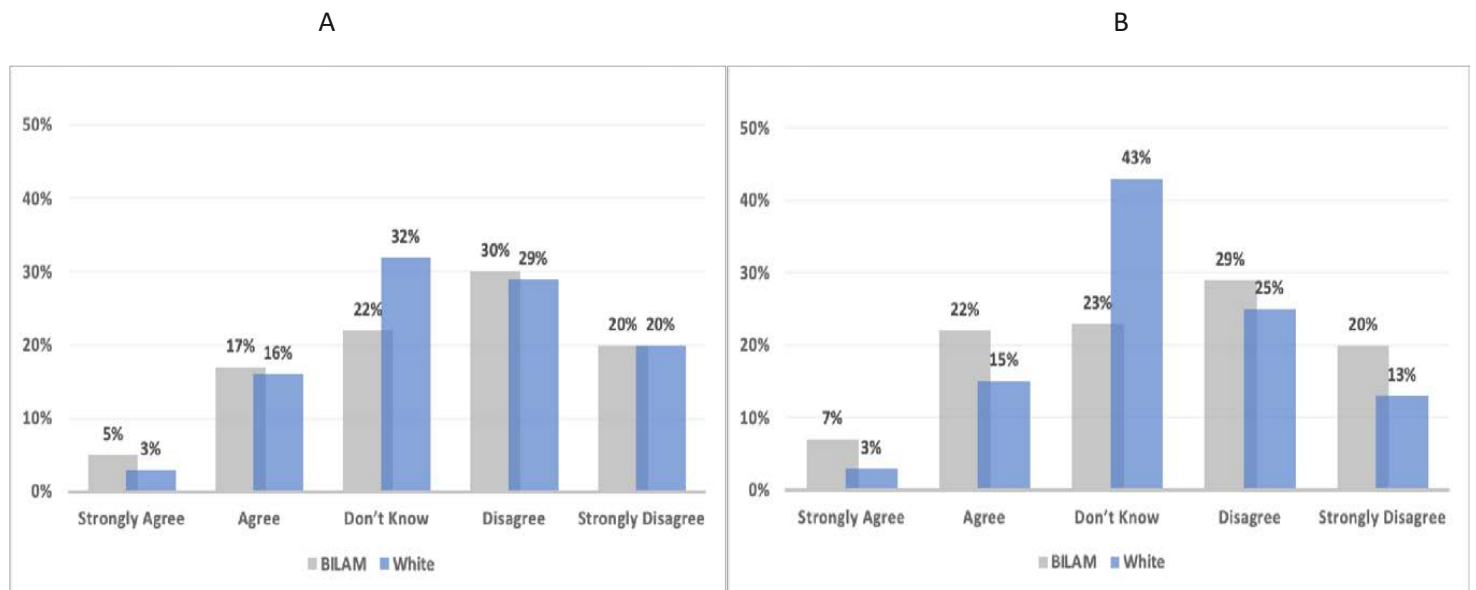
Though many Oaklanders feel that public parks are for their use, this comfort is not experienced equally. Ensuring a shared respect and understanding of the rich and varied ways that people play in our parks, as well as the varied heritages that have contributed to these public spaces over time are important to all having a sense of belonging and inclusion.

## Access through knowing your park - the limits of privilege

There was a tendency for those participants with structural privilege such as being wealthier, White, or living in higher-income neighborhoods to have less familiarity with their neighborhood park:

- Higher Income
  - 29% did not know whether their neighborhood park had good security
  - 22% were uncertain as to whether recreation center hours should increase to seven days per week
- White
  - Twice as frequently reported not knowing whether their neighborhood park had good programming or organized activities (43% vs. 23%) or good signage (25% vs. 16%)
  - Less familiar with the security status of their neighborhood park (32% vs. 22%)
- North Oakland / Montclair
  - 43% unsure whether their neighborhood park had good programming or organized activities

Structural privilege may decrease familiarity with one's parks, and in turn may result in lower awareness of how all residents have an interconnected reliance upon parks for a vibrant and resilient city. The implications are twofold: residents who are unfamiliar with parks may be less likely to receive park benefits and residents who are unfamiliar with their city represent a missed opportunity for the city to have higher levels of civic engagement and investment.



**Figure 14:** Uncertainty about neighborhood park conditions: Does my neighborhood park have A) good security? B) access to plenty of good organized activities?

*BILAM = Black/African American, Indigenous/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African*

# Park utilization: abundant, but uneven

*“Hold activities so that the community involves us and it would be a grand strategy to share, feel like a community of Latinos and African Americans, as an example, and make a beautiful bridge of values, unity, and brother/ sisterhood”*

Depending on the reasons for visiting, parks can provide visitors with benefits such as social cohesion, fitness, mental health, and wellness. However, variability in reasons for visiting may not be only an expression of preference but also of symptom of access and inclusion, and in this manner park utilization is linked to equity.

Park usage among participants was high. With over 130 city parks and 20 recreation centers to choose from, fully 60% of 1,232 survey participants reported visiting a park at least once per week, with 30% visiting a park every day. More than one third of participants reported visiting at least once a month. Frequency of park usage did not differ by race, gender, age, and area, although participants in the lowest income group were nearly twice as likely to use parks every day than participants in higher-income groups (31% vs. 17%).

Oaklanders are drawn to their parks for many reasons, with the most uniform reason being to socialize. For 1,334 participants, the top reasons for visiting Oakland parks and recreation centers were:



- Spend time with family and friends
- Connect with nature, trees, green space
- Improve personal health or fitness
- Enjoy personal relaxation, leisure, mental health
- Use trails, walking, or jogging paths
- Bring children play, go to children’s sporting activities

*“I use the parks a lot. I love them!”*

With the exception of social reasons, there was a fair amount of heterogeneity among participants as to their reasons for visiting parks. Given the linkage between reasons for visiting parks and the benefits that parks can confer, a concern arises as to whether differences in reasons relate to inequitable access rather than varied preferences. The majority of participants provided some level of agreement that they had access in Oakland parks to the following resources:

- Good places to relax, socialize and enjoy nature: 77%
- Clean and well-maintained paths for walking or jogging: 77%
- Good places to meet neighbors and build community: 64%
- Good spaces or equipment for exercise: 63%

However, the strength of agreement was moderate, not scoring above a 2.9, “Good” and participants gave these amenities a “Needs Improvement” rating at the neighborhood level. Further, access varied by race/ethnicity, income, and age: Citywide, Latinx/Hispanic, White, under 65, and lowest income participants gave an overall rating of “Needs Improvement,” compared to a “Good” given by other race/ethnic groups and those over 65 or in the mid- and high-income group.



## Visiting parks for social benefits

*“I would love it if Oakland Parks started doing family nights at parks with playgrounds. A few food trucks, easy kid entertainment, areas to picnic, but not a stressful festival atmosphere--just a place to catch up with friends and facilitate community interactions.”*

Nearly half (593, 44%) reported some form of social reason for visiting the parks (picnics, barbecues, parties, family, friends, events or festivals). Of note, people of all races, gender, and income status were equally likely to visit parks to socialize. Socializing is a great uniter and a common desire and need for Oaklanders, but how easily that experience plays out is variable:

- **Residents of West Oakland / Downtown** were more likely to report visiting parks for socializing (53%) compared to East Oakland/South Hills (38%), North Oakland/Montclair (43%), and San Antonio/Fruitvale (36%).
- **Younger participants, under 35 years**, were most likely to visit parks for socializing (50%) closely followed by those 35-65 (48%) and lastly those over 65 (31%).

Even with high socializing activity, the quality of park experience was lower. Overall, participants gave a 2.9 out of 4 to the statement that Oakland parks provided easy access to good places to relax, socialize, and enjoy nature.

- **Participants from East and West Oakland** report less access to good places to relax, socialize, and enjoy nature in Oakland parks (53% of 253 and 56% of 132, respectively) compared to North Oakland and San Antonio/Fruitvale (68% of 217; 75% of 436, respectively).



## Places to relax and socialize in neighborhood parks

Two thirds of participants moderately agreed their neighborhood park provided good space to socialize, relax, and enjoy nature (720, 66%), while nearly a third disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, neighborhood parks received a score of 2.7 (“Needs Improvement”) for this measure.

- **Participants in the lowest income group** less frequently agreed that their neighborhood park provided good places to relax and socialize compared to the highest income group (56% vs 71%) and scored it with a 2.4 (“Needs Improvement”) compared to a 2.9 (“Good”) from the highest income group.
- **Participants younger than 35** were half as likely to agree or strongly agree that their neighborhood park provided good space for relaxing and socializing compared to those over 65 (17% vs 32%), scoring it with a 2.7 (“Needs Improvement”) compared to a 3.1 (“Good”).

## Visiting parks for health, fitness, and sports benefits

*“More basketball courts, less trash, less predators”*

Parks are a known venue for physical activity, including health-promoting moderate to vigorous activity. (Joseph & Maddock, 2016) Research consistently shows, for all ages, that park features and design influence the degree to which parks can increase physical activity, (Sami et al., 2020) (Zhai et al., 2020) (Zhang et al., 2019) making the degree to which Oakland parks are delivering features in this regard an important health consideration.

Just over 40% of participants reported visiting parks for personal health and fitness (550, 41%), with no difference by gender, income, age, or area of residence. Roughly half of White, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Indigenous/ Native American participants reported this reason (56%, 49%, 42%) as did 70% of Middle Eastern/North African participants. However, among Black/African American and Latinx/Hispanic participants, only 34% and 27% did so, respectively.

Attending parks specifically to participate in or watch organized sports was more frequent among BILAM participants (20% vs. 9%), with Black/African American, Indigenous / Native American, and Latinx/Hispanic participants reporting this reason most frequently (20-25%). Those with lowest incomes more often visited parks for specific organized sports-related reasons (25% compared to 11% and 12% of the middle- and higher-income groups, respectively) as was also the case for younger participants under 35 years (19%) compared to those 35-65 (14%) and over 65 (8%).

### Exercise space citywide

- **good walking and jogging paths**, which scored a 3.0 (“Good”) overall, received a lower score (“Needs Improvement”) by participants who were Black/African American (2.7), Latinx/Hispanic (2.8), or in the lowest income group (2.7).
- **good places to exercise**, which received a score of 2.8 overall (“Needs Improvement”), received a lower score of 2.5 from Black/African American participants and those under 35. BILAM participants less frequently agreed that they had easy access to good exercise space or equipment in Oakland parks compared to White participants (58%, 68%).

### Exercise space in neighborhood parks

Even neighborhood parks and pocket parks can increase physical activity. (Cohen et al., 2014) (Cohen et al., 2019) Focusing on neighborhood parks that can be safely accessed may be particularly important for resolving gender inequities whereby low-income women engage in less physical activity in parks than their male counterparts. (Derose et al., 2018)

However, less than half of participants (514, 47%) agreed their neighborhood park provided good exercise space or equipment, and 39% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This metric received an overall score of 2.4 (“Needs Improvement”) uniformly across all race groups.

Men, participants over 65, those in the mid and high-income groups and participants from San Antonio / Fruitvale scored this feature slightly higher than their counterparts.



## Visiting parks for relaxation, wellness, nature benefits

Exposure to nature has been associated with mental and psychological wellbeing, as well as social cohesion. (Jerrett & van den Bosch, 2018) Parks that provide natural green settings and social interaction are known to improve wellness and mental health for adults and children, in the present and in years to come. (Owen et al., 2010) Access to greenspaces can also reduce the extent of socioeconomic inequity in mental health. (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Ellaway et al., 2005)



The natural resources offered in parks are also significant buffers from climate impacts, even reducing risk of mortality, by providing cleaner air, cooling and prevention of heat island effects, and flood prevention. (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Ellaway et al., 2005)

Reflecting on their experience of Oakland parks in general, participants scored moderate access to good places to relax, socialize and enjoy nature (2.9). Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander and White participants scored access slightly higher, with a “Good” compared with Black/African American, Indigenous/ Native American, and Middle Eastern/North African participants who scored a “Needs Improvement”. Agreement also tracked to age and income, with participants under 35 scoring lower at a 2.9 compared to those over 65, who scored at 3.2.

The lowest income group also scored access lower at 2.5 compared to the mid and high- income groups (3.0).

Neighborhood parks had a similar pattern, though overall received a lower score of “Needs Improvement.” There was not much difference by race, but those in the lowest income, youngest, and East Oakland/South Hills groups scored it lowest.

While there were no differences by gender and age, reasons for visiting parks related to wellness and nature did vary by characteristics associated with structural inequity, suggesting that differences in visiting parks for wellness and nature may be not merely due to differences in preferences but also to accessibility. For example, while 70% of White and middle to high income groups reported these reasons, only roughly half of BILAM, low-income, and East Oakland/South Hills participants did. (Figure 15)

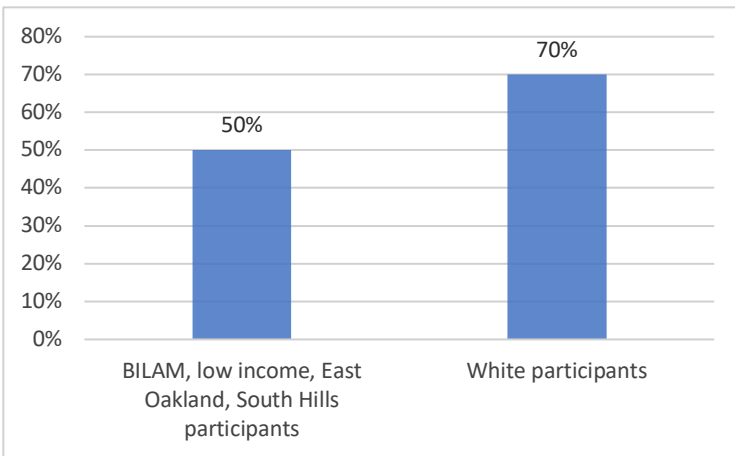


Figure 15 Visiting parks for wellness and nature

- **Visiting parks for relaxation, leisure and mental health** was less frequent among Black/African American and Latinx/Hispanic participants (37% and 32%) compared to roughly half of the other race/ethnic groups.
- **Visiting for hiking, walking and jogging paths and trails** was lowest among Black/African American and Latinx/Hispanic participants (29%, 28%) compared to 47% - 63% of other race/ethnic groups.
- **Visiting for trees, greenery and open space** was lower among Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Indigenous/Native American participants (32%, 41%, 42%) compared to roughly half of other race/ethnic groups.
- **By income group, visiting for relaxation, greenery, and trails** was lowest among the lowest income group (41%, 44%, 38%, respectively) compared to 50%-65% of the mid to high income group participants.



## Organized activities in neighborhood parks

*“More targeted fun extracurricular activities for both children AND families to participate in. More community service opportunities”*

Recreational programming in parks is key to park activation and ensuing benefits, for example by increasing visits, physical activity, and social connection. Additional park programs and supervised activities are known to increase park use by 50%, (City Parks Alliance, 2019) and girl-specific programs boost girl participation in physical activities. (City Parks Alliance, 2019) Programming can be particularly important for ensuring that smaller neighborhood parks that may have fewer features can still fully benefit their neighborhood.

Organized activities in neighborhood parks received low marks from all participant groups (“Needs Improvement”), with only men giving a slightly higher assessment, though still in the “Needs Improvement” range. While no group of participants was really satisfied, roughly a third of participants in the lowest income group as well as BILAM participants agreed, more than higher income or White participants, that their neighborhood park offered good organized activities (32% vs. 16% and 28% vs. 18%, respectively). In contrast, participants younger than 35 disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to those over 65 (51% vs. 33%).

## Parks for children’s benefits

*“I tend to visit various Oakland parks. I have children that love the park and being outdoors...”*

A third of participants (470, 35%) reported visiting parks for the benefits related to children: play, childcare, Head Start/preschool, camp, sports or other organized activities, with no difference by gender. This reason was more frequently cited by the lower income group (62%), 35-65 year-olds (44%), BILAM participants (45%), and East Oakland/South Hills participants (42%). (Figure 16)

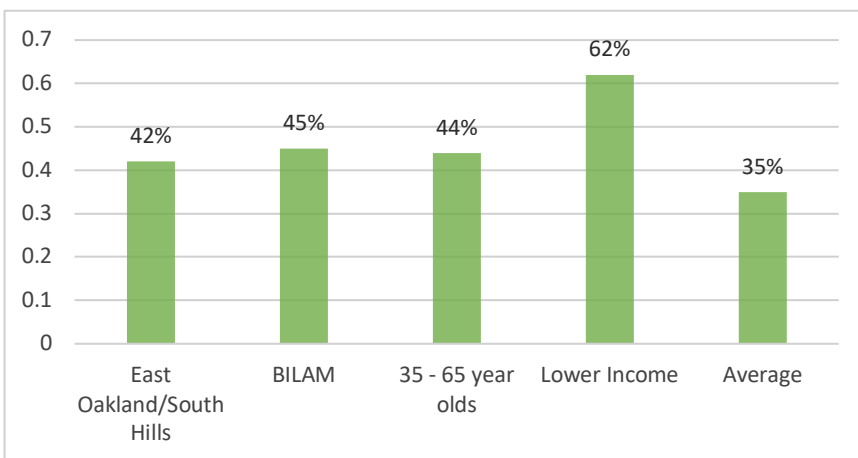


Figure 16 Visiting parks for children



Photo courtesy of: [localwiki.org](https://localwiki.org), CC SA-BY [Our Oakland](https://our.oakland.org)



## Unity on what Oakland parks need

*“Within the parks, more little moments... Benches, tables... Something that blends with that particular environment.”*

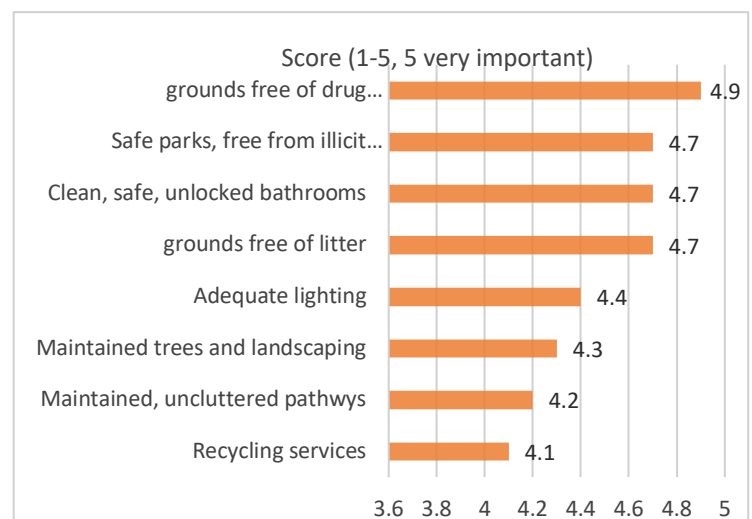
*“Adding art to a park makes it even more unique.”*

*“Becomes more of a destination spot! I hella love Oakland!”*

Participants widely agreed on priorities for regular park maintenance services. (Figure 17) They resoundingly ranked highest the need for clean parks free of litter and drug paraphernalia; clean, safe and accessible bathrooms; safe parks free of illicit activity; and adequate lighting as the top priorities. There were no significant differences by race, gender, income group, age, and neighborhood area when the assessment of “important” and “very important” were combined. Issues related to encampments were not covered in this section.

***No community should feel that its parks don't measure up to those in other communities.***

***-2002 parks survey, Oakland Parks Coalition***



**Figure 17.** Importance of Park Maintenance Services, ranked

Other services scored lower not because they were valued less by everyone, but because different groups valued them differently, especially related to the “very important” assessment. In particular, participants in the lowest income group consistently ranked services as very important, by 10%-22% more percentage points compared to the mid- and high-income groups. For example, those in the lowest income group ranked:

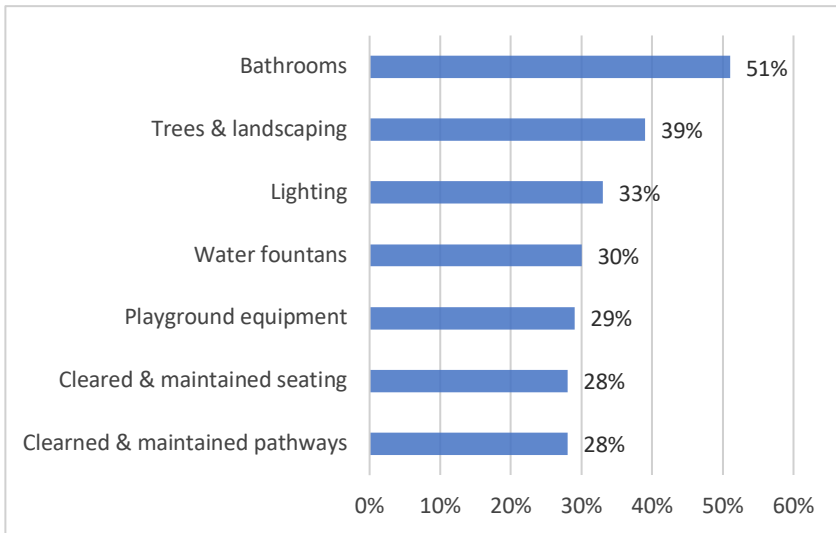
- ***bathrooms and parks safe and free from illicit activity*** as very important 91% and 92% of the time, respectively, while the other income groups ranked them as very important on average 75% of the time.
- ***pathways, graffiti, landscaping, recycling and compost services*** as very important on average 71% of the time compared to 39% for other groups.

BILAM participants ranked these services as very important 66% of the time compared to 51% among White participants.

The need for heightened care and maintenance is universal to all of Oakland's parks, but especially parks in Oakland's under-served and historically-redlined neighborhoods. For these neighborhoods, ensuring safe, clean, inviting public spaces - and their associated social justice benefits - is key to countering continuing inequities.

# Priority features for neighborhood parks

As noted, key features of parks can also contribute to park activation. For example, each element added to a playground can increase park use by 50%. (City Parks Alliance, 2019) The Trust for Public Land’s ParkScore rated Oakland’s park amenities with a 45 out of 100. For 1,334 participants, the most frequently selected physical feature to maintain, improve or add to their neighborhood parks was clean, open, functional bathrooms (51%). Additional features earning over a quarter of the participant’s votes are presented in Figure 18 and include tree care and landscaping, lighting, water fountains, play equipment, pathways, and seating. Ensuring these elements as minimum park amenity standards would be useful in activating neighborhood parks.



Other priority features include more tables (25%), places for dogs to play, shade, and signage (19% each); and facilities for adult, child, and gardening activities (16-18%).

**People want more in their parks!**

**Figure 18.** Priority features for parks

The highest priority items clearly focus on the fundamentals, which in part is testament to the need to elevate the basics in Oakland parks. Oakland should also take this opportunity to elevate its vision; even as other listed features received fewer votes, they still signal the hope for richer park experience.

**Table 5** Features most important to maintain, improve, or add to your neighborhood park

Neighborhood Park Features	% (of 1334)
Restrooms	51%
Landscaping / Trees	39%
Lighting, Water fountains, Play equipment, Walk and jog pathways, Seating	28-33%
Tables, Signage, Shade structures, Dog play, Child / youth activities, Adult activities	19-25%
Community gardens, Sports fields, Sports courts, Barbecues, Outfit, Pool	11-16%
Game tables, Novel recreation (slack line, climbing wall), Skate facilities	5-8%

## **What parks need**

Participants expressed uniformity as to the park services needed, and consolidated around key features to add or maintain. They also volunteered wide-ranging requests that clearly show how parks inspire hope and vision. Perhaps most striking, however, was the simplicity of many of the requests, asking simply for a basic level of municipal service:

*"Canchas para futbol, baños abiertos y limpias, menos basura, menos actividades ilegales y sospechosas / Soccer fields, open and clean bathrooms, less trash, fewer illegal and suspicious activities"*

*"Parks should have adequate trash bins and bathrooms that are open during normal park hours"*

*"Some parks don't have enough shade, some don't have anywhere to sit comfortably, and some are hard to get to without a car"*

They also expressed a need for signage and other forms of communication to help them engage:

*"Here's hoping the city website can be changed so it's more useful to the ordinary citizens"*

And wanted safe routes for active transportation:

*"There should be more bicycle/pedestrian paths connecting urban communities to park so people can access them without a car"*

Many participants pinned hope on the return of the Ranger program and in fact mark park maintenance and safety declines to the loss of their presence:

*"The City should reinstate the Park Rangers"*

*"If the police are reluctant to patrol the parks then please hire some Alameda County police or rangers. Ideally it would be nice to see some trained neighborhood volunteer groups, too"*

While this survey did not extensively explore programming at parks, many participants had ideas for programming and amenities. Their ideas underscore how essential programming is for park activation - and by extension environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion:

*"I think youth will be drawn to parks and rec centers if there is set programming. Pick-up basketball games with community members, craft demonstrations, community planting and gardening, or youth circles for peer counseling or art (music, dance, other art forms)"*

*"We need more self-help, meeting for abused women, volunteer dinner nights, movie nights, raffles, skating, video games, home economics class and boxing classes free"*

*"Play areas for tweens, teens, and adults"*

*"It would be good to arrange hiking groups because many women do not feel safe hiking by themselves"*

*"Need more focus on our community's senior citizens. Offering low impact fitness equipment & group games & sensory gardens. More places for our elderly to socialize and stay active"*

*"Organized fitness classes for parents/ kids play time would be a big hit in our park"*

*"I wish my neighborhood pool had better hours for kids/free swim"*

Even as Oakland's parks are city parks, many participants reminded that urban parks are still important to ecosystem conservation and human connection with nature.

*"Would be nice to have nature programs"*

*"An actual conservation plan for areas with locally rare species"*

*"Keep parks safe for wildlife too"*

*"I wish the wildlife area around the nature center bird islands at Lake Merritt were more protected"*

*"Beautiful natural or art features - something that brings the visitor peace"*

*"Parks should not be over-developed; don't turn them into social service emporiums please"*

One place of differing opinion seems to be about dogs. With equal fervor and frequency, two opinions were expressed:

*"More dog parks!"*

*"Too many uncontrolled dog owners who let their dogs into "no dogs" parks!"*

In sum, participants believe in the possibility of parks and are open to many ways to activate them:

*"Anything that could attract more people would be good"*

# CONCLUSIONS

This survey, “Parks and Equity: The Promise of Oakland’s Parks,” is the first time in 25 years that Oaklanders were asked to speak to their experiences and perspectives of Oakland’s parks, shedding light on the distribution of community benefits and ramifications for equity across the city. The impetus for this survey arises from the central tenant that parks are not neutral spaces but instead function at the fulcrum of environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. When parks are activated, meaning well-maintained, safe, equitably accessible, fully utilized and beloved, they operate as neighborhood hubs of urban resilience, promising social and environmental benefits to their communities. These benefits include increased health and wellness, community safety and connection, youth engagement, cultural and economic vitality, environmental conservation and climate resilience. However, when parks are in disrepair, unsafe, empty or unintegrated into community life, they not only do not fully confer these benefits but also widen disparities and reinforce structural inequities.

The essential question becomes: Is Oakland delivering the promise of its parks?

Our answer to this question is organized by the elements of park activation, i.e., the gatekeepers to community benefits: maintenance, safety, access, utilization, and community love. The survey found that where Oakland parks shine the most is with community love: Oaklanders love and are passionate about their parks!

Significantly, participants connected their feelings and hopes for parks to their sentiments, hopes for, and belief in Oakland.

Which is why the survey’s most striking finding is that participants, across race, gender, neighborhood, income, and age, translate this love into a unified vision of parks that can extend to Oakland itself: A city that is healthy, safe and connected, culturally and economically vibrant, engaging for youth, resilient and environmentally sustainable.

## ***Oakland needs to stand for its parks because people experience how a city cares for its parks as a reflection of how it cares for its people.***

Participants also recognized the potential role that parks and recreation facilities can provide for climate change and disaster resilience, such as providing cool and clean air during heat and smoke events, flooding abatement, and coordination of relief services during disasters.

Perhaps as a result, participants resoundingly supported more investment in parks, fields, recreation facilities, and pools. They expressed a desire for more cultural and art events in parks and longer open hours for recreation centers. They say they are willing to politically support public servants who stand for these investments.

Beyond the love, though, survey findings indicate that there is a need for improvement in park maintenance, resources, accessibility, and recreational programming and that disparity in the distribution of these needs are likely exacerbating inequity in Oakland.

In the survey's Parks Promise scorecard, which assesses access, safety, and features, parks citywide received a “Good” and neighborhood parks received a “Needs Improvement” rating. Alarming, neighborhood parks, those most proximate to the community, received a “Severe Problem” for security.

In this regard, the current survey reinforces findings from OPRF’s 2018 Parks Survey, “Continuing Crisis”, in which OPRF found that Oakland was failing to maintain adequate park conditions.

For example, it confirms that a public sanitation crisis, in the form of denigrated - and denigrating - free-standing bathrooms, trash, drug-related litter, safety concerns and encampments persists as a huge problem in Oakland parks. This crisis is critical not only because these conditions are universally decried but also because the consequence is that people



and communities receive fewer benefits from their parks. Because this loss at times fell along the lines of neighborhood, race, income, age, or gender, *the crisis is playing a role in perpetuating structural inequities.*

The public sanitation crisis also was found to present a significant barrier to parents taking children to parks. Given the life-long positive impacts of transformative childhood experiences that arise from playing, socializing, and exploring through parks and recreation, these barriers have far-reaching implications as the sanitation crisis effectively limits parks from providing developmentally essential benefits to children and youth. This finding also points to generational justice implications, as the next generation of Oaklanders will be more impacted by what lies ahead with widening social and economic disparities and increasing climate impacts if these issues are not remedied.

Further, the survey found that residents in East Oakland/South Hills experience disproportionate barriers to park benefits because their neighborhoods are more likely to lack parks, have parks in greater disrepair, or require unsafe routes to visit them. As a result, these residents must choose to forgo park benefits or else choose between assuming greater risk walking to parks, walking less, or driving more to reach a safe, clean, and well-serviced park outside their neighborhood.

Findings related to structural privilege warrant some consideration in that privilege in the form of wealth, whiteness, and seniority by age, seemed to correlate with less familiarity with parks, less sense of belonging in Oakland parks, and by extension, less experience of the universal, interconnected reliance on parks for a vibrant, resilient city. These divides have farther-reaching ramifications as they lower the level of civic awareness that could otherwise contribute to raised voices, engaged political capital, and dedicated investment in parks.

Falling short on the promise of parks is not only a missed opportunity to serve the people of Oakland and make this city more vibrant. It means that rather than resolving inequities, parks - or their absence - play a role in perpetuating them.

***OPRF sees that one of its most important roles is to raise expectations and reignite civic imagination.***

Two truths stand: All of Oakland’s parks need care, investment, and stewardship. This care is urgently and critically needed for parks in Oakland’s under-served neighborhoods, where our findings emphasize that structurally disadvantaged residents can especially benefit from parks.

Participants resoundingly and uniformly prioritized the need for: clean parks un-impacted by litter, drug paraphernalia and encampments; clean, safe and accessible bathrooms; safe parks free of illicit activity; and adequate lighting. The features Oaklanders want most in their parks are clean bathrooms, well-maintained trees and landscaping, lighting, water fountains, play equipment, pathways, and seating. Ensuring these elements as minimum park amenity standards would be useful in activating neighborhood parks. Table 6 summarizes this survey’s findings



**Table 6** Summary of findings, Parks & Equity: The Promise of Oakland's Parks

### Beloved Parks: Park Love, Park Pride is STRONG



*Oaklanders love their parks and share a vision for what parks can be and do for Oakland.*

- 94% agree parks that are well-maintained, safe, and actively used can increase health and wellness, make Oakland stronger, more connected and more just, improve economic and cultural vitality, and positively engage youth
- 88% say parks and their recreation centers care for the environment, improve climate resilience
- 94% support investment in parks, centers, fields, pools
- Nearly 80% support more recreation center hours, more arts, culture, and events in parks

### Maintenance: A Public Sanitation Crisis



*Oaklanders are concerned about the condition of their parks*

Bathroom conditions, drug paraphernalia, litter, and encampments are top barriers

Poor maintenance especially keeps children from parks and transformative experiences

- 55% cited maintenance barriers to park use with no difference by race or gender
- People bringing children to parks were at least 26% more likely to cite bathroom and maintenance barriers
- Almost half (42%) of participants cited encampments as a barrier

### Safety: A widespread concern and neighborhood-level crisis



*Oaklanders are worried about safety in the parks, especially neighborhood parks*

- 53% said neighborhood park security was inadequate, (scored 1.9, or “Severe Problem” across race, income, age, residence)
- 46% reported safety concerns were a barrier to citywide park use, across residence and income
- 50% of women, BILAM participants, people bringing children cited safety barriers vs. ~40% of counterparts

### Park Access: Works for many but is not equitable, many routes unsafe, need belonging



*Almost half travel less than 1/2 mile (43%) and walk (47%) to most frequented park, but unsafe routes are a barrier to visiting or enjoying parks (14%)*

- A third of participants cannot safely walk to a neighborhood park, across age, income (score 2.6 of 4)
- Fewer East Oakland/South Hills participants travel < 1/2 mile from and walk to their most frequented park (31% and 25%, respectively). Only 35% from East Oakland / South Hills visit their neighborhood the most (vs 50%), and more often face unsafe routes to them (46% vs 25-19%)
- Twice as many BILAM compared to White participants had unsafe routes to city parks (19%, 9%), and to neighborhood parks (36%, 25%)
- Participants moderately agree they can meet neighbors, build community in Oakland parks (2.9 of 4)
- 20% receive no information about parks; 30% of those < 35 yo receive no information
- Neighborhood park signage scored low (2.3); 55% of those <35 said signage inadequate (vs 33% >35)

**Table 6, cont.** Summary of findings, Parks & Equity: The Promise of Oakland's Parks

**Park Utilization: People use their parks!**

*Oaklanders especially socialize in parks, but conditions and access to amenities are sub-par*

- 60% visit a park at least once/week; 30% visit daily. Socializing in parks unites Oaklanders: 44% across race, gender, income visit parks to socialize, but scored Oakland parks at 2.9 of 4 for easy access to good places to relax, enjoy nature, and socialize
- East Oakland/South Hills & Fruitvale/San Antonio participants visit for socializing less (~37% vs ~50%)
- Neighborhood parks scored worse (“Needs Improvement”) with low income and <35 scoring it lower

Exercise in parks was common, with 40% of participants visiting for this reason, but:

- Black/African American & Latinx/Hispanic participants visit less for health (34% & 27% vs. 42% - 56%)
- Those with lowest income were twice as likely to visit for organized sports
- Access to good walking and jogging paths was average (3.0), with a lower score of “Needs Improvement” from Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, those <35, and in lowest income group
- Access to good places to exercise in city parks “Needs Improvement” (2.8) with a lower assessment from Black/African Americans and <35 participants.
- Nearly 40% strongly disagree their neighborhood park provides a good place to exercise

Wellness and Nature access varied by race and income

- Black/ African American and Latinx/Hispanic participants visited less for relaxation, leisure and mental health reasons (37%, 32% vs. ~50%), and less for hiking, walking, jogging paths and trails reasons (29%, 28% vs. 47% - 63% for other race/ethnic groups).
- The lowest income group visited less for relaxation, greenery, and trails vs. higher income group

Organized activities in neighborhood parks “Needs Improvement” according to all participant groups



*BILAM = Black/African American, Indigenous/American Indian, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African*



# RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a way forward. Table 7 details recommendations that are supported by over a decade of recommendations made by OPRF and its predecessor, Oakland Parks Coalition, and even by the observations and guidance of the 1996 Open Space, Conservation and Recreation Element (OSCAR - See Appendix III). Of note, since that OSCAR update, Oakland's population has grown and the budget has been slashed; 2003 - 2013 OPRYD spending power dropped by ~\$15million.

That recommendations from the 1990's still stand even as OPRYD had a healthier budget and less people to serve than it does now speaks to how entrenched the problems have been allowed to become. To increase the effectiveness of this report's recommendations for a new direction, we ask first for a commitment to:

***Listen to Oaklanders*** because they know Oakland and its parks, they care and dream for Oakland and its parks, and they will stand and act for Oakland and its parks.

***Prioritize park activation*** with equitable maintenance, safety, programming, access, and community buy-in and love.

***Recognize that parks are at the fulcrum of justice*** because parks are part of the solution for an equitable, vibrant, and sustainable Oakland, but without care and investment they perpetuate structural racism and social disparities.

***Utilize an environmental justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (eJEDI) framework*** to prioritize resources and safety for our most underserved parks, work with communities to resolve injustices of the past while upholding standards for all parks, and remove structural barriers to full cultural and racial inclusion.





**Table 7. Recommendations**

Park Love, Park Pride: Build on the love for a solutions-oriented future



- Prepare for the Future: Prioritize parks and recreation and incorporate SB 1000\* in the General Plan update and OSCAR Element update; conduct an equity-based Parks Master Plan; fully act on parks' role in the 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan
- Support and fund OPRYD's Strategic Action Plan
- Facilitate increased investment in parks, for example, raise the gift-in-place level eligible for administrative approval
- Support youth engagement in city planning, park programming, stewardship, and leadership

Maintenance: Solve the sanitation crisis



- Convene an interdisciplinary task force inclusive of community members, businesses, non-profits, schools, and multiple city departments to craft an equity-based solution to the public sanitation issue within our parks - we can and must solve this problem!
- Faithfully implement Measure Q, ensuring that the designated dollars improve park maintenance as intended

Safety: Resolve park safety concerns



- Start by fully investigating and understanding what community members need for parks to be safe, and prepare to provide services accordingly

Park Access: Make all neighborhoods complete with strong neighborhood parks, authentic belonging



- Make the natural and human heritage of our park spaces visible through interpretive signage, play structures, landscaping, art and exhibitions in a manner unique to the setting of each park, recognizing Oakland's impact on Ohlone land and people and increasing their (and the extended Indigenous/Native American community) access to parks for cultural and land stewardship
- Adopt strategic inclusion practices through multi-cultural and multi-generational programming
- Open Recreation Centers 7 days per week with extended hours to meet interests of diverse groups
- Partner for safe routes to parks

Park Utilization: Engage the community in play



- Establish a reliable, annual funding source in support of recreation programming to insulate it from the year-to-year fluctuations in the city budget and allow for long-term planning and implementation of programming
- Partner with foundations, businesses, non-profits, neighborhood groups, schools, fitness coaches, etc. to install equipment and launch inclusive organized activities in neighborhood parks, not limited to parks with recreation

\* In 2016, California passed law SB1000, requiring local governments to identify local environmental justice (also known as "disadvantaged" communities) and address environmental justice in their general plans in order to: facilitate transparency and public engagement in local governments' planning and decision making, reduce exposure to pollution and associated health risks in environmental justice communities, and promote equitable access to health-inducing benefits, such as healthy food options, housing, public facilities, and recreation. <https://oag.ca.gov/environment/sb1000>

In short, we ask the City of Oakland, with OPRF and community and private partners, to prioritize these actions:

- **Empower OPRYD** and its Strategic Plan with material and collaborative support
- **Prepare for the Future** and incorporate SB 1000 and parks and recreation services through the General Plan update, the OSCAR Element update, a Parks Master Plan; fully include parks and recreation in ECAP implementation; bring youth into the planning process
- **Solve the sanitation and safety crises** by getting all the players to the table, including community, city staff, labor, police, businesses, non-profits, health agencies, and OPRF to create a solution to these solvable problems
- **Engage the community in play** with robust programming and public-private partnerships so that all neighborhood parks - regardless of whether there is a recreation center - are fully utilized and benefiting their neighborhoods; recognize the essential need for youth to be engaged
- **Honor the community and the earth** through maintaining landscaping, planting trees, and ensuring that the natural and human heritage of each park is visible
- **Catalyze investment** through policy and partnership

Oakland needs to stand for its parks in these ways because people experience how a city cares for its parks as a reflection of how it cares for its people. Making activated parks part of the solution is all the more critical in light of the pressing challenges of the 21st century, including the threats of climate change and pandemic, the imperative to rectify centuries of racism, widening wealth disparities, population growth, and demographic shifts.

This most basic recommendation, to understand parks as part of the solution, is why OPRF sees that one of its most important roles is to raise expectations and reignite civic imagination. It's when we know that Oakland can do better and can fulfill the promise of its parks that we make Oakland the best place to live and thrive - for everyone.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EJEDI)<sup>2,3</sup>

**Environmental Justice** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to (all aspects of) development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and public policies. It also means the fair distribution of environmental goods, amenities, and services, such as healthy parks and green spaces, clean air and water, safe food, climate resilience, and a healthy environment in which Oaklanders can work, live, and play. Environmental justice is the necessary path towards acknowledging and correcting historically produced environmental atrocities, harms, and hazards that currently impact residents today while preventing new ones from forming. The ultimate goal of environmental justice is the eradication of environmental harms and the equitable proliferation of environmental goods.

**Equity** is the imperative that all Oaklanders have access to the same municipal opportunities or services, including parks, park programming, and facilities. This translates to fair and impartial access to safe, healthy, and quality public parks, gardens, green spaces, and nature for recreation.

**Diversity** is the recognition and respect for different cultures, traditions and desires in how Oaklanders engage with parks, gardens and other recreational spaces. Embracing diversity encourages engagement across cultural differences and community building, welcoming all Oaklanders.

**Inclusion** is the commitment to a municipal park system that creates, provides, and sustains multi-generational, multi-cultural and multi-abled recreational spaces. Oakland parks should be fully inclusive of all community members, not only in access to parks, but also in the governance, stewardship, and events that shape and protect public parks and green spaces. This means upholding and welcoming civic voices, imagination, and inspiration that create healthy, connected and resilient communities.

## Appendix II

### INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK & CHANGE MODEL FOR EJEDI in PARKS<sup>4</sup>

1. **Partnership/Alliances/Voice:** Cultivate advocacy capacity to build meaningful community and civic engagement
2. **Leadership:** Increase awareness and institutional leadership
3. **Vision:** Develop Master Plan, Strategic Plan, and analysis tools to change structures, policies, practices and procedures to further institutional transformation, ensure funding
4. **Capacity:** Train staff; apply pro-equity tools
5. **Context:** Establish baseline disparity data, targets/benchmarks and processes

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from PRAC 2018 Annual Report, January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018

<sup>3</sup> See also Draft J.E.D.I Guidelines from the State Social Conservancy: <https://scc.ca.gov/justice-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-jedi/>

<sup>4</sup> See also Draft J.E.D.I Guidelines from the State Social Conservancy: <https://scc.ca.gov/justice-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-jedi/>

# Appendix III

## EXTENDED RECOMMENDATIONS

### Extended List of Recommendations, OPRF 2020

With each playing their appropriate role, the City, OPRF, and the community can help Oakland parks fulfill their promise through the following detailed practice and policy list. See Appendices II for an institutional framework and change process for environmental justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in parks. Those with an “\*” are directly supported by previous recommendations that span 25 years.

1. Solve public sanitation crisis in the parks - the crisis of trash, bathrooms, encampments, drug paraphernalia\*
  - a. Establish an interdisciplinary task force inclusive of community members, local businesses, and multiple city departments to craft an equity-based solution to the public sanitation issue within our parks\*
  - b. Ensure ongoing full and faithful implementation of Measure Q\* for park maintenance and for ensuring that encampments in parks are addressed with appropriate services
  - c. Strengthen a centralized and coordinated approach to ensuring each park has active stewardship and liaison support\*
  - d. Strengthen responsiveness of Adopt-A-Spot and public works to park stewards\*
  - e. Restore maintenance and landscaping staff to pre-1978 levels\*
2. Commit to park safety
  - a. Pass the revised rules and regulations proposal and accordingly, in all parks, install clear signage regarding rules and regulations\*
  - b. Fully investigate and understand what community members need for parks to be safe and prepare to provide services accordingly
  - c. Establish a Safe-Routes-To-Parks initiative
3. Prepare for 21st and 22nd century challenges and opportunities
  - a. Support OPRYD’s Strategic Platform
  - b. Align efforts with SB1000 requirements to include Environmental Justice Elements in local general plans, including an updated Oakland General Plan
  - c. Update the OSCAR element, utilizing an environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion framework\*
  - d. Produce a Park Master Plan utilizing an environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion framework\*
  - e. Ensure plans and zoning include expanding and servicing park and open space for a growing population and climate change resilience\*
  - f. Prioritize involving youth in park and recreation stewardship \*
4. Commit to inclusive parks
  - a. Make the natural and human heritage of our park spaces visible through signage, play structures, landscaping, exhibitions in a manner reflecting each park, recognizing Oakland’s impact on Ohlone land and people\*
  - b. Work with the Ohlone and extended Indigenous/Native American community to increase park access for cultural and land stewardship
  - c. Support a fund to name park benches to represent our rich heritage
  - d. Move beyond ADA compliant to ADA inclusive
  - e. Increase access to park-related vending permits for traditionally under-represented vendors and businesses



5. Increase investment in parks and recreation
  - a. Increase the gift-in-place administrative approval ceiling to \$500,000
  - b. Set minimum amenity and program standards for all parks (seating, shade, engaging equipment, organized activities)\*
  - c. Create opportunities to partner with foundations, local businesses, non-profits, neighborhood groups, fitness coaches, etc. to bring fitness equipment and inclusive organized activities into neighborhood parks\*
6. Support community engagement so parks are more authentically supported by the community and upheld by city staff:
  - a. Provide stipends for serving on the PRAC and Recreation Advisory Councils (RACs) to enable participation from those who face economic barriers to civic engagement and make meeting times feasible for those who do not have flexible jobs
  - b. Work with local non-profits to extend Recreation Center hours, park programming and park care\*
  - c. Improve dissemination of information about activities in parks
7. Take a holistic approach to parks and recreation
  - a. Ensure routine surveys of park conditions and experiences\*
  - b. View parks as part of complete neighborhoods with connectivity to other necessary resources and interdepartmental linkages or staffing that reflects the interdisciplinary nature of park and recreation services
  - c. Reinstate OPRYD as a comprehensive department that manages the physical care of parks as well as recreational programming
    - i. Dispersed park services across departments does not align with how people use parks, the needs they have expressed, and how they work with the city
  - d. Ensure park representation, for example through PRAC or park stewards for key task forces, for example related to climate change, housing, safety

### Recommendations from previous OPRF surveys

Over the course of almost two decades, two Oakland park organizations, Oakland Parks Coalition and Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation have chronicled the conditions of Oakland’s parks as one measure of whether our city is fulfilling its imperative to protect the health and safety of its residents. This practice of parks assessments began in October, 2002, when, in a three part report based on surveys of conditions in Oakland Parks, the Oakland Parks Coalition (OPC), with founders Audree Jones-Taylor and Gillian Garro, proposed that the City of Oakland strive to maintain common standards for park amenities and operations that were widely practiced by cities all over the United States. Exhaustive OPC-led park surveys over a period of six months, from February through August of that year had revealed that the city’s parks fell far short of meeting those standards.

In Section 4, page 8 of that report they wrote: “Over the years, city agencies lost their overall vision and began to acquire land and build parks without a thought process, without community input, and without resources to maintain them. OPC believes no Oakland child or parent should be afraid of participation in any park or recreation facility in our city. No community should feel that its parks don’t measure up to those in other communities.” The report laid out the foundations required for park excellence. Here is just a sampling of what that would include:

- a Master Plan establishing consistent design and maintenance criteria for all planted areas, including irrigation and pest control policies and staff with horticulture training and experience
- adequate staffing and improved methods to keep parks clean, free of litter and graffiti
- strict adherence to mowing and pruning schedules required for safety and plant health
- scheduled maintenance and repair of surface, benches, tables, fences gates, lighting
- well-maintained recreation facilities and recreation that promotes “positive self-esteem, strong leadership and youth development”

Finally, OPC recommended strengthening community with local organizations and businesses partners.

“The strength of any Park and Recreation Department is the utilization of community and outside agencies in support of its mission and goals. . . Parks and recreation facilities continue to help shape the quality of life in Oakland. Citizens still view OPR as a vehicle to improve society, release stress and connect with their neighborhoods and communities.”

The recommendation for strengthening the community bond included: building a strong park stewardship program; including youth in or creating a youth council to engage in the process of planning recreation; involving churches with youth and recreation programs; and appealing to local businesses for financial and hands-on support of their neighborhood parks.

#### **The 1996 OSCAR Residential Survey (summarized)**

1. Every Oakland resident should live within walking distance of a park
2. Oakland parks should support a wide range of passive and activate recreational activities
3. Oakland’s existing parks should be regarded as a limited and precious resource, carefully managed and conserved.
4. Parks and park programming should build upon and complement the city’s diverse natural and cultural resources, responding to diversity in ways that recognize different values, lifestyles, and languages
5. Parks should reinforce the identity of individual neighborhoods and be adapted to meet the wishes of neighborhood residents
6. A special effort should be made for recreation to reach children and teens, promoting positive self-esteem, responsibility, leadership.
7. Park and recreational services should promote health and fitness for all
8. Parks should contribute to and be supportive of Oakland’s economic development goals
9. New development should pay its fair share to meet increased demand for parks resulting from that development
10. Allocation of public money for recreation should prioritize the areas with the greatest need, including areas with the lowest per capita park acreage and the poorest access to private open space
11. Budgets should prioritize rehabilitation and maintenance of existing facilities
12. Priority should be placed on making the parks safe. While a range of physical and law enforcement solutions can be explored, the single most effective solution to crime in parks is to increase legitimate use of the parks. Expanding park activities should be viewed as a central part of crime prevention.

# Appendix IV

## SUMMARY DATA TABLES

### Race Detail - Strong Agree / Agree

(Agree / Strongly Agree)	Self-Identified Race						p
	Black	Native/ Indigenous	Latinx	Asian/ Pac Islander	Mid Eastn / N. African	White	
<b>Vision</b>							
Parks and recreation centers that are safe, well-maintained and actively used:							
increase health and wellness <sup>1</sup>	95%	91%	92%	92%	100%	94%	0.00
increase community safety and cohesion <sup>1</sup>	94%	100%	96%	96%	100%	95%	0.04
provide positive options for youth	98%	95%	96%	95%	100%	96%	0.34
make cities stronger and more just	89%	100%	98%	96%	100%	96%	0.00
conserve and protect the environment	92%	96%	96%	97%	83%	93%	0.08
relief from climate change and disasters	91%	82%	93%	88%	77%	86%	0.61
<b>Participants support:</b>							
more arts/culture/events in parks	90%	95%	92%	86%	77%	70%	0.00
investment in parks, fields, pools, facilities	95%	100%	96%	93%	80%	93%	0.68
opening Rec Centers 7 days/week	81%	90%	92%	81%	77%	71%	0.00
candidates who strongly support parks	93%	86%	94%	90%	100%	94%	0.85
<b>Reasons visit</b>							
Socializing	48%	50%	42%	50%	60%	44%	0.59
General Wellness	48%	54%	43%	64%	60%	70%	0.00
Personal health, fitness, exercise	34%	42%	27%	56%	70%	49%	0.00
Play or watch organized sports and activities	20%	25%	22%	15%	10%	9%	0.00
Bring children for play, sports, camp, care	44%	54%	53%	37%	30%	30%	0.00
Hiking, jogging, walking trails	29%	50%	28%	47%	60%	63%	0.00
Relaxation, leisure, mental health	37%	54%	32%	50%	50%	50%	0.00
Trees, greenery, open space	55%	42%	32%	41%	50%	65%	0.00
<b>Barriers to visiting, fully using, or enjoying parks</b>							
Encampments	36%	54%	31%	45%	20%	45%	0.00
Safety	46%	54%	54%	54%	60%	41%	0.02
Unsafe route to park	14%	13%	23%	22%	40%	9%	0.00
Maintenance	58%	63%	55%	61%	60%	54%	0.75
Bathrooms	54%	75%	57%	54%	60%	53%	0.43
Receive no info	22%	13%	28%	25%	30%	18%	0.03

1. The statistically significant difference is based upon disaggregated strongly agree/agree comparison. When combined, there is no significant difference

3. Vision, Reasons, and Barriers Comparison Table

	Total	Gender			Race			Income				Age				Location				
(Strongly Agree/Agree)		Female	Male	p	POC	W	p	<75k	75-150k	>150k	p	<35	35-65	>65	p	EO/SH	NO/M	SA/F	W/O/D	p
<b>Vision</b>																				
<b>Parks and recreation centers that are safe, well-maintained and actively used:</b>																				
increase health and wellness 1 <sup>-3</sup>	94%	94%	94%	0.11	93%	94%	0.00	94%	94%	93%	0.00	90%	96%	92%	0.02	93%	93%	93%	95%	0.78
increase community safety and cohesion 2 <sup>-3</sup>	94%	96%	95%	0.06	96%	95%	0.00	97%	95%	95%	0.00	95%	95%	94%	0.00	95%	94%	96%	94%	0.31
provide positive options for youth <sup>3</sup>	95%	96%	95%	0.01	96%	96%	0.19	98%	94%	96%	0.00	94%	96%	94%	0.02	96%	96%	94%	95%	0.74
make cities stronger and more just <sup>4,3</sup>	95%	96%	93%	0.02	95%	95%	0.00	97%	94%	95%	0.00	94%	94%	95%	0.08	94%	93%	94%	97%	0.69
conserve and protect the environment	94%	95%	93%	0.02	95%	93%	0.03	94%	95%	92%	0.36	94%	95%	92%	0.49	94%	92%	93%	94%	0.96
relief from climate change and disasters 5 <sup>-3</sup>	88%	90%	73%	0.00	89%	86%	0.25	94%	89%	82%	0.01	92%	88%	85%	0.06	94%	80%	88%	86%	0.00
<b>Participants support:</b>																				
more arts/culture in parks*	79%	78%	80%	0.81	88%	70%	0.00	90%	80%	71%	0.00	87%	78%	69%	0.00	84%	70%	76%	81%	0.01
investment in parks, fields, pools, facilities	94%	94%	92%	0.51	95%	93%	0.18	93%	95%	95%	0.31	94%	94%	91%	0.7	95%	92%	93%	81%	0.2
opening Rec Centers 7 days/week**	78%	78%	74%	0.12	85%	71%	0.00	87%	79%	70%	0.00	81%	77%	74%	0.38	83%	71%	77%	73%	0.07
candidates who strongly support parks	92%	92%	94%	0.51	92%	92%	0.34	91%	94%	89%	0.03	89%	93%	92%	0.16	94%	88%	93%	94%	0.36
<b>Reasons Visit Parks</b>																				
Socializing	44%	47%	43%	0.28	48%	44%	0.21	51%	49%	46%	0.61	50%	48%	31%	0.00	38%	43%	36%	53%	0.01
Wellness/Nature	60%	63%	60%	0.41	53%	70%	0.00	49%	69%	70%	0.00	57%	64%	61%	0.14	51%	66%	61%	66%	0.00
Personal health, fitness	41%	44%	41%	0.34	39%	49%	0.00	45%	49%	46%	0.79	38%	43%	49%	0.06	36%	45%	43%	39%	0.11
Play or watch organized sports and activities	13%	18%	13%	0.03	20%	9%	0.00	25%	11%	12%	0.00	19%	14%	8%	0.00	14%	12%	12%	14%	0.77
Bring children for play, sports, camp, care	35%	39%	34%	0.16	45%	30%	0.00	62%	33%	38%	0.00	38%	44%	12%	0.00	46%	31%	32%	35%	0.00
Hiking, jogging, walking trails	49%	51%	50%	0.64	38%	63%	0.00	29%	60%	64%	0.00	38%	55%	51%	0.00	44%	56%	53%	45%	0.01
Relaxation, leisure, mental health	44%	46%	44%	0.58	41%	50%	0.00	37%	54%	48%	0.00	44%	46%	46%	0.92	40%	45%	45%	48%	0.3
Trees, greenery, open space	54%	56%	54%	0.58	44%	65%	0.00	39%	62%	64%	0.00	46%	59%	54%	0.00	43%	60%	56%	60%	0.00
<b>Barriers to visiting or full use and enjoyment</b>																				
Encampments	42%	43%	40%	0.31	37%	45%	0.00	33%	48%	46%	0.00	39%	45%	37%	0.05	28%	51%	45%	51%	0.00
Safety	46%	50%	40%	0.0	51%	41%	0.00	46%	55%	44%	0.02	47%	51%	33%	0.00	43%	47%	47%	50%	0.41
Unsafe route to park	14%	15%	12%	0.23	19%	9%	0.00	17%	16%	12%	0.32	18%	16%	4%	0.00	15%	12%	13%	20%	0.16
Maintenance	55%	58%	58%	0.65	57%	54%	0.21	54%	69%	59%	0.00	62%	60%	44%	0.00	50%	61%	56%	64%	0.01
Bathrooms	53%	55%	55%	0.96	56%	53%	0.38	57%	61%	56%	0.5	58%	58%	44%	0.00	50%	54%	56%	56%	0.36
Receive no information about parks/rec	20%	21%	19%	0.37	23%	17%	0.02	23%	21%	24%	0.66	30%	20%	13%	0.00	21%	20%	20%	20%	0.97



Reasons for and barriers to park visits	#	% (1,334)
<b>Reasons Visit Parks</b>		
Socializing	593	44%
Wellness/Nature	795	60%
Personal health, exercise, fitness	550	41%
Play or watch organized sports and activities	176	13%
Bringing children for play, sports, camp, care	470	35%
Hiking, jogging, walking trails	657	49%
Relaxation, leisure, mental health	585	44%
Trees, greenery, open space	714	54%
<b>Barriers to visiting or full use and enjoyment</b>		
Encampments	547	41%
Safety	610	46%
Unsafe route to park	185	14%
Maintenance	737	55%
Bathrooms	706	53%
Receive no Information about parks/rec	267	20%

<b>Transportation to Park</b>		
Transportation mode	Park most frequented (1,129)	Neighborhood park (1,111)
Walk	47%	62%
Private vehicle	39%	23%
Bike	4%	3%
AC Transit	3%	1%
Don't go to Oakland park	1%	3%
Wheelchair / Mobility Device	0.5%	0.5%
Other	9%	8%

<b>Vision Results Table</b> (*Variance from 100% is due to rounding)													
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total*							
<b>Vision</b>													
<b>Parks that are safe, well-maintained and actively used:</b>													
increase health and wellness***	807	70%	271	24%	16	1%	39	3%	20	2%	1153	100	
increase community safety and cohesion***	820	70%	275	24%	27	2%	18	2%	11	1%	1152	100	
provide positive options for youth***	855	74%	245	21%	28	2%	20	2%	6	1%	1154	100	
make cities stronger and more just***	807	70%	285	25%	28	2%	22	2%	11	1%	1153	100	
conserve and protect nature	794	69%	290	25%	25	2%	29	3%	14	1%	1152	100	
Provide relief from climate change, disasters	619	54%	383	34%	85	7%	47	4%	8	1%	1142	100	
<b>Participants support:</b>													
more arts/culture in parks	462	41%	428	38%	122	11%	115	10%	14	1%	1141	100	
investment in parks, fields, pools, rec centers	764	67%	309	27%	42	4%	25	2%	8	1%	1148	100	
opening Rec Centers 7 days/week	523	46%	362	32%	175	15%	77	7%	9	1%	1146	100	
candidates who strongly support parks	727	64%	320	28%	70	6%	23	2%	3	0.20%	1,143	100	

<b>Route safety to neighborhood park</b>	
<i>I can easily &amp; safely walk or wheelchair to my neighborhood park (1,111)</i>	
Strongly Agree	22%
Agree	35%
Don't Know	12%
Disagree	19%
Strongly Disagree	12%

<b>Distance to park most frequented</b>	
<i>Distance to park most frequently visit (1,127)</i>	
< .5 mile (10 min walk)	43%
.5 - 1 mile (10-20 min walk)	21%
1-2 miles (2--30 min walk)	12%
> 2 miles (> 30 min walk)	22%
Don't visit Oakland parks	3%

Parks Promise Score Card, detail																			
Park Promise Scorecard Indicators	Gender			Race			Income				Age				Location				
	Fem	Male	p	BILAM	W	p	<75k	75-150k	>150k	p	<35	35-65	>65	p	EO/SH	NOM	SAF	WO/D	p
<b>Citywide</b>																			
I can easily access good walking/jogging paths in Oakland parks	3	3.2	.00	2.9	3.1	.00	2.7	3	3.1	0.04	2.9	3	3.2	0.01	3	3	3.1	2.9	.00
I can easily access good places to relax, socialize, and enjoy nature in Oakland parks	3	3.1	.00	2.9	3.1	.00	2.5	3	3	0.01	2.9	3	3.2	.00	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.9	0.03
I can meet neighbors and build community in Oakland parks	2.8	3	.00	2.9	2.9	0.41	2.5	2.8	2.8	0.14	2.8	2.9	2.9	0.16	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8	0.07
It is easy to access good places for exercise in Oakland parks	2.8	2.9	0.07	2.7	2.9	.00	2.6	2.8	2.7	0.58	2.6	2.7	3	.00	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.7	0.07
Total City Parks Promise Score	2.9	3	.00	2.9	3	.00	2.6	2.9	2.9	0.06	2.8	2.9	3.1	.00	2.8	2.8	3	2.8	.00
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>																			
My neighborhood park has good places to relax, socialize, enjoy nature	2.8	3	.00	2.7	2.9	.00	2.4	2.8	2.9	0.02	2.7	2.8	3.1	.00	2.6	2.8	3	2.7	.00
I can easily and safely walk or wheelchair to my neighborhood park	2.8	2.9	0.15	2.7	2.9	.00	2.7	2.8	2.8	0.69	2.6	2.8	2.9	0.02	2.4	2.8	2.9	2.9	.00
My neighborhood park has good spaces or equipment for exercise	2.5	2.8	.00	2.5	2.6	0.45	2.1	2.4	2.6	0.11	2.5	2.5	2.8	.00	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.4	.00
There is good signage about rules, events in my neighborhood park	2.3	2.4	0.25	2.3	2.4	0.27	2.2	2.3	2.3	0.79	2.3	2.3	2.5	0.11	2.2	2.3	2.4	2	0.4
My neighborhood park has plenty of good organized activities	2.1	2.4	.00	2.2	2.1	0.23	2	2.1	2	0.88	2.1	2.1	2.2	0.65	2	2	2.2	2.2	0.02
My neighborhood park has good security	1.9	2.2	.00	2	2	0.76	1.9	1.9	2	0.29	1.9	1.9	2	0.74	1.8	1.9	2	2	0.04
Total Neighborhood Parks Promise Score	2.5	2.7	.00	2.5	2.6	.00	2.3	2.5	2.5	0.11	2.4	2.5	2.7	.00	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.5	.00

**Parks Promise Score Card, detail by race**

	Overall		Black African American		Indigenous Native American		LatinX / Hispanic		Asian / Pacific Islander		Mid Eastern North African		White / Caucasian		p
	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	
<b>Citywide Parks</b>															
I can easily access good walking/jogging paths in Oakland parks	3	Good	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.7	Needs Improvement †	3.1	Good	2.9	Good	3	Good	3.2	Good	0.0
I can easily access good places to relax, socialize, and enjoy nature in Oakland parks	2.9	Good	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	3	Good	2.9	Good	2.8	Needs Improvement †	3.1	Good	0.0
I can meet neighbors and build community in Oakland parks	2.9	Good	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	2.9	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	2.9	Good	2.9	Good	0.9
It is easy to access good places for exercise in Oakland parks	2.8	Good	2.5	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.7	Needs Improvement †	2.7	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	0.0
Total City Parks Promise Score	2.9	Good	2.7	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	3	Good	0.0
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>															
My neighborhood park has good places to relax, socialize, enjoy nature	2.7	Needs Improvement †	2.7	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Needs Improvement †	2.7	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	0
I can easily and safely walk or wheelchair to my neighborhood park	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.9	Good	0
My neighborhood park has good spaces or equipment for exercise	2.4	Needs Improvement †	2.4	Needs Improvement †	2.8	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.5	Needs Improvement †	2.4	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	0.3
There is good signage about rules, events in my neighborhood park	2.3	Needs Improvement †	2.3	Needs Improvement †	2.2	Needs Improvement †	2.4	Needs Improvement †	2.4	Needs Improvement †	2.1	Needs Improvement †	2.4	Needs Improvement †	0.8
My neighborhood park has plenty of good organized activities	2.2	Needs Improvement †	2.1	Needs Improvement †	2.5	Needs Improvement †	2.3	Needs Improvement †	2.2	Needs Improvement †	2	Needs Improvement †	2.1	Needs Improvement †	0.2
My neighborhood park has good security	1.9	Severe Problem	1.9	Severe Problem	1.9	Severe Problem	2	Needs Improvement †	2.2	Needs Improvement †	1.8	Severe Problem	2	Needs Improvement †	0.5
Total Neighborhood Parks Promise Score	2.5	Needs Improvement †	2.4	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	2.5	Needs Improvement †	2.5	Needs Improvement †	2.3	Needs Improvement †	2.6	Needs Improvement †	0

**Main reasons for visiting Oakland parks or recreation centers**

Reason for visit	Percent (of 1334)
Connect with nature (“Enjoy trees, greenery, open space”)	54%
Use trails, walking, or jogging paths	49%
Personal relaxation, leisure, mental health	44%
Personal health or fitness	41%
Spend time with family or friends	34%
Bring children to play	31%
Events, festivals	19%
Have a picnic, barbeque, party	18%
Dog play	16%
Watch or participate in organized sports	13%
Bring children to camp, sports, activities	12%
Boat, sail, kayak, row, shoreline activities	6%
Childcare or Head Start	6%
Pool	6%
Gardening	3%
Don't visit parks	1%

*\*percents do not sum to 100 because participants could check all that apply*

**Most common ways to receive information about park and recreation activity**

Communication mode	% (of 1334)
Friends, word of mouth	34%
Social media	31%
Online / the internet	22%
Do not receive any information	20%



# Appendix V

## METHODOLOGY

### Overview

The objective of this study was to create a quantitative and qualitative citywide assessment of Oaklanders' perspectives, experiences, and use of the city's municipal parks. The survey used an observational design, surveying Oakland residents over the final quarter of 2019 (September 21 to December 31). The City of Oakland's Office of Race and Equity provided guidance on the survey method and questionnaire design. Residents were reached through online and in-person convenience sampling measures in three languages (English, Spanish, and Cantonese), with 1,334 participating respondents across communities of race, age, income and four city council districts.

### Questionnaire development

The questionnaire design drew from several local and national park surveys for question validation and with input from the Department of Race and Equity and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. The questionnaire was field tested in three iterations: at Mosswood Park, various sidewalk locations in downtown Oakland, and online trial through the Mosswood Recreation Advisory Council and the Oakland Parks, Recreation and Youth Development email publication. An online English-Language survey was produced as well as a hard copy version in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The Spanish translation was done first by a non-native speaker, followed by a native speaker. The Chinese version was translated by the City of Oakland's Disability & Accessibility department. The questionnaire is available on OPRF's website [https://www.oaklandparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ParkSurvey\\_English-11212019.pdf](https://www.oaklandparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ParkSurvey_English-11212019.pdf)

### Sample

Beginning September 27, 2019, data was collected from a convenience sample of Oakland residents until the sample approximated Oakland's population by geographic and racial/ethnic characteristics.

The online survey was launched on surveymonkey™. It was posted on websites or released by listservs and personal email networks by Oakland Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development, Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation, OPRF board members, The Mayor and City Council members, local community groups were asked to circulate the online survey through their email listserv.

The hard copy survey was made available at 22 recreation centers and other park facilities, and 17 libraries. Active outreach and interviews were conducted by UC Berkeley undergraduate students from the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship Program. Student interviewers were trained by OPRF volunteers. Interviewers attended and conducted intercept surveys at various events in Oakland, with an emphasis on reaching traditionally under-represented populations. In-person surveying was conducted in English and Spanish at 5 farmers markets, Friday Nights at OMCA, First Fridays, Autumn Lights, Dia de los Muertos Festival, the Oakland Pow Wow, a Clinton Square community meeting, a Mosswood Park community workshop, a San Antonio Park community event, and sports activities at various parks.

### Participant profile

1,334 participants took all or part of the survey.

#### *Participation by City area*

Residential zip code was provided by 1,255 (94%) of participants, and these were assigned to four city sub-areas corresponding to: East Oakland/ South Hills; North Oakland/Montclair; San Antonio-Fruitvale/ Lower Hills; and, West Oakland/ Downtown The population for each of these areas was summed, adjusting for shared zip codes with Piedmont, Emeryville, and Berkeley. Proportionally, there are more surveys from San Antonio-Fruitvale/Lower Hills (42%), but this area also has a larger share of the city's population (35% of Oakland residents).

### ***Participation by Council District***

Participant zip code was assigned to council districts based on a visual assessment of which districts contained the majority of the zip code (meaning some participants may have resided in a district they were not assigned due to the majority of that zip code being contained within an adjacent district. Participants fairly evenly spanned all council districts: District 1: 15%; District 2: 23%; District 3: 10%; District 4: 19%; District 5: 9%; District 6: 9%; District 7: 15%.

### ***Participation by race/ethnicity***

The racial diversity was represented in the survey, based upon self-identified reporting, with 1,095 (82%) of participants providing information about their race/ethnicity. The distribution roughly matched that of the general population in Oakland, with over-representation of those self-identified as White, although half of the participants identified as people of color.

### ***Participation by gender***

Participation by gender was self-identified in the survey. Participation tended heavily toward more women than men, and there are also proportionately more women living in Oakland than men, as for every 100 females there are 93.8 males. Of 1151 (86%) participants who provided gender information, self-identified women constituted 806 (70%) of the sample, self-identified men accounted for 325 (28%), and 19 (2%) identified as non-binary/non-conforming or other.

### ***Participation by economic level***

Response to income was low, with 43% of participants not providing this information, making it difficult to characterize participants by this metric. The range of income levels reported among survey participants was wide, spanning from below \$30,000 to over \$150,000 per year. (The average household annual income in Oakland is \$76,000.) Of 885 non-student responses, 24% earned less than \$75,000 or had a household with more than four members and annual income less than \$150,000; 41% earned \$75,000-\$150,000; and 34% earned over \$150,000. If participants with lower income more often skipped the income question, then this economic profile is likely somewhat higher than the actual survey profile.

### ***Participation by age***

The questionnaire and the sampling method were not designed to capture youth perceptions and experience, and so, while some youth 18 years and under participated, they are not proportionately represented (3%). The overall median age in Oakland is 36.5 years old. Of the 1,198 (90%) participants who provided age information, the most represented group in the survey was aged 35 - 44 years (28%), followed by 45-54 years and 65+ years (each at 19%), 25-34 years (15%) and 55-64 years (14%). Combined, those under 35 years represented 20% of the participants, those 35-64 years were 61%, and those over 65 years were 19%.

### ***Participation by parenting status***

Of 1,076 participants providing information on their parenting/caretaking status, 626 (58%) reported currently parenting or caring for children under 18 in their home.

### ***Participation by housing arrangements***

Of 1,082 participants providing information about their housing arrangements, 649 (59%) reported owning their home, while 411 (38%) reported renting. Overall in Oakland, roughly 40% of residences are owner-occupied. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/oaklandcitycalifornia>

### **Analysis**

Data were cleaned by a UC Berkeley graduate student who was provided a stipend. Analysis was conducted by the graduate student and an additional statistical consultant using STATA™, as well as by a community volunteer using SAS™. Subgroup analyses included Chi-squared test or simple difference of means test (t-test) and linear regression models across subgroups with a 95% confidence interval. Differences at the sub-group level were reported if concurrence of the full sample was less than 75% and the difference between sub-groups greater than 10%, (p<.01).

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