

TOWN ALIVE: ECONOMIC ACTIVATION ZONES

At-Large Councilmember Rowena Brown

The **Town Alive** initiative establishes **Economic Activation Zones**—designated areas that re-energize Oakland’s public spaces, strengthen small businesses, and connect residents to innovation opportunities.

The program launches with two pilot components:

1. **Entertainment Zones** to activate commercial corridors with family-friendly outdoor events and cultural festivals
2. **Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) Activation Zones** to foster equitable, community-based innovation and create hubs for community-based AI programming

Together, these pilots make Oakland’s economy more vibrant, inclusive, and future-ready.

Why This Matters

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Oakland has been rebuilding its local economy. Yet, many of our commercial corridors still need structured opportunities for economic and cultural activation.

Town Alive bridges that gap by:

- Reviving local commercial corridors through safe, family-friendly programming.
- Partnering with community institutions to expand access to the growing responsible AI economy.

Oakland’s economic recovery depends on reconnecting people to places—and ensuring innovation benefits every neighborhood.

The Zones

Entertainment Zones

By ordinance, these zones will create opportunities for outdoor gatherings, performances, and cultural festivals in Oakland’s commercial corridors.

- Utilizes **SB 969**, allowing adjacent bars and restaurants to sell alcohol in to-go containers for on-site consumption within the zone.
- Supports **community-led programming** that celebrates Oakland’s diversity and creativity.

Pilot Entertainment Zone Locations:

- Jack London District
- Broadway Valdez/Northlake District
- Temescal District
- Uptown Downtown

Management Plans:

- Management Plans are tailored plans for each Entertainment Zone that establish location-specific requirements for operations, public health, and public safety during events
- Produced by the Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWD) in collaboration with community partners, OPD, OakDOT, OPW, and other relevant departments

Becoming An Entertainment Zone:

- Contact your Councilmember and EWD to begin the process
- Receive City Council approval by ordinance establishing the Zone
- Develop a Management Plan with EWD outlining programming, safety, and operations
- Apply for Entertainment Zone event funding through the Oakland Fund for Public Innovation (*if desired*)

Responsible AI Activation Zones

These are physical hubs for **community-driven AI education and innovation**, ensuring Oakland leads with equity in emerging technologies.

Led by the **Oakland Fund for Public Innovation (OFPI)**, first-year programming will include:

- Public education events and professional conferences
- Civic technology pilots and student internships & showcases
- Small business support for responsible AI adoption
- Workforce development programs

Locations:

- Laney College (Downtown)
- The Unity Council's Unity Tech Hub (Fruitvale)
- Mills College at Northeastern University (East Oakland)

Budget & Timeline

- **Funding:** \$1 million startup allocation approved in the FY 2025-27 budget, and managed by OFPI, to support Entertainment Zones and Responsible AI Activation Zones.
- **Sustainability:** Future funding expected through private and philanthropic partnerships
- **Council Consideration:** November 2025
- **Launch:** Spring/Summer 2026