



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Ashleigh Kanat, Director
Economic & Workforce
Development Department

SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL – 2025-2029
Economic Development Action Plan

DATE: October 2, 2025

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Oct 2, 2025 15:34:57 PDT)

Date: Oct 2, 2025

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On The 2025 – 2029 Economic Development Action Plan.

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL

This supplemental report provides a revised version of the Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP), which corrects minor typos and formatting issues in the implementation matrix. Following Council's receipt of this informational report, the draft EDAP will be provided to a professional designer for graphic design and production, including enhanced charts and improved formatting. Once the final version is complete, with appendices, the Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) will coordinate with the Public Information Office (PIO) to issue a press release. Copies of the finalized EDAP will be distributed to each Council Member and made available on EWDD's webpage.

City Council
October 7, 2025

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On The 2025 – 2029 Economic Development Action Plan.

For questions regarding this report, please contact ASHLEIGH KANAT, DIRECTOR, at (510) 238-4973.

Respectfully submitted,



Ashleigh Kanat (Oct 2, 2025 11:16:08 PDT)

ASHLEIGH KANAT
Director, Economic & Workforce Development
Department

Attachment (1):

1. Draft Economic Development Action Plan



Economic Development Action Plan • 2025-2029

Economic and Workforce Development Department



CITY OF
OAKLAND

DRAFT for CED

9/30/25

Letter from Mayor Barbara Lee

Dear Oaklanders,

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

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

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

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

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

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

With hope and determination,

[signature pending final]

Barbara Lee, Mayor of Oakland

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Introduction

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

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

Strategic Goals of the EDAP

The Plan is organized around five strategic goals:

1. Attract and Grow Key Industries

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

2. Sustain and Support Businesses

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

3. Build Oakland's Workforce

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

4. Invest in Places

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Celebrating Oakland's Assets

Oakland's strengths reflect its unique geography, diverse population, rich cultural life, and evolving economy. These assets are the foundation for long-term, inclusive growth.

Strategic Location and Connectivity

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

Global Trade and Transportation Hub

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

Industrial and Innovation Capacity

- Expansive industrial and warehouse zones position Oakland for continued growth in advanced and custom manufacturing, life sciences, clean tech, and research and development.
- Through a \$15M grant from the Last Mile Federal Funding Account, administered by the California Public Utilities Commission, Oakland Connect will expand access to reliable, high-speed internet in East and West Oakland.
- In partnership with the Kapor Foundation, more than \$2 million for inclusive technology was secured to help expand STEAM education, build career pathways, and lay the groundwork for responsible AI practices that center equity and transparency.

Housing Development Momentum

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

Modern, Multimodal Infrastructure

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

Highly Educated and Growing Consumer Base

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

Vibrant Arts, Food, and Cultural Life

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

Expansive Parks and Open Space

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

Development of the Plan

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

The goals also reflect and build upon the City’s adopted planning frameworks, including the [General Plan](#) (2045 General Plan Update is underway) and [Housing Element](#), the [Cultural Development Plan](#), the [Equitable Climate Action Plan](#), and area-specific strategies such as the [Downtown Oakland Specific Plan](#) and other Specific Plans. Additionally, the EDAP’s development was shaped by a robust and honest assessment of where Oakland stands in the current market and real estate development cycle. And finally, the Plan is focused on what the Economic & Workforce Development Department controls or influences while trying to be realistic about the City’s current fiscal and staffing capacity.

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

Community Partnerships

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

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

Implementation

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

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

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

Organization of the EDAP

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

Racial Equity Framework

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

Consumer spending underpins economic growth nationally, and this spending is increasingly driven by Black, Latinx, and Asian Pacific Islander communities. Collectively, these groups represent 72% of Oakland's residential population, confirming that, for Oakland, closing racial gaps can unlock economic growth, attract investment, and strengthen neighborhood resilience.

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

The EDAP builds on this progress, adopting a place-based strategy that focuses on closing service and investment gaps in under-resourced neighborhoods.

Five Point Equity Framework

Oakland's racial equity approach is structured around a five-point framework that is embedded in each goal of the plan:

- 1. Use Data to Identify Disparities**

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

- 2. Follow Oakland's Inclusive Engagement Policy**

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

- 3. Address Service Disparities**

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

- 4. Deliver a Resilient Inclusive Economy to All Oaklanders**

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

5. Build Community Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms

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

Data-Led, Community-Driven Equity Indicators

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

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

Figure 1: “Economy” Themed Equity Indicators from the 2018 Equity Indicators Report

Indicator	Focus Area
Business Ownership	Disparities in ownership rates between Black and White Oaklanders
Long-term Business Vacancy	Correlation between vacancies and race/ethnicity of census tracts
Disconnected Youth	Youth ages 16–24 not in school or work, by race
Labor Force Participation	Gaps in labor market access, by race
Unemployment	Racial disparities in unemployment
Median Household Income	Income ratio between Black and White households
Poverty	Percent of population below the federal poverty level

¹ See pages 20 – 40 of the 2018 [Oakland Equity Indicators Report](#).

Employment in High-Wage Industries	Representation by race in high-paying sectors
Living Wage (*)	Likelihood of earning at least a living wage job
Participation in Workforce Programs	Access to training for unemployed residents

(*) The term “Thriving Wage” now replaces the term “Living Wage.”

DRAFT

Goal 1

Attract and Grow Key Industries

Opportunity

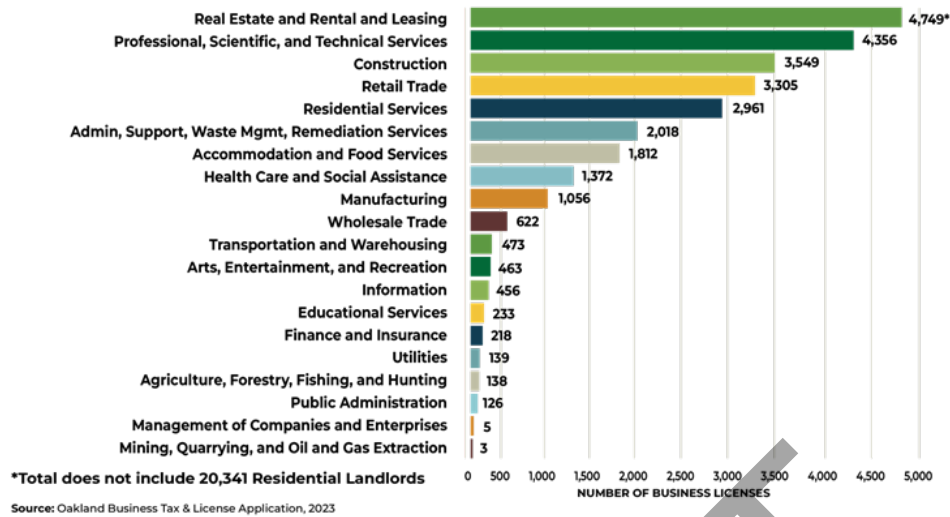
Oakland's central position within the larger regional economy, coupled with its diverse talent base and a robust transportation network, creates strong potential to attract and grow employers in key industries. Goal #1 is designed to target high-impact and high-growth sectors, including the healthcare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

Existing Conditions

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

The strengths and opportunities within Oakland's economy can be seen in the number of businesses and employees in each sector. **Figure 1** shows the top three sectors by number of businesses are Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (4,749 businesses), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (4,356 businesses) and Construction (3,549 businesses).

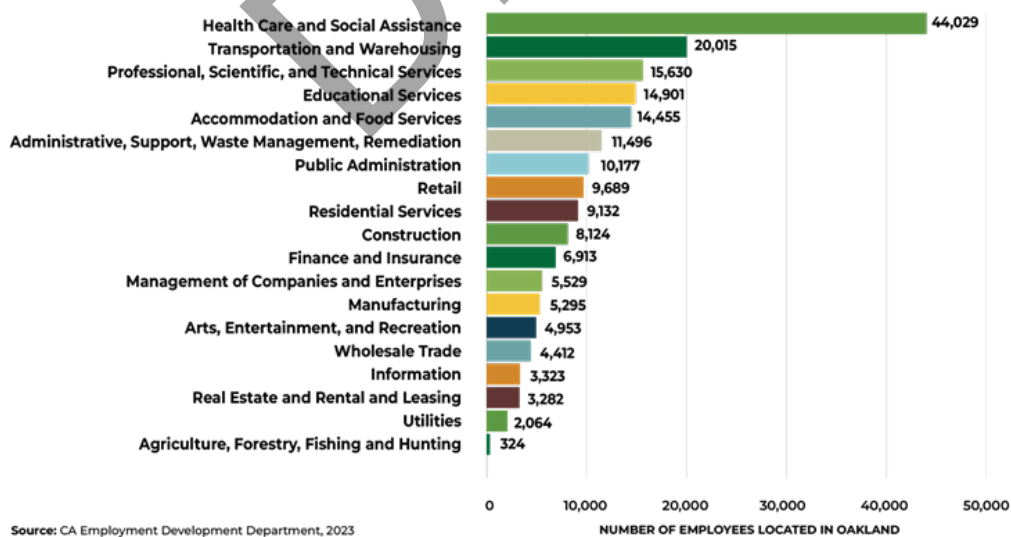
Figure 1: Number of Businesses by Sector, 2023



Employment in Oakland by sector is shown in **Figure 2** where the top three sectors are Health Care and Social Assistance (44,029 employees), Transportation and Warehousing (20,015 employees), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (15,630 employees).

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

Figure 2: Number of Employees by Sector, 2023



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

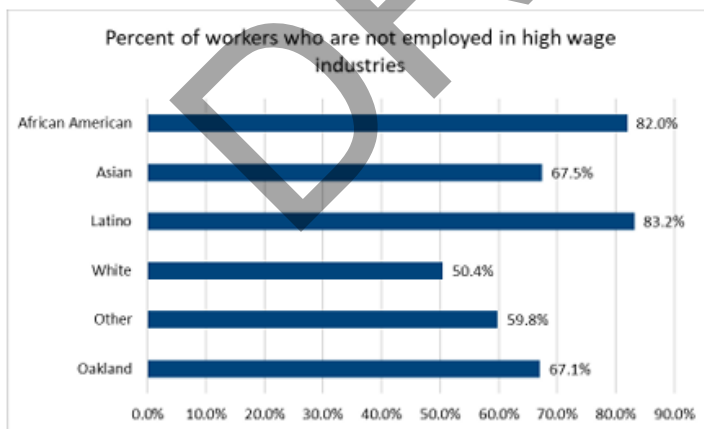
Racial Equity Indicators

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

Figure 3, presented in the 2018 Equity Indicators Report, measures the percent of employed individuals who are not employed in industries with a mean annual wage of at least \$80,000. Employment in high wage industries is an important measure of what kinds of jobs are accessible to individuals of different racial and ethnic groups.

Figure 3: Percent of Workers Who Are Not Employed in High-Wage Industries²

Data:



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year PUMS, 2016 (Oakland PUMAs extend beyond the city boundaries, see maps here: https://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/maps/2010puma/st06_ca.html)

² The data presented in Figure 3 is in the process of being updated and the updated graph will be included in the Final EDAP.

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

Actions and Sub-actions

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

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

A. Pursue sector-specific strategies to catalyze investment and support growth

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

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

B. Develop a business attraction plan to promote Oakland's assets and attract investment

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

- EWDD will lead the creation of a marketing strategy and promotional materials that highlight the City's commercial and visitor-serving assets, anchor and growth sectors, skilled workforce, and development opportunities.
- In collaboration with Planning and Building, Public Works, and the Department of Transportation, EWDD will influence infrastructure planning through the General Plan Update and Capital Facilities Element to support long-term economic development goals, with a particular focus on identifying opportunities to increase resilience, distributed renewable energy, energy storage, and sustainable transportation.
- EWDD will coordinate with major public landowners—including the Port of Oakland, BART, Alameda County, Caltrans, and others—to develop joint strategies for activating key sites.
- Working closely with Oakland's real estate sector, EWDD will promote high-impact development opportunities such as the Oakland Coliseum, West Oakland R&D sites, and other large, privately-owned opportunity sites, to invite investment and advance job creation and economic growth in alignment with community needs.
- In coordination with Visit Oakland, aim to be host of one to two key technology focused mid- to large-size conferences (i.e., Dreamforce, AfroTech, and others).

C. Build partnerships to grow workforce development opportunities in key sectors to ensure equitable access to good jobs and growing wages for all Oaklanders

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

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

Goal 2

Sustain and Support Businesses

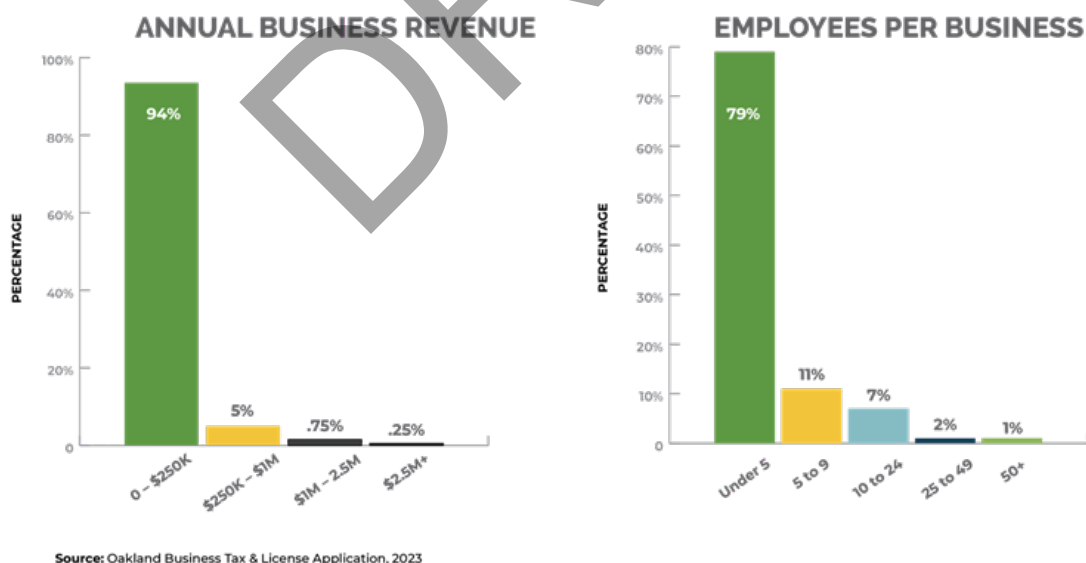
Opportunity

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

Existing Conditions

Oakland's economy is anchored by small businesses. Based on self-reported data provided as part of the annual Business Tax & License renewal process. The City processes approximately 54,000 business license applications each year, indicating a stable business community where openings and closings, or churn, are a regular occurrence and a natural part of commercial activity. **Figure 4** shows how more than 90% of Oakland businesses have fewer than ten employees, and most generate less than \$250,000 in annual revenue. Oakland's entrepreneurial character is well established, in 2023, the City ranked 11th nationally for self-employment overall and 5th for women's self-employment.

Figure 4: Business Characteristics, 2023



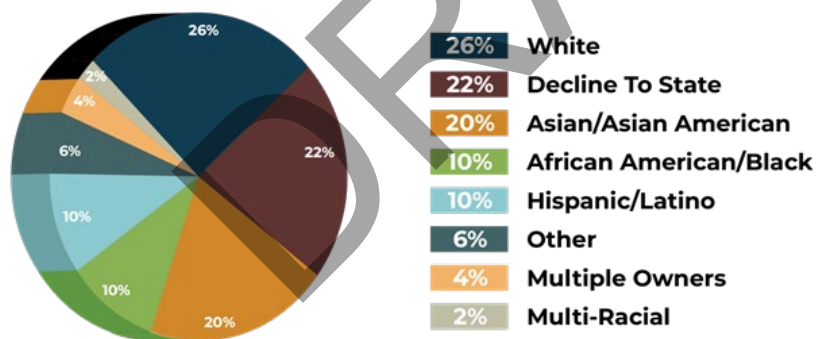
Despite these strengths, structural challenges persist. Many businesses, particularly small and emerging firms, continue to face barriers in accessing capital, navigating permitting processes, securing affordable commercial space and insurance, and responding to regulatory requirements.

High vacancies and the poor conditions in some business corridors remain significant concerns for stakeholders. Business owners and residents consistently cite cleanliness, safety, and the activation of empty storefronts as top priorities. Vacant properties often attract illegal dumping and crime, undermining neighborhood vitality. Community feedback prior to and during EDAP engagement sessions strongly emphasized the need to fill vacancies and reduce the time and cost associated with opening or expanding a business. Since 2018, EWDD has embedded business assistance services in six neighborhood libraries, providing direct support to an average of 300 businesses annually.

Racial Equity Indicators

Persistent racial disparities in business ownership and access to capital continue to shape the landscape for small businesses in Oakland. **Figure 5** indicates Black and Latinx entrepreneurs each own 10% of Oakland businesses, compared to 26% owned by White business owners and 20% by Asian business owners. However, for Black and Latinx entrepreneurs, these rates fall well below their share of the City's population. Of Oakland's population, 20.9% are Black and 28.9% are Latinx. Black- and Latinx owned businesses face disproportionate barriers to financing, often operating with limited reserves and reduced access to traditional lending institutions. These inequities constrain business survival and growth, especially in under-resourced neighborhoods where small businesses play a central role in community stability and wealth generation.

Figure 5: Business Ownership by Race, 2023



Source: Oakland Business Tax & License Application, 2023

To address these disparities, the City integrates racial equity indicators into its business support strategies, prioritizing interventions that reach historically underserved entrepreneurs and business corridors. This includes targeted outreach, expanded access to culturally competent technical assistance, and partnerships with community-based lenders and support organizations. Some examples include the City's work to evolve its procurement programs to expand access for small, local, and underrepresented businesses, and to coordinate business outreach around local

contracting opportunities. EWDD's Corridor Safety and Ambassador Program focuses investment in high-priority commercial corridors to support businesses in areas of the City where there has been historic underinvestment.

Actions and Sub-actions

A. Support a clean, safe, and inviting place to do business

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

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

B. Assist businesses by helping to navigate City services

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

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

C. Provide regular opportunities for businesses to engage with the City

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

- Expand EWDD's business outreach by attending and participating in regular meetings of the business community, such as meetings of BIDs, corridor and sector business associations and chambers of commerce to share and receive information, maintaining active digital communication, and providing timely responses to business inquiries and requests for help.
- In coordination with the Mayor's Office, convene regular business roundtables to gather input and improve City services in high-priority commercial areas.
- Connect businesses with City partners to share resources across multiple platforms and in different languages (e.g., Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic) to ensure access to information for non-English speaking business owners.
- EWDD will support other City departments and partners to pursue projects and pilots that provide opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses to demonstrate leadership in growing sectors (i.e., creative industries and climate).

D. Assist with site identification and business location services

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

- In coordination with the Planning and Building Department, establish a real estate working group that includes key players in the real estate market, including local brokers and property owners and chambers of commerce to help connect new businesses to space in Oakland.
- Assist businesses with property searches, relocation, acquisition, ownership advice, and support, and connect businesses with brokers active in Oakland.
- Using the budget approved in the 25-27 Biennial Budget, explore a program that seeks to fill vacancies by offering temporary permits and flexible uses for ground-floor sites and community facilities.

E. Connect businesses with capital and financial assistance

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

- Leverage private, Federal, and State investments to attract capital to Oakland. For example, in 2024, Oakland semiconductor startup Akash Systems was approved for more than \$68 million in grants and tax credits through the CHIPS Act. This includes \$18.2 million in proposed direct funding and \$50 million in combined federal and California state tax credits. With this federal investment, EWDD can support related business attraction,

workforce development, and supply-chain opportunities that strengthen Oakland's role in the semiconductor sector.

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

DRAFT

Goal 3

Build Oakland's Workforce

Opportunity

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

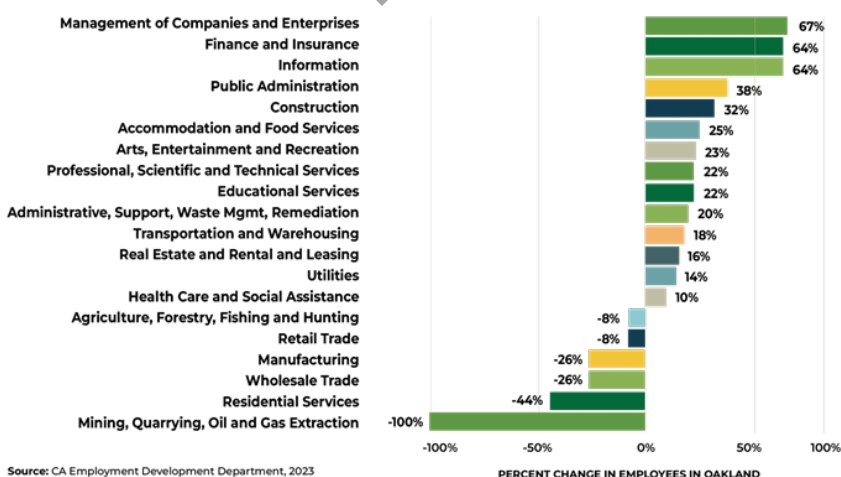
Existing Conditions

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

Meanwhile, consistent growth in construction, accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation reflects the City's steady housing and population growth which has sustained the ongoing recovery in creative and service-based industries. This diversity strengthens Oakland's labor market and creates opportunities across a wide range of education and skill levels.

Figure 6 below documents the sectors that have grown the most in terms of employment: Management of Companies and Enterprises (67% growth between 2010 and 2023), Finance and Insurance (64% growth), and Public Administration (38% growth).

Figure 6: Change in Employment by Sector, 2010 - 2023



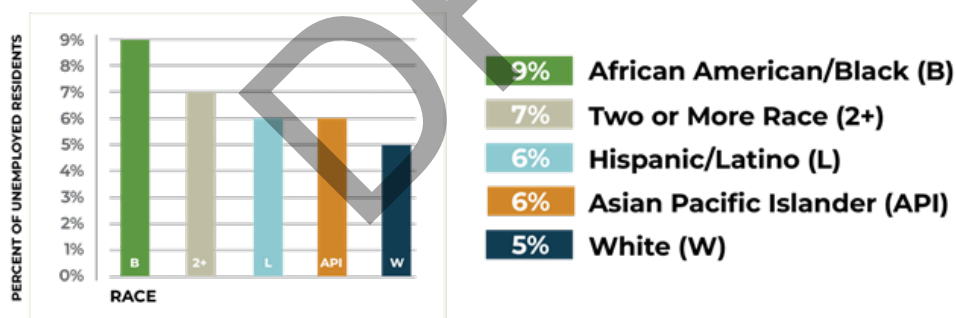
The Oakland Workforce Development Board (OWDB) plays a central role in connecting job seekers with employment pathways while helping local employers meet their workforce needs. Guided by the [High Road Training Partnership \(H RTP\)](#) model, the OWDB advances programs that prioritize both economic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

Racial Equity Indicators

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

As shown in **Figure 7**, which documents unemployment by race, Black Oaklanders are more likely to be unemployed than any other race, while White Oaklanders are the least likely race to be unemployed. These inequities are rooted in systemic barriers such as education access, discriminatory hiring practices, and gaps in transportation, childcare, and housing stability.

Figure 7: Unemployment by Race, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S2301, 2023

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

growing sectors, such as IT, by equipping them with in-demand skills and linking them directly to employer networks.

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

Actions and Sub-actions

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

A. Deliver job training and employment services for adults and youth to increase workforce participation and support sustained employment for Oakland residents

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

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

B. Enhance business and employer engagement to create training programs that intentionally open employment opportunities for residents

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

- Convene regular business roundtables in priority sectors such as clean energy and electrification, healthcare, logistics, transportation, and technology and responsible AI.
- Collaborate with employers to design and scale demand-driven training, apprenticeships, internships, and career advancement pathways.
- Expand on-the-job training incentives and promote hiring tax credits to encourage inclusive hiring and upskilling.

- Deliver rapid response services to assist companies and workers affected by layoffs or plant closures.

C. Establish partnerships to advance equity and ensure Oaklanders have opportunities for economic security, especially those living in geographic areas dealing with the most community stressors

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

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

D. Implement special workforce innovation initiatives to coordinate with education, business, and workforce partners to improve employment support services

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

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

Goal 4

Invest in Places

Opportunity

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

Existing Conditions

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

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

Figures 8, 9, and 10 present rent and vacancy trend data from 2010 through 2024 for three primary real estate classes: retail, office, and industrial.

Office

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

Industrial

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

Retail

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

Figure 8: Office Rent and Vacancy Data, 2010 – 2024

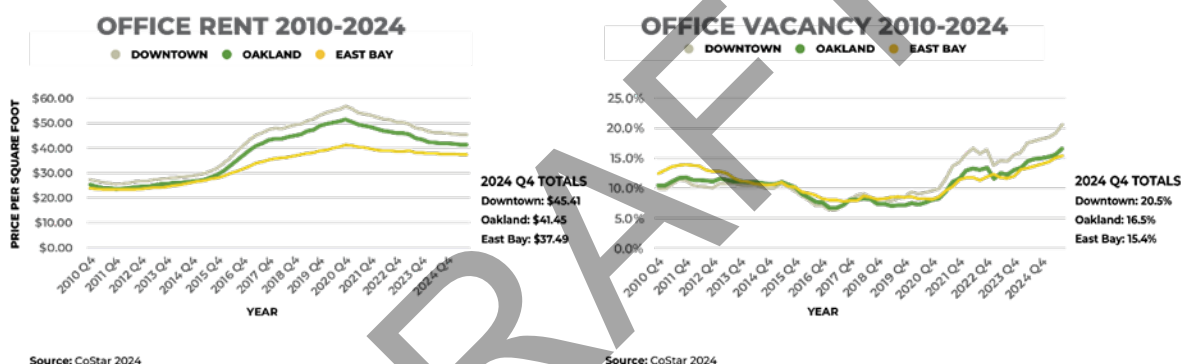


Figure 9: Industrial Rent and Vacancy Data, 2010 – 2024

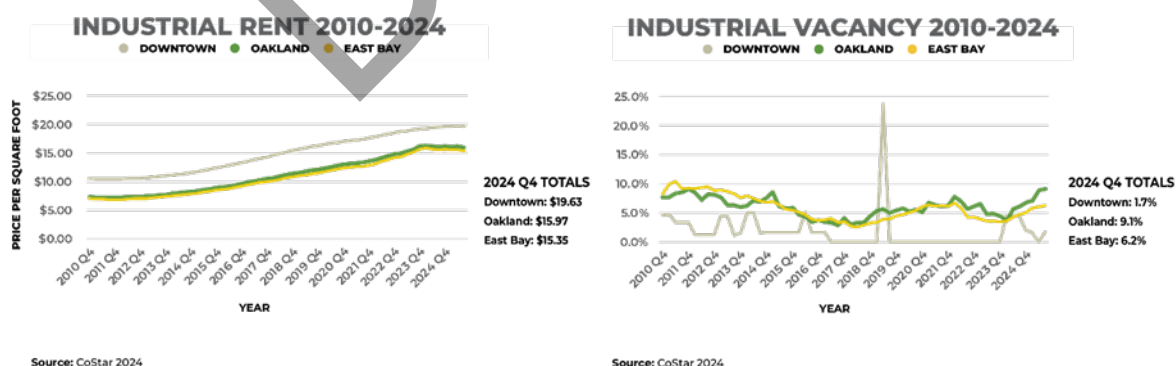
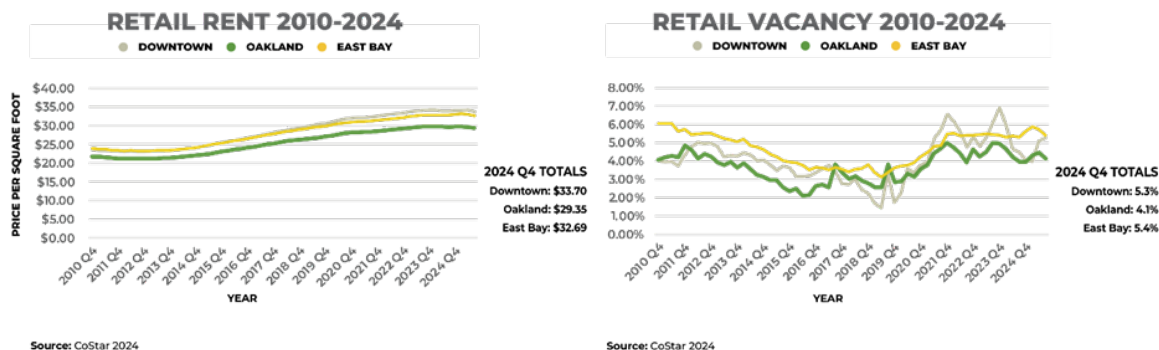


Figure 10: Retail Rent and Vacancy Data, 2010 – 2024



Racial Equity Indicators

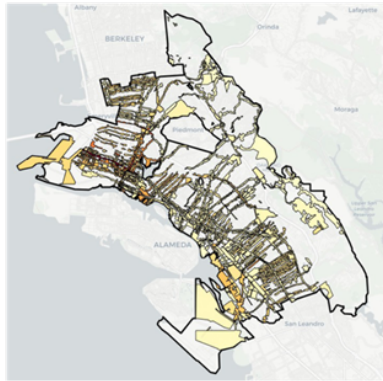
Oakland's economic geography reflects a legacy of racialized policies, including redlining, urban renewal, and decades of underinvestment, that have disproportionately harmed Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color.

In addition to downtown, neighborhood business corridors are also key to Oakland's economic strength. Many neighborhoods now benefit from increased residential density, helping local businesses grow near where people live. Investing in business corridors ensures that residents and workers have access to essential goods and services such as retail, groceries, financial institutions, and wellness providers.

However, some corridors, especially in areas of historical underinvestment, continue to face high vacancy rates and public safety challenges. Data from the City's 311 system shows that the majority of complaints relate to illegal dumping, vandalism, and abandoned vehicles, all of which directly affect small business vitality and contribute to vacancies.

Figure 11 shows where businesses and employees are located in Oakland using data from the 2023 Business Tax and License Applications and the CA Economic Development Department. EWDD is identifying business corridors alongside the data for vacancy, crime, illegal dumping and similar 311 complaints, which enables the City to determine Priority Business Corridors. In these areas, a racially equitable strategy prioritizes allocation of resources into communities most affected by historic harm.

Figure 11: Oakland Business Corridors, 2023



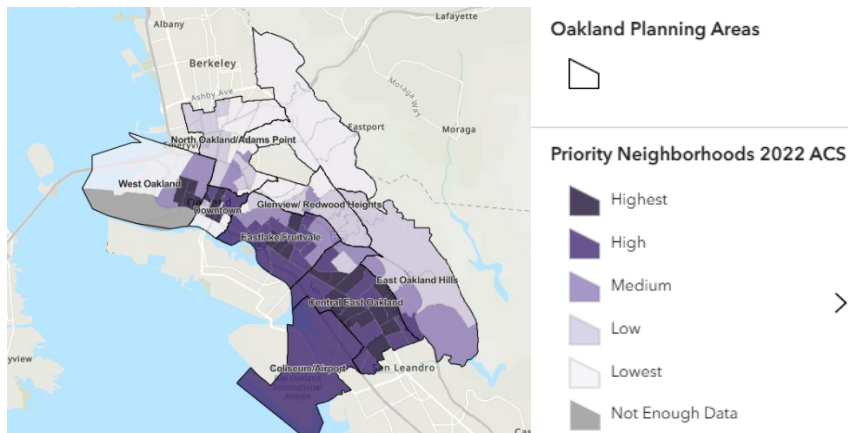
Rank	Street Name	Business Count
1	Broadway	613
2	MacArthur Boulevard	612
3	International Boulevard	565
4	Grand Avenue	535
5	8th Street	452
6	9th Street	423
7	10th Street	408
8	3rd Street	308
9	Foothill Boulevard	304
10	14th Street	299
11	41st Street	287
12	17th Street	272
13	7th Street	271
14	Franklin Street	270
15	50th Avenue	269

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

Merchant groups are actively working with the City to address these issues through storefront activation, security improvements, and beautification efforts. Focused strategies from EWDD aim to reduce vacancies, support small businesses, and improve corridor safety and functionality. Locating business corridors provides an economic view within the Priority Neighborhoods identified by analysis from Oakland's Department of Transportation (DoT). **Figure 12** is OakDOT's Geographic Equity Toolbox Priority Neighborhoods map. This residential data from the Census shows areas in Oakland with higher needs. The Toolbox is comprised of these Census variables:

1. People of Color
2. Low-Income Households (<50% Area Median Income)
3. People with Disability
4. Seniors 65 Years and Over
5. Single Parent Families
6. Severely Rent-Burdened Households
7. Low Educational Attainment (less than a bachelor's degree)

Figure 12: OakDOT Geographic Equity Indicators – Priority Neighborhoods Layer



Actions and Sub-actions

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

A. Enable the conditions for private sector development including working with businesses and developers to improve the business climate

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

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

B. Pursue public/private real estate development on public property to catalyze positive change and investment

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

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

C. Manage the City's real estate assets to generate revenue and meet community needs

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

- Generate revenue through strategic leasing, licensing, asset management, and the disposition of City-owned properties.
- Seek temporary uses on City-owned land to create activity and provide community benefits and services until sites are ready for permanent development.

- In coordination with other departments, explore public financing tools to address capital improvement needs for City real estate assets.

D. Work with local businesses, property owners, and corridor business associations to steward clean, safe, active places and spaces

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

- Convene and/or meet regularly with local business organizations and other stakeholders to establish a management plan for their business corridor. For example, EWD currently works with the Uptown Arts and Entertainment District businesses.
- Develop business corridor stabilization and activation plans with community partners in High and Highest priority neighborhoods, including the Hegenberger Avenue corridor.
- Leverage partnerships, City services, and public financing tools to help implement community-led corridor development strategies.
- Implement City policies and programs that help improve business corridors, including business incentives, corridor ambassadors, Entertainment Zones, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

Goal 5

Support Oakland's Artistic, Cultural, and Social Activities

Opportunity

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

Existing Conditions

Oakland's creative economy is both a major economic driver and a cultural asset. Local creatives generate jobs, attract tourism, and stimulate spending across sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. Based on findings reported by CVL Economics in the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Economic Indicators Report, for every 100 jobs in the creative economy, an additional 14 jobs are supported, and \$21 million is contributed to the regional economy each year.³

Figure 13: Economic and Fiscal Impact of Oakland's Creative Economy



³ Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Oakland/East Bay Economic Indicators Report, prepared by CVL Economics, March 2025, page 40.

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

While the broader East Bay region saw a 1.6% decline in Arts and Entertainment employment and a 5% drop in Accommodation and Food Services jobs between 2020 and 2024,⁴ Oakland's creative sectors have shown strength over the long term. From 2010 to 2023, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation employment increased by 23%, and jobs in Accommodation and Food Services rose by 25%. Regional forecasts anticipate a 57% increase in arts and recreation jobs by 2030, potentially adding over 14,000 new positions.⁵

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

Racial Equity Considerations

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

Equitable place-making must also recognize and support cultural preservation as a form of economic resilience, ensuring that Oakland's neighborhoods retain their identity, histories, and creative businesses. Cultural anchors - such as legacy businesses, community institutions, and cultural venues - are essential to neighborhood vitality and economic inclusion. Oakland's economic development strategies must support these assets by stabilizing rents, providing flexible space for artistic and cultural uses, and enabling ownership models that keep cultural wealth in the community. Partners like the Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) and Community Vision are critical. By embedding cultural preservation into place-based planning, the City can help ensure

⁴ Ibid., page 25.

⁵ [State Economic Blueprint](#), page 59, February 2025.

that economic growth strengthens - not displaces - the communities that have long defined Oakland's identity.

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

Actions and Sub-actions

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

A. Invest in culture, arts, and creative industries

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

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

B. Facilitate spaces for community connection and celebration

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

- Promote inclusive and accessible community gatherings by streamlining access to local venues, parks, and outdoor spaces.
- Coordinate with City departments to issue timely permits for events, festivals, and film productions.

- Provide planning guidance and link arts and cultural organizations to technical assistance and available public resources.
- In coordination with CAST and other community partners, EWD will support the preservation of cultural spaces through site matching, promotion of temporary uses, and referral to stabilization services.
- Develop and implement a framework for Cultural and Entertainment Districts in alignment with the Culture of Belonging plan and the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan.

C. Support local business and vendor participation in cultural and social activities

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

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

D. Increase economic development through activation of parks, streets, and vacant spaces

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

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

Implementation Matrix Summary

Goal and Action	Performance Metrics	Lead	Partners	Dates
1. Attract and Grow Key Industries				
A. Pursue sector-specific strategies to catalyze investment and support growth	increase in # of businesses and employment in key sectors	EWDD	PBD; GOBiz; East Bay EDA; Port; Chambers	Ongoing
B. Develop a business attraction plan to promote Oakland's assets and attract investment	availability of digital assets to be used for promotion	EWDD	PBD; OPW; OakDoT; Visit Oakland; Chambers; Real Estate Brokers; Bay Area Host Committee; Transit Agencies; County	2026/27 and updated annually thereafter
C. Build partnerships to grow workforce development opportunities in key sectors to ensure equitable access to good jobs and growing wages for all Oaklanders	# of employer advisory councils; # of industry-specific events and collaborative forums; # of individuals employed in key industries, following workforce interventions	EWDD	Education Partners; Workforce Service Providers; Business Associations	2025/26 and ongoing
2. Sustain and Support Businesses				
A. Support a clean, safe, and inviting place to do business	stability or growth of business license data; # of key business corridors with active business associations; long-term vacancy rates; 311 call and response data; OPD crime data	All City Departments	Corridor business associations	Ongoing
B. Assist businesses by helping to navigate City services	# of businesses assisted	EWDD	PBD; OakDot; OPW	Ongoing
C. Provide regular opportunities for businesses to engage with the City	# of business partnership events; # of businesses participating; increased trust of City by businesses	EWDD	Mayor's Office; CAO; PBD; Business associations and business support organizations	Ongoing
D. Assist with site identification and business location services	# of sites matched, # of new commercial permits, # of businesses receiving concierge assistance with permitting, planning, building, and site selection	EWDD	PBD; Real Estate Brokers; Corridor Business Associations	Ongoing
E. Connect businesses with capital and financial assistance	# of businesses assisted w referrals; # of grants, loans received	EWDD	Banks; FinTech Firms; Community Development Financing Institutions (CDFI)	Ongoing

Goal and Action	Performance Metrics	Lead	Partners	Dates
3. Build Oakland's Workforce				
A. Deliver job training and employment services for adults and youth to increase workforce participation and support sustained employment for Oakland residents	# of WFD participants; # of trainers	EWDD	Training Community-Based Organizations; Employers	2025/26 and ongoing
B. Enhance business and employer engagement to create training programs that intentionally open employment opportunities for residents	# of employers engaged; # of placements; # of placements at 13 weeks	EWDD	Training Community-Based Organizations; Employers	2025/26 and ongoing
C. Establish partnerships to advance equity and ensure Oaklanders have opportunities for economic security, especially those living in geographic areas dealing with the most community stressors	# of partnerships with community and economic development orgs; # of programs for target groups	EWDD	PBD; Education and Supported Housing partners	2025/26 and ongoing
D. Implement special workforce innovation initiatives to coordinate with education, business, and partners to improve employment support services	Value of total non-WIOA funding; # of programs funded; # of partners; # of participants	EWDD	OFCY; DVP; Economic Development Organizations; Community-Based Organizations	2026/27
4. Invest In Places				
A. Enable the conditions for private sector development including working with businesses and developers to improve the business climate	Permit counter processing times; # of instances of site/concept assistance provided; # landlord/tenant referrals; reduction in vacant sqft over time	EWDD and PBD	Real Estate community; Corridor business organizations	2025/26 and ongoing
B. Pursue public/private real estate development on public property to catalyze positive change and investment	# of permanent affordable housing units advanced on City-owned land; # of commercial sq.ft. advanced on City-owned land	EWDD and PBD	HCD; Developer Community	2025/26 and ongoing
C. Manage the City's real estate assets to generate revenue and meet community needs	# of active emergency housing programs on public sites; # of leases/licenses under active management	EWDD and HCD	Agency Partners, Housing Partners	2025/26 and ongoing
D. Work with local businesses and property owners to steward clean, safe, active places and spaces	stability or growth of business license data; # of key business corridors with active business associations; amount of grant funding made available for clean and safe programs; reduced vacancies over time	EWDD	Corridor business associations and individual businesses	2025/26 and ongoing

Goal and Action	Performance Metrics	Lead	Partners	Dates
5. Support Oakland's Artistic, Cultural, and Social Activities				
A. Invest in culture, arts, and creative industries	# of cultural funding grants issued; # of cultural organizations served; # of public art projects under management	EWDD	Mayor's Office; philanthropic partners; Oakland artists and culture keepers	Ongoing as resources allow
B. Facilitate spaces for community connection and celebration	# of special event and entertainment venue permits issued	EWDD	OPRYD; OPW (KOCB); OPD; OFD; local event producers	Ongoing
C. Support local business and vendor participation in cultural and social activities	# of businesses supported for events from vendors to brick and mortars	EWDD	Corridor business associations and individual businesses	Ongoing
D. Increase economic development through activation of parks, streets, and vacant spaces	# of repurposed sites, including parking lots	EWDD	OPRYD; OPW (KOCB); OPD; OFD; corridor business associations	Ongoing