

# Final Community Plan EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EAST OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE



“ *Residents are eager to shift the thought patterns that have stifled these neighborhoods in order to create a model for progressive positive change that fosters walking, biking, and driving down safe, nicely paved, and well-lit streets especially for our children and elderly residents. With our new vision; **we anticipate a robust, climate resilient, equitable, economically flourishing community** saturated with invigorating cultural based business, manicured greenery, and fresh organic vegetation. Also, to imbue the area with youth focused activities and jobs, respected and patronized entrepreneurial endeavors ...*

*It's about change for the better! **Moving from redlining to revitalized, from traumatization to triumph, from divestiture to re-invested, from poverty to prosperous and progressive profits. From drug infested to drug free. From dangerous to "in-demand." From homeless to housed. From the illusion of ownership to actual ownership. From healing to healthy, striving to thriving, inequitable to equitable and from a vision to reality!*** ”

*-Cynthia Arrington, EONI Partner and Sobrante Park Resident Action Council President*



## INTRODUCTION

In 2017, twelve East Oakland neighborhood organizations formed the East Oakland Neighborhood Initiative (EONI) to **develop a new vision for East Oakland neighborhoods historically impacted by redlining, injustice, and divestment.** The ‘Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors’ Community Plan, supported by California’s Transformational Climate Communities Program, is the result of a year-long community engagement process that focused on identifying community concerns and priorities and co-developing projects to address those concerns and priorities. The ‘Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors’ Community Plan **provides direction for implementing managed neighborhood change without displacement and gentrification.**



## BACKGROUND

In the Fall of 2017, the EONI partners invited the City of Oakland to partner on the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Planning Grant, a grant program administered by the State of California's Strategic Growth Council and the Department of Conservation. After co-developing and submitting an application to the program, the East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative – a partnership comprised of twelve community organizations and the City of Oakland – was selected as the recipient of a Transformative Climate Communities Planning Grant in 2019.

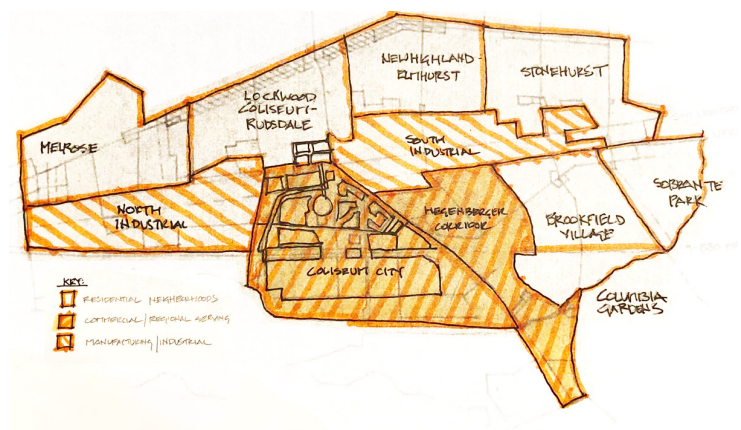
**The grant financed a year-long, community-led planning cycle for six neighborhoods in Deep East Oakland:** Melrose, Stonehurst, Sobrante Park, Highland/Elmhurst, Brookfield/Columbia Gardens, and Coliseum/Rudsdale/Lockwood/Havenscourt.

The East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative has five key goals that shaped the planning process: **Reduce greenhouse gases; Prevent Displacement; Improve public health; Build economic empowerment; and Plan by and with the community.** With these guiding principles, EONI partners hosted over twenty community meetings between November of 2018 and June of 2019. This extensive community outreach helped produce a final Community Plan that memorializes resident goals, concerns, and priorities for their community. **This Community Plan envisions a more equitable future for East Oakland,** and identifies specific next steps and projects that address the transportation, housing, workforce, and environmental challenges faced by East Oakland residents.



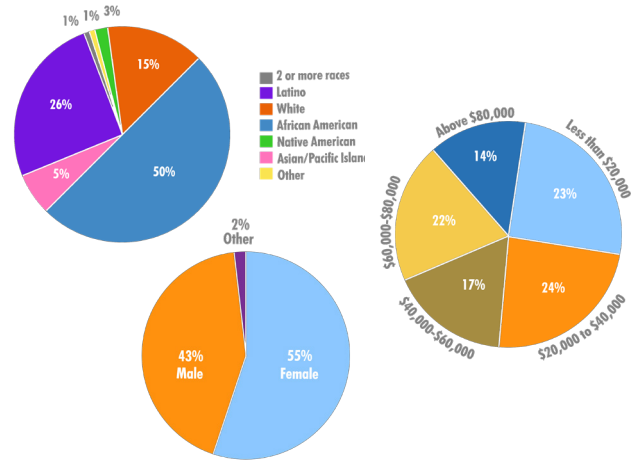
## PROCESS

The City of Oakland, as well as the East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative community partners, has many partially-developed plans and projects within the EONI target area. These projects have reached varying stages of visioning and planning, but are lacking either funding, design development, or permits and approvals. The East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative team utilized these projects as the foundation for their outreach, as they are closer to meeting shovel-readiness requirements for potential funders; they also serve as good starting points for conversations about urban greening, affordable housing, watershed management, transportation, and other EONI priority areas. **EONI partners developed a comprehensive list of these tentatively-planned projects, and mapped them out to show where they lie within the project area.**





## Meeting Attendee Demographics



The East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative community engagement process consisted of a series of three meetings in each of the six target neighborhoods, along with comprehensive kick-off and closing events, for a total of twenty community meetings. **Community meeting participants were largely representative of East Oakland’s population** – over seventy-five percent of attendees identify as African-American or Latinx, and sixty-four percent of attendees have an annual household income of less than \$60,000.



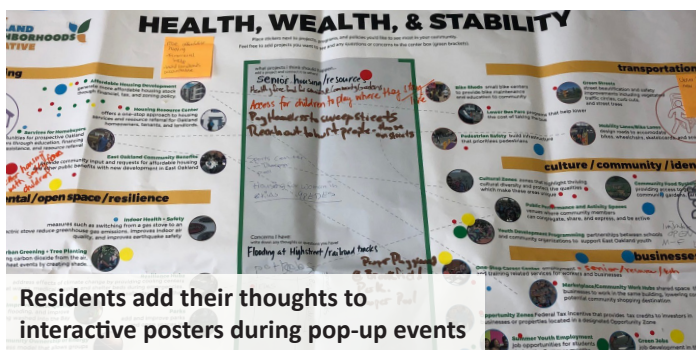
Youth share how they use neighborhood parks and share their vision for the future

The first meeting in the series focused on utilizing personal experiences to build asset maps, while participants of the second meeting reviewed the existing projects map, identifying points of alignment with their priorities for their community, as well as gaps. At the third and final meeting of the series, participants ranked the projects they would like to see in their neighborhoods – both those that were ideated prior to EONI, and those that arose from discussion at previous community meetings.



Community members map neighborhood assets

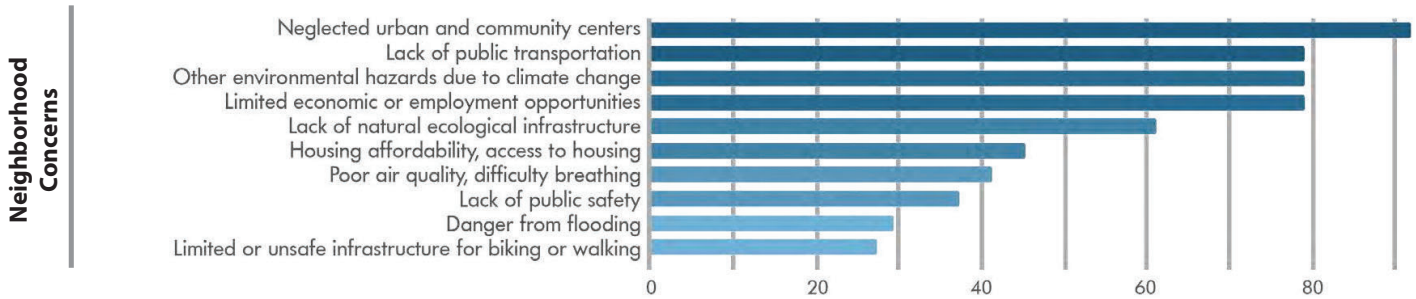
In order to reach a broader range of participants, especially groups who do not traditionally attend community meetings, the third meeting was conducted as a series of “pop-ups.” In this format, EONI partners brought outreach materials – surveys, project descriptions, development information – to locations where East Oakland residents were likely to congregate to give them an opportunity to participate in our planning process. **This allowed us to reach people who may be too busy to attend our community meetings**, or were not initially intrigued by the description of our work. We “popped up” at gas stations, schools, block parties, and existing community meetings. Our “pop-up” meetings provided excellent data, and allowed us to engage with diverse populations without the additional burden of organizing traditional community meetings.



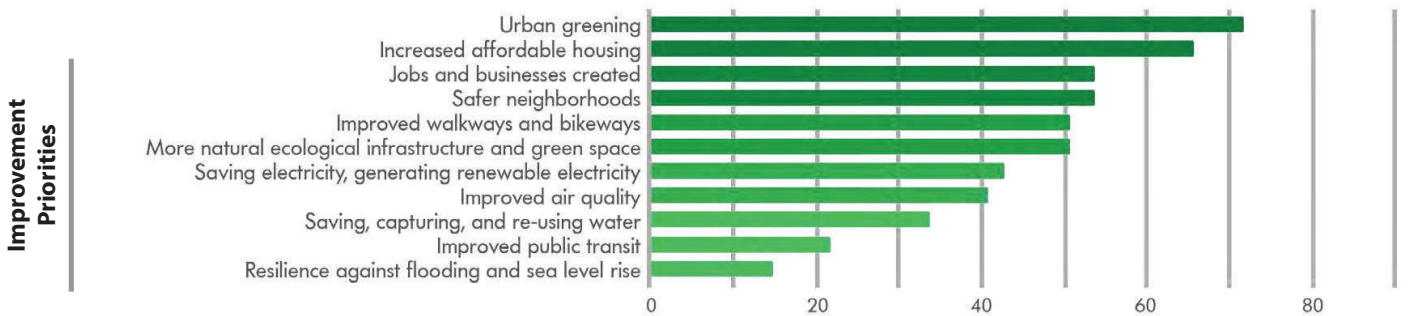
Residents add their thoughts to interactive posters during pop-up events

# FINDINGS AND RESULTS

As another channel for input, surveys of participants were carried out at community meetings. The following chart shows the primary concerns expressed by EONI meeting attendees.



Neglected community centers are pre-eminent, as is limited employment, lack of public transportation and other climate hazards. EONI meeting attendees expressed the following improvement priorities.



Urban greening and affordable housing lead the list of improvement priorities, with public safety, job creation, and walkways/bikeways dominating the top half of the list.

Through these meetings, as well as the 200+ surveys that were collected over the course of the outreach process, the East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative was able to generate a clear picture of resident concerns and priorities. **The top concerns of East Oakland residents were neglected urban centers, lack of public transportation, environmental hazards due to climate change, and limited economic opportunities** – all of which speak to a general sentiment that East Oakland has been excluded from the broader socioeconomic fabric of the Bay Area. The main priorities that residents noted they would like to see in their communities are urban greening, affordable housing, and increased job opportunities.

East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative community partners worked with City of Oakland staff to identify specific projects that would advance the priorities and address the concerns identified by East Oakland residents throughout the community engagement process. Our final Community Plan identifies topics in each of the five EONI content areas – **Healthy Surroundings, Housing is a Human Right, Safe and Accessible Transportation, Grow Community Wealth, and Arts & Culture** – that were consistently identified as priorities throughout the community engagement process. We also identified specific projects for each content area, and each of the six EONI neighborhoods, that would advance key priorities and address key concerns.



## HEALTHY SURROUNDINGS

- » More greenspace, including reopening closed parks and putting vacant lots to higher uses
- » Intentional urban greening and tree planting for purposes of shade and aesthetics. In addition, trees take carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) out of the air, and removing CO<sub>2</sub> is an important aspect of successfully addressing climate change.
- » Surface water quality/creek restoration. Many EONI residents share a connection with water, whether it's Lake Merritt, formerly accessible urban creeks or the Martin Luther King Shoreline, along the Bay.
- » Cleaner streets and neighborhoods

## HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

- » Strengthen policies to prevent displacement of existing East Oakland residents
- » Ensure real estate development and amenities serve existing community needs
- » Homelessness is a primary concern
- » Affordable housing can be an asset that serves as an anchor for communities

## SAFE & ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

- » Repair streets through regular maintenance
- » Proactive fixing of potholes
- » Safer routes to walk and bike

## GROW COMMUNITY WEALTH

- » Local small businesses and business corridors need support
- » Addressing crime and fostering a safe walking environment is crucial to supporting local businesses
- » Investments in local green energy production can create jobs
- » There is a need for youth summer employment opportunities

## ARTS & CULTURE

- » There is a desire and need for greater connectivity among area residents
- » Welcoming spaces to meet like community events, street fairs, and local restaurants all contribute to a thriving connected community
- » Grant programs can support local artists
- » Additional and improved spaces for public performances are needed



Our Community Plan concludes by identifying ongoing City of Oakland initiatives and plans that can continue to support East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative priorities. The Coliseum Area Specific Plan, 2016 Housing Action Plan, Oakland Economic Development Plan, and Community-Based Transportation Plan, among others, contain guidelines and policies for advancing housing affordability, climate resilience, transit accessibility, and other goals that are at the forefront of EONI as well as the Transformative Climate Communities program. This community plan serves to memorialize stakeholder visions for the future of East Oakland, and can be used to inform further development, programming, and planning in the area.