



Oakland 2045

Oakland Environmental Justice Element

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Executive Summary

Historical and ongoing governmental and industrial practices have led to, and continue to generate, racially inequitable outcomes, and longstanding environmental injustices in Oakland. This General Plan outlines actions to work toward undoing the impacts of these past practices and create a fair and just city. An environmental justice approach seeks to rectify these issues, improving the environmental health of those most harmed by pollution burdens and impacted by historic disinvestment and disenfranchisement by investing in these communities to create opportunities that will allow its residents to live long, healthy lives.

This document, the Environmental Justice Element of the City of Oakland's General Plan, serves as the foundation for achieving equity and environmental justice when planning for future growth and development in Oakland. The Environmental Justice Element identifies communities that are disproportionately impacted by inequitable and unjust environmental harms, and proposes goals, policies, and objectives to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in these communities, referred to as Environmental Justice Communities.

This document builds upon Oakland's current regulatory setting for equity and environmental justice, including Oakland Municipal Code Section 2.29.170, which specifies that "the City of Oakland will intentionally integrate, on a Citywide basis, the principles of 'fair and just' in all the City does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities," as well as City Council Resolution 89249: Declaring Racism A Public Health Crisis, which states "That the City of Oakland declares racism a public health crisis and recognizes the severe impact of racism on the well-being of Oakland residents and the City overall."

California law requires that each city and county adopt a general plan to guide its physical growth and development. A jurisdiction's general plan is its official policy document to create a blueprint for the future of the jurisdiction and guide its development. In California, all cities must adopt a General Plan composed of at least seven elements, including either an Environmental Justice Element or Environmental Justice goals and policies integrated into related elements. Because environmental justice is a cross-cutting topic, Oakland has chosen to adopt a standalone

Environmental Justice Element, while integrating environmental justice strategies into policies, goals, and actions across other elements of the General Plan. This approach will enable the City to coordinate interdepartmental efforts to effectively address environmental justice and racial equity. The Environmental Justice Element, as do the other General Plan Elements, uses an equity lens throughout its analysis and focuses on burdened census tracts in the development of its goals, policies, and actions. Therefore, the Environmental Justice Element is rooted in an equity framework in accordance with the General Plan's Vision Statement and Guiding Principles.

The Environmental Justice Element contains nine chapters. Following the introduction and history sections, the Environmental Justice Element summarizes baseline conditions within Oakland's communities through the lens of six environmental factors. In general, each of these six chapters contains an overview of an environmental condition, a summary of disparities and communities vulnerable to the factor, and a set of goals and policies specific to that factor. The communities that are highlighted in

each chapter are the highest-scoring census tracts identified by the Environmental Justice Communities screening analysis and Environmental Justice Element Racial Equity Impact Assessment processes as the places that experience the greatest disparities and/or vulnerabilities. Chapter 9 concludes with a comprehensive table of actions to achieve the goals and policies set forth in the preceding chapters. Below are brief descriptions of the contents under each chapter:

- **Chapter 1, “Introduction,”** presents the background and purpose of the Environmental Justice Element, including statutory requirements. It also outlines the City of Oakland’s process and community engagement efforts undertaken to develop the Element. Further, the chapter outlines the racial equity goals of the Environmental Justice Element and considers the Element’s relationship to other elements of the City’s General Plan and guiding principles.
- **Chapter 2, “Environmental Racism and Health Inequities in Oakland,”** provides an overview of the historical development and planning decisions of Oakland which have shaped current conditions of environmental disparities. This chapter includes a description of health inequities that have resulted from past planning decisions and defines Oakland-specific Environmental Justice Communities (disadvantaged communities).
- **Chapter 3, “Reducing Pollution Exposure and Improving Air Quality,”** analyzes the pollution burden, especially on sensitive land uses, in Oakland from air pollution, water contamination, hazardous materials and toxics, and illegal dumping.
- **Chapter 4, “Safe, Healthy, and Affordable Homes,”** details housing disparities in the City of Oakland, including code enforcement, age of housing stock, and indoor air quality.
- **Chapter 5, “Expanding Healthy Food Access,”** analyzes Oakland’s food network, including availability of food outlets, food availability, and food quality.
- **Chapter 6, “Equitable Public Facilities,”** details the distribution of and investment in Oakland’s public facilities, such as infrastructure, school facilities, parks, and transportation and emergency services.
- **Chapter 7, “Promoting Physical Activity,”** analyzes the barriers to physical activity and health in the city, such as mobility and safety, park access maintenance, and urban forest and greening.
- **Chapter 8, “Engaged Communities,”** details the City of Oakland’s community engagement efforts and challenges experienced, including an overview of the community engagement spectrum, linguistic isolation, internet access, and employment.
- **Chapter 9, “Implementation Actions and Programs,”** provides a summary table of the goals, policies, and actions relevant to each of the environmental factors that address the unique needs of Environmental Justice Communities as identified in this Element.





1. Introduction

Oakland strives to be a city where all neighborhoods thrive and community members have what they need to lead healthy and productive lives. This includes clean air, land, and water; quality, affordable housing located near jobs and amenities; an enjoyable, accessible network of parks, recreation, and community facilities; access to nutritious food; and other community assets distributed equitably throughout the city. To achieve this goal, the city must respond effectively to the resounding consequences of institutional and systemic discrimination that are reflected in Oakland's uneven geography of opportunity. This has largely meant that predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color unfairly and disproportionately experience higher exposure to pollution, greater negative health impacts, and less access to health-promoting resources.

To chart a path forward toward a more equitable city, Oakland has created its first Environmental Justice Element (EJ Element) for the Oakland 2045 General Plan Update. The Environmental Justice movement arose to address our history of unjust governmental actions, find remedies to disproportionate impacts, and builds decision-making power among groups most affected by

these harms. Consistent with State requirements, the EJ Element addresses community-identified environmental justice issues related to reducing pollution exposure and improving air quality; promoting safe, healthy, and affordable homes; providing equitable public facilities; expanding healthy food access; promoting physical activity; improving civic engagement; and prioritizing improvements and programs that meet the needs of Environmental Justice Communities (EJ Communities).



1.1 PURPOSE AND REQUIREMENTS

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The City of Oakland is updating its General Plan, a visionary blueprint for the City's future over the next 20 years. Senate Bill (SB) 1000,¹ the Planning for Healthy Communities Act, requires general plans to "identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities" by means that include, but are not limited to:

- Reducing pollution exposure, including the improvement of air quality;
- Promoting equitable access to public facilities,² healthy food, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity;
- Reducing barriers to inclusive engagement and participation in the public decision-making process; and
- Prioritizing improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

¹ SB 1000 is an act to amend Section 65302 of the California Government Code.

² As defined in subdivision (d) of California Government Code Section 66000, "public facilities" includes public improvements, public services, and community amenities.

How are “Disadvantaged Communities” defined?

SB 1000 defines a “disadvantaged community” as “an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.”³

Further, SB 1000 defines “Low-Income” as “an area with household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093.

What is Equity?

In Oakland, equity means all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to attain their full potential. It means that identity—such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or expression—has no detrimental effect on the distribution of resources, opportunities, and outcomes for Oakland’s residents. Equity differs from equality, which focuses on giving everyone the same thing, regardless of outcomes.

³ Leyva, Connie M. SB-1000 Land use: general plans: safety and environmental justice., Government Code § 65302 (2016). https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB1000



SB 1000 requires that jurisdictions with “disadvantaged communities” adopt environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives as either a stand-alone Environmental Justice Element or as a set of objectives and policies integrated into other elements. In recognition of the cross-cutting nature of environmental justice topics and the interaction between various elements of the General Plan, the City of Oakland has opted to pursue a combination of both options by creating a standalone element as well as interweaving environmental justice into the policies, goals, and actions of all elements.

While State law uses the term “disadvantaged communities,” the City of Oakland has opted to use the term “Environmental Justice Communities,” (or “EJ Communities”) in line with recommendations from the California Environmental Justice Alliance.⁴ This is based on the recognition that, in addition to identifying the problems and areas that are unfairly impacted (i.e., “disadvantaged”) by cumulative burdens, gaining equitable access to environmental benefits, investments, and other resources for low-income communities and communities of color is also an important aspect of environmental justice.

RACIAL EQUITY GOALS FOR THE CITY OF OAKLAND + PREVIOUS ONGOING EFFORTS

A guiding principle of Oakland’s General Plan update is to advance the City’s mission to “intentionally integrate, on a City-wide basis, the principle of ‘fair and just’ in all the City does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities.”⁵ This means working to eliminate the root causes of inequity, understanding barriers to achieving greater equity in communities, and working with these communities to develop

⁴ California Environmental Justice Alliance/PlaceWorks, SB 1000 Implementation Toolkit: Planning for Healthy Communities, October 2017, available for download at <http://www.caleja.org/sb1000-toolkit>.

⁵ Oakland Municipal Code Section 2.29.170.1

solutions for long-term and systemic changes. That process begins by undertaking a full acknowledgment of the systemic racial inequities that have shaped the City of Oakland.

The EJ Element builds on the City’s ongoing efforts to achieve racial equity in Oakland. It is based on the frameworks established by the City’s 2018 Oakland Equity Indicators Report, the 2020 Racial Equity Impact Assessment and Implementation Guide for Oakland’s 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan (ECAP), and other previous studies that have laid the foundation to ensure that the City integrates equity and social justice into its policies, practices, and actions.

In 2016, the City established the Department of Race and Equity to advance racial equity, with a mission “to create a city where diversity has been maintained, racial disparities have been eliminated, and racial equity has been achieved.”⁶ The Department of Race and Equity is particularly concerned with making a difference in the determinants of equity that lead to creation of a fair and just society – including community economic development, community and public safety, the law and justice system, early childhood development, education, equity in City practices, food systems, health and human services, healthy built and natural environments, housing, job training and job opportunities, neighborhoods, and parks and natural resources. The Department of Race and Equity’s goals are:

1. Eliminate systemic causes of racial disparities in City government;
2. Promote inclusion and full participation for all residents of the City; and
3. Reduce race-based disparities in Oakland’s communities.

⁶ City of Oakland, “Learn More About the Department of Race and Equity,” January 20, 2021, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/race-matters>, accessed February 2022.

These goals are based on the following race and equity working assumptions. These assumptions are adapted from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Race Matters Toolkit,⁷ and lay the framework for the Department of Race and Equity's Race and Equity Change Process.⁸

- Race matters: Almost every indicator of well-being shows troubling disparities by race.
- Disparities are created and maintained through institutionalized policies and practices that contain barriers to opportunity.
- It's possible, and only possible, to close equity gaps by using strategies determined through an intentional focus on racial disparities and their root causes.
- If opportunities in all key areas of well-being are equitable, then equitable results will follow.
- Given the right message, analysis, and tools, people will work toward racial equity.

The City recognizes that determinants of equity are the drivers of achieving a fair and just society. Access to the determinants of equity is necessary to have equity for all people regardless of race, class, gender, or language spoken. Inequities are created when barriers exist that prevent individuals and communities from accessing these conditions and reaching their full potential.

⁷ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Matters Toolkit: User's Guide, December 12, 2006, <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-racemattersusersguide-2006.pdf>.

⁸ City of Oakland, "Race & Equity Change Process," August 31, 2018 (last updated January 20, 2021): <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/race-equity-theory-of-change>, accessed December 2022.

RELATIONSHIP TO OAKLAND'S GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The City of Oakland's General Plan Update project is being undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on the creation of this new EJ Element, as well as updates to the Housing and Safety Elements, and preparation of a Racial Equity Impact Assessment, Zoning Code and Map update. Subsequently, Phase 2 will update the Land Use and Transportation; Open Space, Conservation and Recreation; and Noise Elements, as well as create a new Infrastructure and Facilities Element. Phase 2 is slated to be completed by 2025.

Because environmental justice topics touch all aspects of Oaklanders' daily lives, the EJ Element serves as a foundational roadmap to the city becoming a more equitable and healthier place for all. The EJ Element will also inform and give direction to all other elements. The following **Table EJ-1** illustrates the EJ topics

included in Phase 1 elements and those that will inform policies in the Phase 2 elements. This means Phase 2 is an opportunity to develop additional implementation actions and programs, as well as conduct more in-depth analysis on EJ issues as they relate to the Phase 2 elements and refine the policies in the EJ Element with further study. For example, this Element identifies community needs for additional healthy food outlets, solutions to address pedestrian collisions, and ways to reduce impacts of industrial pollution. In addition to the goals and policies in this EJ Element, the Land Use and Transportation Element could include several additional policies and actions to incentivize grocery store development, improve roadway safety through specific design, and address land use compatibility to protect residents and reduce pollution.

While the EJ Element will be adopted in Phase 1, any additional EJ issues or solutions that arise during Phase 2 can be addressed through follow-up amendments to the EJ Element in Phase 2.



Table EJ-1: Relationship of other Element Policies to Environmental Justice Topic Areas

ELEMENT	SAFE AND SANITARY HOUSING	PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS	AIR QUALITY, WATER QUALITY, AND POLLUTION EXPOSURE	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, INVESTMENT PRIORITIZATION, AND IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES
Housing (Phase I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building more affordable housing • Addressing homelessness • Avoiding displacement and keeping people in their homes • Affirmatively furthering fair housing • Improving housing quality issues • Encouraging climate-resilient and earthquake-resilient housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging new affordable housing in higher resource areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging new affordable housing in higher resource areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting against smoke and wildfire • Studying options to provide financing for remediation of contaminated sites • Eliminating methane gas combustion in all homes by 2040 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting residents from displacement • Preserving and improving existing housing stock • Promoting neighborhood stability and health • Provide accountability measures for housing programs
Safety (Phase I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting housing from environmental and human-made hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure • Roadway improvements and auto safety • Augmenting urban greening and urban forestry to mitigate flooding, heat, and pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing exposure to toxic air contaminants • Protecting the public from hazardous materials • Promoting green infrastructure and climate resilience measures • Addressing climate change inequity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging coordination across departments and with community groups to support community safety • Creating a responsive, inclusive emergency response network • Coordinating with existing groups on sea level rise planning
Land Use and Transportation (LUTE) (Phase 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding more locations and facilitating additional housing in Oakland • Creating complete, walkable, bikeable, and transit-accessible neighborhoods, with access to everything people need close to home • Locating homes away from pollution sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making it safer, easier, and more comfortable to walk, bike, and get around without a car • Improving connectivity between important community destinations including public facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating incentives, finding more locations, and facilitating food access in Oakland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring land use compatibility between polluting uses and sensitive populations • Reducing number of cars on the road, improving other means of getting around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaping economic development and future of jobs • Creating cultural districts/ corridors • Creating complete neighborhoods with access to healthcare and health-promoting services and facilities

Table EJ-1: Relationship of other Element Policies to Environmental Justice Topic Areas

ELEMENT	SAFE AND SANITARY HOUSING	PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS	AIR QUALITY, WATER QUALITY, AND POLLUTION EXPOSURE	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, INVESTMENT PRIORITIZATION, AND IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES
Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation (OSCAR) (Phase 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring all housing has adequate, equitable access to open space and recreational facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a comprehensive network of accessible, well-maintained parks and facilities for all neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting and providing access to more community gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserving natural spaces and habitat that also supports cleaner air, water, land, and soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring culturally appropriate parks and recreation programming Investing in existing parks and recreational facilities in EJ Communities
Noise (Phase 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting homes from excessive noise and improving community noise environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring public spaces do not experience excessive noise while also supporting community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing noise pollution and exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizing investments in EJ Communities that reduce noise
Infrastructure and Facilities (Phase 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring homes have adequate, equitable access to quality infrastructure and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting infrastructure financing mechanism for improvements identified in other elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building climate-resilient infrastructure Adding additional green stormwater infrastructure to the City's storm drainage network to clean and infiltrate stormwater Reducing embodied carbon in infrastructure and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizing infrastructure investments in EJ Communities Promoting industries and businesses that support a local circular economy, including repair and reuse businesses/activities

CONNECTION TO VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Environmental Justice Element seeks to create a city where all people have a chance to live a healthy and opportunity-filled life, no matter their identity. The purpose of this Element ties closely with the following portions of the General Plan's Vision Statement:

We are housed, healthy, and safe. Oakland has high-quality accessible housing for everyone who needs it, and each person is housed with dignity. Every neighborhood, home, school, and park has clean air and fresh water, and Oakland's children breathe that fresh, clean air as they run, play, and grow. Cool shade from mature trees, scents of flowers, and sounds of birds chirping and bees buzzing enrich lush residential areas. The city's many grocery stores, farmer's markets, and garden farmstands offer fresh, healthy food to nurture tables and bodies in all different cultural traditions. Oakland's homes and communities have healed from historic violence, and crime-free, clean streets and public spaces are safe for people to walk and linger.

We see ourselves reflected in Oakland. Residents shape and craft the City's processes and outcomes through equitable, transparent, and inclusive processes. The City of Oakland works for its residents, prioritizing their quality-of-life concerns, recognizing and celebrating the contributions of Oakland's multiple distinct communities of color, including Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous peoples, and actively partnering with community groups and residents. Youth, elders, people with disabilities, immigrants, and people who speak different languages actively participate in government and are empowered to craft a city that meets the needs of all residents; community members can see progress towards their goals through continuous monitoring and feel a sense of ownership of their culturally rich city. The built environment responds to and reflects this richness: its public art, play spaces, and buildings showcase Oakland's unique diversity and multicultural histories.



We support meaningful opportunities for residents and businesses to prosper and contribute. Oakland is a beautiful city where people want to live and work, with thriving local businesses and a growing equitable economy that offers high-quality, climate-positive jobs for many different skillsets. New businesses are welcome, and Oakland is a hub for entrepreneurs and companies attracted to Oakland's skilled workforce and its location at the geographic center of the Bay Area. The city is an incubator of new ideas and green solutions, training the next generation of business leaders through robust workforce development programs. Throughout Oakland, flourishing neighborhood commercial streets are lined with trees and greenery, small businesses, restaurants, and services residents patronize daily, and visitors come from all over to enjoy the local food, art, sports, natural environment, and culture.

We are rooted in Oakland and all neighborhoods have what we need to grow. Oakland's public facilities are hubs of community activity, as schools, libraries, parks, and open spaces spark connections and inspiration and bring people together for learning, play, growth, and resilience. Children play in clean, safe and accessible parks and spend summers splashing in sparkling lakes, pools, and beaches. Neighborhoods thrive as small villages within the city, where neighbors can support each other, children grow up, elders age in place, and those that were displaced return to their communities. Diverse arts and culture flourish in Oakland, from art and music to food and festivals, and a sense of belonging permeates public spaces filled with gatherings, celebration, and wellness. As residents walk down the street they can hear many languages, see different places of worship, and feel the swell of many people coming together to build something greater. The City's roots grow stronger every day.

The EJ Element furthers the following General Plan Guiding Principles:

We are housed, healthy, and safe.

1. Facilitate housing production and maintenance throughout Oakland to meet the housing needs of people at all income levels including low- and very-low incomes, workforce and moderate-income households, and shelter for the unhoused.
2. Ensure that every home, neighborhood, school, and park has clean air, water, and land.
3. End community violence and crime through a collaborative and community-led public health approach to violence and healing.
4. Design streets that are safe for walking, biking, rolling, and playing.
5. Ensure that people have access to fresh food, water, and restrooms.
6. Foster quiet neighborhoods that are not impacted by excessive noise from streets, highways, and machinery.

We see ourselves reflected in Oakland.

7. Use equity and results-based accountability to drive decision-making and investments in Oakland, working to overcome intentional and unintentional barriers to fairness, justice, and opportunity.

8. Co-develop solutions with community groups, community members, and the Ohlone people, such that all people of Oakland feel ownership of the city.
9. Fully integrate youth, elders, and persons with disabilities into the community, ensuring that they can access resources and represent their own interests.

We support meaningful opportunities for residents and businesses to prosper and contribute.

10. Promote a thriving and sustainable economy that attracts and retains a diversity of jobs and future-oriented industries that provide opportunities for all Oaklanders.
11. Foster local small businesses as the heartbeat of Oakland.

We are rooted in Oakland and our roots run deep.

12. Strengthen schools, libraries, childcare, and community spaces to support, inspire, and partner with families.
13. Cultivate lush active parks, recreation areas, and quiet green spaces that are accessible, safe, clean, drought-resistant, and well-maintained.
14. Foster Oakland's neighborhoods as villages within the city that enrich residents with resources, culture, and strong social ties.
15. Work toward a reversal of historic and ongoing displacement.
16. Promote Oakland's diverse cultural richness, allowing it to thrive and grow through its people, music, gardens, art, history, murals, languages, food, and festivals.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PLANNING PROCESS

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND RACIAL EQUITY BASELINE REPORT

The City of Oakland prepared an Environmental Justice and Racial Equity Baseline (EJ Baseline Report) to identify and delineate existing social, economic, and environmental disparities by race and geography that can be influenced directly or indirectly by the General Plan. The findings of the EJ Baseline Report serve to establish a baseline of existing conditions pertaining to environmental justice and racial equity to inform conversations throughout the General Plan Update process between City staff and members of the public, particularly those in communities most impacted by racial inequities that make them vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and other environmental effects.

The EJ Baseline Report is consistent with Oakland's Results-Based Accountability framework, "a disciplined way of thinking and taking action" to create measurable change in people's lives. "Results-Based Accountability" is a data-driven decision-making process oriented toward actionable outcomes. This framework starts by defining desired results or goals and works backwards, step by step, toward those means to set a clear path to achieve those outcomes. Indicators measure the extent to which a result is being achieved and help keep track of the City's progress over time.

The Results-Based Accountability framework is an important aspect of the City's Race and Equity Change Process, which requires establishing baseline disparity data, targets/benchmarks, and processes to track and report outcomes. The EJ Baseline Report synthesizes recent efforts to paint a comprehensive picture of where the City currently stands along its trajectory toward environmental justice and racial equity and helps to define where policies in the EJ Element can further those objectives.

EJ ELEMENT RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT ANALYSIS

The City of Oakland conducts a racial equity impact analysis (REIA) alongside all emerging or revised plans and policies to support development of equitable, concrete, data-driven, outcome-oriented, and problem-solving actions. The REIA educates about racial disparities; informs about root causes of disparities; engages impacted communities; provides a set of specific recommendations for achieving equitable outcomes; and includes a framework for evaluating the equity impacts of implementation over time.



A REIA has been prepared in parallel with the EJ Element to guide practices and inform policies that effectively advance racial equity in Oakland. The first stage of the EJ Element REIA focused on the SB 1000 Screening Analysis methodology and results of the EJ Baseline Report. The assessment grades the indicators included in the screening analysis from A, most equitable, to F, most disparate/inequitable to highlight the issues with the most racially disparate outcomes and the neighborhoods facing the greatest disparities within each issue. Applying the REIA to the screening analysis resulted in recommendations for refining the methodology and adjusting indicators to better reflect:

- The City's top equity issues,
- Community priorities that have been identified through the outreach process,
- Actionable metrics that directly inform planning decisions, and
- Availability of data.

Further, the REIA and recommendations helped determine a more suitable threshold for identifying EJ Communities, as discussed in the following section.

REVISION OF EJ COMMUNITIES MAPPING

Identifying low-income communities most impacted by environmental justice issues (EJ Communities) is a core component of SB 1000 and one of the primary objectives of an EJ Element. The EJ Baseline Report was an important first step in presenting a preliminary screening methodology to identify EJ Communities. This kicked off the iterative process of modifying and refining the methodology to ensure that the final EJ Communities map in this Element is representative of the on-the-ground conditions people experience in their daily lives. In addition, the methodology has been revised using the recommendations from the REIA

(described above). The changes that have been incorporated into the final analysis include minor adjustment or replacement of certain indicators from the preliminary screening analysis in the EJ Baseline Report, addition of new indicators, restructuring of indicators into new categories or topics, and removal of two indicators due to data inconsistencies. Section 2.3: Identifying Environmental Justice Communities describes the final methodology and provides a full discussion of the changes that were made to the indicators. A full description of the final indicators is included in **Appendix A**.

In addition, the criteria and threshold for identifying EJ Communities were expanded to increase the final number of EJ Communities. Using recommendations from the REIA and based on community feedback, including from the West Oakland Community Action Plan (WOCAP) Steering Committee, EJ communities include: (1) census tracts in the top quartile (25 percent) of the screening methodology composite score; (2) census tracts in the top decile (10 percent) of the Pollution Burden, Climate Change, Sensitive Population, and Built Environment category scores; and (3) any Disadvantaged Communities designated by CalEPA pursuant to SB 535. More than one of these criteria may apply to an EJ Community. The results of the EJ Communities mapping process are presented in Section 2.3: Identifying Environmental Justice Communities.

Note: The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), in partnership with Communities for a Better Environment and community members from East Oakland, initiated the first Community Steering Committee meeting for the East Oakland AB 617 Community Emissions Reduction Plan (CERP) process on September 15, 2022. The committee will meet monthly to develop a CERP to improve air quality and public health in the impacted communities of East Oakland. Once the community boundary for the East Oakland CERP is defined by the committee, the EJ Communities Map will be updated to include those communities.

Environmental Justice Communities: A Note on Terminology

The State defines “disadvantaged communities” as “an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency, pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code, or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.”

In this EJ Element, we opt to use the term “Environmental Justice Communities” to refer to “disadvantaged communities.”

Although “Environmental Justice Communities” are identified and mapped in the EJ Element to help the City focus on where and how to implement EJ policies and actions, this distinction does not mean EJ issues do not exist in communities elsewhere in the city. The term “EJ Communities” is used in this Element to refer only to census tracts that have been identified as EJ Communities through the SB 1000 screening analysis. Communities that experience EJ issues (and may or may not be an EJ Community) are separately referred to as “impacted communities” in this Element.

1.3 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Proactive and meaningful community engagement from the start of a planning process to the implementation of goals and policies is critical to achieving the goals of environmental justice. A key environmental justice (EJ) principle is involving the communities most impacted by environmental justice issues, and those who could be adversely impacted from policy implementation, so that they can have a say in the decisions that impact their health and well-being. Community engagement in developing this Element included a range of activities intended to meet people where they were. In many instances, community members shared their firsthand knowledge of environmental issues in their neighborhoods, as well as existing community-led efforts and strategies to address these issues. Engagement activities included:

- **Community Organization Interviews.** Equity facilitators from E/J Solutions interviewed 12 environmental justice advocacy organizations for input on draft actions and the Environmental Justice Element’s topic areas of focus:
 1. Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)
 2. Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)
 3. Cocina del Corazón
 4. The Greenlining Institute (GLI)
 5. New Voices Are Rising (NVR)
 6. Oakland Parks & Recreation Foundation (OPRF)
 7. Oakland Climate Action Coalition (OCAC)
 8. Saba Grocers Initiative
 9. Save the Bay (STB)
 10. Sugar Freedom Project (SFB)
 11. The Village in Oakland (The Village)
 12. West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP)



- **Neighborhood Workshops.** On April 30 and May 28, 2022, staff held General Plan open houses in East and West Oakland. At the East Oakland workshop, participants discussed environmental justice concerns in small groups with staff or added sticky notes to boards addressing environmental justice, safety, and housing. At the West Oakland workshop, participants marked up maps with stickers representing key environmental justice issues and discussed EJ issues in small groups with a facilitator.
- **EJ Hub and Online Survey.** City staff created an online, interactive, educational platform (“GPU Environmental Justice Hub” or “EJ Hub”) to support community engagement and data ground-truthing process for the EJ Element. The EJ Hub showcases information from the EJ and Racial Equity Baseline through an interactive and engaging platform. Using the EJ Hub, residents explored the initial draft Map of Potential Environmental Justice Communities, shared their visions for a healthy neighborhood, and documented local environmental justice issues and solutions. The EJ Hub can be accessed here: <https://arcg.is/00iuLT>
- **Community Tours.** On August 29, 2022, Ms. Margaret Gordon, Co-founder and Co-director, and Brian Beveridge, Co-director, of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP), led the planning team on a tour of West Oakland, a special and instructive opportunity to learn from WOEIP’s extensive community knowledge of environmental justice conditions in West Oakland.
- **Cultural Events and Pop-Ups.** Between November 2021 to March 2023, the GPU team conducted community events in Eastmont, Fruitvale, San Antonio, Chinatown, West Oakland porch chats, Hoover Elementary in West Oakland, and at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center’s (OACC) Asian Pacific New Year Celebration and the Black Joy parade. Information about these events can be found on the General Plan Update website (<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/meetings-and-events>) and the community engagement collaborative’s website (<https://www.deeplyrooted510.org/>). Eleven organizations within the collaborative have hosted and conducted community engagement and outreach with their networks at large outdoor or virtual events and pop-ups



in addition to through social media, with a focus on reaching individuals from communities of color.

- **Equity Working Group.** The Equity Working Group (EWG) is comprised of individuals who have been highly engaged in Oakland housing, safety and environmental justice, land use issues and solutions. The EWG met 9 times to provide input on the 2023-2031 Housing Element. At 17 meetings throughout 2022, the EWG discussed equity considerations for the Safety and EJ elements. See <https://www.deeplyrooted510.org/ewg> for more information.
 - **Stakeholder Interviews.** At eight discussion groups held in May 2022, representatives from over 50 agencies, businesses, and community groups participated in small group discussions with project staff.
 - **Neighborhood Councils.** Staff are working with Neighborhood Service Coordinators to present and receive feedback at Neighborhood Council (NC) meetings on topics including housing, environmental justice, industrial lands, and safety and natural hazards.
- Some of the key themes from community outreach included the following:
- **Industrial Land Use and Air Pollution.** One of the most pressing environmental justice issues in Oakland is the disproportionate pollution burden that West and East Oakland neighborhoods face, largely due to proximity to the Port of Oakland, industrial land, and its associated uses, such as truck transport. Coupled with Oakland’s economic history, these land use patterns were created by zoning choices, racial exclusion, and urban renewal. This has resulted in a legacy of polluting uses right next to sensitive uses such as homes, schools, and parks. In times of growing wildfire threat, smoke has also become another burden that adds to existing pollution. A growing body of research indicates that these polluting industrial land uses increase rates of asthma, cancer, and other health issues, as well as decreased life expectancy. The impacted communities are disproportionately communities of color. Related to industrial land uses, input also indicated a lack of enforcement of nonconforming or unpermitted uses, desire for change to zoning or shortening of conditional use permitting timelines, and recommendations for a moratorium on polluting facilities, phasing out certain uses, urban greening, greener employment replacements for these industries, and provision of air filters for existing neighbors. Many of the strategies suggested have greenhouse gas reduction and climate resiliency co-benefits.
 - **Exposure to Toxics and Hazardous Substances.** Even after industrial land uses are discontinued, they may leave behind toxic chemicals and other hazardous substances. There are several Superfund or brownfield sites throughout areas of West Oakland as well as along I-880 that are either undergoing or still require cleanup, known as “remediation.” Active remediation may directly expose on-site and nearby inhabitants to hazardous substances through land, air, and water contamination. Such activities and intermediary uses of Superfund and brownfield sites should consider both the short- and long-term potential for harmful health effects on current and future users.



- Transportation Safety and Noise.** Urban renewal and past land use decisions have also resulted in disproportionate impacts due to freeways and railroads. I-880 and I-980 differ vastly from I-580 in terms of truck traffic and subsequent pollution and road safety because of decisions regarding goods movement that were largely influenced by the more affluent residents living in the hills. Community members voiced concerns about pedestrian and bicyclist safety in neighborhoods near I-880 and I-980, citing traffic collision hot spots like Chinatown as places that need immediate improvement. In addition to air pollution emitted by vehicles along these roadways, noise pollution is another key concern impacting the communities living near freeways and railroads.
- Housing Issues.** Some of the top housing issues identified by community members included the homelessness crisis, housing quality issues, and housing affordability. Groups suggested a wide variety of strategies to house the unhoused community, including treating unhoused populations with dignity; stopping the current encampment management policy; facilitating more flexible building types, temporary units, permanent supportive housing, RVs/safe parking zones, tiny homes, manufactured housing; and working with the unhoused community to understand their needs and priorities. The disproportionate representation of Black Oaklanders among unhoused individuals was also emphasized as a key equity issue. Producing new

affordable and deeply affordable housing options was identified as a key strategy to prevent displacement. Groups discussed a wide range of strategies to build more inclusive neighborhoods and add more affordable housing units in Oakland, including legalizing existing nonconforming housing units, adopting inclusionary zoning, increasing density in primarily single-family areas such as Rockridge, supporting homeowners in the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), acquiring land to build new permanently affordable housing and community land trust-managed projects, and reducing the amount of discretionary review required for new housing projects. Finally, many Oaklanders described facing housing quality issues such as overcrowding and unsafe building conditions, as well as lack of maintenance resulting from landlord neglect, lack of funds for upkeep, or fear of reporting these issues. Inequitable lead paint risks were also identified as part of the 2021 Racial Equity Impact Analysis: Eliminating Lead Paint Hazards in Oakland and Alameda County. Community-recommended strategies to address these issues included programs/grants to landlords and homeowners to make repairs; universal design improvements to allow all Oaklanders to remain in their homes as they age and to help mobility-impaired residents; and tax credits or programs to address other housing habitability concerns such as indoor air quality. Other issues and recommended strategies are summarized in Chapter 2 of the 2023-2031 Housing Element.

- Equitable Climate Resilience.** Oakland's frontline communities are hit first and worst by environmental injustice and the climate crisis. Although these communities vary in vulnerability to climate issues such as sea level rise, flooding, and energy cost burden, many of these same people and places experience the compounded effect of other environmental justice issues such as lack of access to healthy food, affordable homes, or well-maintained parks. Several community members have emphasized that there is immediate need to implement solutions that strengthen frontline communities' climate resilience.
- Gentrification and Displacement.** Concerns about gentrification and displacement associated with new investment were top of mind for many Oaklanders, especially in light of a significant loss (30 percent) of Oakland's Black population from 2000 to 2019. People who have generational roots in Oakland have been displaced but continue to come to Oakland to work and be with community. While displacement issues relative to housing costs are discussed in the Housing Element, community members also expressed alarm at displacement of Oakland's cultural institutions and local businesses, an essential part of Oakland's culture. Others indicated that this displacement was not new; for example in West Oakland, construction of the BART Station, post office distribution center, and freeway construction destroyed existing black businesses along the 7th Street corridor. Several community members suggested providing targeted support to existing small businesses, and establishing cultural or arts districts to prioritize, promote, and preserve Oakland's culture.
- Cultural Spaces and Art.** Preservation of community culture and diversity was one of the most frequently referenced goals among community members. More than half of all Oakland Visioning Survey respondents mentioned Oakland's diversity—including race, culture, economics, gender, neighborhoods, and perspectives—as one of its greatest strengths, and around a quarter of respondents also mentioned the Oakland's wealth in terms of culture, including diversity in art, music and creative spirit. Focus groups and popup interview input also reflect this priority. Oakland is home to a wide array of cultures, and the City seeks to ensure that these diverse practices, expression,

and creativity are seen, respected, and supported. A central goal of environmental justice is to allow everyone to prosper in a healthy community, not by removing the differences between the city's communities but rather, by fostering welcoming environments for people of all identities and backgrounds to thrive. Community members recommended that the City promote and/or support public and community spaces, programs, and events for cultural learning and acceptance throughout Oakland, and create policies that support Oakland artists, culture makers, and organizations.

- **Illegal Dumping and Lack of Public Works Maintenance.**

Community input also indicated that presence of trash, blight and illegal dumping, and infrequent trash collection and other lack of maintenance were other important environmental justice issues. Beyond being a visual eyesore, community members indicated that illegal dumping has larger public health consequences, forcing some to veer off sidewalks into dangerous roadways, raising concerns about hazardous materials, blocking creeks and worsening flooding, starting fires, and leading to general feelings of neglect and abandonment by the City. Illegal dumping and lack of waste receptacles or maintenance in public areas such as parks and sidewalks also reduce people's ability to enjoy public spaces and to access them for physical activity that promotes health and well-being. Recommended strategies included more stringent enforcement of illegal dumping, more frequent pickup in "hot spots," amnesty programs such as free disposal days for bulky and hazardous waste, and incentives for recycling, education, and community ambassador programs.

- **Pedestrian and Bicyclist Comfort and Safety.** Some community members indicated that they or someone they knew had been involved in a collision with a vehicle as a pedestrian or bicyclist. Others noted that roads in some areas are poorly maintained and suffer potholes. Potential solutions included a suite of transportation improvements, including speed bumps, more bike lanes and stations, improved public transit, street improvements to make walking and biking safer, reducing car traffic overall, and maintaining roads.

- **Need for Health-Promoting Resources in Neighborhoods.**

Many community members pointed out the inequitable investment in community health assets, such as high-quality parks, clean and well-maintained public restrooms, schools, and community facilities; local retail that meets daily needs; arts and cultural facilities; affordable and quality housing; and accessible healthcare. They also pointed to inequitable distribution of health harms, such as polluting facilities, proximity to freeways or truck routes, and illegal dumping. Consistent with SB 1000 guidance and the City's racial equity goals, community members emphasized that City improvements, investments, and policies should specifically focus on prioritizing needs of communities that have suffered the most harm due to past planning decisions.

- **Tree Canopy and Green Infrastructure.**

The importance of addressing equity in Oakland's urban tree canopy was emphasized, as well as the urban forest's role in mitigating negative effects of climate change. Urban forestry resources have many co-benefits including providing shade and reducing urban heat, filtration of some air pollutants, serving as visual and sound buffers, supporting natural habitats and ecosystems, and boosting economic value of neighborhoods. Tree canopy can vary substantially due to tree species, age, and maintenance. Lack of proper maintenance can hinder a tree's ability to provide its many benefits. Additionally, urban greening projects have been identified as the highest priority in the East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative Community Plan. Recommended considerations include development of a maintenance plan for all public trees along streets and sidewalks and in parks, as well as expansion of urban greening projects in EJ Communities, and equitable implementation of the Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plan.

- **Food Access.** An absence of affordable options for healthy, nutritious food in combination with a concentration of retailers such as liquor stores and fast food outlets that do not offer such choices can lead to an unhealthy food environment that limits the ability to make healthy food choices. The high cost of food was identified as one of the biggest barriers to good nutrition. Community members voiced a need for an equitable distribution of affordable

grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens to enable food sovereignty in all neighborhoods. Participants also spoke of need to support smaller independent grocers, smaller vendors, and other organizations who are already located in communities underserved by food retail.

- **Accountability and Community Empowerment.** While Oakland has made strides in addressing racial equity and adopting policy to remedy environmental justice issues, many community members felt like the City could do better in building and maintaining relationships with community groups. Some felt distrustful that an institution that perpetuated past harms would seek to truly turn community input into action. Others emphasized the importance of developing solutions *with* community, rather than just *for* the community, as a power-building mechanism. Solutions included active, paid partnerships with community organizations; feedback loops during outreach processes that communicate any current City limitations and identify actions to reduce/remove these barriers; and mechanisms to track how effective policies are and how they are being implemented.

