PUBLIC FACILITIES, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Basic Parameters and Objectives

In State law, environmental justice is defined as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."[1] In practice, this means that everyone has the right to live, work, play, and pray in healthy places free of pollution in the air, water, and land. It also means that the enduring impacts of environmental injustices that disproportionately burden low-income communities and people of color need to be recognized and addressed as an immediate priority in order to achieve equitable health outcomes.

In general plans, environmental justice elements need to include objectives, goals, and policies that seek to reduce pollution exposure and unique/compounded health risks as well as promote public facilities, access to healthy food, safe and sanitary homes, physical activity, and civic engagement. Most importantly, these efforts must prioritize the needs of the communities with the greatest disparities.

Principles of Environmental Justice

Some excerpts from the Principles of Environmental Justice[2] related to the topic for this fact sheet:

Environmental justice...

demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages...

must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples [...] affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

affirms the need for urban [...] ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities [...] honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and to provide fair access for all to the full range of resources.

calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
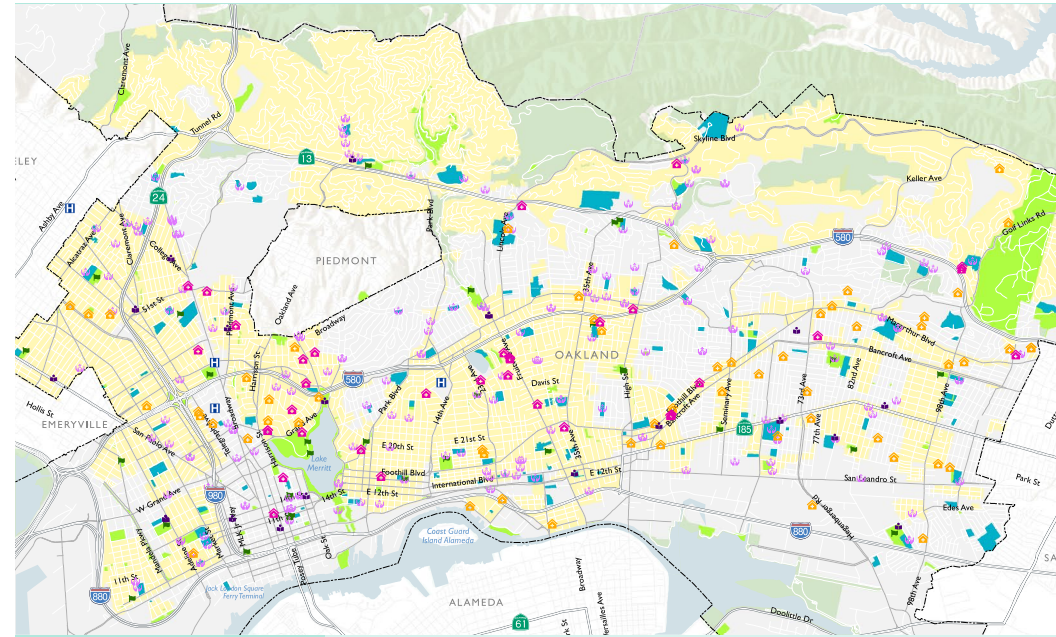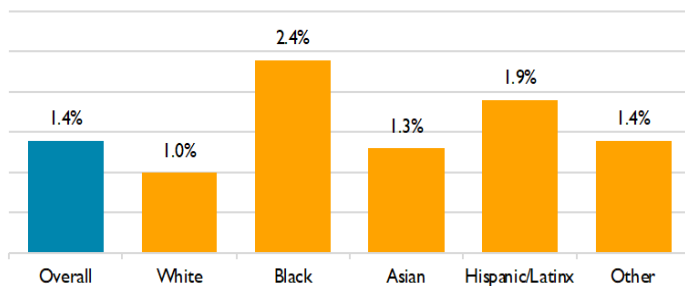
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[1] Cal. Gov. Code § 65040.12 (e)

[2] https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html

Public Facilities

"Public facilities" is an umbrella term that includes "public improvements, public services, and community amenities," according to State law. This covers a wide spectrum of publicly provided uses and services including infrastructure, school facilities, parks, and transportation and emergency services that support the health, safety, and well-being of a community.

Because of past discriminatory land use policies, there are parts of Oakland that have been overlooked for public investments and development of new amenities. Delayed investments and programs can significantly prolong inequities.

New Capital Improvement Projects have been recommended for the Brookfield Village, Sobrante Park, and Stonehurst neighborhoods in East Oakland, and Coliseum Industrial Complex area, and Ralph Bunche and Oak Center neighborhoods in West Oakland. Additionally, distribution of healthcare facilities in Oakland is not uniform; most clusters are in North Oakland and Downtown, in contrast to the few in West and East Oakland. Lastly, neighborhoods in census tracts Lockwood/Coliseum/Rudsdale and Lower San Antonio East suffer from the most energy cost burden.

Energy Cost Burdens by Race, 2018

Bar chart values: Overall 1.4%, White 1.0%, Black 2.4%, Asian 1.3%, Hispanic/Latinx 1.9%, Other 1.4%

Source: California Department of Social Services, 2021; Oakland Unified School District, 2021; City of Oakland, 2021; ALAMEDA County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

Public/community facilities in Oakland include a wide range of places where residents gather and/or receive services such as community centers, senior centers, parks, libraries, schools, and childcare centers. These facilities offer a variety of educational and recreational programs, community gathering spaces, access to information and technology, and opportunities to participate in their neighborhood's cultural, political, and social life. The yellow shading in the map represents existing residential areas. There are substantially fewer public facilities in East Oakland compared to other neighborhoods in Oakland.

We want to hear from you!
- What public community facilities are most used and most valued by residents in your neighborhood?
- How can the City equitably invest in public facilities to meet the community's needs?
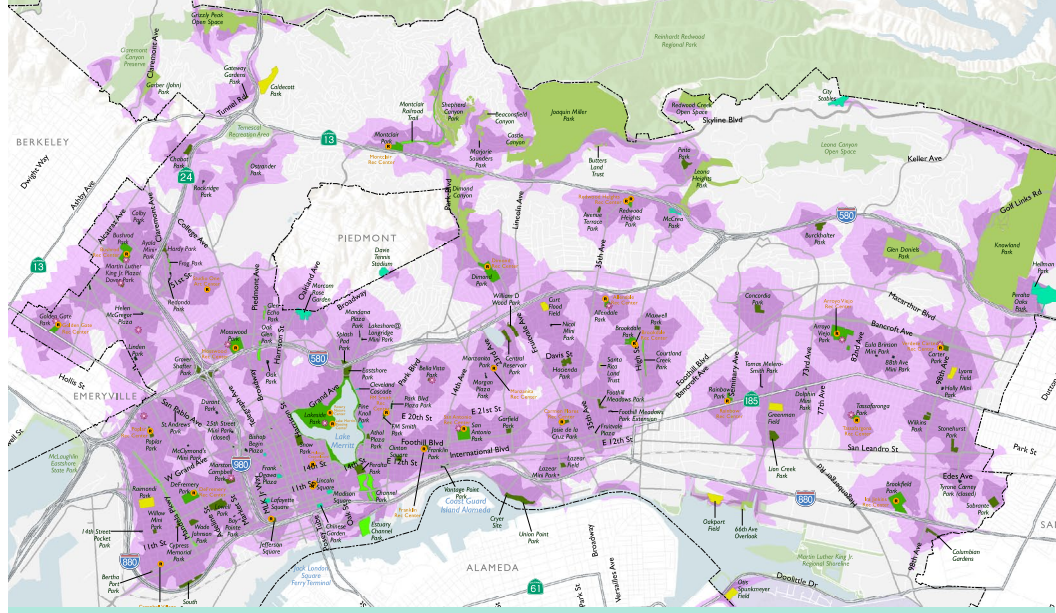
Physical Activity

Building complete neighborhoods with open spaces, parks, urban forests, and safe sidewalks and bikeways can support a greener, healthier city, with more opportunities for residents to get out and play, socialize, experience nature, commute to work, and exercise. The built environment plays an integral role in determining how communities can access opportunities for **physical activity** by providing places and encouraging land uses that support active transportation and other forms of exercise. The built environment is negatively impacted by a history of inequitable investments and discriminatory land use practices.

In 2020, the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation surveyed Oakland residents to better understand how to improve citywide park equity. This study found that park quality generally needs improvement, particularly for Black respondents; white respondents had the highest scoring perception of park quality.

According to Oakland Walks, the City's Pedestrian Plan, sidewalks in East and West Oakland are more likely to be damaged and to be missing critical amenities such as curb ramps, and these neighborhoods are disproportionately burdened by traffic collisions resulting in fatalities and severe injuries.[3] The neighborhoods along East 14th St, also known as International Boulevard in deep East Oakland and parts of West Oakland north of Adeline Street are less likely than other neighborhoods to have sufficient tree coverage, exposing people outdoors to an uncomfortable environment characterized by extreme heat and pollution.[4]

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[3]City of Oakland Department of Transportation, Oakland Walks! 2017 Pedestrian Plan Update, https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Ped-Plan-2017-rev-sep2018-compressed.pdf.

Source: City of Oakland, 2021; ALAMEDA County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

The lack of tree cover combined with disproportionate levels of air pollution and more concrete and other impermeable dark surfaces, means that these neighborhoods experience hotter temperatures than other city neighborhoods during extreme heat events (urban heat island effect).

There are significant geographic disparities in park access, quality, and quantity between the hills and flatlands neighborhoods. The Oakland Hills are almost entirely bordered by and includes some regional parks (several of which are owned by the East Bay Park District rather than the City of Oakland). The hills also include some large resource conservation areas and open spaces. The Oakland flatlands contain a much smaller total area of the City's parkland, with most being small neighborhood parks, in stark contrast to the Oakland Hills.
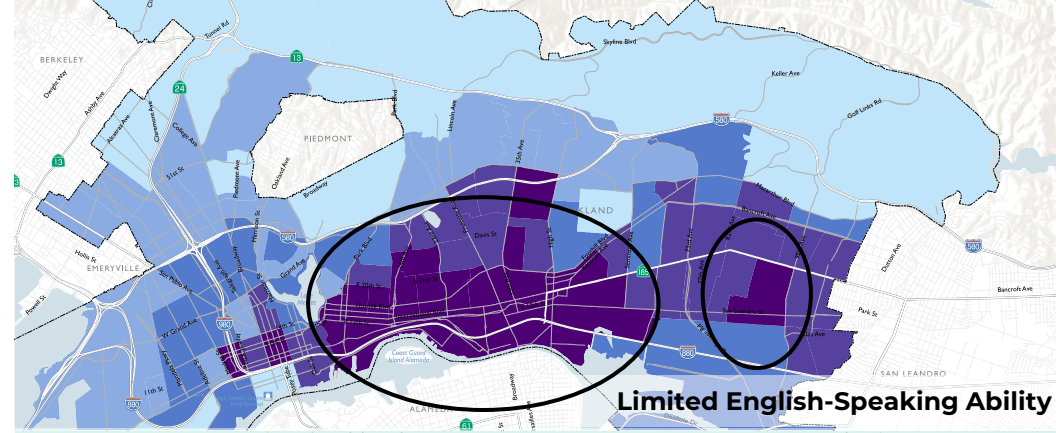
We want to hear from you!
- What infrastructure development would you most like to see?
- How can the City make equitable investment?

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in your community through both political and non-political processes. Civic engagement includes both paid and unpaid forms of activism and organizing, caring for your local environment, and engaging in community service and mutual aid. In Oakland, civic engagement involves everything from voting in elections, to participating in city planning processes, to volunteering with a community organization, to participating in city council meetings, to participating in direct actions, marches and protests
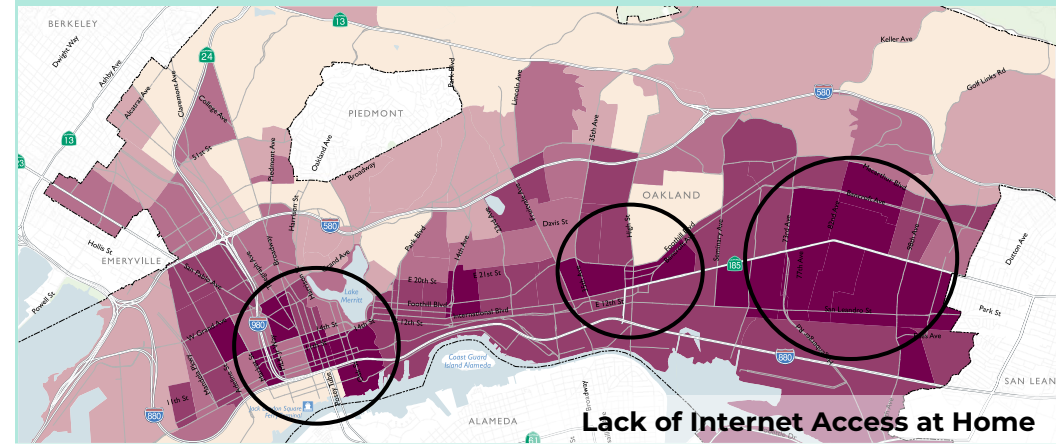
Reliable access to the internet and telecommunications systems plays an increasingly important part in daily and civic life, helping people to work, learn, access services, participate in government, and stay connected to friends and family. According to the 2018 Equity Indicators Report, Black individuals were the most likely to not have high speed internet access at home (40.8 percent), followed by Hispanic/Latinx individuals (33.5 percent). White individuals were least likely to lack high speed Internet access at home (14.6 percent). Despite the importance of having Internet access, there are still many households, particularly households of color, without access to the internet or to computers at home.

Employment can also be one of the means by which we engage in community life. Access to living wage jobs and employment opportunities is an indicator of a community's economic health. Many of Oakland's smaller businesses represent the beating heart of Oakland's culture. The 2018 Equity Indicators Report found that majority Asian census tracts were 2.96 times more likely to have long-term business vacancies than majority White census tracts. Black Oaklanders face greater disadvantages than non-Black Oaklanders when it comes to securing and maintaining employment.

Limited English-Speaking Ability

Source: ACS 2015-2019; City of Oakland, 2021; ALAMEDA County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

Limited English-speaking ability among populations ages 5 and older who speak a language other than English at home is most concentrated in neighborhoods throughout East and Central Oakland.

Lack of Internet Access at Home

Source: ACS 2015-2019; City of Oakland, 2021; ALAMEDA County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

The map above shows how neighborhoods in East Oakland and near Jack London Square have the greatest proportion of households without internet access.

We want to hear from you!

- What are barriers to effective, equitable, and accountable civic and community engagement have you experiences with the City?
- How should the City work to reduce, overcome, or eliminate these barriers?

PRIMARY INEQUITIES

Health

Cost burden for services

Linguistic isolation

Employment

PRIMARY BARRIERS

Distribution of parks and services

Information availability in appropriate language

Internet access

Business and workforce support

RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

- City of Oakland
  - o Public Works Department
  - o Parks and Recreation Department

- Utility providers
  - o Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)
  - o East Bay Community Energy (EBCE)
  - o East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)
  - o Waste Management (WM)

- Internet service providers

RESOURCES

Oak 311 to help you with requests for routine maintenance and urgent infrastructure issues: 510-615-5566

OAKWifi Coverage Area Map

City of Oakland Language Access Services Department

City of Oakland Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development Department

City of Oakland Economic and Workforce Development Department

Public Facilities, Physical Activity, and Civic Engagement Draft Policy Ideas

This list of draft policy ideas was developed from existing community and neighborhood plans, as well as community outreach. Let us know whether the following tables accurately capture environmental justice issues in your community and whether the draft policy ideas do enough to address these issues by **checking the box in the column that is your answer.** Feel free to leave additional ideas/comments in the "Other/Comments" column!

Sources referenced below:

- ECAP = Oakland Equitable Climate Action Plan 2030
- EONI = East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative Community Plan
- HDG = Oakland Healthy Development Guidelines
- WOCAP = West Oakland Community Action Plan
- WOEIP = West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Disparity/ Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
Inequitable distribution of public facilities	Ensure equitable distribution and prioritize new facilities in EJ communities as part of LUTE, OSCAR, and Infrastructure element development	HDG, EONI, pop up outreach, focus groups			
	As part of LUTE development, ensure appropriate land use designations and zoning to facilitate development of needed facilities in underserved areas, like for healthcare, childcare, community facilities (including restorative justice centers), etc.	HDG			
	Increase access to community parks through joint use agreements; removing physical barriers (like fences); and providing choice of legible routes to and from park areas	HDG, DOSP, pop up outreach			
Inequities in maintenance and upkeep	Prioritize equitable capital improvements and maintenance projects in EJ communities with equity as a weighted factor	Existing City best practice, pop up outreach			
	Coordinate planning efforts with: - Public education	WOEIP Toxics Tour (coordinate with			

Disparity/ Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
	• Public health • Community centers • Library services • Justice services • Flood protection • Energy providers • Technology and communications services • Caltrans and the Port Maintain interagency coordination agreements with neighboring jurisdictions and partner agencies that provide facilities and services	Port on space activation); pop-up outreach; focus groups			
	Use Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) landscaping, lighting, measures among other techniques when designing open space and recreational spaces	HDG			

PHYSICAL ACTIVTY

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
Not all neighborhoods have walkable or bikeable access to goods, services, and jobs	As part of LUTE development: • include policies that promote finer grained land use patterns • study shuttles and other local transit to foster local mobility	EONI, HDG; WOCAP; pop-up outreach			
Inequities in vehicle-bicyclist/pedestrian collisions in Chinatown and East Oakland	As part of LUTE development: • Study safe speeds and street design and implement improvements in EJ communities • Prioritize universal design principles (so that improvements are usable by all people) • Use data-driven, "vision zero" approach to eliminating traffic fatalities • Collaborate with stakeholders who reside in EJ communities when developing and implementing programs and improvements	Safety and EJ Focus groups, pop-up outreach; WOCAP; WOSP, 2019 Oakland Bike Plan, 2017 Oakland Walks Pedestrian Plan; EOMAP			
	Continue to plan and distribute paving program resources based on equity, road condition, and safety metrics	Existing City best practice			
Inequitable tree canopy distribution and green space	Fund and implement green infrastructure program, targeting EJ communities and funding community-identified projects. Projects could include: • vegetated buffers • trees and urban greening • Stormwater capture	ECAP, Safety Focus Groups, EONI, Existing Green Infrastructure Plan, pop up outreach			
	Implement the Urban Forest Master Plan. This includes: • Partnering with nonprofits • Encouraging trees on private property • Working with community on tree maintenance and removal as needed	ECAP, community pop-ups, EJ Focus groups			

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
	• Prioritizing tree canopy in EJ communities with the least amount of canopy				

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
Inequitable rates of civic participation	Ensure meaningful, sustained engagement by continuing and enhancing processes that: • Emphasize participation from low-income communities and communities of color • Are driven by resident priorities • Are easily accessible and understandable (including by language) • are rooted in community partnerships (and explore feasibility of establishing funds for these partnerships) • create opportunities for youth engagement and leadership	EONI; DOSP; Current City of Oakland best practices			
	Maintain communication channels that: • Allow for ongoing dialogue with groups and residents • Track issues and priorities at neighborhood level • Use outputs to inform development of City programs and services • Share outputs across departments to avoid participant burnout	Best practice taken from other cities			
	Increase representation of historically marginalized communities in City employment and other taskforces/ committees, as well as processes, such as participatory budgeting.	WOCAP (participatory budgeting), pop up outreach			
	Prioritize investments in high-speed internet in underserved low-income communities and expand to public facilities in these areas.	Policy taken from other cities			

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
	Continue to provide translation and interpretation services, assistance in accessing services and programs, and direct engagement with linguistically isolated groups	Current City of Oakland best practice			
Disparities in employment opportunities and business ownership, or displacement of existing cultural businesses	Make intentional City investments to increase and diversify economic growth in EJ communities. This could include: • Supporting business incubators and startup support of POC/women/veteran-owned businesses with business planning, expansion planning, navigating permitting, and access to capital. • Use public procurement to prioritize underrepresented business enterprises	EOMAP; focus groups; pop-up outreach			
	Support workforce development initiatives, including: • partnerships with educational institutions, employers, and community-based organizations to continue and expand local hire, training, apprenticeships, and employer partnerships in desired industries (such as green tech, life sciences, food manufacturing, etc.) • Two-generation programs that link education, job training, and career-building for low-income parents with supports for their children; • Bridge programs that prepare people with low academic skills for further education and training; • Transitional jobs programs that provide short-term subsidized employment.	ECAP, WOCAP (green jobs); pop-up outreach; City best practices			
	As part of land use planning efforts, explore the following strategies in	WOIEP Toxics Tour (Black business			

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
	partnership with community organizations based in EJ Communities: • Corridor revitalization • Zoning opportunities to facilitate smaller, "microretail" spaces that are more affordable to new or smaller businesses. • Cultural Districts that showcase, support, and preserve existing cultural identity of retail and commercial services. For example, programs that support restoration of historical Black business districts in West Oakland. • Neighborhood retail and local business conservation strategies to prevent conversion of existing neighborhood-retail uses in neighborhoods that would otherwise lose easy access to nearby shops and neighborhood services, including through anti-displacement strategies.	district idea, changes to allow for smaller commercial spaces); Oakland Cultural Plan; focus groups; pop-up outreach			

Please share with us: What's missing from the list of disparities or gaps we've identified or from the draft policy ideas?

Disparity/Gap/Issue	Policy Idea