



## **NEIGHBORHOOD LAW CORPS**

### **Oakland City Attorney's Office**

#### **What is the Neighborhood Law Corps?**

The Neighborhood Law Corps (NLC) is a community-facing, affirmative litigation unit within the Oakland City Attorney's Office.

Through civil lawsuits and other enforcement actions, the NLC focuses on some of the most challenging problems facing Oakland's neighborhoods, particularly tenant protection, substandard housing, public nuisance, and other key health and safety issues. NLC Attorneys also collaborate with other city departments, sister government agencies, and community organizations to connect residents with resources.

The program, launched in 2002, has been recognized with awards, including the Gold Award for Municipal Excellence from the National League of Cities and the Making Democracy Work Award from the League of Women Voters Oakland.

There is one NLC attorney assigned to each of the five Oakland Police Command Areas, which can be viewed here: [MapOfPoliceDistricts.pdf \(oaklandcityattorney.org\)](#). Additionally, the following interactive map is a handy tool where one can enter a specific address to determine the applicable police area, police beat, neighborhood council, Neighborhood Services Coordinator (NSC), and Community Resource Officer (CRO), among other information: <http://gisapps1.mapoakland.com/policedistricts/>.

#### **How does the NLC address issues at properties?**

NLC actions typically start with an initial investigation of issues brought to the team's attention from various sources, including, but not limited to, other City departments, community organizations, City Council, neighborhood councils, and community members.

The NLC generally focuses resources on matters where other methods of enforcement have failed. For example, there are many situations where compliance may be fully achieved without NLC action, such as by an enforcing City department (e.g., by Code Enforcement of the Planning and Building Department, through inspections, follow-up notices, and citations). Accordingly, it is important to report issues to the enforcing City department first, as that department may be able to resolve the issue. Sometimes, when the department cannot resolve the issue and NLC involvement is appropriate, the NLC gets involved, including by reviewing what an applicable department has already tried to resolve the issue. For additional information on reporting mechanisms for different types of problems, see the ***Public Nuisance Reporting Guide***.

**What are some of the focus areas of the NLC’s past and present affirmative litigation?**

- Housing/Tenant Protection: Litigation aimed at combating harassment and discrimination by property owners and managers, preserving Oakland’s affordable housing stock, and enforcing local and state law to ensure housing in Oakland is safe and habitable for all residents.
- Anti-Human Trafficking: Litigation aimed at shutting down illicit massage businesses serving as fronts for human trafficking, disrupting organized crime networks, and holding property owners accountable for serious illegal activity that occurs at their properties.
- Environmental Justice: Litigation aimed at halting business practices that create environmental hazards disproportionately impacting marginalized communities.

**How do NLC Attorneys engage with community members?**

- Collaborate with community organizations to investigate potential cases and bring litigation
- Connect community members with the right City department to address their issues
- Provide community members with contact information for local organizations that offer legal and other services
- Attend neighborhood council meetings

**NLC Attorneys do not:**

- Represent individuals (e.g., provide eviction defense)
- Defend the City in litigation
- Advise City departments or City Council
- Mediate disputes between Oaklanders
- Intervene in private disputes between neighbors (e.g., boundary disputes)

**NLC Attorneys do not work on the following issues:**

- Criminal activity that is not associated with a particular private property
- Illegal dumping complaints that have not been routed through 311
- Abandoned automobiles
- Illegal marijuana grow-operations
- Homeless encampments, including RVs
- Contract enforcement