

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Oakland Budget Advisory Commission (BAC)

1. What is the Budget Advisory Commission (BAC)?

The Budget Advisory Commission (BAC) is a citizen advisory body that provides recommendations to the Oakland City Council on city expenditures, revenues, and financial policies. Its primary role is to ensure transparency and community involvement in the city's budgeting process.

2. What does the BAC do?

The BAC advises the City Council through informational reports submitted to the Finance & Management Committee. The commission reviews financial policies, provides input on budget priorities, and helps guide responsible fiscal decision-making for Oakland.

3. How many members are on the BAC?

There are currently **8 members**, but the commission can have up to **15 members**.

BAC Members (as of March 2025):

- Mandela Bliss
- Larisa Casillas
- Mike Forbes, vice-chair
- Margaret Grimsley
- Ben Gould
- Mike Petouhoff
- Stephisha Ycoy-Walton
- Jane Yang, chair

4. How are BAC members selected?

- Members are appointed by the Mayor.
- Council members recommend one member each to the commission.
- The city's auditor's office and the chair of the city council's economic and workforce development committee appoint one person each.
- The city council's finance and management committee chair appoints two members.
- The mayor selects three members.

Commission application can be found [here](#).

5. How long is a BAC member's term?

Members serve three-year terms. These terms are staggered so that five members' terms expire on or around October 1st of each year.

6. When and where does the BAC meet?

The BAC meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 PM in Oakland City Hall.

7. How can I become a member of the BAC?

Contact your city council member and apply here: [City of Oakland: Boards](#)

8. Where can I find more information about the BAC?

Historical and additional information about the BAC can be found at:

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/boards-commissions/budget-advisory-commission>

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Oakland FY 25-27 Budget Resident Survey

1. What is the Oakland Budget Resident Survey?

The Oakland Budget Resident Survey is a community survey conducted to gather public input on budget priorities for the City of Oakland for the fiscal years 2025-2027. It is mandated by Oakland's Consolidated Fiscal Policy and fielded by the Budget Advisory Commission (BAC).

2. Why was this survey conducted?

Due to budget constraints and the need for community-driven decision-making, the survey was conducted to provide the Mayor and City Council with valuable insights into residents' concerns and priorities.

3. How was the survey conducted?

The survey was administered primarily online, with additional in-person outreach, particularly to people living outside. It was available in English, Spanish, and Chinese to ensure broad accessibility.

4. How many people participated in the survey?

A total of 6,748 community members responded, a significant increase from the 1,270 respondents in 2023.

5. What were the key findings from the survey?

- **Frustration with City Hall:** Community satisfaction with living in Oakland has declined, and dissatisfaction with local government is at a record high.
- **Top concerns:** Safety, housing, and cleanliness remain the most pressing issues for residents.
- **Values-aligned solutions:** Oaklanders care about their neighbors. Many respondents want to see compassionate and effective solutions for people living outside, as well as improvements in public safety.
- **Basic services matter:** Across all demographics, respondents prioritized essential city services such as fire protection, emergency responders arriving in a timely manner, and cleanup of graffiti and illegal dumping.
- **Alternative revenue generation:** While most districts opposed the proposed sales tax increase, some residents expressed interest in progressive tax plans as an alternative.

6. What are the top budget priorities for residents?

The three most critical priorities identified by residents are:

1. **Public safety** – Emergency responders, crime prevention, and community safety.
2. **Housing & Homelessness** – Affordable housing, homelessness services, and humane treatment of unhoused individuals.
3. **Cleanliness & Infrastructure** – Addressing blight, illegal dumping, and improving roads and public spaces.

7. What did the survey reveal about public safety concerns?

Residents are deeply concerned about crime, slow police response times, and public safety. While some support law enforcement funding, many advocate for civilian emergency response teams and reduced police overtime costs.

8. How do Oaklanders feel about homelessness and housing?

Residents emphasized the need for more affordable housing, better homelessness services, and compassionate solutions rather than criminalization of the unhoused.

9. What did the survey say about the proposed sales tax increase?

A majority of respondents across most districts indicated they would not support the proposed sales tax increase from 10.25% to 10.75%. Many believe the city should improve financial management before increasing taxes.

10. What funding cuts did residents suggest?

Residents were most supportive of:

- Reducing police overtime and shifting some duties to civilian staff.

- Cutting funding for encampment sweeps.
- Adjusting non-essential city programs to prioritize core services.

11. What are the next steps?

The Budget Advisory Commission will present these findings to city leaders and the public. The results will be used to inform budget decisions, and continued engagement with residents is planned.

For more details, visit the full report: [2025 City of Oakland Resident Budget Priorities Survey](#) or at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/boards-commissions/budget-advisory-commission>