



CITY OF OAKLAND

Councilmember Janani Ramachandran

Oakland District 4



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BUDGET MEMORANDUM

Date: March 15, 2023

To: Oakland City Council, Mayor Sheng Thao, and City Administrator

From: District 4 City Councilmember Janani Ramachandran

Re: City Budget Priorities for FY 2023-2025

As we emerge out of a devastating pandemic, my budget priorities rest on the central concept of re-building public trust in City Hall. I want to ensure that we are holding ourselves accountable to performing the core functions of local government, which include funding basic services and building safe neighborhoods where every resident can thrive. We can start to rebuild our community's trust when we can clearly answer the question, "Where is our money going?" I intend to work with all of my colleagues to ensure that we are spending every precious dollar of our limited funds in the most efficient, evidence-based, and impact-driven way possible. This includes setting clear, defined, and measurable expectations for how we allocate our funding to city departments, external contracts, and grants. My priorities also recognize that we are facing a significant fiscal deficit (projected upwards of \$188 million) in this budget cycle, and therefore must generate as much city revenue and obtain as many external grants as possible to fund our core services. Doing so includes ensuring that our staffing needs are met in revenue-generating and grant-writing departmental roles.

The following budget priorities have been co-created based on the stated needs and lived experiences of Oaklanders, including input from our Community Advisory Council (with members representing different neighborhoods across District 4), and a range of city-wide stakeholders and community organizations. I look forward to collaborating with my fellow Councilmembers, the Mayor, and her Administration to fund local government institutions where every resident can participate and feel that their voice is truly being heard.

1. Public Safety

- a. Community Policing: Re-instate foot and bike OPD patrol officers, and fund Community Resource Officers to be present in every police beat.
- b. Expand MACRO: Ensure that MACRO is funded to become a 24/7 citywide program with full-time staff positions, and maintain a visible public presence to respond to non-emergencies and engage in preventative work.

- c. **Neighborhood Councils:** Expand resources for Neighborhood Councils, through the Neighborhood Services Division, to engage underrepresented residents, collaborate with OPD, MACRO, and OFD, train community members on emergency preparedness, dispute resolution, nonviolent communication, and other topics to build neighborhood resilience.
- d. **Violence Prevention:** Invest in evidence-based programs that take a holistic approach to violence prevention, recognizing the intersections between domestic and sexual violence, gun violence, racial injustice, housing instability, food insecurity, and poverty, and the power of restorative justice approaches to heal and uplift communities. Fund grassroots community organizations to engage in localized, impact-driven violence prevention work.
- e. **OPD Grant Writer:** Fund at least 1.0 FTE grant writer (non-sworn professional staff) within OPD to apply for financial resources from the State, Federal government, and private philanthropy, especially to support community policing as well as technology solutions for criminal investigation.

2. Traffic Safety

- a. **Traffic calming in all dangerous intersections and roadways:** Improve safety for pedestrians and bikers through a variety of interventions. This includes implementing road diets and lane reductions, hardened medians, flashing beacons, speed signage, roundabouts, protected intersections and bike lines, speed bumps, and more. Specific areas that require traffic calming include Park Boulevard (throughout the Glenview Business Corridor and around Edna Brewer Middle School), MacArthur Boulevard (throughout the Laurel Business District, Fruitvale Ave., Maple Ave., and Lincoln Ave. Intersections, and around Bret Harte Middle School), High Street (near 580 on-ramp), Thornhill Drive (near Thornhill Elementary School), and Moraga Avenue (near Montclair Businesses District).
- b. **Speeding cameras and sideshow deterrents:** Once state law permits the implementation of speeding cameras, fund cameras at all dangerous intersections, as well as physical implements to deter sideshows (such as Botts Dots).

3. Roads and Public Infrastructure

- a. **Pothole patching and paving crews:** Fully fund all Department of Transportation staff positions responsible for street paving and pothole patching work. Fund contracting out of these services when necessary due to staffing shortages. Ensure additional funding is available during predictable storm seasons each year.
- b. **Illegal Dumping:** Fully fund Department of Public Works' crews and external contractors to both respond to 311 requests as well as proactively clean out "dumping hot spots."
- c. **Storm Drainage:** Ensure that Department of Public Works' implementation of the Storm Drainage Master Plan is fully funded in order to support areas most susceptible to flooding, erosion, and mudslides, including by modernizing our

drainage pipes.

4. Affordable Housing and Homelessness Services

a. Affordable housing: Construct affordable housing in all publicly owned land parcels and underutilized buildings, acquire or lease low-occupancy motels, and implement cost-effective models of tiny homes proven to be successful in comparable cities. Coordinate efforts with neighboring cities and Alameda County.

b. Revenue for affordable housing: Modernize developer impact fees for commercial and residential properties. Fund all staff positions within Housing and Community Development that involve grant-writing in order to seek County, State, and Federal governments to seek competitive grants.

c. Transitioning unhoused residents to safe housing through evidence-based solutions, including motel vouchers, safe storage, and pet care: Fund initiatives that have been proven to increase the likelihood that residents will gain stability, obtain employment, and find permanent housing, such as motel vouchers. Explore creative solutions that will more effectively allow unhoused individuals to access existing shelter options, such as storage for personal items (through partnerships with private storage facilities), and temporary care of pets (by adding staffing resources to Oakland Animal Services).

d. Supporting tenant education program as eviction moratorium ramps down: Fund tenant advocacy and legal aid programs to expand knowledge of existing protections to tenants most at risk of becoming homeless, and ensure that all staff positions within the Rent Adjustment Program are funded.

5. Wildfire Prevention

a. Vegetation Management Plan: Explore resources to fund the implementation of the City's Vegetation Management Plan, including re-creation of the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District. Maintain existing City financial commitments towards vegetation management, including support for CalFire grants, maintenance of DPW Tree Services division, and participation in the East Bay Hills Wildfire JPA/MOU effort.

b. Oakland Fire Department: Ensure that OFD has sufficient resources, staff, equipment, and technology to respond to the wide range of fire emergencies impacting Oakland, and can continue regular inspection of high-risk properties.

c. Emergency preparedness: Continue OFD's funding of Oakland Firesafe Council to conduct community emergency preparedness educational programs and materials.

d. Climate resilience: Fund and implement actions identified in Oakland's Equitable Climate Action Plan, and continue to be a leader in decarbonization efforts.

6. Revitalizing Small Business Corridors

a. Resources for Small Businesses: Ensure that the City's Small Business Assistance Center is equipped to provide technical assistance to support small businesses of all kinds. Support existing BIDs and the creation of new BIDs

- (including the Dimond BID proposal). Explore partnerships with the local legal community to provide pro-bono assistance for small business owners.
- b. **Safety:** Fund initiatives to decrease property and violent crime in business corridors, including visible presence of OPD patrol officers, increased OPD substations, and technology tools to support successful investigations of criminal activity. Fund civilian community ambassadors to support all commercial corridors.
 - c. **Streamlining Permitting:** Ensure that the Department of Building and Planning is able to fully implement its "One-Stop Shop" efforts to streamline permitting, and has adequate staff and technology to hasten permitting processes for residents and Businesses.
 - d. **Youth Summer Jobs program:** Re-vitalize the Youth Summer Jobs program for Oakland high school students to work in city departments, and expand program to provide small business owners stipends to hire youth summer interns.

7. Public Arts and Spaces

- a. **Cultural Affairs:** Maintain funding for staff and programming in the City's Cultural Affairs Division, and continue to provide grants for community-based organizations across Oakland.
- b. **Public Arts Events:** Offer support for neighborhood councils, grassroots nonprofits, and merchant groups to fund small-scale music, dance, food, and cultural events in commercial corridors throughout the year.
- c. **Park Facilities:** Ensure that all City parks have fully-functioning and maintained bathrooms year-round. Ensure that adequate resources are given to make all City parks ADA accessible.
- d. **Recreation Centers and After-School Youth Programming:** Maintain funding for Oakland Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development activities, expand availability of after-school programming, and work to fill the department's staff vacancies.

8. Other

- a. **Human Resources:** Fund all positions within the City's HR Department, and explore the need to add additional staff to make City of Oakland's hiring processes more efficient so that all city vacancies can be filled as soon as possible in order to provide basic constituent resources.
- b. **IT:** Implement technology upgrades to ensure that our systems are modernized and less susceptible to hacks and ransomware attacks.

Sincerely,



Janani Ramachandran
Oakland City Councilmember, District 4