

FACT SHEET: SAFE, HEALTHY HOUSING AND HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

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.

¹ [Cal. Gov. Code § 65040.12 \(e\)](#)

Principles of Environmental Justice

Some excerpts from the Principles of Environmental Justice² related to the topic for this Focus Group Meeting:

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.



Affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.



Affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities..., honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and 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

² <https://www.ejnet.org/ei/principles.html>

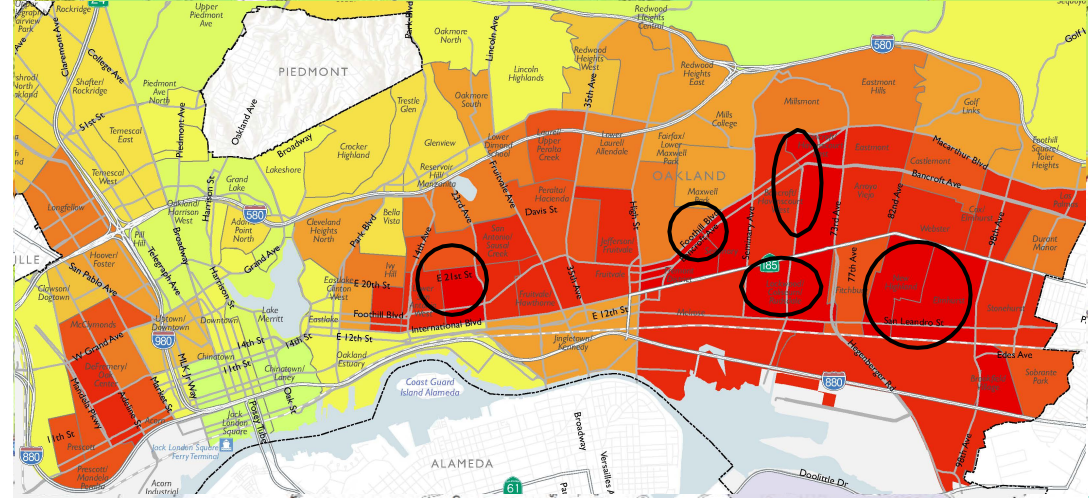
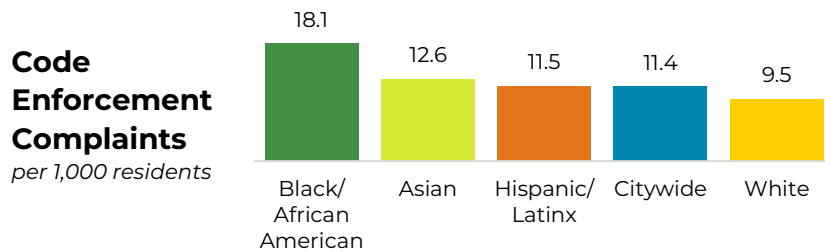
Housing Quality

Housing quality and habitability in Oakland can be characterized by multiple aspects, including indoor air quality, potential lead exposure, and frequent code enforcement complaints.

Homes near pollution sources can expose people to air pollutants such as nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, moisture, and mold. Older buildings that are not well-maintained can lack proper ventilation or have deteriorated building infrastructure that exacerbates exposure to these indoor pollutants.

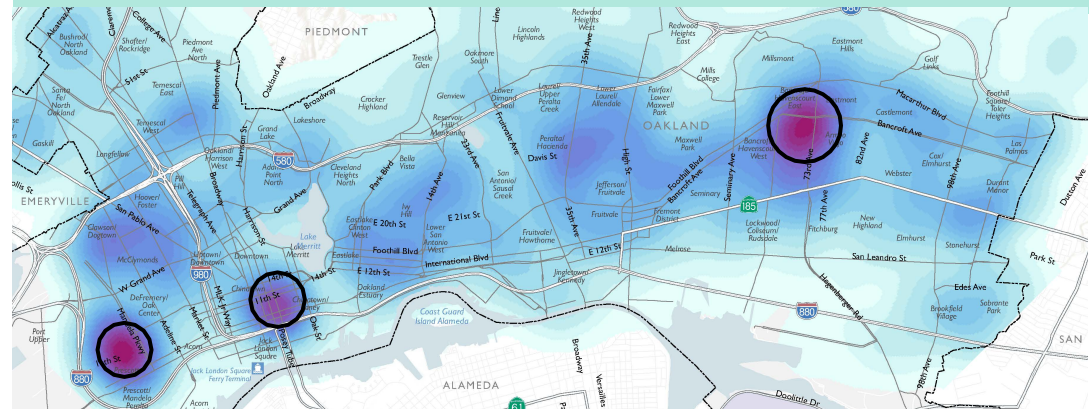
Without proper maintenance or rehabilitation, older buildings can fall into disrepair, subjecting residents to conditions such as inadequate sanitation, structural hazards, and exposure risks. Housing built before 1978, for example, is likely to contain some lead-based paint, which can spread throughout indoor environments and be ingested or breathed in, increasing risk of lead poisoning particularly in young children.

In Oakland, majority-White census tracts have the lowest rate of code enforcement complaints (for blight, zoning, and housing habitability) per 1,000 residents, while tracts that are majority people of color all have higher code enforcement complaints than the overall citywide rate.



Lead Exposure

About 60% of census tracts in Oakland are in the top 20th percentile statewide for **children's lead risk** from housing. The most impacted neighborhoods in Oakland are in Lower San Antonio and many areas of East Oakland, where **over 90%** of households are at risk of lead exposure.



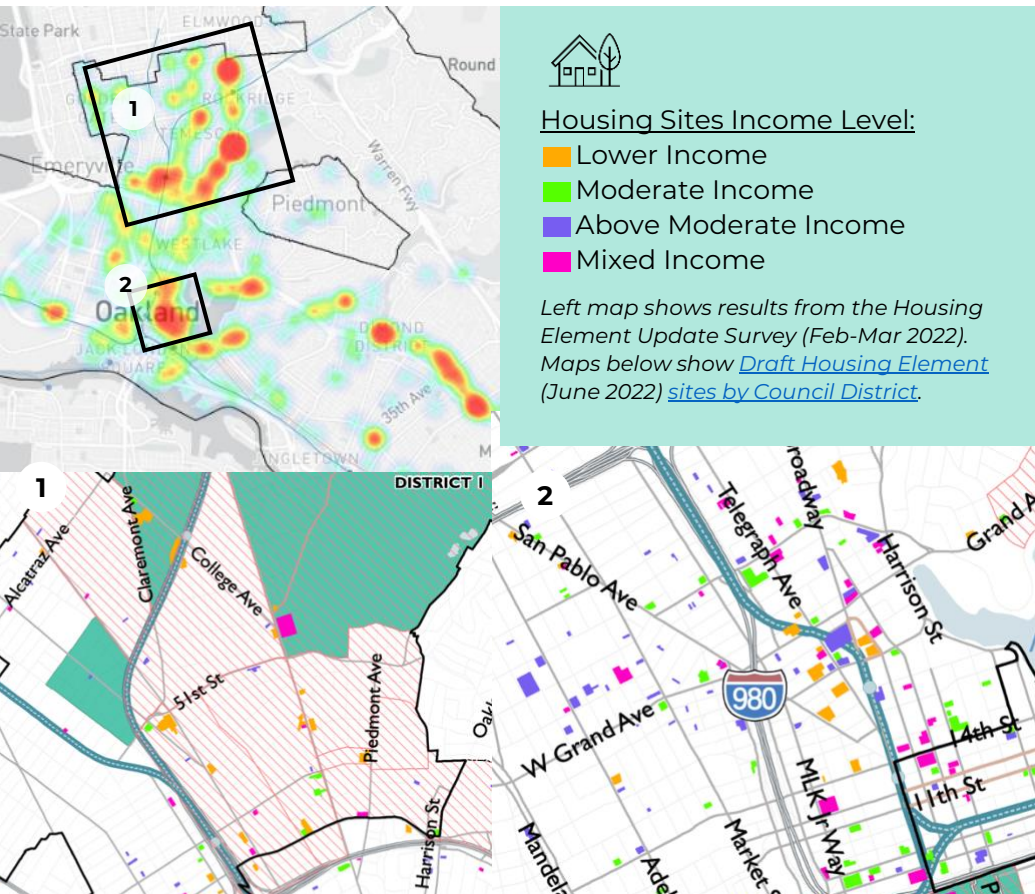
Housing Habitability: Code Enforcement Complaints

The density of code enforcement complaints for housing habitability issues is greatest around **Prescott, Chinatown, and Bancroft/Havenscourt East**. Primarily Black/African American census tracts have the highest rate of code enforcement complaints – almost twice the rate in predominantly White census tracts.

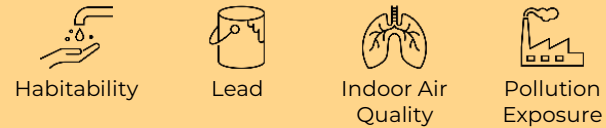
2023-2031 Housing Element Update

The City is currently in the [process of updating its Housing Element for the 2023-2031 housing cycle](#). The Housing Element focuses on protecting Oakland residents from displacement and houselessness, preserving and improving existing housing stock, and expanding affordable housing opportunities.

Through the Housing Element process, the community has identified places where they'd most like to see housing, including Downtown, along Broadway, and near Rockridge BART. The [Draft Housing Element sites inventory](#) seeks to provide expanded housing opportunities in these places, especially for lower income groups.



HOUSING QUALITY ISSUES IN OAKLAND



FOOD & NUTRITION ISSUES



RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

Housing

- [California Dept. of Housing & Community Development](#)
- [Alameda County Healthy Homes Department](#)
- [City of Oakland Housing & Community Development Dept.](#)
- [City of Oakland Planning & Building Department](#)

Food

- [California Dept. of Social Services \(CDSS\)](#)
- [Alameda County Social Services Agency](#)

RESOURCES

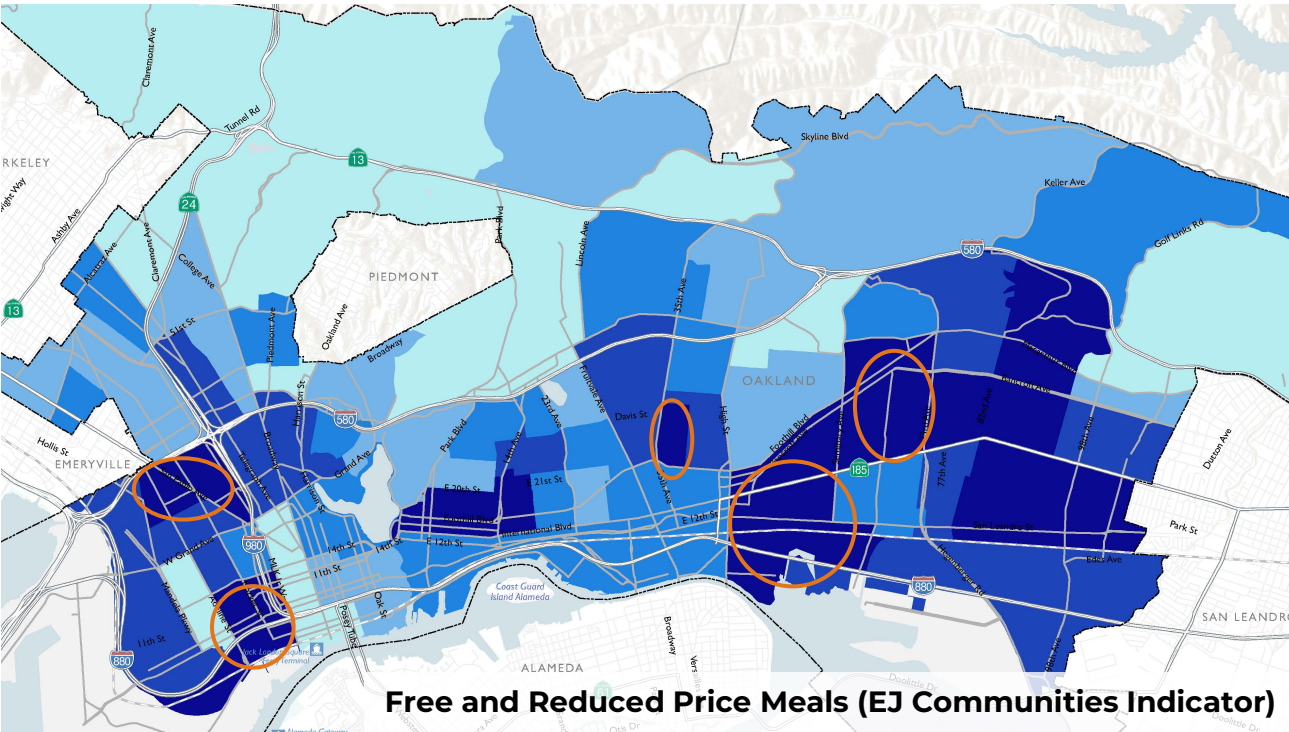
- [Alameda County Community Food Bank](#): 510-635-3663
- [City of Oakland Lead-Safe Homes Program \(LSHP\)](#): 510-238-3909
- [City of Oakland OAK 311: Report a Property Complaint](#): 510-238-3381
- [BAAQMD: Report an Air Pollution Complaint](#): 800-334-6367
- [Alameda County Social Services Agency \(CalFresh\)](#): 510-263-2420
- [Oakland Summer Food Program](#): 510-238-6454
- [UC Cooperative Extension Alameda County](#) (Urban Agriculture)

Healthy Food Access

The grocery store is the primary source of healthy food for most Oaklanders, providing access to a wide variety of nutritious and relatively affordable produce and other foods compared to food outlets like convenience stores. However, racial and socioeconomic inequities in access to healthy food, known as “**food apartheid**,” have led to inequitable food access for communities of color.

Supporting a neighborhood-based network of **food distribution** points can also help to improve food access. For example, libraries, schools, parks, and even large parking lots can become sites where sales or distribution of fresh food can occur, making food more accessible.

Community gardens can promote the concept of **food sovereignty**, where people are empowered to control their food and food systems. Research has shown that people who participate in community gardens eat more fruits and vegetables and worry less about running out of food before the end of the month.



Food Insecurity

Urban areas, including many parts of Oakland, have the greatest rates of **food insecurity** in the county – **up to 40%** of a census tract's population in Downtown Oakland. **Marginal food security** is also highest in Oakland, with **up to 18%** of a tract.



Image Source: Mandela Grocery Cooperative website

Safe, Healthy Housing and Access to Healthy Food Issues and 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 feedback?” column!

Sources referenced below:

- [Oakland & Alameda County Lead Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\)](#)
- DOSP = [Downtown Oakland Specific Plan](#)
- ECAP = [Oakland Equitable Climate Action Plan 2030](#)
- EONI = [East Oakland Neighborhoods Initiative Community Plan](#)
- HDG = [Oakland Healthy Development Guidelines](#)
- [Mandela Partners \(Mandela Grocery Cooperative\)](#)
- WOCAP = [West Oakland Community Action Plan](#)

SAFE, HEALTHY HOUSING

Add link to Housing Element here again, note it addresses tenant protections, preservation of existing housing, and production of more affordable housing.

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
Inequitable burden and enforcement of housing habitability issues	Coordination across City departments and agencies to optimize use of funds, staffing, etc. to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement and tenant protections • Sanitary housing and maintenance issues • Environmental hazards in homes and neighborhoods; and • Other concerns related to stable, safe, and sanitary housing. 	Best practice			
	Identifying supplemental funding for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofit • Rehabilitation, and • Upgrade projects 	ECAP, Pop-up outreach			

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/ Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
	that address health and safety in housing occupied by low-income renters and homeowners, including air quality improvements.				
Lead paint risk	Improve lead paint screening ability including proactive inspections. Prioritize abatement, testing, and outreach in EJ communities at high risk.	Pop-up outreach; Oakland & Alameda County Lead REIA			
	Continue to work with Oakland HCD and Alameda Dept of Public Health to provide information about home health, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Safe Home Program grants • Indoor air pollutants/asthma triggers • Hazard zone exposure. 	Healthy homes screening mentioned in West Oakland Toxic Tour			
Sensitive uses/proximity to polluting facilities	Other policies in Factsheet for Focus Group #2, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air filter requirements in new homes and air filter distribution programs; • Buffering; • Changes to zoning and permitting; • and other strategies 	WOCAP, HDG, ECAP, Pop-up outreach, EJ Hub survey			
	Incentivize inclusion of health promoting features in new housing, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site health and human services; • Energy-efficient appliances; • Green infrastructure (green roofs or tree planting) • Car sharing • Community gardens or sponsored rides to farmers markets • Transit and bus passes for lower income workers 	HDG			

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
Disparities in access to fresh produce	<p>Explore locations and other strategies to incentivize new full-service grocery stores as well as smaller markets in underserved areas. Incentives could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds or grants • Zoning overlays • Land use changes • Density or intensity bonuses • Allowing smaller grocery stores in residential areas without good food access • Permitting vertical farms and reduce fees for vertical farming 	Food access and disparity issue identified in pop-up outreach and EJ hub, but confirmation of ideas needed			
	<p>Develop and implement a program to incentivize and assist business owners to stock fresh and healthy food. Elements could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for refrigeration equipment • Business counseling and technical assistance • Store design support 	Inspired by work of Mandela Partners			
	<p>Supporting urban agriculture and home gardening efforts through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver of vacancy tax if property is put to agricultural use • Expansion of the edible parks program • Acquire additional land for public community gardens • Make underutilized/vacant public agency-owned lands available for community gardens • Land transfers or discounted water rates • Incentives for rooftop gardens or other agricultural landscaping 	Edible parks included in DOSP. Incentives for urban agriculture included in HDG. Community and home gardening included in Coliseum Area SP			

Disparity/Gap	Draft Policy Ideas	Idea Source	Captures/Addresses Issue?		Other/Comments
			Yes	No	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote food innovations and use grants to fund and permit street (sidewalk) vending, food cooperatives, pop-up markets, and other models that don't fit into traditional storefront, farmers market, of community garden models 	Food access and disparity issue identified in pop-up outreach and EJ hub, but confirmation of ideas needed			
	<p>Support existing capacity and develop new capacity to recover edible food that would be otherwise wasted, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building food collection and storage capacity among partners Engage with food generators to donate surplus food <p>Inform surplus food generators about strategies/best practices to prevent wasting food</p>	Food recovery inspired by ECAP			
	<p>Partner with agencies to increase awareness of existing food assistance programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information in newsletters, the web, and at community events and facilities Target merchants in food insecure areas to inform about incentives to accept WIC and SNAP 	Food access and disparity issue identified in pop-up outreach and EJ hub, but confirmation of ideas needed			
Disparities in food insecurity and health outcomes like obesity	Support existing food security resources and healthy food and nutrition education programs through operational support (for example, if hours need to be expanded), marketing, and educational campaigns	DOSP			

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