

INSIGHTS FOR IMPACT: A COMMUNITY-CENTRIC EXPLORATION OF OUTDOOR VENDING IN OAKLAND



*Advancing Equity in Outdoor Public Programming
and Permitting Pathways*



Cultivate. include. achieve.

Prepared and presented by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the pursuit of understanding and transforming the outdoor vending landscape in Oakland, the journey has been shaped by the collaboration and support of exceptional individuals and organizations.

At the forefront of this transformative effort is the Oakland, CA. **District 2** team. **Nikki Fortunato Bas, Council President**, has been a fierce advocate and leader, centering equity and inclusion. Her commitment, especially during the budget process, ensured that vital resources were allocated to support the vending efforts at the Lake.

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Most importantly, my deepest appreciation goes to the vendors. Your willingness to share experiences and stories has provided intimate insights, propelling us toward a cosmopolitan canopy that fosters shared solutions for shared spaces.

This collaborative effort represents a significant step toward a more inclusive and vibrant Oakland. We are indebted to each contributor for their support, dedication, and belief in the transformative power of community engagement.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF CITY COUNCIL CULTURAL STRATEGIST IN GOVERNMENT PROJECT 2022-2023

This case study aims to address the City of Oakland's need for a comprehensive understanding of how to support existing outdoor public programming and identify barriers to entry for BIPOC and low-income event organizers and vendors. The study also explores specific locations and stakeholders that can be engaged to create new or ongoing events and markets. Through an innovative cultural strategist position, the study proposes strategies to support event organizers in navigating permitting pathways, lowering existing barriers, and developing a program for ongoing events in public spaces, with a focus on outreach and promotions. The findings emphasize the importance of inclusive community engagement and cultural competency in order to foster equity and create a more diverse and vibrant public programming landscape in Oakland.

Prepared for the



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INTRODUCTION

With the historic budget of FY 2021-23, the Oakland City Council committed to improving outdoor spaces as part of their vision for clean, healthy, and sustainable neighborhoods. However, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and overcrowding at Lake Merritt raised concerns about maintaining a balance between cultural events and responsible usage. Furthermore, there were hurdles in the permitting processes that limited access for BIPOC and low-income organizers.

To tackle these issues, a Cultural Strategist was enlisted. Their role involved navigating permits, reducing barriers, and developing ongoing events programs with inclusive outreach and promotions. The objective was to bridge policy gaps, foster inclusivity, and promote equity within Oakland's cultural landscape. The goal of these efforts was to create a vibrant and equitable community that embraces outdoor public programming while ensuring responsible use of public spaces.

THEORETICAL FRAME

This case study is framed within the theoretical lens of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), which aims to examine the structures and privileges associated with whiteness and disrupt the power dynamics that perpetuate systemic oppression and inequities. In the context of outdoor public programming and the Lake Merritt Market Place in Oakland, CWS provides insights into the underlying mechanisms that shape the existing social, economic, and political landscape.



CASE STUDY NARRATIVE

As a cultural strategist in the City of Oakland, my journey to help establish the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace for BIPOC vendors began with a series of assignments and activities aimed at understanding the needs and aspirations of the community.

In my initial steps, I met with Tiffany Kang, an essential collaborator, to discuss our vision and approach for the marketplace. To familiarize myself with the existing processes and guidelines, I proactively initiated dialogues with city and county officials, as well as community members, to deepen my understanding of their roles and perspectives regarding street vending in Oakland. The journey continued with community engagement at the lake, EB PREC Community Owner Circle, Lake Merritt Working Group, and other vendor spaces to engage with local stakeholders and hear their valuable insights to enhance my effectiveness in understanding the vending-related issue.

Understanding that direct input from vendors was crucial, I created a vendor interest form to gather information from potential participants in upcoming outdoor events. Reviewing permit applications and engaging in discussions at the Town Hall Parking Meter meeting provided crucial knowledge about the permitting process and allowed me to identify potential challenges.

To deepen my understanding of the vendors' perspectives, I participated in the Afrocentric Oakland Juneteenth Weekend event planning session and engaged with vendors at Lakefest. This experience helped me comprehend their needs better, especially regarding essential resources like porta potties, trash cans, and security.

Collaborating with Think, Live, Love & Omni Commons for the Black Future Marketplace further enriched my insights and facilitated connections with potential partners for workshops and focus groups. Meeting with City of Oakland Economic Development and fellow cultural strategists enabled me to align efforts and create a comprehensive approach.



CASE STUDY NARRATIVE CONT.

As the case study progressed, I continued attending various events, such as Lakeshores Saturday market, Life is Living Outdoor Event, and Art as a Tool marketplace. Engaging with vendors during these events reinforced the significance of inclusive planning and addressed their concerns about isolation and resource availability.

With a focus on inclusion, I designed vendor-focused group questions and conducted focus groups at Oakstop. Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, I identified areas for improvement, including outdoor permitting processes and creating a shared Google folder with resources for vendors.

Throughout the journey, I worked closely with District 2 staff, ensuring consistent communication and collaboration with vendors and city teams. The Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace Planning Committee played a central role in steering the project, while interactions with various stakeholders, such as Alameda County Health Department and the Cultural Affairs Commission, ensured regulatory compliance and holistic support.

The process culminated in the successful establishment of the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace, a space that celebrates BIPOC culture, fosters economic empowerment, and creates a strong sense of community belonging. The development of a Governing Board and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) further solidified the market's commitment to inclusion and sustainable growth.

Overall, the case study highlights the significance of active engagement, collaborative partnerships, and an inclusive approach in establishing the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace. As a cultural strategist in the government, this journey has reinforced the transformative power of community-driven initiatives and the positive impact they can have on the city of Oakland and its residents.



APPROACH

THE PROJECT PROCESSES, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EXECUTION.

| TASK | | TIMELINE |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| PHASE 01 GROUNDING & KNOWLEDGE BUILDING: | UNDERSTANDING OF EXISTING PRACTICES, KEY STAKEHOLDERS, AND RESOURCES | MAY 2022-JULY 2023 |
| PHASE 02 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | REACHING IN & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING | MAY 2022-JULY 2023 |
| PHASE 03 INTIMATE INQUIRY | QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION | JUNE 2022-JULY 2023 |
| PHASE 04 SENSE-MAKING | ESTABLISHING FRAMEWORKS AND DATA ANALYSIS | NOVEMBER 2022- JULY 2023 |
| PHASE 05 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT | APPLYING FINDINGS FROM DATA | SEPTEMBER 2022- OCTOBER 2023 |
| PHASE 06 COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION | CURATING SPACE, AND SUPPORTING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE | MAY 2022-JULY 2023 |
| PHASE 07 MARKETPLACE DEVELOPMENT | ESTABLISHING STANDAR OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR SUSTAINABILITY | NOVEMBER 2022- JULY 2023 |
| PHASE 08 DEVELOPINGG CASE STUDY | INTAMATE INQUIRY & DATA ANALYSIS | JULY 2023- NOVEMBER 2023 |

METHODOLOGY

Problem of Practice

The overutilization of a public space, Lake Merritt, has led to concerns regarding safety and health issues. However, this space holds significant value for BIPOC entrepreneurs and residents from across the city, serving as a vital community hub for fostering economic well-being and cultural wealth.

Research Purpose

This research aims to understand stakeholders' perspectives and needs in the conflict over the public space by connecting with community leaders and gathering insights for creative problem-solving. This research is significant for finding inclusive solutions, bridging gaps, and promoting equity in public space management, aligning with the CSIG's commitment to cultural and racial equity.

Research Questions

- What are the real and perceived barriers impacting BIPOC from participating in regulated outdoor events?
- What can the city do to help alleviate these barriers?
- What are responsive methods of obtaining qualitative inquiry and creating responsive pedagogy to help existing and aspiring vendors with participating in regulated outdoor events?

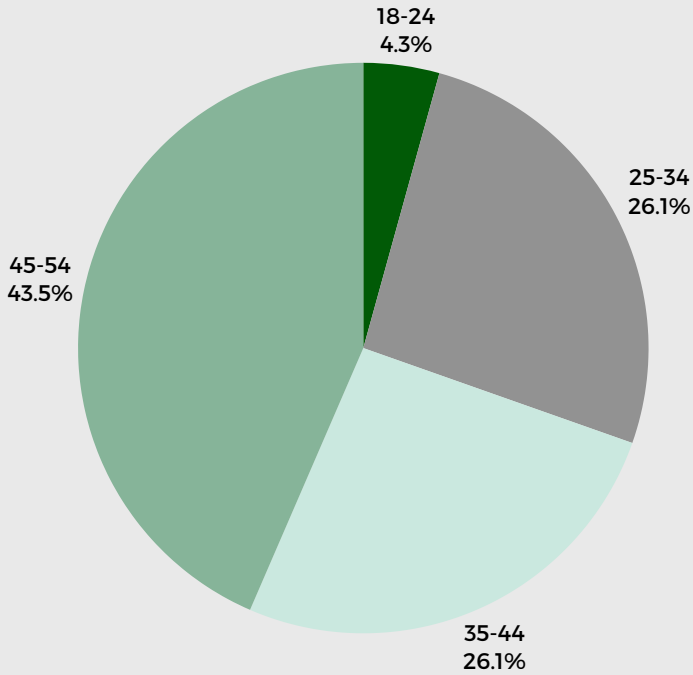
Research Methods

- Interviews
- Surveys
- Process Analysis

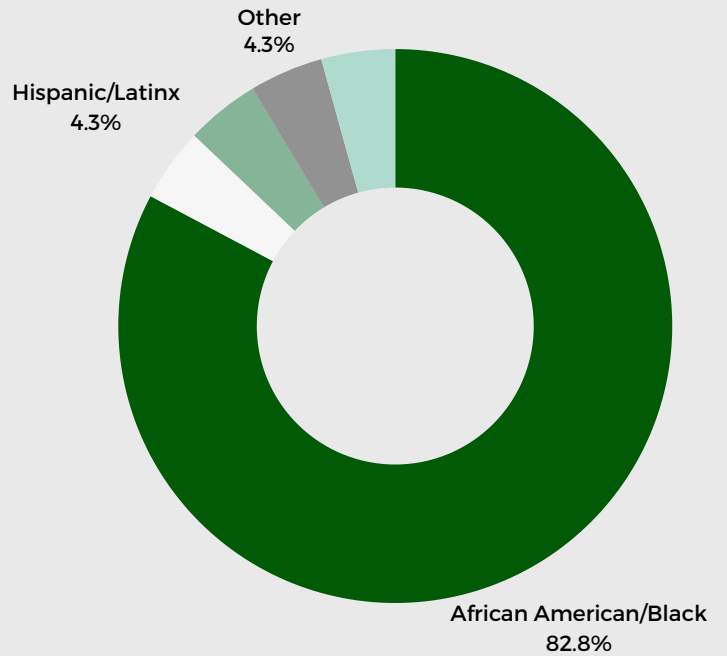


MARKETPLACE VENDOR DEMOGRAPHICS

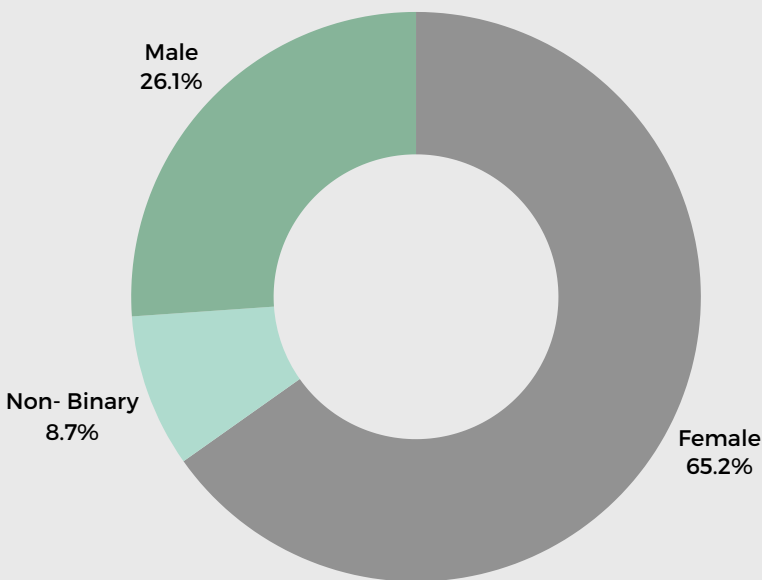
Age



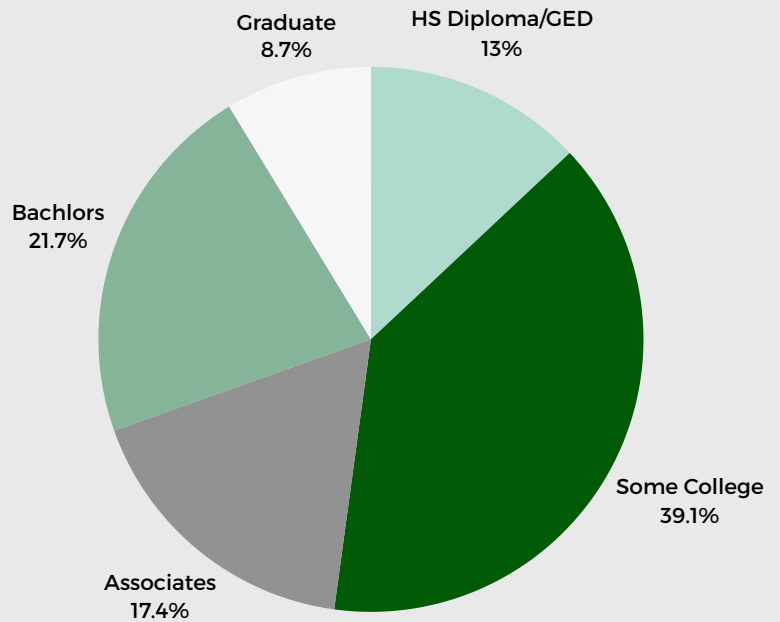
Racial Identity



Gender Expression

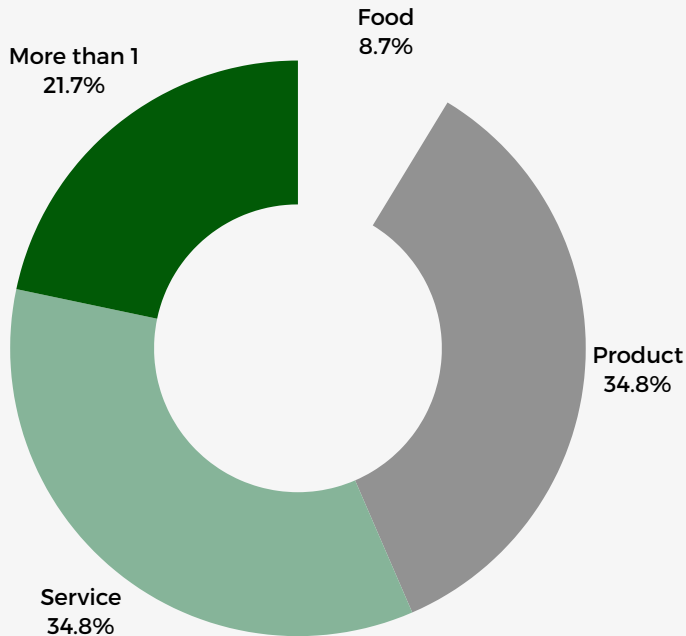


Education

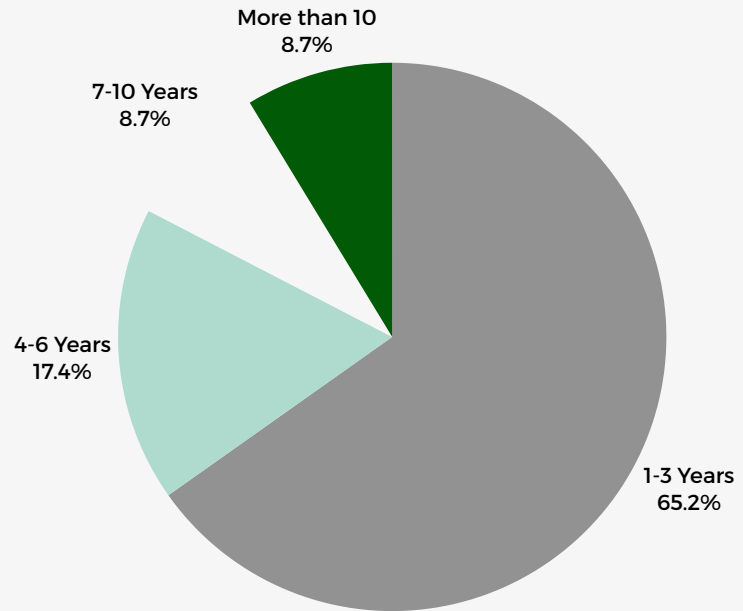


VENDOR BUSINESSES

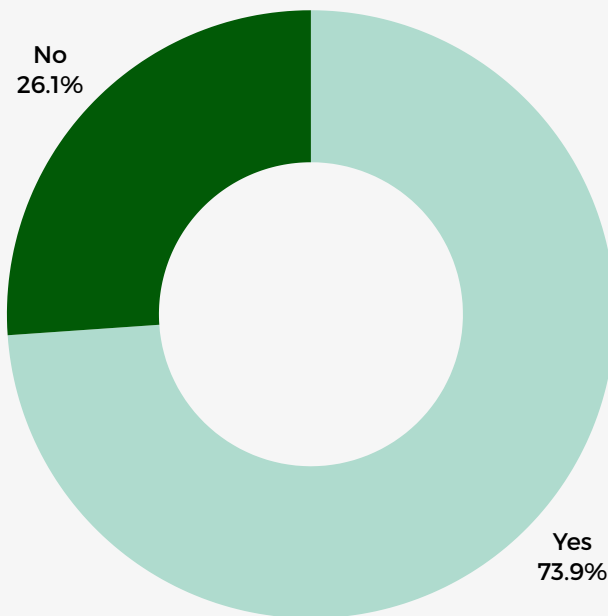
Type



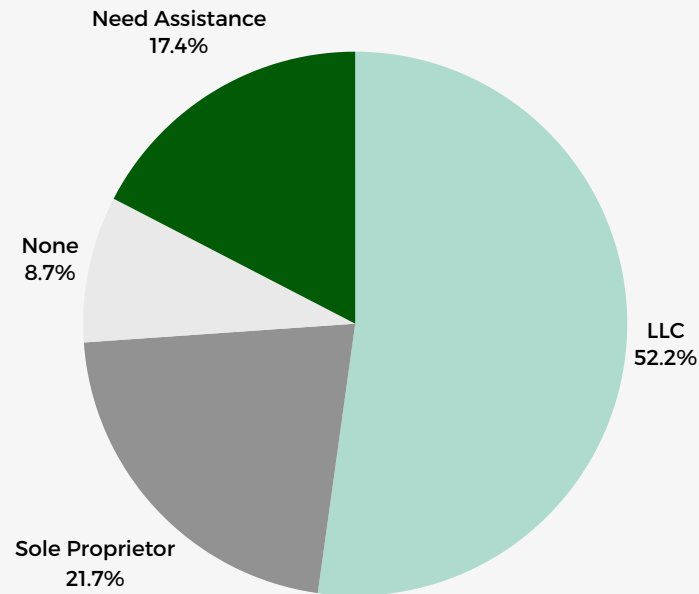
Years Vending



License



Structure



VENDOR VOICES

How do you decide on a location to vend? What factors do you consider?"



The size of each cloud indicates its frequency in responses. "Foot Traffic" dominates the visual, highlighting its crucial role in location decisions. "Proximity to Local Events" and "Safety" are also prominently featured, showing their importance. These three themes were often mentioned throughout the study.

VENDOR VOICES

Street vendors contribute to the community by...

“ We are the local economy. Street vendors create more opportunities for gatherings and foot traffic and brick and mortar establishments. ”

“ We contribute 100%, we’re literally the community. We live, eat, shop here, why not work here too? ”

“ We add cultural enrichment, inspire people and pay taxes. ”

“ I think it’s great for people to run their own business and be able to serve and service the community. ”

Changes we would like to see...

“ a market that is open 7 days a week for street vendors to set up safely. ”

“ A place that we vend and be safe and everyone that attend will feel safe as well. ”

“ Yes a market that is open 7 days a week for street vendors to set up safely. ”

“ I would like to see a permanent vending corridor. ”

How the city can support...

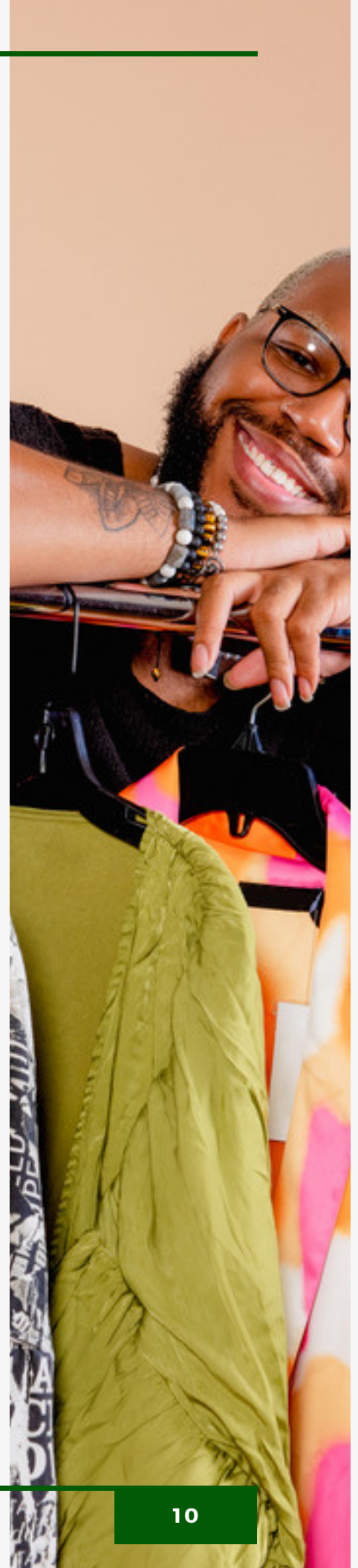
“ Make more locations safe and secure for local vendors. ”

“ Help provide enforcement during events, promote events on their website & media, ensure the parks/site is cleaned, ”

“ listening to the needs. ”

“ Help with the permits. ”

“ Provide grants and innovative solutions. ”



FINDINGS

Vendor Engagement:

The vendors' unique insights, experiences, and needs are essential in shaping the success of the Freedom Market. Their firsthand knowledge of the challenges they face and the cultural significance of their products and services hold valuable implications for the market's development. Throughout the course of the research, it became apparent that the voice of vendors was notably absent from significant meetings, such as the Lake Merritt working group or the planning process of the Lake Merritt Marketplace location, which raised concerns about the lack of direct representation of their perspectives. By not including vendors in key discussions, the city is missing out on critical information that could help inform policies and initiatives tailored to meet the diverse requirements of BIPOC vendors.

Lack of Traffic at the Recommended Location on El Embarcadero:

One of the primary concerns voiced by vendors was the perceived lack of foot traffic at the recommended location on El Embarcadero. Foot traffic is essential for vendors as it drives potential customers to their booths and ensures a steady stream of business. Without sufficient access for foot traffic vendors struggle to attract customers and generate sustainable income, impacting their overall success and participation in the market.

Vendor Isolation at the Proposed Location:

Vendors expressed a sense of isolation at the proposed location for the market. This feeling of seclusion could be attributed to the layout and organization of vendor booths on El Embarcadero. The barricades used to block the traffic contributed to the feeling of isolation. Vendors used language like “segregation” , and “prison” to illustrate their feelings of being disconnected from the main flow of pedestrian traffic and other market activities. This isolation limits the visibility of vendors, hinders their ability to engage with potential customers and disregards the sense of belonging for vendors.

Lack of Essential Resources:

Another significant concern raised by vendors was the lack of essential resources at the proposed location. Basic amenities such as porta potties, trash cans, and proper waste stations for liquids were reported to be lacking. The absence of these facilities not only creates inconvenience for vendors but also poses potential health and sanitation issues for both vendors and visitors. Access to proper waste management and restroom facilities is crucial for maintaining a clean, hygienic, and welcoming environment at the marketplace.

Inadequate Security Measures:

Vendors expressed worries about the lack of adequate security at the proposed location. The absence of visible security personnel or measures can lead to concerns about the safety of vendors, their products, and customers. A secure environment is essential to instill confidence in vendors, enabling them to focus on their businesses without fear of theft or vandalism. Unloading in the evening also posed concerns around traffic.



EXISTING DECISION-MAKING POWERMAP

The current decision-making process functions as a top-down power dynamic. This structure places the highest level of control and authority in the hands of city officials, regulatory bodies, and other upper-echelon stakeholders. Despite being key players in the operational ecosystem, vendors input is at the bottom of this hierarchy, with limited influence over decisions that directly impact their livelihoods and the way they conduct their business.



WHO IS OPPOSING VENDING?

The first notable opposition to vending at Lake Merritt can be traced back to the "BBQ Becky" incident in 2018. This event, where a white woman reported Black individuals for barbecuing, symbolizes a broader pattern of racial tensions and systemic discrimination at the lake. A CWS framework helps us understand this as an instance of white privilege and racialized control of public spaces. Such actions, often rooted in racial biases, reflect an underlying resistance to the diversification and cultural expression of BIPOC communities. The incident inadvertently united local vendors and community members, transforming the lake into a dynamic hub of protest against racial injustice and a celebration of cultural diversity.

The second opposition group comprises a special interest group of residents living near Lake Merritt, predominantly white, who have expressed concerns about vending activities. From the perspective of CWS, this reflects a dynamic where white residents, holding societal privileges, may perceive the presence of vendors, typically from marginalized communities, as disruptive or undesirable. Additionally, government employees, mostly in non-decision-making civil servant roles, also pose a form of opposition. Their bureaucratic procedures and enforcement of regulations, often without an understanding of the community's cultural and social dynamics, inadvertently perpetuates systemic barriers.

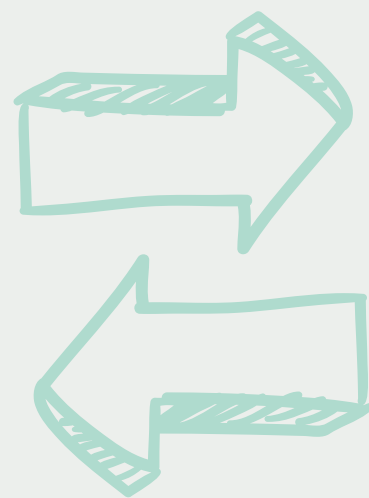
VOICES OF OPPOSITION

"People can't even take wedding photos at the lake anymore"

"I mean, I'm just trying to understand this....I just thought if someone continues to break the law at some point, they go to jail"

"These are really police matters, people are out there operating illegally....our folks aren't going to go out there. We don't have guns"

"Where in the world do people play drums all day?"



*quotes from government employees and special interest groups

CSIG SUCCESSES

Equity Scale

Creating an equity scale for participation in the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace transforms the marketplace into a platform that actively works towards social justice, economic empowerment, and community solidarity. By providing opportunities to those most marginalized, the marketplace becomes a catalyst for positive change, fostering an environment where everyone can contribute and prosper. I also will ensure that folks who have been displaced from Oakland can still participate in the city's vendor market.

Lake Merritt Market Place

During the process of reimagining vendor operations at Lake Merritt, it became evident that the City of Oakland sponsoring the Lake Merritt Freedom Market would be highly beneficial in centralizing permit compliance and enhancing the market's impact. The Freedom Market, with its focus on economic empowerment and cultural diversity, aligns with Oakland's vision of "Belonging in Oakland." By sponsoring this marketplace, the City of Oakland not only simplifies regulatory processes it also strengthens its commitment to building an inclusive, connected community. CSIG input in the permit process also aided in the implementation of the new centralized special events process.

Governing Board

The establishment of the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace Governing Board is an inspiring achievement in community-driven governance and entrepreneurship. By actively involving local vendors in decision-making processes and nurturing a supportive ecosystem, the market will become a symbol of inclusivity and collaboration. As it continues to thrive under the guidance of the governing board, the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace will solidify its position as an essential cultural hub and a testament to the power of grassroots efforts in creating meaningful and lasting change.



ENSURING EQUITY IN MARKETPLACE VENDING

Equity Scale for Prioritizing Access to the Vendor Market in Oakland

In an effort to foster a more inclusive and representative vendor market in Oakland, we developed an 'Equity Scale.' This tool is designed to ensure that underrepresented and disadvantaged groups are given priority in accessing vending opportunities. The scale is based on five key questions, each aimed at identifying individuals or businesses that have historically faced barriers.

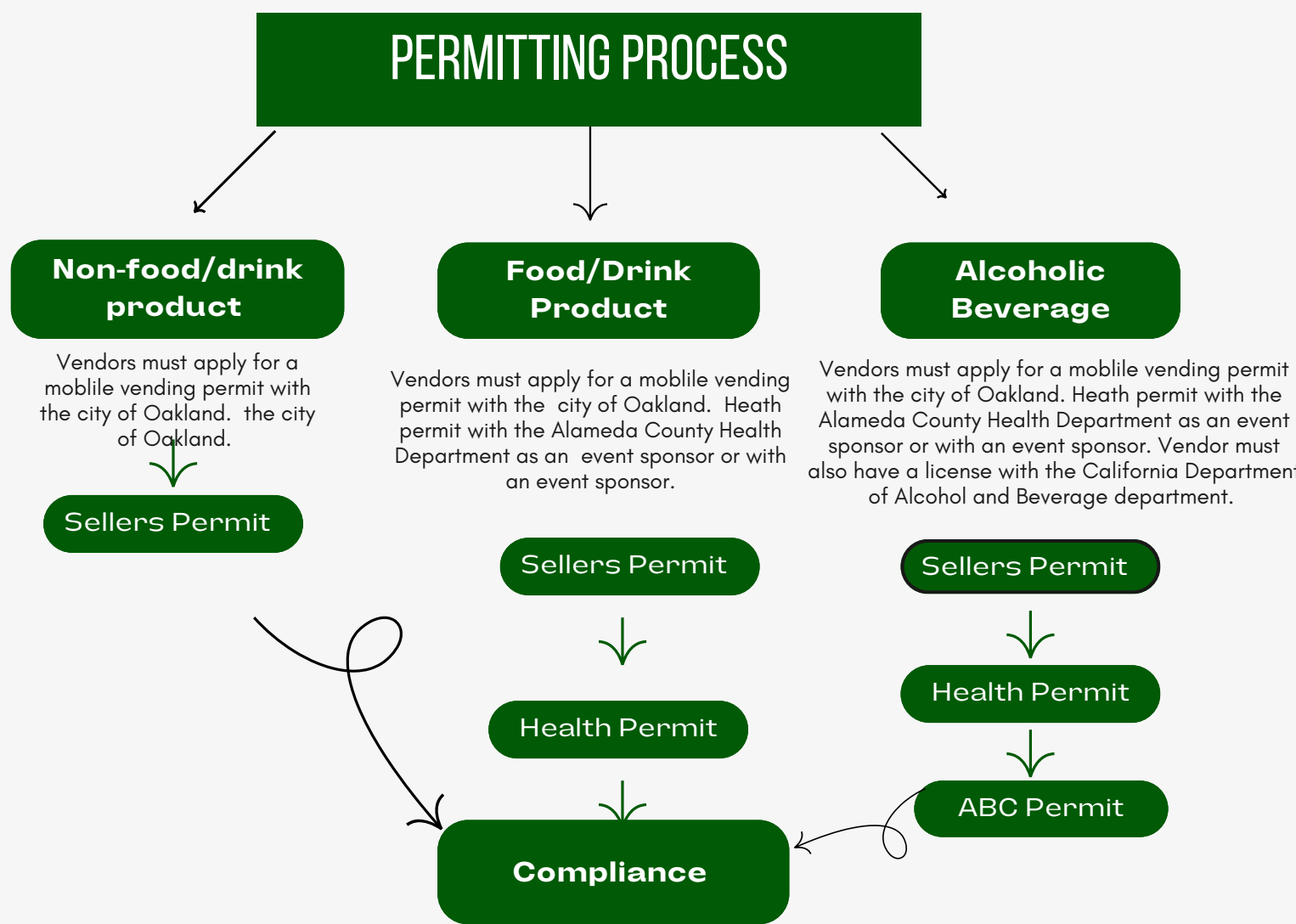
EQUITY FACTORS

- 1. Attended School in Oakland:** This question helps identify vendors who have been part of the Oakland community from a young age, emphasizing local roots and connections.
- 2. BIPOC Ownership:** Prioritizing BIPOC-owned businesses is crucial in addressing racial and ethnic disparities in business ownership and economic opportunities.
- 3. Currently Living in Oakland:** This ensures that current residents of Oakland, especially those from underserved neighborhoods, have access to vending opportunities, supporting local entrepreneurship.
- 4. Selling Handmade Products:** Focusing on vendors who sell handmade products encourages local artisans and craftsmen, supporting unique skills and trades that contribute to the cultural richness of Oakland.
- 5. Does Not Have a Brick and Mortar Location:** By prioritizing vendors without a physical store, this question helps provide opportunities to those who may not have the capital or resources to maintain a traditional storefront, thus supporting small-scale and emerging entrepreneurs.



PERMIT PROCESS

This chart demonstrates the permit process now centralized under the City of Oakland. The linear progression, with fewer steps and clear guidance represents the new approach. The process begins with a single entry point into the City of Oakland's department, responsible for the initial permit-related matters. This reorganization eliminated the need for vendors to visit the Oakland police department which significantly reduced the bureaucratic burden and time required to obtain permits. There is still a need for simplifying regulatory compliance between the Alameda County Health department and the City of Oakland.



EXISTING POLICY

SENATE BILL NO. 946: IMPACT ON SIDEWALK VENDING IN OAKLAND, CA

Background: Senate Bill No. 946, signed into law on September 17, 2018, represents a significant legislative move towards regulating sidewalk vending across California, including in Oakland. The bill aims to support entrepreneurship, particularly in low-income and immigrant communities, and to safeguard public safety and welfare while promoting regulated sidewalk vending.

Key Provisions:

1. Local Authority Regulations: The bill restricts local authorities from regulating sidewalk vendors except in compliance with the bill's provisions. It applies to all types of local authorities including cities, counties, and charter cities like Oakland.

2. Vending Program Requirements: Local authorities that choose to adopt a sidewalk vending program must ensure that:

- Vendors are not restricted to specific public right-of-way parts except for health, safety, or welfare concerns.
- Vendors are allowed to sell in local authority-owned parks, subject to certain concessions.
- Sidewalk vendors are not limited to a designated neighborhood or area, barring residential zones for stationary vendors.
- The overall number of vendors is not restricted unless necessary for health, safety, or welfare.

3. Additional Local Regulations: Local authorities may impose additional time, place, and manner restrictions if they are directly related to objective health, safety, or welfare concerns. This includes limited operating hours, sanitary conditions, and compliance with disability access standards.

4. Permit and Business License Requirements: Vendors may be required to obtain a permit or business license, with accommodations made for diverse identification forms in place of a social security number.

5. Decriminalization and Penalties: The bill decriminalizes violations of sidewalk vending ordinances, replacing criminal penalties with administrative fines based on an individual's ability to pay. It also provides for the dismissal of criminal prosecutions for sidewalk vending that have not reached final judgment.

6. Privacy Protections: Personal identification numbers collected for permits or licenses are kept confidential.

Implications for Oakland:

For Oakland, SB 946 offers a framework to regulate sidewalk vending in a way that encourages economic empowerment and cultural diversity. The bill's provisions ensure that vending activities are integrated thoughtfully into the cityscape, respecting the rights of vendors while addressing public safety and welfare concerns. Oakland can leverage these guidelines to create a vibrant, inclusive, and regulated sidewalk vending environment that aligns with the city's broader goals of community development and entrepreneurship support.

**SB 946 ENDS CRIMINALIZATION OF SIDEWALK VENDING IN CALIFORNIA
AND ALLOWS LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ADOPT NON-CRIMINAL LAWS TO
PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE.**

CSIG RECOMMENDATIONS

Continuation of Vending with Proper Permitting: Allow vendors to continue setting up on the grand side of the lake where there is higher pedestrian activity. Majority of the vendors have demonstrated self-organization and effectiveness in their vending approach. Providing support for proper permitting and necessary resources will help them thrive in this location.

Inclusion of Vendors in Decision-Making Processes: Actively involve vendors in decision-making processes related to the market. Encourage their participation in meetings, such as the Lake Merritt working group, where concerns around vending are discussed. Creating an inclusive environment where vendors' voices are heard and valued will lead to more effective and responsive market planning.

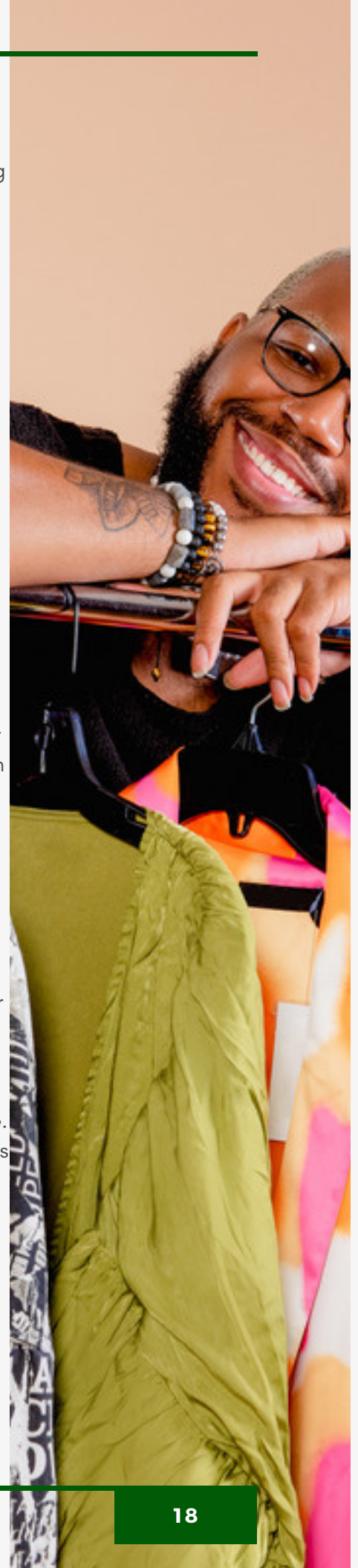
Cultivation of the Governing Board: Foster the development of a governing board for the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace through various means, such as providing stipends or establishing fellowships. Ensure that the board comprises individuals with lived experience, cultural competency, and existing relationships within the community to make well-informed decisions that represent the diverse vendor population.

Reimagine Civic Engagement: Reevaluate the city's approach to civic engagement by going beyond traditional town hall meetings. Seek innovative ways to engage with the community, such as collaborating with local organizations, leaving physical spaces, and holding events in neighborhoods to foster a stronger sense of belonging and connection.

Vendor Support and Relationship Building: Establish long-term relationships with vendors and provide ongoing support. Cultivate warm and inviting connections with vendors, making them feel valued and heard in their engagement with the marketplace. This support will lead to a greater commitment to the market and foster a sense of belonging among vendors.

City Sponsorship for Health Permits: As health permits require an event sponsor, consider having the city act as the sponsor for the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace. This will help reduce costs for vendors and ensure that safety and health requirements are met, facilitating the long-term sustainability of the market.

Cultivate a Sense of Belonging: Prioritize creating a sense of belonging among vendors by actively seeking their input, opinions, and feedback. Ensure that vendors know their perspectives are valued and that they have a meaningful role in shaping the marketplace. Address the sentiment of not being heard and create an inclusive and supportive environment for all vendors.



POLICY SOLUTIONS

Strategy 1: Establish Dedicated Vending Zones in High-Demand Areas

Objective: Designate specific areas around Lake Merritt for vending activities, ensuring a balance between vendor presence and public accessibility. These zones should be strategically placed to maximize foot traffic while minimizing congestion and environmental impact.

Strategy 2: Streamline the Permit Process for Lake Merritt Vendors

Objective: Simplify the permit application process to make it more accessible, especially for BIPOC and low-income vendors. This includes creating an online portal for applications, reducing paperwork, and offering guidance through the process.

Strategy 3: Develop a Vendor Support and Training Program

Objective: Implement a program to provide vendors with training and resources on business management, product development, and customer service. This initiative aims to enhance the quality and diversity of vending at Lake Merritt, fostering a thriving and professional vending community.

Strategy 4: Initiate a Collaborative Event Planning Framework

Objective: Establish a cooperative framework that involves vendors in the planning of cultural events and festivals at Lake Merritt. This approach ensures that vending activities are integrated into event planning, promoting inclusivity and synergy between vendors and event organizers.

Strategy 5: Implement Sustainable and Eco-friendly Vending Practices

Objective: Encourage and enforce environmentally sustainable practices among vendors. This includes the use of biodegradable packaging, waste reduction strategies, and promoting products that align with environmental conservation efforts around Lake Merritt.

Strategy 6: Enhance Safety and Compliance Monitoring

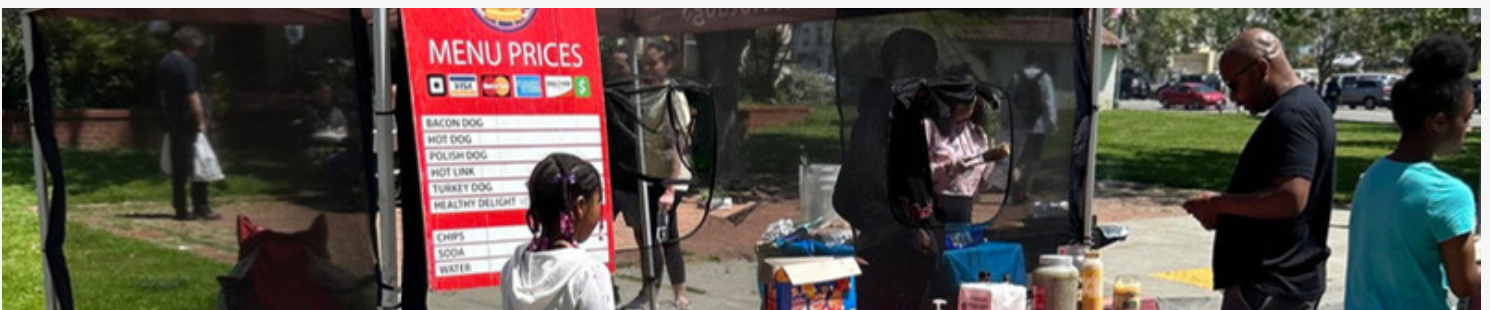
Objective: Increase the presence of non-police safety personnel to monitor vending activities, ensuring compliance with city regulations and addressing any conflicts or issues that arise. This strategy aims to create a safe and orderly environment for both vendors and visitors.

Strategy 7: Foster Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms

Objective: Create regular forums and feedback channels for vendors and community members to express their opinions and suggestions regarding vending at Lake Merritt. This continuous engagement will help in making informed adjustments to policies and practices.

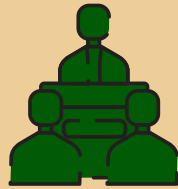
Strategy 8: Provide Financial Assistance and Grants for Emerging Vendors

Objective: Offer financial support in the form of micro-grants or low-interest loans to new and emerging vendors, particularly focusing on those from underserved communities. This support aims to encourage entrepreneurship and economic diversity among Lake Merritt vendors.



BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The City of Oakland has earmarked \$1 million annually from the Lake Merritt Parking Management Funds to enhance the Lake Merritt area's functionality and accessibility. The funds are distributed across various initiatives to manage parking, support equity, maintain parks, and improve traffic safety. Crucially, at least 30% of this funding is proposed to be dedicated directly to “park stewards”.



Establishment of Vendor Governing Board
\$90,000 (30% of Vendor Operations Budget)

Purpose: To form a representative body, including a fellowship program, to facilitate decision-making, policy development, and advocacy for vendors.

Impact: Enhances vendor representation in governance, ensuring that their interests and challenges are addressed effectively.



Business Education for Vendors
\$60,000 (20% of Vendor Operations Budget)

Purpose: To provide training programs focusing on business skills, financial literacy, and regulatory compliance.

Impact: Empowers vendors with essential business knowledge, contributing to their economic stability and growth.



Grants for Vendor Support
\$75,000 (25% of Vendor Operations Budget)

Purpose: To offer financial assistance to new and existing vendors, especially those from underrepresented communities.

Impact: Facilitates equitable access to vending opportunities, supporting entrepreneurship among marginalized groups.



Permitting Process Support
\$75,000 (25% of Vendor Operations Budget)

Purpose: To streamline and subsidize the permitting process, making it more accessible to vendors.

Impact: Reduces bureaucratic barriers, enabling a smoother entry and operation for vendors in the Lake Merritt area.

TOWARD A COSMOPOLITAN CANOPY: THE THEORY



The concept of "cosmopolitan canopies" offers valuable insights that can be applied to move the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace forward, fostering a more inclusive and diverse environment for all stakeholders. By understanding and embracing the principles of cosmopolitan canopies, the marketplace can become a place of cultural convergence, where people from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable engaging in open and intimate conversations. Here are some suggested practices for moving forward based on this theory:

THE PRACTICE

**ENCOURAGE CROSS-
CULTURAL
COLLABORATION**

**CREATE WELCOMING
AND
HETEROGENEOUS
SPACES**

**CELEBRATE
CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

**PARTNER WITH
COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS**

**EDUCATE AND RAISE
AWARENESS**

**FACILITATE
INTIMATE
CONVERSATIONS**

**PROVIDE COMFORT
AND AMENITIES**

**EMPHASIZE CIVILITY
AND RESPECT**

CONCLUSION

This case study, guided by Critical Whiteness Studies, has explored the complexities and challenges faced by vendors at the Lake Merritt Market Place in Oakland. Our findings reveal significant issues impacting the success and inclusivity of the Freedom Market, chiefly concerning vendor engagement, location viability, resource allocation, and security measures. These insights highlight the systemic barriers and inequities faced by BIPOC vendors in outdoor public programming.

The feeling of not belonging among vendors at the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace is influenced by historical experiences of exclusion and amplified by incidents like "BBQ Becky," which exposed racial profiling and discrimination against BIPOC individuals. Vending outdoors at the marketplace became an act of resistance against the social inequities BIPOC people faced during COVID, including racial disparities, isolation, and socio-economic loss.

The government has and continues to play a role in creating structural barriers for BIPOC vendors. Historical policies and practices have perpetuated systemic inequalities, limiting access to resources, permits, and economic opportunities. The incident with "BBQ Becky" highlighted the racial bias and discrimination within the community, impacting vendors' sense of safety and belonging.

However, the establishment of the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace served as a way for BIPOC vendors to reclaim agency and resist these barriers. By creating a space where they could showcase their culture and products freely, the marketplace provided an opportunity for economic empowerment and self-expression despite the challenges they faced.

"A CHILD WHO IS NOT EMBRACED BY THE VILLAGE WILL BURN IT DOWN TO FEEL ITS WARMTH"



CONCLUSION CONT.



In conclusion, the city's historical actions and incidents like "BBQ Becky" contributed to the feeling of not belonging among BIPOC vendors. Yet, the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace became a powerful symbol of resistance, allowing vendors to challenge structural barriers and reclaim their identities and economic opportunities within the community. Moving forward, it is essential for the city to address and dismantle these systemic inequities to create a truly inclusive and empowering environment for all.

The vendors at the Lake Merritt Freedom Marketplace have showcased their ability to self-organize and contribute to the marketplace's vibrancy. However, the current recommendation for the marketplace on El Embarcadero does not offer a long-term solution. To ensure success, the city of Oakland must support the vendors and meet them where they are at. Cultivating a "cosmopolitan canopy" approach will create an inclusive space where diverse people feel welcome and respected. Involving vendors in decision-making, providing necessary amenities, and fostering mutual understanding will lead to a transformative and harmonious marketplace. Embracing the cosmopolitan canopy concept will contribute to an equitable and inclusive Oakland for all.

In conclusion, addressing these challenges through the lens of CWS not only aligns with the goals of equity and inclusivity but also enriches the Lake Merritt Market Place as a space that truly reflects and serves its diverse community. Our recommendations offer a roadmap toward a more equitable, inclusive, and thriving marketplace, resonating with the broader aspirations of CWS to disrupt power dynamics and combat systemic oppression.

APPENDICES

[CSIG ACTIVITIES & TASK](#)

[VENDOR MIXER VIDEO](#)

[LAKE MERRIT FREEDOM
MARKET WEBSITE](#)

[GOVERNING BOARD
BYLAWS & STRUCTURE](#)

[MAP OF ALLOWABLE
VENDING AREAS](#)

[MOBILE VENDING FACT
SHEET \(ENGLISH\)](#)

[MOBILE VENDING FACT
SHEET \(SPANISH\)](#)

[VENDOR SURVEY RESULTS](#)

[SENATE BILL 946](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tanisha Cannon is a dynamic leader in social justice with a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and a background in sociology and public administration, Tanisha's expertise is extensive. Her passion for social justice is deeply personal, stemming from her own lived experiences with societal challenges.

Her career has been marked by significant contributions to underrepresented communities, including impactful roles at the Oakland Housing Authority, Alameda County Office of Education and Alameda County Health Department. Drawing inspiration from the Ubuntu philosophy, Tanisha emphasizes empathy, respect, and humanity in her approach to social justice. In her current role, Managing Director for Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, she is committed to amplifying marginalized voices and fostering an environment that champions equity and justice.

Tanisha's approach to social justice is further distinguished by her emphasis on qualitative data and intimate inquiry. She recognizes that numbers alone cannot fully capture the complexities of individual experiences, especially within underrepresented groups. Specializing in intimate inquiry, Tanisha cultivates a space where these individuals can speak their truth, share their stories, and be heard. This method allows for a deeper understanding of their realities, ensuring that their voices are not just included but are central to developing solutions and strategies for social change.

Tanisha's blend of personal dedication and professional expertise, combined with her innovative approach to data and storytelling, makes her a formidable advocate for social change. She continues to work tirelessly to support and uplift communities impacted by systemic inequities, ensuring that every voice has the opportunity to contribute to the narrative of justice and equity.



Cultivate. include. achieve.