

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of
OAKLAND
California

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City of Oakland, CBOs Awarded \$28.2 Million Grant for Transformative East Oakland Projects

Oakland, CA – On Thursday, June 25, the California Strategic Growth Council voted to fund Oakland’s “Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors” proposal through a multi-year grant of \$28.2 million. The proposal represents a partnership between the City of Oakland, multiple community organizations and local residents to implement five projects across a five-square-mile area in deep East Oakland over the next five years. Projects in the proposal include:

- 55 units of 100% affordable housing and a ground-floor health clinic
- A 1.2-mile community trail along the San Leandro Creek
- 2,000 trees that will be planted throughout the area
- A 3-acre nursery to support neighborhood residents in building out one of the largest urban aquaponics farms and food hubs in the U.S.
- Expanded bike share and programming for East Oakland youth

“Led by the community for the community, the ‘Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors’ proposal envisions an East Oakland with healthy surroundings, safe and accessible transportation and thriving arts and culture that builds community wealth and ensures housing is a human right for existing East Oakland residents,” said Mayor Libby Schaaf. “Thanks to the ambitious vision and leadership of East Oakland stakeholders and the generous support of the Strategic Growth Council, these projects provide an opportunity to harness the leadership and civic power that we’ve particularly seen displayed in the past few weeks, lift up those voices that have been stifled by historic and structural racism and enact lasting transformation in some of our most challenged neighborhoods.”

“Oakland’s ‘Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors’ proposal demonstrated the Transformative Climate Communities Program’s goal to support community-driven, integrated projects that provide local economic, environmental and health benefits,” said Louise Bedsworth, Executive Director of the California Strategic Growth Council. “The East Oakland project demonstrated the partnership, collaboration, and project development that are such an important part of community-led transformation.”

An exciting aspect of the project is that community organizations will be directly funded, leveraging other funding sources, to implement projects and build organizational capacity. In addition to regional partners like Related Companies of California and East Bay Regional Parks District, ACTS Community Development Corporation, Black Cultural Zone, Planting Justice, East Bay Permanent Real

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Estate Cooperative, Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation, and Higher Ground Neighborhood Development are the community-based co-applicants who will receive funding and lead implementation of the projects.

The five projects in the “Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors” proposal are:

95th and International Housing, Health and Connectivity

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The project, led by the Related Companies of California and Acts Community Development Corporation, will create 55 units of 100% affordable housing (20% to 50% of Area Median Income (AMI) with 25% of the units designated for homeless populations) on 95th Avenue and International Boulevard. The ground floor will include a community health clinic.

San Leandro Creek Urban Greenway

A 1.2-mile trail will be opened to East Oakland residents, transforming a concrete barrier into a pathway for Deep East Oakland neighborhoods to connect to the regional Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline Park. Under the East Bay Regional Parks District, the trail will be used for active transportation, recreation, access to open space and environmental education programming.

Community Greening

The Community Greening Project will bring together multiple community groups, organizations and local jurisdictions to plant 2,000 trees in the Project Area through a combination of street trees and trees on privately owned properties. Some of the trees will be locally sourced from the Planting Justice nursery, with the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation partnering with community organizations to provide training and paid internships for tree planting.

Planting Justice Aquaponics Farm and Food Hub

Funds to acquire a historic three-acre nursery and support neighborhood residents in building out the largest/most productive urban aquaponics farm in the U.S. The site will produce hundreds of thousands of pounds of organic produce and edible nursery starts each year, create 27 living-wage jobs, house a food hub in Oakland's most segregated neighborhood, and serve youth education, health/wellness, community development, and business incubation programming.

Higher Ground & Scraper Bike Team Bike Share and Youth Development

The Scraper Bike Team will partner with Higher Ground to develop curriculum for bike safety and repair and teach the afterschool enrichment classes to youth. The Oakland Public Library will partner with Oakland Public Works to design and construct an expanded bike repair and programming space known as "The Shed" located at Martin Luther King, Jr. Branch Library. The City of Oakland's Department of Transportation will collaborate with Scraper Bike Team and Higher Ground to implement and grow the East Oakland Mobility Action Plan.

The projects will be guided by the principles of community engagement, displacement avoidance, workforce development and climate resiliency throughout the five-year implementation period and will be stewarded by a to-be-formed

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stakeholder committee, comprised of the project co-applicants, community organizations and area residents. The Black Cultural Zone will lead business and community engagement, while the East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative will lead the displacement avoidance work by connecting East Oakland residents with programs to halt displacement, build community wealth, and produce Additional Dwelling Units.

Challenging the typical top-down approach to community development, the "Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors" proposal builds on decades of activism in East Oakland, and the recent [East Oakland Neighborhood Initiative](#) (EONI). EONI focused on deep engagement in six East Oakland neighborhoods: Melrose, Highland/Elmhurst, Sobrante Park, Brookfield Village/Columbia Gardens, Stonehurst, Coliseum/Rusdale/Lockwood/Havenscourt.

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The community-led EONI engagement and resulting [Community Plan](#) energized project area residents and created hope for true transformation that centers community needs. Project area resident Cynthia Arrington captured that community spirit, “Today, residents bring a wide range of backgrounds, skill sets and values creating a community poised and ready to restore [East Oakland] back to a place of peace and beauty. We have awakened, working together in an organized way ensuring revitalization for a healthier, safer, greener place to proudly call COMMUNITY!”

The timing of the community-led EONI process aligns with a growing commitment from the City and other regional partners and agencies to invest in East Oakland. The City of Oakland has [acknowledged a climate emergency](#) and the need for a just transition from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable and just for all its members. Last month, the City helped to stand up two COVID-19 test sites in the area, and earlier this week, the City passed a budget to fund the Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland (MACRO) program in an effort to pilot alternatives to police response. Oakland’s history of redlining, injustice and divestment links directly to disproportionately high impacts of poverty and pollution, and the most recent rates of COVID-19, in East Oakland.

“Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors” is supported by the California Strategic Growth Council’s Transformative Climate Communities Program with funds from California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. Of the three funded proposals in the 2020 grantee cohort, the City of Oakland’s was the only proposal to be fully funded.

In addition to community members and partner organizations, staff from the following City departments had supporting roles in the “Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors” proposal:

City Administrator’s Office
Economic & Workforce Development

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Housing & Community Development
Information Technology
Mayor’s Office
Oakland Public Library
Oakland Workforce Development Board
Parks, Recreation & Youth Development
Planning & Building
Public Works
Race & Equity
Transportation

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To learn more about the TCC grant, please visit
<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/transformative-climate-communities-tcc-grant>

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