

CITY OF OAKLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# GRAND AVENUE MOBILITY PLAN

FROM MANDELA PARKWAY TO MACARTHUR BLVD

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Major: **Urban Studies** | City Planning 180: **Research Seminar in Urban Studies**

College of Environmental Design | University of California Berkeley

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## Introduction

City Planning 180 is a newly launched undergraduate pilot program at the University of California Berkeley exclusively offered in the college of Environmental Design. It is a research seminar course offered to graduating seniors majoring in Urban Studies in the spring semester of 2020. The class provides mentored internship opportunities to students. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students were assigned to intern with the organizations of their choice.

Throughout the fifteen-week semester, students were able to work on a variety of projects in urban policy areas of current interest to their clients such as housing, homelessness, land-use and transportation. Projects included a Restorative Justice lens that looks at the history of racial and social injustice has contributed to current policy realities and analyzes what needs to be done differently today to break the cycle of policy and planning injustice.

In collaboration with Oakland Department of Transportation's (OakDOT), we researched the historical factors influencing the severe disinvestment along the corridor. The Grand Avenue Mobility plan is a community-led multimodal mobility plan that studies Grand Avenue from Mandela Parkway to MacArthur Boulevard.

We had the opportunity to visit the site and observe some of the pre-existing conditions of the street, sidewalk, bus stop, streetlights, and traffic signals. The study corridor traverses three distinct areas of Oakland: West Oakland, Downtown, and Adams Point. Throughout the document, we will be analyzing various factors that contribute to the racial disparities we see along the corridor.

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## Background

Located on the Eastern region of the San Francisco Bay, the city of Oakland has been historically influenced by ever evolving transportation systems that have helped shape its urban landscape and its demographics.

As part of the territory that later became California, the region was inhabited by several indigenous tribes including the Ohlone. By the 1700s, it was homeland “to more than 300,000 native people in more than 200 tribes,” whose lifestyle was devastated and altered through diseases and assimilation resulted from the interaction with outsiders such as Spanish missions, Mexican ruling and “American intrusion.”<sup>1</sup> The combination of simultaneous events further facilitated the reduction of the region’s “native population by more than two-thirds,” in which land displacement, poverty, bounty hunting, famine and racial discrimination were pervasive.<sup>2</sup> While Mexico was asserting its independence against Spanish ruling and expanding its territory to further north, new settlers from the East Coast and large land grants were becoming common elements and practices in the region. By the early 1800s, highly politically connected and well-to-do Mexican immigrants as well as white Californians were the primary beneficiaries, being Luis Maria Peralta one of them.<sup>3</sup>

A sergeant of the Spanish Army, supervised by the last Spanish governor Don Pablo Vicente de Sol, Luis Maria Peralta received, in 1820, one of the largest land grants from the Crown of Spain for his four decades of military service. This land grant facilitated the purchase of a vast parcel of land known as Rancho Santo Antonio, which stretched from, present, San Leandro to Albany, covering an area of approximately 44,800 acres or 181 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>4</sup> By the age

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<sup>1</sup> Oakland's History of Resistance to Racism

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklands-history-of-resistance-to-racism>

<sup>2</sup> Oakland's History of Resistance to Racism

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklands-history-of-resistance-to-racism>

<sup>3</sup> California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849 to 1900

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/california-first-person-narratives/about-this-collection/>

<sup>4</sup> Peralta Hacienda Historical Park

<http://www.peraltahacienda.org/pages/main.php?pageid=69&pagecategory=3>

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of 83, he divided the land between his four sons, Jose Domingo Peralta, Antonio Maria Peralta, Hermengildo Igancio Peralta and Jose Vicente Peranta, whereas the daughters were given the cattle and the adobe in San Jose. Jose Domingo Peralta inherited Berkeley and Albany, Antonio Maria Peralta inherited East of Lake Merritt, Hermenegildo Ignacio Peralta inherited East Oakland and San Leandro, and Jose Vicente Peralta inherited West of Lake Merritt including Temescal.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 1) The rancho way of life was composed of family living, beef and hides marketing and cattle production, which were essential factors in the economic development of the region. Nonetheless, the U.S Federal Land Act of 1851 hindered the rancho lifestyle and its continuous economic prosperity due to lengthy litigations between landowners and the U.S government. The 1851 Federal Land Act contested the land ownership and legitimacy of the rancheros land titles resulting in illegal possession, subdivision, and sale of parcels of lands, livestock theft and killings by squatters. As it was the case of Jose Vicente Peralta whose parcels of lands were overtaken by a lawyer, Horace W. Carpentier, Edson Adams and A. J. Moon that in turn refused to abandon the lands. Jose Vicente Peralta to mediate the situation decided to lease to them.<sup>6</sup> The three squatters used these business tactics to acquire financial and political power that enabled them to found the city of Oakland, where Horace W. Carpentier became its first mayor in 1853. Simultaneously, in the state of California, the native American population was being mistreated and killed so that its number "had been reduced to 30,000."<sup>7</sup>

The city of Oakland transformation from a partially rural community to a more urbanized setting occurred with the expansion of the railroad to the west. (Figure 2) The Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad & the Pacific Railway Acts of 1862, signed by Abraham Lincoln, galvanized urban growth, in which the movement of people and goods

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<sup>5</sup> Rancho San Antonio  
[https://localwiki.org/oakland/Rancho\\_San\\_Antonio](https://localwiki.org/oakland/Rancho_San_Antonio)

<sup>6</sup> A Brief History of West Oakland  
<http://web.sonoma.edu/asc/cypress/finalreport/Chapter02.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Oakland's History of Resistance to Racism  
<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklands-history-of-resistance-to-racism>

was facilitated by the introduction of railroads. The Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) rail company was instrumental in the completion of the “The First Transcontinental Railroad” in the western hemisphere in North America. As it was mentioned in the historical essay by Nancy J. Olmsted, *“The Railroads Are Coming 1860-1873,”* Horace Carpentier in complete ownership of the Oakland waterfront and through his business dealings with the Western Pacific “(now identical in management with the Central Pacific) agreed to construct a railroad to its waterfront land-grant in Oakland within 18 months, in exchange for half a million in gold coin, or else turn over its rights to the city of Oakland,” and in conjunction with “Collis Huntington and his Central Pacific Railroad partners” formed a “monopolistic” business alliance that provided a venue for the construction of the transcontinental railroad that connected “Sacramento to the San Francisco Bay.” (Olmstead, 1986, Chapter 10; Douglass, 2005, Chapter 2) (Figures 3 & 4)



Figure 1. Map of the San Antonio Ranch, portion belonging to Vicente and Domingo Peraltam property of the Peralta Family as of 1860. Extracted from: [https://localwiki.org/oakland/Rancho\\_San\\_Antonio](https://localwiki.org/oakland/Rancho_San_Antonio)



Figure 2. Map of Oakland and Alameda, as of 1877. Extracted from: <http://imgzoom.cdlib.org/Fullscreen.ics?ark=ark:/13030/kt9g5028qh/z1&&brand=calisphere>

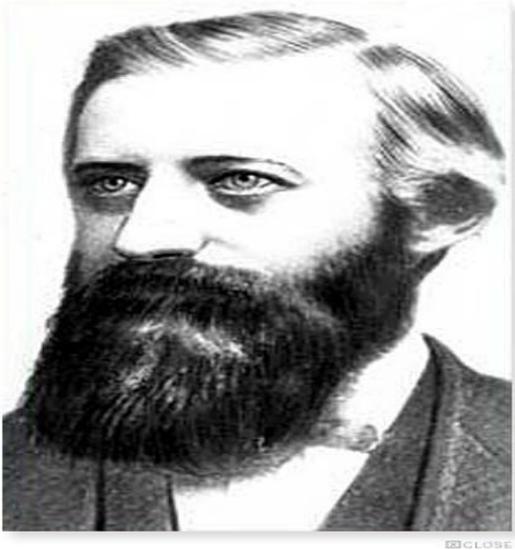


Figure 3. Horace w. Carpentier, lawyer and first Mayor of Oakland. (1824-1918)



Figure 4. Oakland Point Pier prior to the construction of Long Wharf, 1869. Historic American Building Survey Southern Pacific Railroad Collection.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.ca0018.photos/?sp=1>

A feat made possible by a legislation signed on March 30, 1868 that “granted to the Western Pacific and Southern Pacific companies each a terminus of thirty acres on the San Francisco side of the Bay, the grant lying on the waterfront of Mission Bay, together with rights-of-way for approaches to the terminals.” (Southern Pacific Bulletin, 1928, 16) In the process, the Central Pacific Railroad purchased the San Francisco and Oakland Railroad, making Oakland the terminus of transcontinental trains. This terminus allowed access to other forms of public transport such as ferries to San Francisco, and allowed access to the bay area, resulting in population growth and increased urban development. By 1871, the Oakland Pier Point along Seventh Street was expanded to the Oakland Long Wharf facility that turned into the busiest and largest wharfs in California. Additionally, the Oakland Long Wharf and San Francisco route utilized ferries that transported commuter and long-distance passengers. As a result, the city of Oakland, primarily west Oakland, developed into an important transportation hub, catering to residents and visitors. (Figure 5)

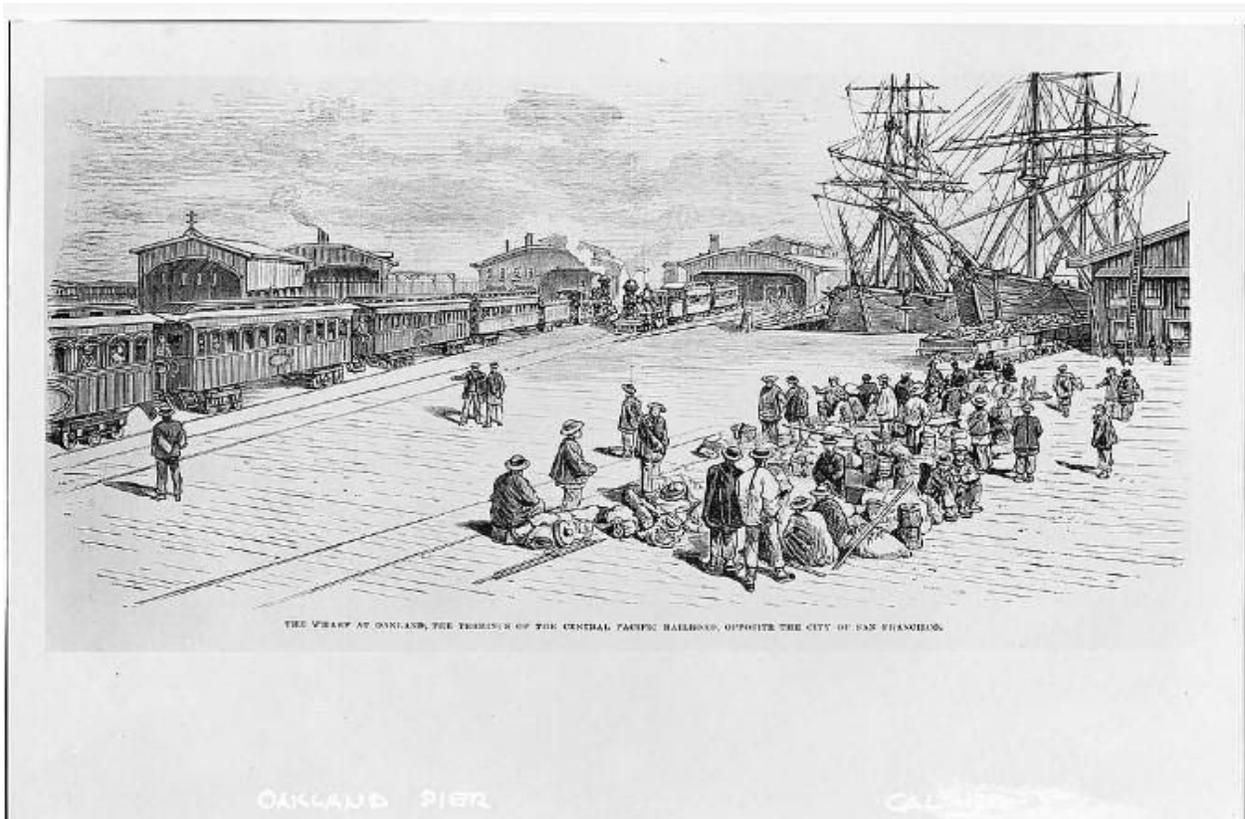


Figure 5. An illustration of the Oakland Long Wharf. Southern Pacific Mole & Pier, Seventh Street, Oakland, Alameda County, California. Historic American Buildings Survey Southern Pacific Railroad Collection. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.ca0018.photos/?sp=7>

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## Transportation

Transportation systems are essential in land use connectivity. Through them, mobility and accessibility facilitate the movement of people, goods and ideas between destinations and their ease of access. Also, transportation systems help to determine how people use space around them. In this context, Oakland Long Wharf helped to shape physical settlement patterns and the surrounding building environment, where low- and middle-class income housing development along with boarding houses, small businesses and shops populated the landscape. (Figure 6) Simultaneously, the surrounding built environment catered to workers, administrators, vendors and passengers of the local railroad company, the Central Pacific Railroad, that eventually joined venture with the “Southern Pacific Railroad in 1885.”<sup>8</sup> The Oakland Long Wharf was a megaproject and an engineering feat that became known as one of “the best ever built in the United States.” (Scott, 1871, 8) In the book *“Information Concerning the Terminus of the Railroad System of the Pacific Coast,”* John Scott describes it as:

“A wharf, 11,000 feet long, running out to a depth of 26 ½ feet at low tide and 33 ½ feet at high tide,..., having 12 railroad tracks upon its last one thousand feet, a wide carriage spacious passenger depot and railroad offices, warehouses and outside storage for 40,000 tons of grain or other merchandise, three large docks, one of which affords ample space for five of the largest steamers or clippers afloat, is not often seen, even in this age of railroad and engineering wonders.” (7)

The locale had been projected to accommodate shipped exports such as “all grain, ores, wool, wine and other merchandise” destined to “Europe and elsewhere, [in] shipboard from cars at the end of the Company’s wharf,... [whereas] all steamers or other craft which

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<sup>8</sup> A Brief History of West Oakland  
<http://web.sonoma.edu/asc/cypress/finalreport/Chapter02.pdf>

[came] this port with Oriental cargoes for the Atlantic States, [would] go direct[ly] to the Company's docks and unload into the cars," resulting in a good cost, time and labor management efficiency . (Scott, 1871, 9) (Figure 7) Such endeavor produced an induced demand that increased the transport of people, goods and services, propelling the construction of the Oakland Mole aimed to accommodate the influx of passengers.

(Figure 8)



Figure 6. Map of the Oakland Long Wharf as of 1855.  
Extracted from:  
[http://cpr.org/Museum/Maps/Long\\_Wharf\\_Oakland.html](http://cpr.org/Museum/Maps/Long_Wharf_Oakland.html)



Figure 7. Oakland Long Wharf, property of the CPRR Company. Oakland, California in the late 1880s  
Extracted from:  
[http://cpr.org/Museum/Maps/Long\\_Wharf\\_Oakland.html](http://cpr.org/Museum/Maps/Long_Wharf_Oakland.html)



Figure 8. Postcard illustration of the Oakland Mole that became an important passenger railroad hub until the 1950s.  
Extracted from:  
[http://cpr.org/Museum/Maps/Long\\_Wharf\\_Oakland.html](http://cpr.org/Museum/Maps/Long_Wharf_Oakland.html)

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Additionally, it propelled the influx of entrepreneurs and laborers seeking business and employment opportunities as well as better living conditions. Within the population converging into West Oakland, a variety of services and labor skills such as carpenters, iron workers, domestic employees, delivery and laundry work, store clerks, hotel and retail ownership were available in the area. Newly arrived immigrants from Ireland, Germany, China, Italy and Portugal along with migrants from the East Coast and Southern States of the US gravitated towards the booming city, which railroad system facilitated mobility and accessibility to socio-economic and institutional opportunities. Consequently, racial discriminated and financially disenfranchised individuals and communities such as Asian and primarily African American flocked into West Oakland. As Golut et al in the *“Race, Space, and Struggles for Mobility: Transportation Impacts on African American in Oakland and the East Bay,”* state “during that period, rail and shipping were among the few industries in which employment was available to non-Whites, drawing African Americans to jobs in the ports and warehouse of West Oakland at the western terminus of the Central Pacific Railroad.” (706) African American neighborhoods were established in the vicinity of the railroad tracks and in Oakland itself. These neighborhoods like West Oakland’s Seventh Street became a staple of economic prosperity, cultural centerpiece, and greater prospects of property ownership.

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## Housing

Throughout the United States in the 1910s and 20s, a zoning ordinance became a powerful tool to segregate the neighborhoods based on race and ethnicity. The concentration of black neighborhoods near profitable yet polluting businesses were intentional. By 1912, Oakland city officials created an industrial zone in West Oakland. Residential districts near Lake Merritt were zoned for businesses and apartment complexes in 1918. Cities throughout the county were later required by the Federal Housing Administration to develop their comprehensive zoning plan to access their mortgage insurance. Oakland adopted its first comprehensive zoning plan in 1935.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the New Deal to help stimulate the economy, to reduce rural foreclosure, and to help factory workers. With it, the federal government implemented laws that forbade the sale or lease of houses to black people. It created an appraisal system that disproportionately disenfranchised the housing process for them. During appraisal, redlining was instituted, in which areas occupied by Black people were automatically given a bad report and the land was devalued. As a result, fluctuating property value stigmatized African American residents. According to Kenneth T. Jackson from Columbia University, in his article *"Race, Ethnicity, and Real Estate Appraisal: The HomeOwner Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration,"* emphasized that "black neighborhoods were invariably rated as Fourth grade [red], but so were any areas characterized by poor maintenance or vandalism." (423) In the 1930s, the sheer presence of a "small proportions of black inhabitants were typically rated D, or hazardous." (428) Whereas, areas occupied by less than 500,000 people, those classified as high-class Jews, and "well-maintained and attractive working areas were graded A, B and C respectively. (428) Regardless of the financial status of Black people, they were relegated to the fringes of society, and financially destitute part of the city, the ghetto, that in turn became a space of spatial division and physical isolation of Black people from the rest of the population.

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Figure 9 illustrates a redlining map and indicates how the federal Home Owners Loan Corporation analyzed the city condition based on income and racial demographics.

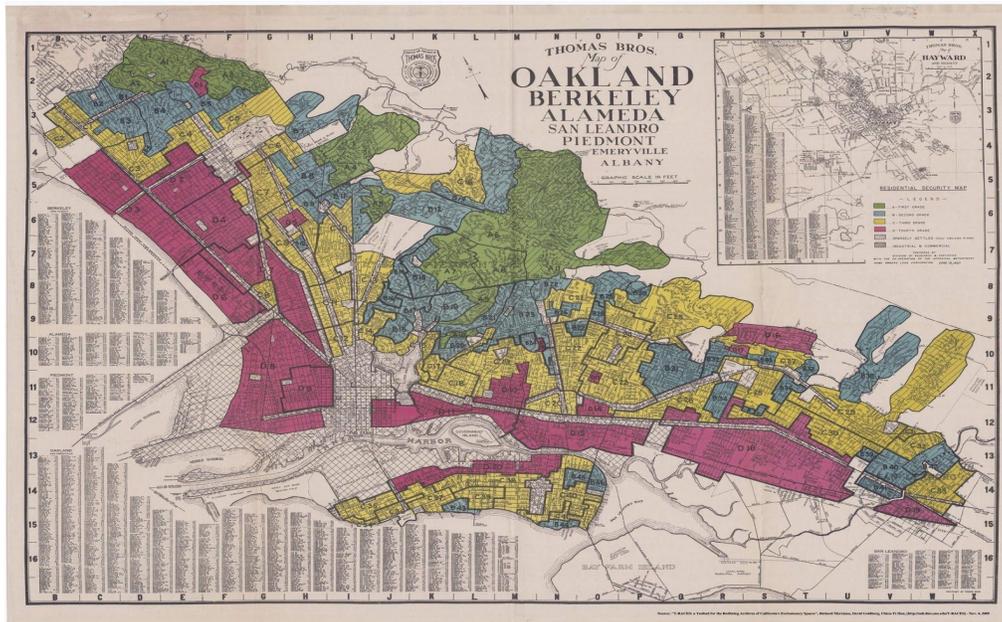


Figure 9: A 1937 HOLC “residential security” map of Oakland, classifying various neighborhoods by estimated riskiness of mortgage loans.

Regions of East and West Oakland were shaded in red meaning no loans were made in the area. West Oakland in particular, had its entire region impacted by the map. Even white folks living in those regions had a hard time securing loans. In the 1930s, West Oakland experienced an influx of migrants from Southern states and had severe housing shortages. With little to no assistance from the surrounding municipalities, African Americans remained in West Oakland. To this day, the black and white gap in homeownership from the discriminatory lending practice persists.

On June 27th, 1934, the National Housing Act was adopted by the Federal Housing Administration. Its Underwriting Manual endorsed racial covenants by which exclusionary and expulsive zoning, and restrictive covenants were bluntly expressed. Suburban subdivision developers were prevented “from qualifying for federal subsidized construction loans unless the developers committed to exclude African Americans from the community.”

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(Rothstein, 2015, 2) As it was expressed in the “Racial” Provisions of the FHA Underwriting Manual of 1936, non-whites were undesirable tenants:

“229. The geographical position of a location may afford in certain instances reliable protection against adverse influences... *Usually the protection against adverse influences afforded by these means include prevention of the infiltration of business and industrial uses, lower-class occupancy, and inharmonious racial groups...*

284 (3) (g) *Prohibition of the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they were intended.*<sup>9</sup>

The Oakland City Planning Commission conducted the Real Property Survey in 1936 under the guidance of the Works Progress Administration. All the housing data were collected in the field by survey enumerators over the period of February 1936, to June 1936. The chief purpose of this survey was to determine the general conditions of residential housing in the entire city and in the specific districts of the city. The plan was then to select the districts with substandard living conditions and renovate them to raise the residential desirability.

Results from the survey showed that districts near commercial or industrial structures had poor conditions of repair in their residential units. Structures in poor conditions had prevalent overcrowding. In particular, the central business district and the industrial districts west of San Pablo Avenue had poor conditions of repair in their dwelling units. In

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<sup>9</sup> “Racial” Provisions of FHA Underwriting Manual, 1936. Extracted from Wendy Plotkin ([wendy.plotkin@asu.edu](mailto:wendy.plotkin@asu.edu)) page created in 1998 and updated on September 1st, 2003. Federal Housing Administration, Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure Under Title II of the National Housing Act With Revisions to April 1, 1936 (Washington, D.C.), Part II, Section 2, Rating of Location.

<http://wbhsi.net/~wendyplotkin/DeedsWeb/fha36.html>

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contrast, districts on the north and east side of Lake Merritt had less than 10 percent of structures per block in poor condition. The survey also showed the changes in converted structures. In the span of a decade between 1920 to 1930, 47 percent of all conversions took place. The predominant changes occurred in structures originally built as single-family dwellings. In the report, the Oakland City Planning Commission states:

*"districts containing a considerable number of blocks with 11% to 30% of structures in poor condition are the result of improper subdividing and selling, which produce narrow lots and lots without utility improvements (principally sewer) and adequate street improvements" (21).<sup>10</sup>*

In the absence of a proper comprehensively drawn zoning plan, it was common practice among the construction developers to convert single family dwelling type to a multi-family dwelling type. However, most of these private developers did not care to include flushing toilets, private bathing accommodations, or running water. This lack of essential facilities resulted in the gradual breakdown of residential desirability.

The concentration of non-white households in the city indicated poor living conditions. Especially, the district surrounding the intersection of 7th and Peralta Streets in West Oakland had the greatest concentration of Black or African Americans. Districts adjoining the Central Business District, on the other hand, had the greatest oriental concentration. In 1936, 39.9 percent of the dwelling units were occupied by owners and 53.9 percent of all available occupied dwelling units were rental facilities. Majority of the non-white households made up the tenant population.

The district with the worst housing condition laid roughly southwest of East 14th street in East Oakland and West of San Pablo Avenue in West Oakland. The district just northeast of

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<sup>10</sup> 1936 Real Property Survey, Oakland City Planning Commission

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East 14th street extending from Lake Merritt to about 23rd Avenue also showed substandard housing. The areas selected for the worst housing condition are generally known to have low owner occupancy, low value of single-family dwellings, low rentals, a high number of Juvenile Delinquents, high number of tuberculosis deaths, and high number of cases of contagious diseases. In the report, the zoning ordinance permitted the erection of dwellings up to four families in size in the areas surrounding the Central Business District. They concluded that a large portion of this section was not adaptable to renovation, remodeling or conversion to more intensive types of use.

In the year 1938, the Oakland City Planning Commission submitted a preliminary report to the city council to adopt a resolution stating there is a need for slum clearance or low-rent housing projects. Results from this preliminary report determined whether the city of Oakland qualifies for a housing project under the United States Housing Act of 1937. The report states that a total of \$500,000,000 is made available for loans to cities and counties. California was one of the 33 states possessing State Legislation which permit the U.S.H.A to loan money to qualifying cities and counties. In the report, the City Planning Commission concluded that Oakland was in the process of becoming areas of sub-standard housing in a predominantly residential district.

To qualify for the grant, the commission assembled data relating to substandard housing in low-rental dwelling units. According to their report, out of 96,505 dwelling units, 52,025 of them were rented facilities. Further research was done on the conditions of the rental and vacant dwelling units. The data is shown in the following table for low and high rental facilities. Out of all the occupied rental units, 6,172 dwelling units were in need of major repair and 190 of them were unfit for use. If we include the vacant units, the total comes up to 7,627 and 461, respectively.

<b>Figure 10: Classification of Rental Dwelling By Rental and By Condition</b>		
Rental Range	In Need of Major Repair	Unfit for Use
Less \$ 5.00	14	12
\$5 to \$ 9.99	613	85
\$10 to \$14.99	2,055	60
\$15 to \$19.99	2081	19
Sub-Total Under \$20.000	4763	176
\$20 to \$24.99	741	8
\$25 to \$29.99	388	2
\$30 to \$39.99	192	2
\$40 to \$49.99	48	0
\$50 to \$74.99	33	2
\$75 to \$99.99	7	0
\$100 and Over	0	0
Sub-Total over \$20.00	1409	14
Grand Total	6172	190

The planning commission presents more detailed data for the dwelling units renting less than \$20.00 per month. In the 1936 Real Property Survey, a total of 19,350 dwelling units were rented for less than \$20.00 per month in addition to 3,130 vacant dwelling units in the same rental category. When analyzing the structural condition, they found out that a total of 4,939 or 25.5 percent of all occupied dwelling units were classified as unfit for use or in need of major repair. This is more than one-quarter of all available and occupied facilities.

<b>Figure 11: Age of Structures Containing Dwelling Units Renting for \$20.00 or Less Per Month</b>							
Year Built	Rental Range					Total	%
	Less than \$5.00	Between \$5 - \$9.99	Between \$10 - \$14.99	Between \$15 - \$19.99			
1885 - 1894	8	334	1,535	1,528	3,405	17.6	
1884 - or Before	12	382	1,105	808	2,307	12	

In California, wood frame constructions are more commonly used as it easily adapts to milder climate conditions. They are usually light and less permanent type of structure estimated to last 30 to 35 years. In the 1930s, 66.4 percent of all structures in Oakland were made up of wood. The average lifespan for a wooden structure is a maximum of forty years and the planning commission concluded that 29.6 percent of the dwelling units were in structures more than forty years old. Unsurprisingly, this is a close percentage to the dwelling units that are in need of major repair.

**Figure 12: Percentage of Low-Rentals Classified By Racial Occupancy**

Race	City Average	Low-Rental
White	96.10%	89.20%
Black	2.50%	7.10%
Oriental	1.40%	3.70%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Figure 12 illustrates the city-wide distribution of these low-rental dwelling units between the races. In the table, we can notice the slightly reduced percentage for the white occupancy versus the increases in both black and oriental occupancy. If we look at the division of family size in accord with the number of rooms occupied, a total of 2,975 dwelling units or 15.4% percent of all dwelling units renting less than \$20.00 per month are crowded or overcrowded. The lack of essential amenities in these low-rentals qualifies Oakland for the legislation. Out of 19,530 dwelling units renting at less than \$20.00 per month, 19,073 of them had no electricity. Plus, 16.7 percent of all low-rental units had no adequate plumbing equipment in their dwelling accommodations.

“One Year of City Planning in Oakland, California” is a book report produced by the City Planning Commission in collaboration with the Work Progress Administration employees. The report examined the changing characteristics and the shifting distribution of Oakland’s population in the 1940s. As a result, some districts have risen as more desirable places of residence while others have depreciated as residential areas.

**Figure 13: Distribution of 1930 Population in Accordance with 1935 Permanent Census Tracts**

Census Tract NO.	1930 Population	Areas in Acres	Population Density Persons Per Acre
13	3,187	93.4	34.1
14	5,039	266.7	18.9
16	5,399	234.3	23
17	5,604	159.3	35.2
18	6,001	156.7	38.3
19	2,286	94.2	24.3
29	2,268	94.4	24
30	3,631	205	17.7
31	4,350	194.2	22.4

Census Tracts were first established in Oakland in 1935. Oakland had a total of 72 census tracts reported in the census. In figure 13, we selected 9 census tracts adjacent to the current Grand Avenue corridor to analyze the population density per district. Figure 13 illustrates the Census Tract Number, estimated population count, areas, and population density expressed in terms of persons per acre. Tract numbers 13, 17 and 18 had the greatest population density persons per acre.

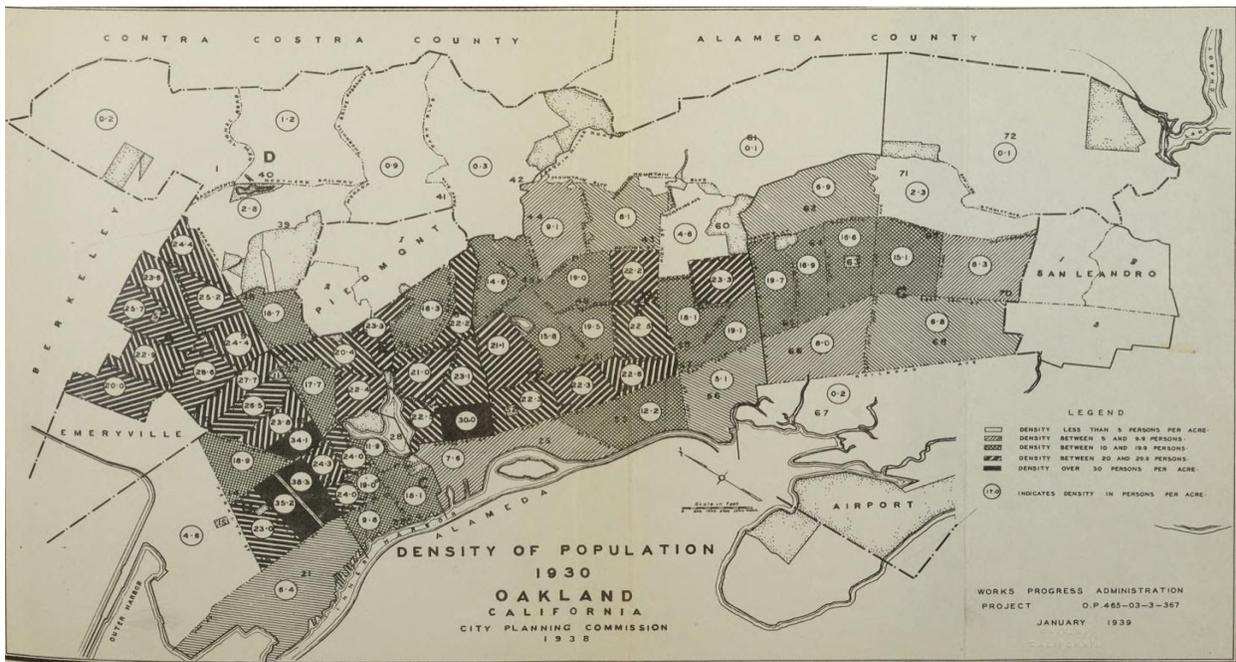


Figure 14: Density of Population 1930 Oakland, California. City Planning Commission 1938.

Figure 14 entitled “Density of Population - 1930” shows graphically the density of population for each of the 1935 Census Tracts expressed in terms of persons per acre calculated from the 1930 federal census. The maximum of 30 or more persons per acre is indicated by a solid black backdrop. From the map, we can see that census tracts that are in West Oakland had the greatest density of over 30 persons per acre. Census tracts near Adams Point and the central business district had between 20 to 30 persons per acre.

On December 11, 1945, city planning engineer W.E. Alworth submitted a preliminary report to the City Planning Commission on the Inventory of the Use of Land in the Industrial Zones of the City of Oakland. The document is a quantitative summary of the amount of land devoted to various uses, public and private, in the industrial districts of the city. For the future growth and development of the city, planners wanted to redevelop the industrial zone. However, the scarcity of sites for large manufacturing and industrial establishments hindered the process. According to the summary report, in 1945, nine hundred acres of land zoned for industrial use were occupied by mixtures of commercial, industrial and residential uses. In these districts, conditions of living were extremely detrimental to the health and well-being of its occupants. This particular report justified city planners’ attempt to clear out mixed residential areas of homes in the industrial zones.

<b>Figure 15: Summary of Major Uses of Land-Public and Private in the industrial Zones of Oakland</b>		
Use Classification	Areas in Acres	% of Used Areas
Residence	901	14.8%
Commerce	186	3.0%
Industry and Railroads	1920	31.4%
Institutions	31	0.5%
Schools	41	0.7%
Parks and Recreation	29	0.5%
Airport	860	14.1%
Military Establishments	942	15.4%
Streets and Alleys	1196	14.7%
<b>Total Used area of Industrial Zone</b>	<b>6106</b>	<b>100%</b>
Vacant	2049	
<b>Total Used area of Industrial Zone</b>	<b>8155</b>	

As indicated in figure 15, the land occupied for manufacturing and industrial purposes, together with railroads amounts to 31.4 percent of the total used area. Light and Heavy Industry establishments alone occupied 1025 acres of land. Out of the total 8,155 acres of land zoned for industrial purposes, 6106 of them are already used. The preliminary report concluded that over half of the vacant area cannot be used in its present condition. They stated that it required fill of various depths before it can be used for manufacturing plants. Out of available 2049 acres of vacant land, only 902 acres is appropriate for the industrial zone in its present condition. However, these are small and scattered parcels of land subdivided into smaller lots.

**Figure 16: Percentage of Usable Lands by Classification**

Use Classification	Areas in Acres	% of Usable Area
Residence	901	22.70%
Commerce	186	4.70%
Industry	1025	25.80%
Railroads	895	22.60%
Institutions	31	0.80%
Park and Recreation	29	0.70%
Vacant but usable	902	22.70%
Total:	3969	100%

To increase the supply of vacant lands for industrial use, the report suggested: “the redevelopment of those areas in which the condition of blight is most advanced” (8). Demolishing mixed-race neighborhoods will have the least political resistance. Figure 16 presents the percentage of usable areas from the other classification of land. In the table, residential areas made up 22.7 percent of the total areas that can be repurposed for the redevelopment of the industrial zone.

On April 20, 1948, the City Council requested the Planning Commission to make investigations to determine the extent of blight in Oakland and to recommend a course of

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aggressive actions for a solution. In 1949, the State Legislature simplified the procedure for initiating community redevelopment projects. In the document, the term “redevelopment” is described as “the process of clearing blighted areas, replanning them, and rebuilding them for residential, industrial, commercial, or public use” (10).

The Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949 to fund cities and counties. The federal fund covered the cost of low rent housing and slum clearance. The Act authorized the construction of 810,000 units of low rent housing. The forty-year loan covered two-thirds of the cost of redevelopment projects. The main objective of the redevelopment plan was to buy out blighted areas and hand it over to private developers for a lower cost. They wanted to depress the land value through a government agency.

Some of the main findings from the study include density of population, mean contract monthly rentals, owner occupied dwellings, overcrowded dwelling units, juvenile offenders, and tuberculosis deaths.

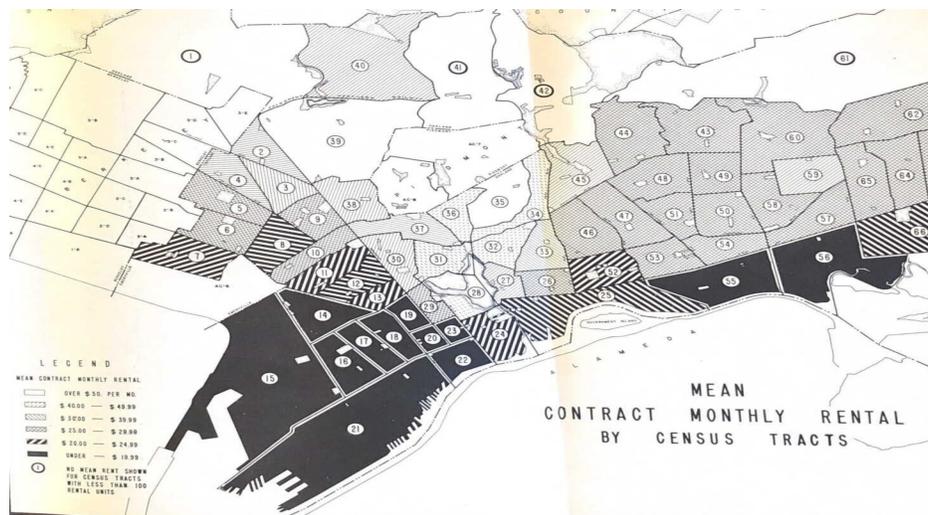


Figure 17: Mean Contract Monthly Rental by Census Tracts

Figure 17 shown above is only limited to rental facilities but does include hotels, apartment houses and other tenant occupied units. The lowest mean contract monthly rentals are concentrated in West Oakland. Less than \$20 a month is the lowest rental found in Oakland. Neighborhoods adjacent to the Lake had considerably high rentals of \$30 to \$40

dollars a month. As you move away from the Central Business District, the monthly rentals increase.

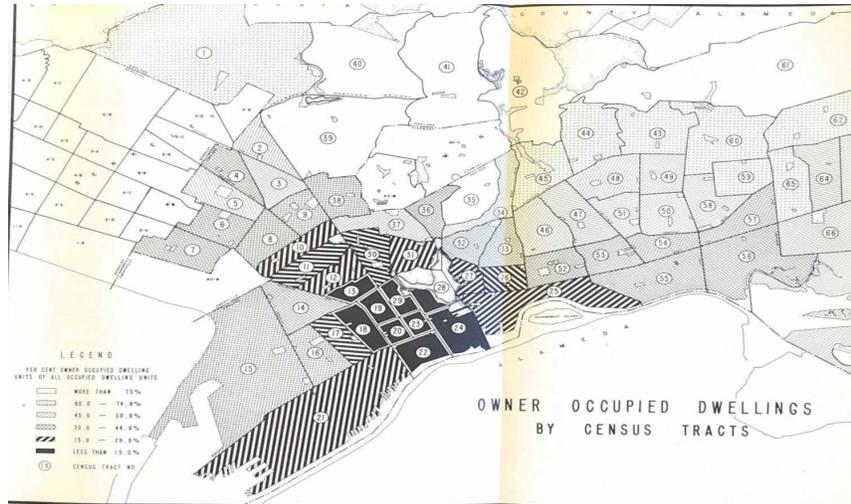


Figure 18: Owner Occupied Dwellings by Census Tracts

Figure 18 illustrates the percent of all occupied dwelling units which are either occupied by the owner or from which the owner is only temporarily absent. When owners move out, they tend to neglect their older rentals. People from the lower income brackets are forced to occupy those dwellings. Concentration of the lowest percentage of owner occupancy occurs in the immediate vicinity of the Central Business District. The percentage of owner occupancy increases as the distance from the downtown increases.

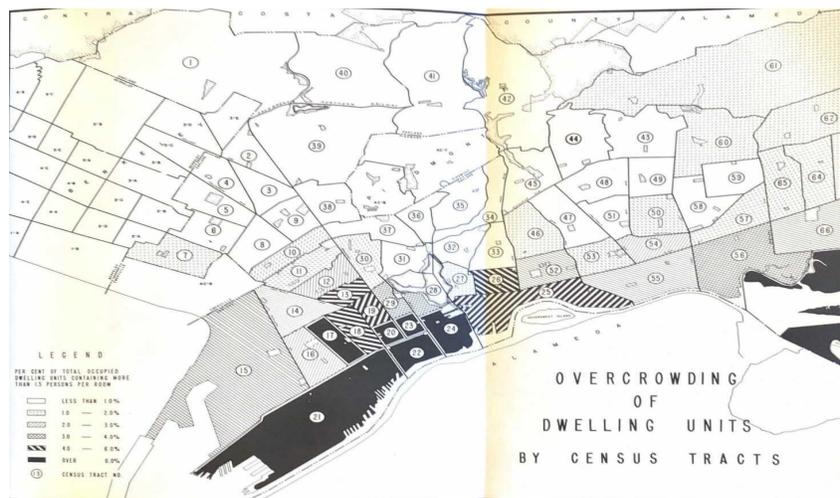


Figure 19: Overcrowding of Dwelling Units by Census Tracts

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Overcrowding is said to exist where more than 1.5 persons live in one room. Since 1940, the population has increased approximately 125,000 over the 302,163. In the meantime, only 14,283 new dwelling units had been constructed. Higher cost of living increased over-crowding in addition to the return of veterans. Land areas which are more suitable for industrial uses experienced the most substantial increase in population. Mainly dwelling units in West Oakland and the Central Business District suffered greatly from doubling up.

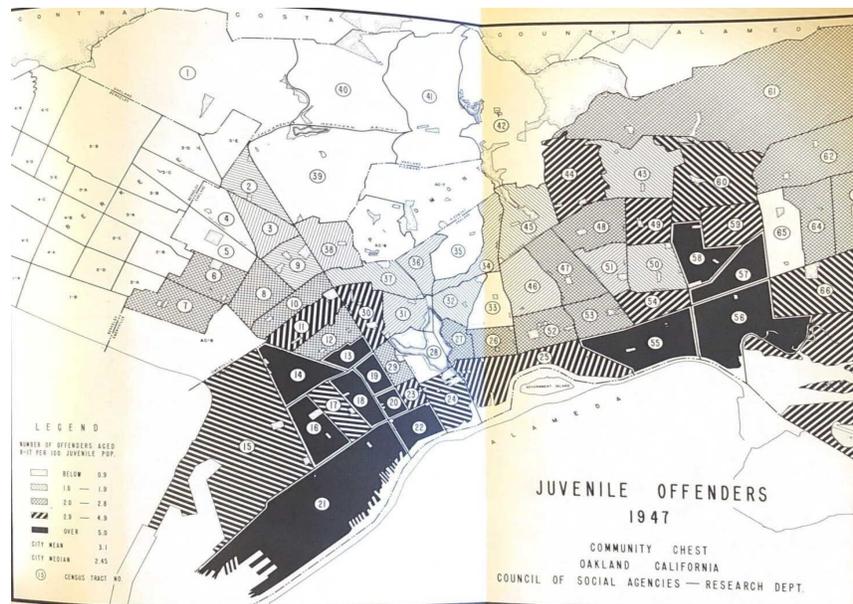


Figure 20: Juvenile Offenders 1947 Oakland, California

The ratio of juvenile offenders per 200 children from ages of 10 through 17 is indicated in figure 20 by census tracts. Although juvenile delinquency rates change from year to year, a high number of cases are still reported in the areas with the worst housing conditions. The study noted that the pattern is not only due to substandard housing, but there are also a variety of other factors influencing.

There is a direct relationship between health and the environment. Depending on where you live, there is higher or lower risk of falling ill. The statistics presented in the document shows the average number of deaths per year per 10,000 population by pulmonary tuberculosis. Twelve out of the 13 total census tracts with the highest death rates are

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concentrated in and about the Central Business District. Nine of the 13, have a death rate more than three times the city's average of 2.6 per 10,000 persons.

### **General findings in West Oakland**

The main concentration of blight occurs on the fringes of the Central Business District and in the West Oakland and East of the Lake neighborhoods. Areas surrounding the Central Business District are appropriately zoned for business, residential, and light industrial uses. Due to the street pattern and several diagonal arteries, West Oakland neighborhoods are subdivided into small lots. Although front and rear yards are provided on practically all lots, they are not suitable for recreation or other types of outdoor activities. They are not large enough. Approximately 35 percent of the area is devoted to streets. This excessive allocation of street space allowed high speed traffic to penetrate the residential sectors. As a result, all the traffic between San Francisco and the Central Business District funnels through West Oakland. Residential districts' proximity to industrial plants and commercial establishments greatly impacts the health and safety of the people. Mixed uses also tend to depress property values in the long run.

The lack of open space and community recreation facilities is prominent in areas of high population density and low average family income. In West Oakland, only 1.2 acres per 1,000 residents are devoted to parks, playgrounds, and school sites. This is nothing compared to the city-wide average of 10 acres per 1,000 population. None of the elementary schools in West Oakland meets the minimum criteria of five acres allotted for the school playground. The same can be said for Junior and Senior high school facilities.

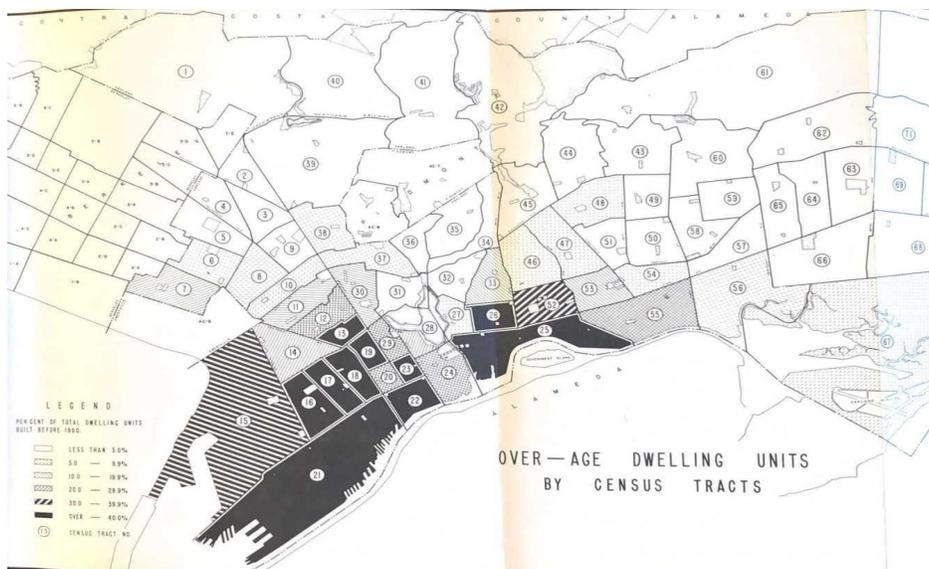


Figure 21: Over-Age Dwelling Units by Census Tracts

Figure 21 illustrates the percent of all dwelling units by census tracts built prior to 1900. On average, 12.6 percent of the city's dwelling units were built prior to 1900. West Oakland had the greatest concentration of over-age residential structures of over 50 years or older. An additional 42 percent of those structures were built between 30 and 49 years ago. In the U.S. Housing Census, an average of 22 percent of the units in each block had no private bath. Compared to the 1930's census, the number of dwelling units in need of major repair have decreased somewhat. Census Tracts closest to the Central Business District contained only 18.3 percent of the total dwelling units but at the same time contained 31.1 percent of the units in need of major repairs. Areas near the Grand Ave corridor in West Oakland, an average of 29 percent of the housing in each block needed major repair.

### General Findings in East of the Lake Neighborhood

In contrast to West Oakland, lot sizes are considerably larger in the neighborhoods East of the Lake. The front, side, and rear yards are large enough to accommodate gardening and other outdoor activities. Diverse ownerships in the neighborhood makes it difficult for private agencies to assemble a large enough land for redevelopment. The gridiron street pattern chops up the neighborhood into small square blocks. Approximately 30 percent of

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the total area is devoted to streets. The north-south streets within the neighborhood carry relatively light through-traffic loads because of the Hills. Overall, land uses are not heavily mixed in the East of the Lake neighborhood. Commercial and industrial uses are only concentrated and confined to certain areas.

There is an average of 3.5 acres of public open space per 1,000 residents. A figure that is not comparable to the optimum standards but still a more desirable outcome than exists in West Oakland. Of the total of 65.5 acres of open space in the neighborhood, 51.1 acres are concentrated in the extensive park development around Lake Merritt. The rest of the neighborhood share only two public squares and four small school sites. Unbalanced distribution of open space is not appropriate when most of the available area is more than one-quarter mile distant from the residences.

According to the 1938 Real Property Survey, 25 percent of the residences were built prior to 1900. An additional 40 percent are between 30 and 49 years old. The U.S. Housing Census provides block by block data on the number of dwelling units in need of major repairs and the number lacking private baths. Less than 5.0 percent of all dwelling units in Adam's Point had been built prior to 1900 and less than 2 percent of dwelling units had inadequate bathing facilities. The report notes that there has been no program of demolition or correction of housing and building code violations since 1942.

Many existing and projected public improvements were to transform the East Lake districts into one of the most desirable residential districts in the city. Areas surrounding the lake are generally considered a major aesthetic asset in Oakland. The neighborhood is well served by mass transit facilities. It is within a walking distance of the retail shopping and financial sectors. Redeveloping residential sites near an outstanding recreational and aesthetic attraction will only add more to the value of the properties.

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## Housing Discrimination in Oakland

White property owners benefited the most when African Americans started to move to Oakland's residential areas near the city center. The central business district in particular had been a hot spot for industry workers to move into. Content with the constant demand for housing, white property owners refused to maintain the current conditions of their property. These neighborhoods were later known as the blighted districts. Majority of the dwelling units needed major repair or had to be demolished all together, but they were profitable. Property owners were still getting paid monthly from folks who were barely making ends meet. Often, the blame was put on the tenants rather than the property owners for living in that environment.

In an effort to segregate white from the black, cities in the Bay Area started to destroy temporary war housing in Richmond, Berkeley, Albany, and Alameda. Majority of the displaced were communities of color. Areas outside of West Oakland were off limit to the Black population.

The increasing suburbanization ultimately ended the investment going towards the urban core. The number of available urban jobs also declined along with the continued disinvestment in the downtown area. Over 90,000 white residents left Oakland between 1970 and 1990. Even among the Black population the general trend was to move away from the city center. New immigrants from Asia and Latin America filled up the void left by two groups. In the span of a decade from 1977 to 1987, Oakland had lost all but four of its department stores. Several attempts to revitalize the downtown area had failed when developers struggled to find retail partners.

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## Racial Disparities and Community Disinvestment

As the railroad expanded to the west, “diverse working populations of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Mexicans, as well as the Irish, German, and southern European immigrant groups that arrived in large numbers to other US urban centers in the years before the Great Depression” settled in the East Bay. (Owens & Antiporda, 2017, 159) African Americans, attempting to pursue better living and working conditions in the north and escaping southerner Black Codes and Jim Crow, equally settled in the East Bay, more precisely in Oakland. With this urban expansion and population increase, racial disparities also intensified where division between racial and ethnic groups reflected in their spatial occupation. It is important to reiterate that initially this division was a natural social phenomenon. It was easily embraced as a means of survival, creation of social, laboral, and financial networks because many of them shared cultural, linguistic, and blood commonalities that facilitated it.

However, discriminatory practices, exclusionary codes and laws were enacted to further racial and ethnic disparities. When land monopoly became an enticing lucrative business investment “for the large hand-holding industrial monopolies,” , these exclusionary codes and laws were readily taken advantage of and implemented. For instance, the Workingmen’s Party of California “targeted Chinese workers as scapegoats” by attempting to bar them from the job market and by hindering their daily lives, in which “restrictions of sidewalk activity, living space, and businesses” were normalized. (Owens & Antiporda, 2017, 162) The city of Oakland was not exempt from these discriminatory practices. Also, the “Yellow Peril/Yellow Terror” was a prevalent concept stating that East Asians were dangerous and perilous to the Western world.<sup>11</sup> The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prevented Chinese laborer immigrants in the U.S.

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<sup>11</sup> Perceptions of the East – Yellow Peril: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear  
<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/perceptions-of-the-east-yellow-peril-an-archive-of-anti-asi-an-fear-1.1895696>

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Furthermore, the Federal Housing Administration (HFA) prevented Black people “from obtaining bank mortgages for house purchases even in suburban subdivisions which were privately financed without federal construction loan guarantees.” (Rothstein, 2015, 2)

In 1944, President FDR signed the GI Bill (Serviceman’s Readjustment Act) as a stimulus package to assist veterans of WWII returning home, but it was not extended to Black veterans. Black soldiers that had fought during WWII in Europe, were not given the same housing benefits as their white counterparts. It is evident that during that period people began to understand that it was financially better to buy a house rather than to rent it due to the value the house would accrue over time. Property ownership would yield financial value for the next family generation. Yet, Black veterans were relegated to living in redlined zones that persisted until the civil rights movement, when scholars and community groups attributed the decline of urban spaces to unfair housing practices and premeditated disinvestment. Black people were confined to “involuntary spatial concentrations... at the bottom of a hierarchy of power and wealth...” (Marcuse, 2000, 277).

Simultaneously, trying to capitalize in the Era of Fordism, mass production, assembly lines, and increase of productivity, businessmen modeled their market towards the concept of mass consumption to increase profitability, “enable the worker to earn more and thus to have more.”<sup>12</sup> During Fordism, mass production galvanized the automobile industry where the product was homogenous to facilitate production and avoid manufacturing interruptions. The rise of private automobile circulation in the streets implied the construction of public infrastructures to accommodate them, the highways. (Ford, 1926) The ownership of a car also implied the suburbanization and the change of economic expenditure such as construction of malls as well as how and what were produced and consumed. The government embarked on the Urban Renewal/Urban Redevelopment initiative, in which subsidized organizations and private entities used “monies plus the

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<sup>12</sup> Henry Ford: (1926) *Mass Production*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 1, p. 163. Reproduced: *The Rise and Fall of Mass Production*, Vol. 1. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

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power of eminent domain to produce marketable development sites below cost.” (Levy, Part II, 55) In other words, the government subsidized several construction projects for mass housing production by shaping the landscape of an urban setting. For instance, Levitt and Sons managed to use the Fordism concept to fulfill the great housing need in the 1950s. Levitt named a town after himself, Levittown, and developed a town outside the main city that would house approximately “15,000 families...” (Brodkin, 1998, 136) Levittown housing accessibility was vehemently denied to non-whites, especially Black people. According to Levitt, he was abiding by the rules of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).<sup>13</sup> Clause 25 of the leasing standard stated that residences could not “be used or occupied by any person other than members of the Caucasian race.”<sup>14</sup> Non-whites, mainly Black people, were only allowed in these residences as “domestic servants or laborers.”<sup>15</sup>

In Oakland, these discriminatory practices continued, but non-white groups, mainly black people managed to have a “decent and dignified” lifestyle by experiencing a certain economic stability along the 7th Street strip that in conjunction with the vibrant Filmore district became known as the Harlem of the West, a place that thrived economically, socially and culturally. It was considered a black metropolis by those occupying its space, where people attempted to create a haven from the injustices and stresses of the larger city. In this haven, people had the opportunity to engage in social activities, elect community leaders, voice their social concerns, worship freely, and aspire for a better future by trying to leave low-paying jobs to high-paying jobs. It was “an environment where exclusion as subordination by white men [were] not rubbed in [the] face...” (Cayton & Drake, 1945, 385) (Figures 22, 23 & 24)

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<sup>13</sup> Karen Brodtkin: (1998) *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. (excerpt) New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> Levittown, PA and the “Northern Promised Land That Wasn’t.”  
<https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/171333#:~:text=Clause%2025%20of%20the%20original%20lease%20for%20the,person%20other%20than%20members%20of%20the%20Caucasian%20race.%E2%80%9D>

<sup>15</sup> Underwriting Manual, FHA, November 1, 1936.  
<http://wbhsi.net/~wendyplotkin/DeedsWeb/fha36.html>



An electric streetcar travels down Seventh Street at Willow in 1947. (From the John Harder collection, courtesy of the West Coast Blues Society)

Figure 22. Extracted from the article "Harlem of the West: Oakland's once-blusting jazz and blues scene along Seventh Street" by Lisa Hix. Bay City News. Published on the Piedmont Exedra. May 18th, 2020



Patrons enjoy the lively environment at Slim Jenkins' bar and restaurant. (Photo courtesy of African American Museum and Library at Oakland)



Musicians Jimmy Buchanan (sax), Earl Watkins (drums), Eric Miller (guitar), Commodore Lark (bass), and Norvell Randall (piano) perform at Slim Jenkins Supper Club on Seventh Street in Oakland. (Photo courtesy of African American Museum and Library at Oakland)

Figures 23 & 24. Extracted from the article "Harlem of the West: Oakland's once-blusting jazz and blues scene along .Seventh Street" by Lisa Hix. Bay City News. Published on the Piedmont Exedra. May 18th, 2020.

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Nonetheless, the postwar WWII period was “plagued” by urban decline, white flight to the suburbs, decline of military manufacturing jobs, and the continuing mistreatment of black people as second-class citizens, whose socio-economic conditions were further negatively affected by the construction of freeways through their communities.

The Cypress Street Viaduct built and inaugurated in the late 1950s ran through the city of Oakland and physically separated West Oakland from the rest of the urban space. (Figure 25) As highway engineers were interested in the movement of people and goods with efficiency and with the least disturbance “to private commercial land values, highways were routed through neighborhoods, especially those with the cheapest housing occupied by poor people and minorities.” (Judd & Swanstrom, 2008, 99) Consequently, West Oakland became isolated from the city of Oakland, which accelerated its deterioration. Surrounding property values decreased, “the federal tax code encouraged businesses to abandon old structures before their useful life is at an end by permitting greater tax benefits for new construction than for the improvement of existing buildings,” “less affluent households move[d] to the city to take advantage of the lower rents.” (Jackson, 1980, 420) (Beauregard, 2006, 65)



The double-deck Cypress Street structure on the Eastshore Freeway in Oakland. The southbound off-ramp to 14th Street is at the lower left.

Figure 25. Cypress Street Viaduct. California Highways and Public Works. Official Journal of the Division of Highways, Department of Public Works, State of California. Volume 37, March-April 1958, Nos 3-4, page 4.

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These spatial social disruptions and racial injustices were met with local resistance and civil unrest. Black youth saturated with/by police brutality, institutional racism, high unemployment, lack of proper medical care, food insecurity, and housing displacement, banded together to form the Black Panther Movement in 1966. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale mobilized the youth and galvanized the masses to take up arms to fight white supremacy. (Figure 26) The movement was created to take swift action against police brutality and white supremacy against black people in Oakland.



Figure 26. Bobby Seale (left) and Huey Newton (right) founder members of the Black Panther Movement.  
<https://sfbayview.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Black-Panther-Party-founders-Bobby-Seale-Huey-Newton-by-AP.jpg>



Figure 27 . Members of the Black Panther Movement armed in the corridor of the Capitol in Sacramento demanding their Second Amendment Right and protesting a law restriction of open carry in public in 1967. (Credit: Walt Zeboski/AP Photo) [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/black-panthers-california-1967\\_n\\_568accfce4b014efe0db2f40](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/black-panthers-california-1967_n_568accfce4b014efe0db2f40)

Figure 28. Women of the Black Panther Movement for self-defense ready to counter attack white supremacy and police brutality. <https://atlantablackstar.com/2014/09/22/24-powerful-images-of-black-women-and-children-during-the-black-panther-movement>



Figure . Police brutality against black people, a common practice throughout the U.S.. William Gadsen attacked by police dogs in front of 16th Street Baptist Church, during a nonviolent protest, Birmingham, Alabama, May 3, 1963. Photograph by Bill Hudson (AP Photos/Bill Hudson) <https://gizmodo.com/how-photography-shifted-the-balance-of-the-civil-rights-5763793>

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Under the slogan *"All Power to the People,"* the Black Panther Movement engaged in political activities and social programs that helped mediate the complete governmental neglect and lack of infrastructural investment in the black community of Oakland. It implemented neighborhood policing to monitor the police and attempt to end police brutality in Oakland. It attempted to provide free healthcare to members of the community, instituted survival programs that provided first aid, self-defense, community classes in economics, and donated clothing and groceries to the community. Moreover, the Free Breakfast for School Children program was instituted to provide meals to children that otherwise would not eat before their classes. These initiatives inspired other oppressed communities around the country to follow suit such as the Young Lords Party and the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement in the Latino community, and I Wor Kuen that galvanized the Asian-American community into action for social and economic justice.

On the other hand, in the 1970s, the construction of the BART station in West Oakland propelled the demolition of the housing stock to make way for it, causing massive population displacement and rampant housing shortage. As Rachel Brahinsky mentions, in her research work *"Hush Puppies,' Communalist Politics, and Demolition Governance: The Rise and Fall of the Black Filmore,"* "by the time replacement housing was available, many evicted families were either uninterested or unable to return, or were unaware of the new housing opportunities," which exacerbated the precarious living conditions of many Black families. (152) Whereas the government decided to enact the Community Development Block Grant by allocating funds into local communities for social programs designed to improve the living conditions of their residents through anti-poverty programs, housing affordability and infrastructure development. Nonetheless, it was gradually eliminated during the Nixon administration to be completely discontinued under President Reagan administration that was "in favor of programs to subsidize landlords and a few experiments in housing vouchers." (Judd & Swanstrom, 2008, 89) Consequently, some families were given housing vouchers that were never fulfilled or were worthless.

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The overall removal of blight/slum clearance was a strategic planning measure used by “local politicians and businesses...to protect the property values of downtown business districts,” to the detriment of black residents. (Judd & Swanstrom, 2008, 89)

Proposition 13 of 1978 further accelerated the dilapidation and the economic deterioration of the city of Oakland, in which public funds were lost due to lack of property taxes. This proposition limits the tax rate for real estate. It states that:

“ Section 1. (a) The maximum amount of any *ad valorem tax* on real property shall not exceed one percent (1%) of the full cash value of such property. The one percent (1%) tax to be collected by the counties and apportioned according to law to the districts within the counties.”<sup>16</sup>

As it was noted by Alan Greenblatt in the article *“As Prop. 13 Turns 40, Californians Rethink Its Future,”* “the law has had profound effects on public finance in California. It has altered funding streams for schools, made fiscal relationships between localities and the state into a complicated mess, and put localities on a never-ending hunt for new taxes and fees.” (2018)

Frequent land use issues have given birth to the Occupy Oakland Movement and Land Action Project in Oakland. Founded in 2011, both community projects geared to push back and create urban spaces for underprivileged and low-income communities that have been constantly displaced by developers or lack governmental support. Thus, there are many examples of planning processes today that aim to mediate some of the planning wrongs of the past by attempting to restore and revitalize communities affected by residential apartheid, redlining, exclusionary zoning, and infrastructure disinvestment, including public transit and streets. As Evelyn Blumenberg stated in the *“The Social Equity and Urban Transportation,”* transportation policies can allow “access to opportunities, improve environmental quality in low-income and minority neighborhoods...[by] ensur[ing] future

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<sup>16</sup> California Legislative Information

[http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CONS&sectionNum=SECTION%201.&article=XIII%20A](http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CONS&sectionNum=SECTION%201.&article=XIII%20A)

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investments and policies will not have adverse and disproportionate effects on vulnerable communities and their residents.” (354)

## Conclusion

The city of Oakland demographics and land use has been historically influenced by the transportation systems. The Eastern side of the San Francisco Bay evolved from the land of indigenous people to being a missionary land. Then, it became an awarded land grant to sergeant Luis Maria Peralta of the Spanish Army, to be in some instances resold illegally by squatters, and to finally be founded as the city of Oakland in 1852. The expansion to the west facilitated by the Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad & the Pacific Railway Acts of 1862 encouraged urban growth by which the movement of people and goods became easier with the introduction of railroads. Additionally, the Oakland Long Wharf helped mold the physical settlement patterns and the surrounding building environment that catered to low- and middle-class income housing development, boarding houses, small businesses and shops.

The prospect of better living conditions and economic growth propelled an influx of entrepreneurs and laborers seeking business and employment opportunities. Amongst them, newly arrived immigrants from Ireland, Germany, China, Italy and Portugal along with migrants from the East Coast and Southern States of the US gravitated towards the booming city. Moreover, racially discriminated and financially disenfranchised individuals and communities such as Asian and primarily African American settled in West Oakland, in which African American neighborhoods were established in the railroad tracks vicinity and in Oakland itself.

Housing and zoning discriminatory practices hindered the continued development of non-white communities, especially African American. Limited living spaces and federal housing law such as the New Deal signed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933 prevented African Americans from accessing the same financial and housing opportunities as their

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white counterparts. The GI Bill facilitated the purchase of housing away from metropolitan spaces. The construction of the Highway systems and the mass production of automobiles encouraged white flight to the suburbs leaving city centers disinvested and with dilapidated infrastructures. The highways would on many occasions run through black neighborhoods isolating and destroying them. Simultaneously, the removal of blight and urban renewal became the synonyms of “Negro” removal from their houses, businesses or their communities all together.

Nonetheless, in Oakland, a grassroots group decided to fight back against white supremacy, police brutality and socio-economic injustice. The Black Panther Movement was formed as a militant group willing to take up arms to get justice for Black people by any means necessary. With the slogan “All Power to the People,” Black Panthers were ready to fight and to implement social programs aiming to improve the quality of life for those living in the Black community. Similarly, Latinos and Asians became actively engaged in their communities with social programs to mediate the precarious conditions of their communities.

Unfortunately, governmental action has not been conducive to improving the quality of life of non-white communities, especially Black people. Whereas city planners have been willing participants in these planning injustices. There needs to be a greater shift to bring a restorative scope to mediate and avert many past wrongdoings by engaging in more inclusive urban planning design that will greatly benefit intentionally disinvested communities and improve their quality of life outcome. With this understanding, the Grand Avenue Mobility Plan seeks to begin the reparation planning by working collaboratively with community partners to build trust and prioritize the voices of historically underrepresented and discriminated communities in West Oakland.

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