

EAST BAY FOR EVERYONE

September 24, 2025

Planning Commission <via email only>
City of Oakland
250 Frank Ogawa Plaza
Oakland, CA 94610

RE: Oakland General Plan Update Phase 2

Planning Commissioners,

East Bay for Everyone, a membership organization dedicated to building just cities through land use, transit and housing policy, writes to provide comments on the Oakland General Plan Update Phase 2 (General Plan Update).

We applaud the goals to reduce VMT, increase housing supply & availability, make streets safer, and increase equitable access to good parks. We recognize and appreciate that the options of the General Plan Update would accomplish many of these goals. The plan for an infill BART station in the San Antonio neighborhood is especially welcome, as are proposals to improve transit & bike infrastructure along major corridors, as well as improving bike & pedestrian access to neighborhood centers. However, no plan can achieve those goals without a clear program for implementation, and we would like to see more discussion of that aspect of the General Plan.

How will Oakland staff its infrastructure delivery so projects are not delayed, cancelled, or stuck in interminable RFPs? Some suggestions:

1. Beyond the 2 year CIP process, Oakland should institute 5 year mid-cycle check-ins to ensure we are on track for plan implementation.
2. Focus on scaling the commitment of staff, financing tools, and project timelines to meet the project size and complexity.
 - a. Rather than focusing EIFD's on affordable housing finance – something EIFDs are not designed to do – EIFD's should be used to finance infrastructure like new ROW, utilities, transit stations and the like.

- b. Develop a team to focus on improving existing parks in low resource areas and/or developing pocket parks rather than creating new 10 acre parks to fit some abstracted planning norm.

We also encourage Oakland to plan for how to expand access to existing open space in addition to creating new parks. Oakland has a lot of exceptional green space in the hills and estuary that is difficult to access without a car. A network of greenways along medians, daylighted creeks, and re-purposed ROW could both create high value neighborhood open space while also linking together regional park destinations. This will require long term vision, focus, and creativity to acquire the necessary land and easements. Tools such as foreclosure purchases, land swaps, and development incentives for greenway development or dedication can help.

Among the many exciting ideas in the General Plan Update discussion, certain important areas/topics are notable in their omission. What is the city's plan for the Coliseum? For the future of Interstate 980? For Howard Terminal?

Certain citywide ideas should also be added to the General Plan discussion. While peer cities such as Berkeley, San Francisco, and San Jose have fully eliminated minimum parking mandates citywide, Oakland has done so in only a limited geography (and as required by state law). Parking mandates are contrary to the city's goals of more affordable housing, more efficient land use, more neighborhood retail, and reduced car dependency. It is past time for Oakland to finish the job of removing them.

Oakland could also consider a policy for Accessory Commercial Units as a way of expanding neighborhood retail access across the city.

We would like to see plans for more housing growth in more high-resource, amenity-rich neighborhoods, particularly Piedmont Ave and Shattuck Ave. Height and density standards in Rockridge should also be updated to align with SB 79. As part of implementing the new General Plan, we would also encourage Oakland to simplify its zoning code. As an example, there are currently 5 different middle housing zones (RD, RM1-4), all of which allow virtually identical height & setback standards, and with only marginal differences in allowed density (increments as low as 5 units per acre).

Sincerely,

John Minot
Co-Executive
East Bay for Everyone