Moving From Plan to Action:
Lessons Learned on Forging an Effective Community-Based Climate Action Coalition in Oakland CA

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Inaugural National Adaptation Forum

Denver CO - 4/04/13

Symposium Overview

- Background on Social Vulnerability to Climate Change Impacts in Oakland CA
- The Oakland Climate Action Coalition
- Resilience & Adaptation Committee
- Energy Committee
- Transportation & Land Use Committee
- Food Justice & Land Access Committee
- Lessons Learned
- Discussion

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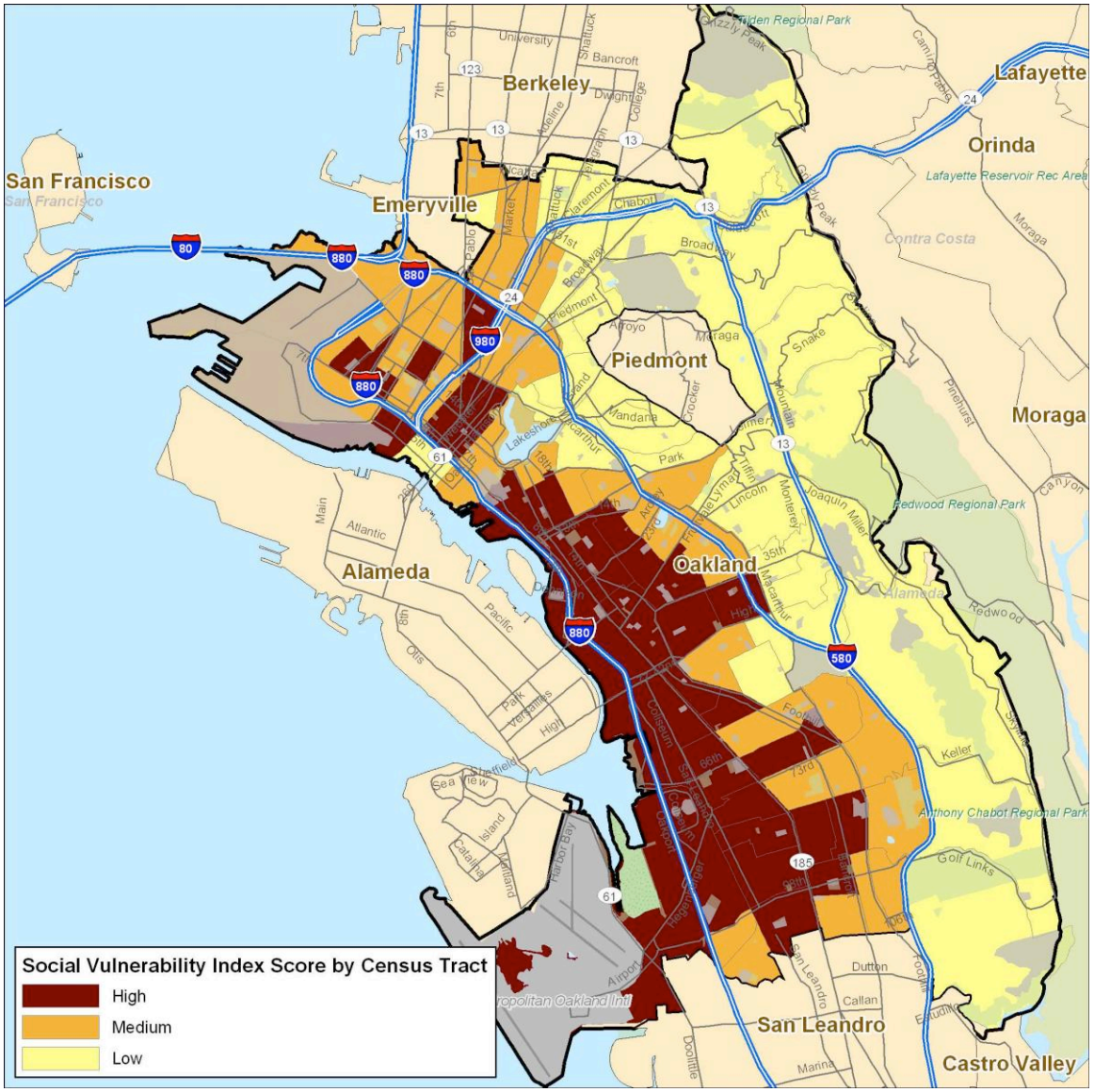
The Oakland Climate Action Coalition

Catalina Garzón
Pacific Institute
Steering Committee Member,
Oakland Climate Action Coalition (OCAC)

Kirsten Schwind
Bay Localize
OCAC General Member

Vulnerability to Climate Change in Oakland



- Over half of Oakland's 410,000 residents live in areas of high social vulnerability to extreme heat, flooding, poor air quality, and wildfires
- Areas of high social vulnerability are concentrated in the flatlands which have increased flood risk and air quality issues

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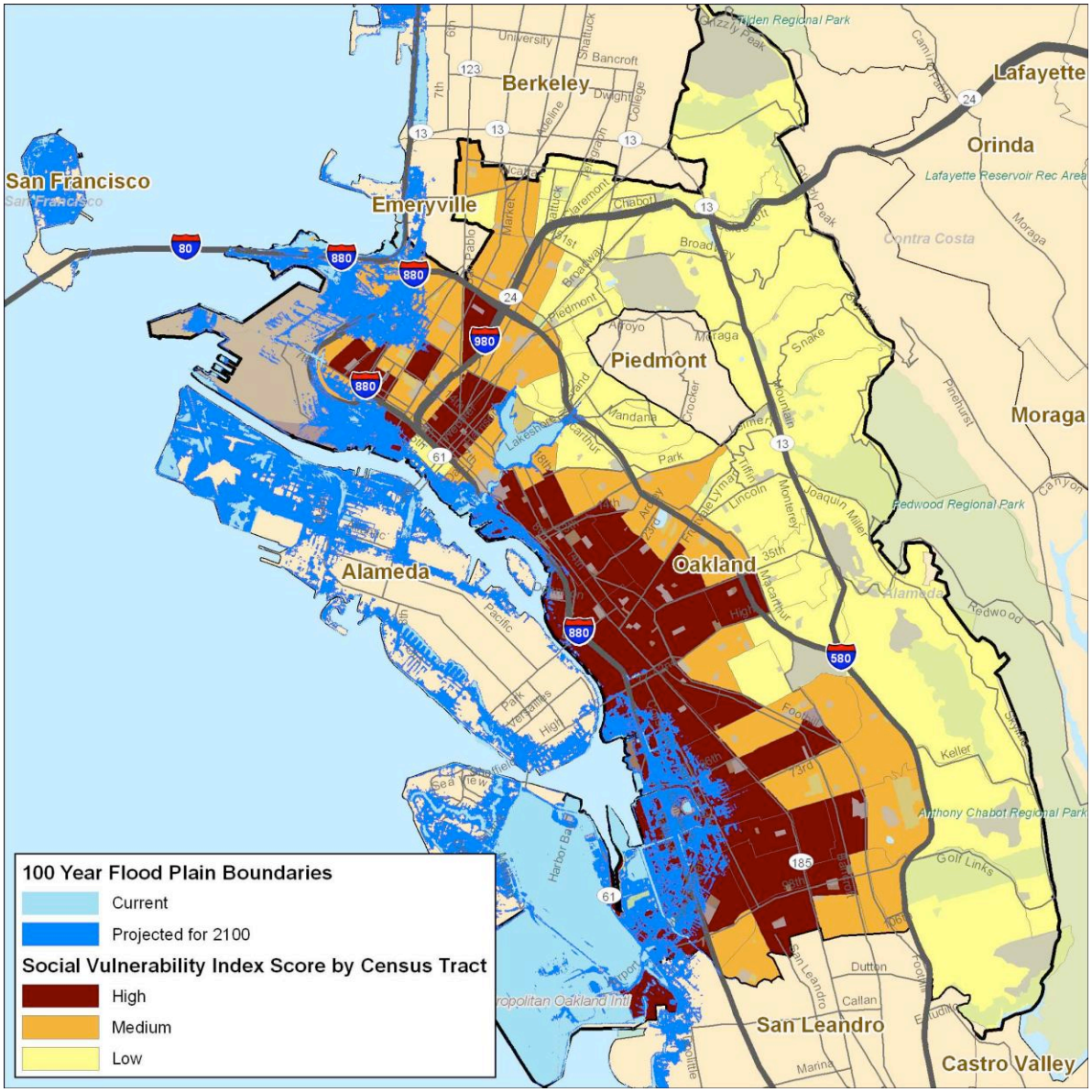
Local Impacts Example: Coastal Flooding



- 5,200 Oakland residents live in areas that will be in 100 year flood zone with a 1.4 meter rise in sea level
- Plans to protect key infrastructure (seaport and airport) could worsen impacts on surrounding residential areas

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The Oakland Climate Action Coalition

Empowering Oakland's vulnerable communities for climate justice:

- Research
- Engagement
- Policy advocacy
- Collaboration
- Grassroots organizing

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About the Coalition

- **What**: cross-sector alliance of over 30 member organizations
- **When Started**: in 2009, to engage in Oakland climate action planning process
- **Purpose**: advance social equity in mitigating and adapting to climate change
- **Mission**: build a just, sustainable, community-based, green economy in the face of climate change

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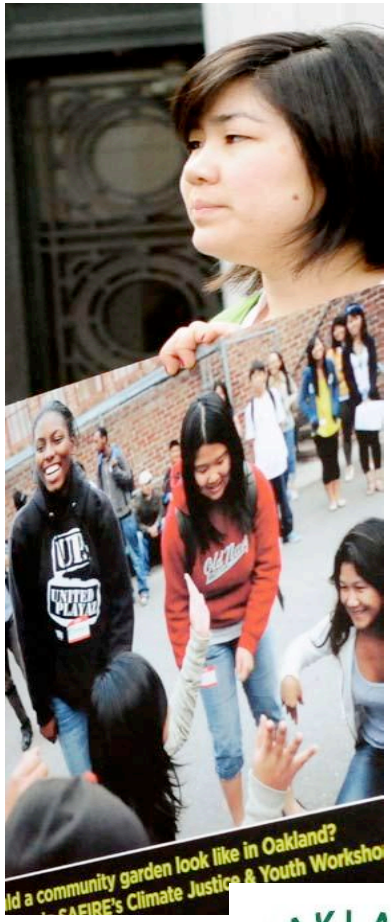
Coalition Points of Unity

- **Climate justice**: effective climate action rooted in social justice and equity
- **Good green Jobs:** livelihoods and businesses that improve the environment and restore community
- **Healthy community:** local food, clean air, affordable housing, public transit…
- **Democracy:** shared decision-making and leadership by impacted communities
- **Climate adaptation:** building community resilience to impacts of climate change



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Policy Advocacy on Oakland Energy & Climate Action Plan

1. Transportation & Land Use
2. Building Energy & Water Use
3. Food & Urban Agriculture/Forestry
4. Consumption & Solid Waste
5. Climate Change Adaptation Planning
6. Port of Oakland
7. Ongoing Community Engagement

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Focus on Community Engagement

Community workshops

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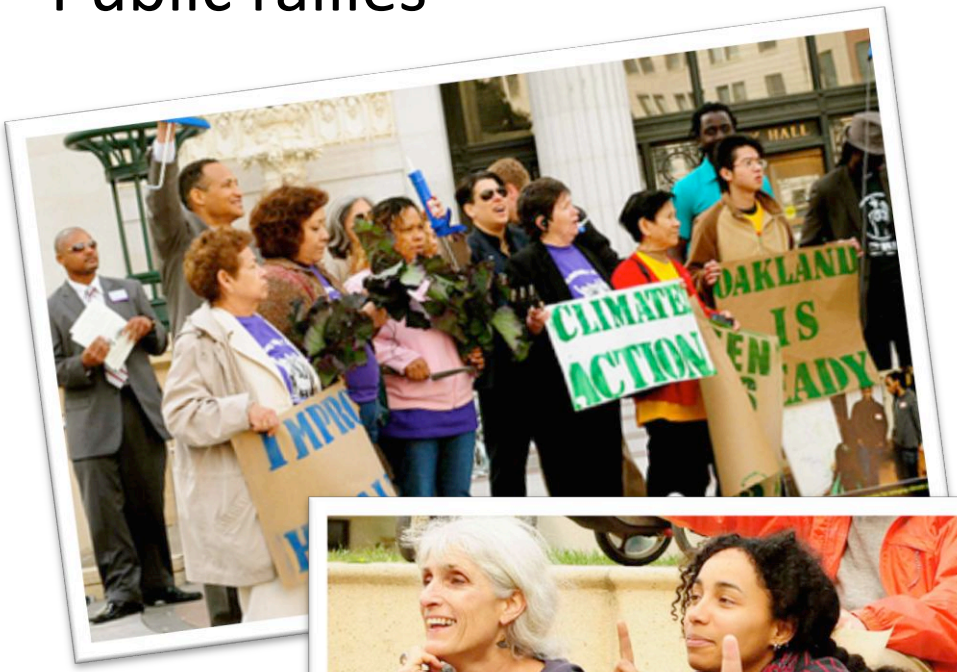
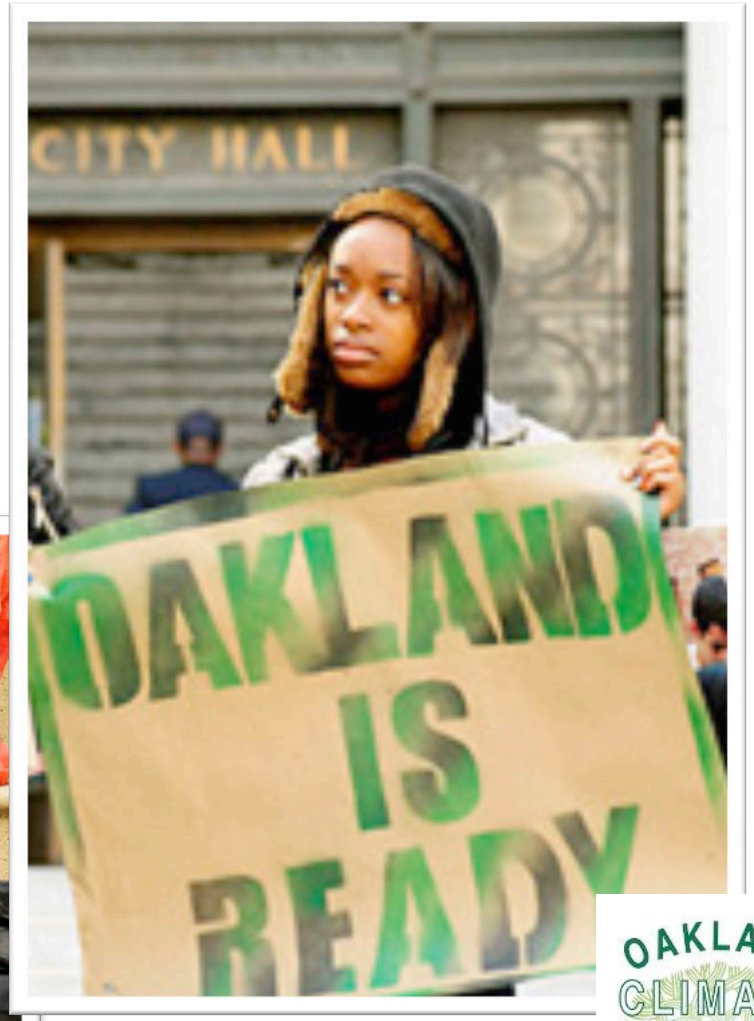
Focus on Community Engagement

Public rallies





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Focus on Community Engagement

Movement building events

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Achievements in Climate Action Plan

- Some of the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets of any city in the U.S.
- Successful advocacy to advance community priorities: nearly 50% of language in plan
- Built strong partnership with Oakland city staff
- Final approval in December 2012

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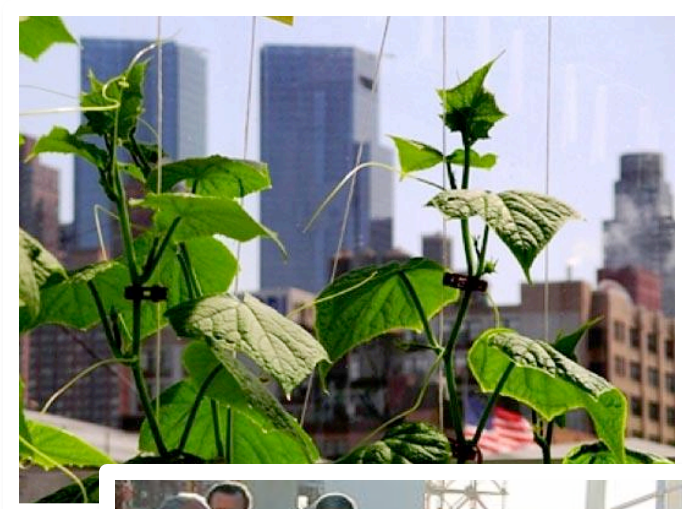
Key Coalition Priorities Not Included

- **Adaptation**: planning and organizing for community resilience
- **Energy**: local control of renewable energy resource development
- **Transportation**: affordable housing in transit oriented development (TOD)
- **Food**: access to healthy food through urban agriculture



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Beyond the Climate Action Plan

- Coalition taking leadership in the four critical priorities for climate justice
- Implementing real change is a big challenge
- Coalition organizing campaigns in the four critical areas
- Collaboration based on shared strategy and political points of unity
- Capacity to coordinate and adequately resource organizing campaigns poses long-term challenges

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Using Community-Based Research, Popular Education, & Policy Advocacy to Make Adaptation a Priority

Margaret Gordon,
West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project

Co-Chair, Resilience & Adaptation Committee
Oakland Climate Action Coalition

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Background

- Priority actions in Oakland ECAP largely focus on assessing vulnerability to climate change impacts not developing adaptation plans
- Agency-led adaptation planning efforts initially focused on protecting physical infrastructure
- Lack of resources for community-based groups to be full partners in the design and implementation of adaptation planning processes underway
- As a result, social equity and vulnerability may be included as concepts in these processes without including impacted residents themselves

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Committee Goals and Structure

- **Committee Goals:**
  - Connect residents of Oakland's vulnerable communities to the information and resources they need to build resilience to local climate change impacts
- **Current OCAC Resilience Committee Members:**
  - **Pacific Institute (PI)**
  - **West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (EIP)**
  - Community Food and Justice Coalition (CFJC)
  - Bay Area 350.org
  - Bay Localize
  - New Voices Are Rising

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Community Engagement Work

- Popular education on resilience & adaptation
- Community-based research on climate change impacts

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Policy Advocacy Work

- Integrate community adaptation priorities into ECAP, specific area plans, and redevelopment plans:
  - Infrastructure Implementation Plan for disadvantaged areas:
    1) Upgrade water & electric wiring
    2) Plant more trees
    3) Improve storm drainage
    4) Set up cooling centers
    5) Create evacuation plans

  - Develop citizen groups to prepare for emergencies in every neighborhood

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Challenges & Solutions

- Social vulnerability is not an empowering framework for generating community solutions
- Limited resources to support collaborative work to build resilience at community level
- Engaging directly impacted residents in building resilience given other issue priorities and constraints
- Currently developing an asset-based approach to community-based adaptation planning

Community Choice Energy as a Road to Climate Change Adaptation

Al Weinrub, Local Clean Energy Alliance

Co-Chair, Energy Committee
Oakland Climate Action Coalition

What is Community Choice Energy?

It's about electricity:

- Where your electricity comes from
- Who controls it
- What it costs

It's about energy democracy

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Community Choice Energy Program

- Under California law:
  Cities and counties can decide on the source of electricity within their jurisdictions
- The community can prioritize the development of **local renewable energy resources**
- The utility company continues to deliver electricity, maintain service, bill customers

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Why Local Renewable Energy?

- Reduce GHG emissions
- Reduce electricity consumption and waste

- Spur local economic development and clean energy jobs
- **Build community resilience in the face of climate change**

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Its An Adaptation Strategy!

Local clean energy development means increased community resilience:

- Vital energy resources developed locally
- Strengthens local economy, local businesses
- Reduces dependence on outside energy supply
- Provides new, accessible energy ownership models
- Local control of energy to meet local needs

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Clean Energy & Jobs Oakland Campaign

- **Goal:** to develop Community Choice energy in Oakland
- **Strategy:** build strong alliance of stakeholder organizations centered in Oakland's working-class, low-income, and people of color communities
- **Challenge:** overcome opposition of energy establishment and popular inertia
- **Result: Energy Democracy in action**

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We Call on Oakland City Council to:

Support development of an East Bay Community Choice energy program

East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy
Sun Light & Power
Sheet Metal Workers' Local 104
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Sungevity
Communities for a Better Environment
League of Conservation Voters
Causa Justa:: Just Cause
Sierra Club, SF Bay Chapter
West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project

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Opportunities & Scale of Transportation & Land Use Strategies

Sandra Hamlat, Board Member,
East Bay Bicycle Coalition

Member, Transportation & Land Use Committee
Oakland Climate Action Coalition

Key Land Use & Transportation Goals

- Ensuring that new transit-oriented developments (TODs) do not result in displacement of current residents, & future homes in TODs are suitably priced for residents of all incomes.
- Protecting current residents from displacement by expanding tenant protections & putting an end to the foreclosure crises & impacts it has had on families & neighborhoods.
- Ensure transportation is affordable, frequent, reliable, and accessible for all (Bike/ped & transit).

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Opportunities

- Challenges:
  - Strategic engagement.
  - Scale of engagement.
    - Funding from AC Transit, BART, & ACTC.
    - Limited funding from City.
  - City's influence on restoring service, reducing fares, & student passes.

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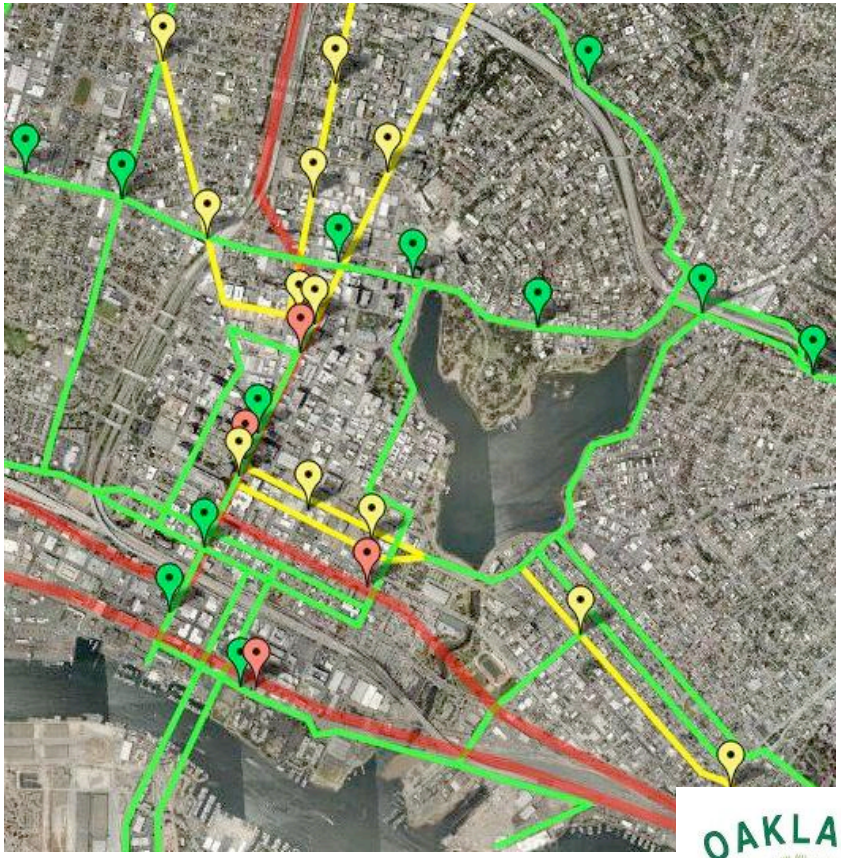
Opportunities

- "Litmus test" for authority & jurisdiction of City.
- Advocate for projects that the City can implement:
  - Bike/ped improvements;
  - TODs; &
  - Bus Rapid Transit.



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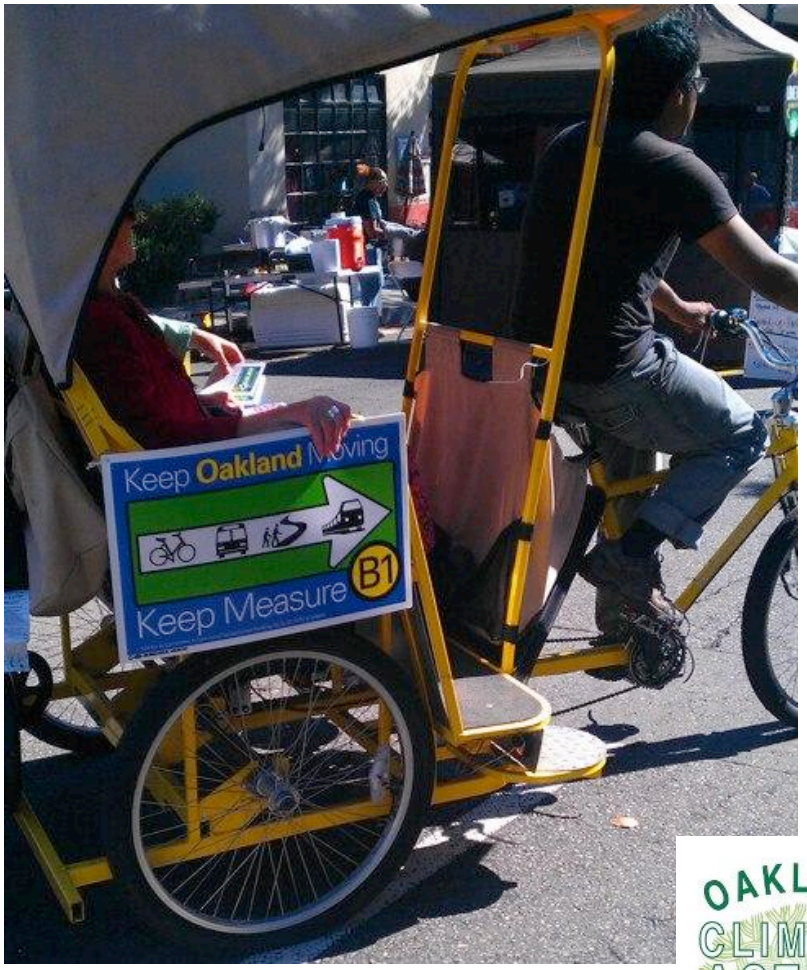
Scale

- Regionally, OCAC can work across borders by coordinating efforts when opportunities arise:
  - Sales tax campaigns;
  - One Bay Area Grant;
  - AC Transit; &
  - ACTC.



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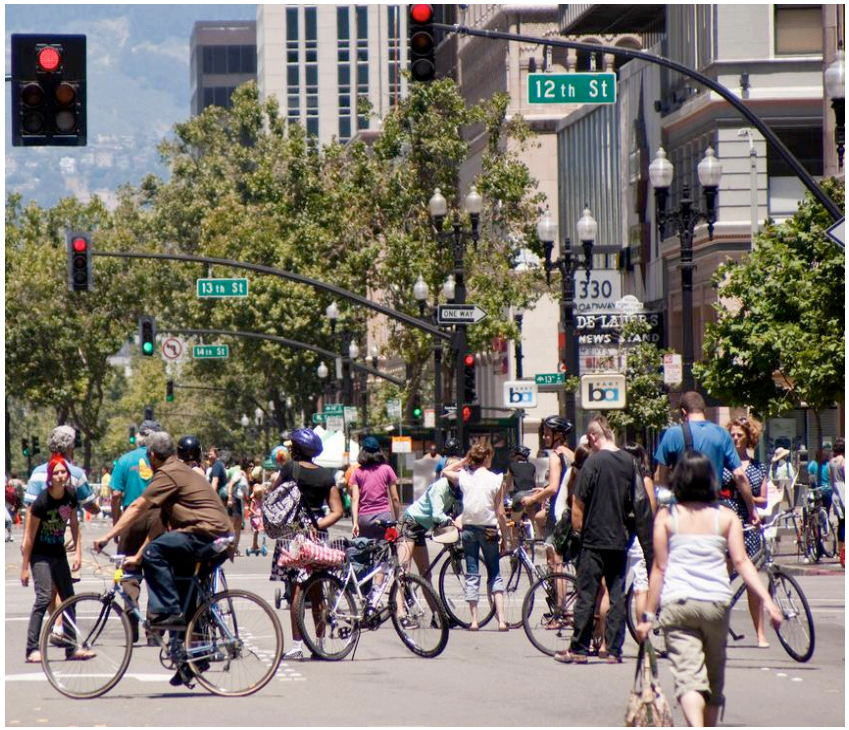
Scale

- City-specific campaigns:
  - TOD planning processes;
  - Oakland Bikeways Campaign;
  - Parking benefits districts; &
  - Open streets & Bike Share.



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Current Campaigns

- TOD: Ensuring walkable communities are created for all, while protecting and prioritizing the needs of existing residents (i.e., Lake Merritt SAP, International Blvd. TOD, Upper Broadway–Valdez Plan, West Oakland BART SAP, Coliseum City).
- Oakland Bikeways Campaign (Telegraph Ave., 14th St., & Park Blvd.)
- East Bay Bus Rapid Transit (International Blvd., 51A Broadway, 57 Macarthur Blvd., 72 San Pablo).

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Strategy

- OCAC can broaden the City's perspective.
  - For example, land use plans should include affordable housing to reduce the City's carbon footprint.

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Strategy

- Regional nature of campaigns suggests organizing on broader scale than just Oakland so that organizations & jurisdictions can efficiently & effectively implement Climate Action Plans.

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Food Justice and Land Access as a Strategy for Building Community Resilience

Nile Malloy

Communities for a Better Environment

Member, Food Justice & Land Access Committee

Oakland Climate Action Coalition

Background

- **Transform land use policy** for local urban agriculture and production to address climate change and rising food prices.
- **Increase the amount of local healthy food**, reduce the consumption of carbon-intensive foods, increase water conservation and expand urban forestry initiatives.
- **Ensure food security** for communities that lack grocery stores, healthy food and green, open spaces.

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Committee Goals and Structure

Committee Goal

Ensure 10% of produce consumed in Oakland is grown in Oakland by 2020 through community gardens and sustainable urban agriculture.

Structure

- Steering committee chairs
- Monthly coordinated meetings
- Collaborate, network and promote local urban agriculture projects, community service/volunteer at various food justice projects
- Coordinate city staff meetings, mobilize for City Council activities related to urban agriculture

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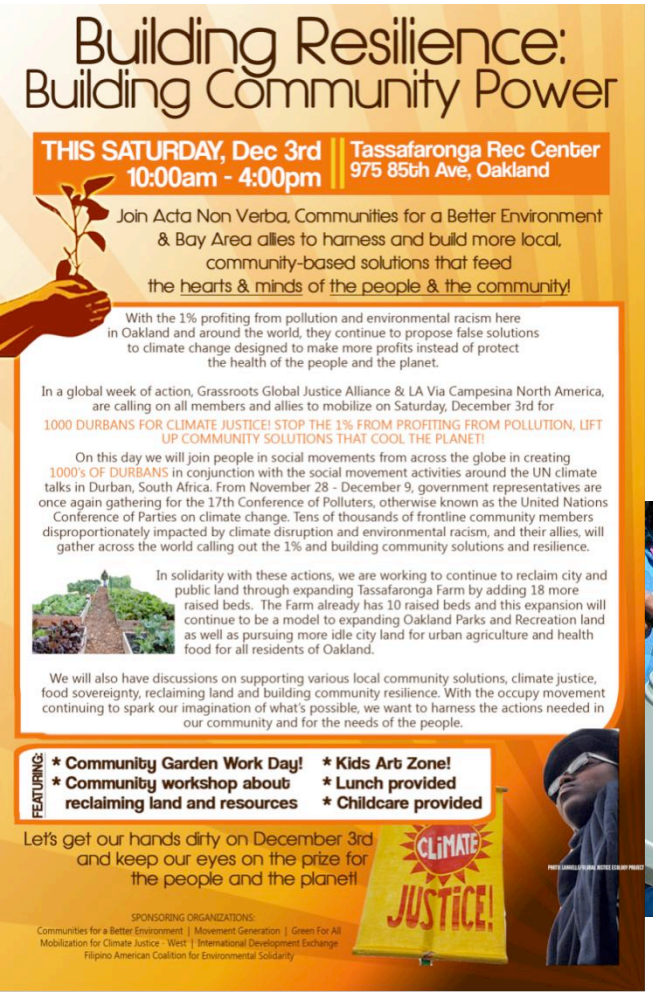
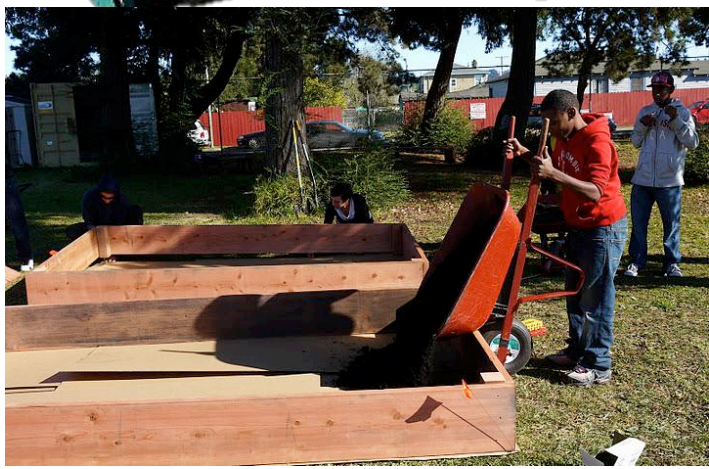
Community Engagement Work





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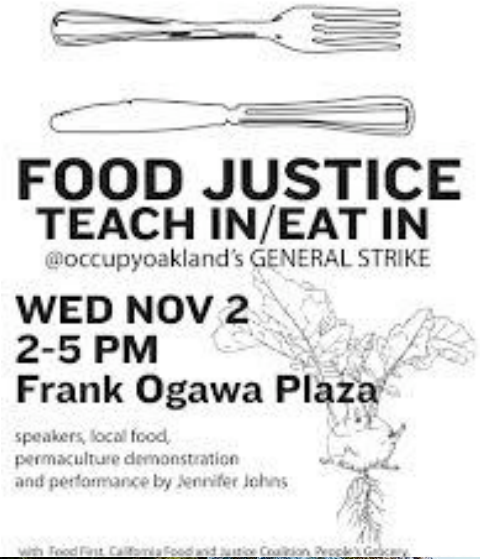
Community Engagement Work



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Policy Advocacy Work

- **Blighted Vacant Lots**
  Organizing to create a transparent and affordable process for community groups to mitigate blighted vacant lots by compiling a list of blighted private property in Oakland, drafting a model lease agreement that provides conditions for private property owners to enter into a long-term lease with a community organization for the purpose of urban farming.

- **Agricultural Zoning**
  Pass a city-wide urban agriculture zoning update in Oakland (in partnership with the Oakland Food Policy Council).

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Policy Advocacy Work

- **Edible Parks**
  Pass an equal opportunity city-wide parkland access protocol and process in Oakland through which resident groups and community-based organizations can submit urban garden proposals for review by the Oakland Parks and Recreation Department coined the Edible Parks Proposal.

- **Food Justice Action Plans**
  Organizing to create statements and action plans that address the links between food justice work and gentrification, racism, classism, sexism, and other structural oppressions.

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Committee Platform

- **Platform Statement**
  We call on city representatives to support policies that enable Oakland residents to grow, consume, and distribute affordable, healthy food in every neighborhood in the city.

- **Explanation**
  We must accomplish a transparent, fair, expeditious, and affordable process for Oakland residents to access land for urban agricultural use.

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Edible Parks Task Force

- Developed Edible Parks Program Guidelines & Process
- Objectives
  - Access to Healthy Food, Park Use/Neighborhood Improvement, Carbon Impact Reduction, Park Stewardship, Local Self-sufficiency and Climate Adaptation and Water Conservation
- Park prioritization criteria
- Endorsed by OCAC, Oakland Food Policy Council and Oakland based community organizations
- Presented program to council members

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Lessons Learned in Building the Oakland Climate Action Coalition

Nile Malloy

Communities for a Better Environment

Steering Committee Member,

Oakland Climate Action Coalition (OCAC)

Lessons from Our Work

- **The power of climate justice framing**
  Equity, empowerment, sustainable development
- **Take the political initiative**
  Don't leave the design of the climate action process to others
- **Community engagement is key**
  Popular education, asset-based resilience, grassroots organizing
- **Issues of scope**
  Adaptation has neighborhood/ municipal/regional dimensions
- **Resource challenges**
  Collaboration takes resources; organizations bring different capacities

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Get in Touch!

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Questions?

Thank You!

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