

Proposal for A Better Downtown Oakland

Oakland, CA

MetWest High School

9th Grade+Whitney's Advisory



ISSUE

Our 9th Grade Advisory, in partnership with Y-Plan and City of Oakland's City Planning Department, has spent the past three months researching the history of Oakland and how Downtown Oakland can better serve marginalized communities, with a focus on youth.

QUESTION

How can we make Downtown Oakland a more equitable place for all to access and enjoy today and in the future?

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

- Instructor: Whitney Dwyer
- Students: 21 9th Grade students
- Client(s): The City of Oakland Planning Department
- Community Partner(s): Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)
- Other Resources: Swan's Market, Mamacita's Café, and City of Oakland

YOUTH DRIVEN DATA AND INSIGHTS

- We studied the Black Panther Party, past urban renewal projects and the migration and immigration factors that have shaped Oakland into being the city it is today
- We conducted interviews with key community stakeholders
- We surveyed relevant communities to test hypothesis
- We conducted two site visits as a whole group and multiple other visits in smaller groups based on group needs

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our students collectively have about 45 strong ideas that would make for an inviting, youth-friendly and equitable Downtown Oakland. The bulk of their recommendations, however focus on gentrification prevention and providing safe spaces for youth.

SHORT-TERM (1-6 Months)

- Increased numbers of trash cans on the street with attractive and fun details
- Light up crosswalks to help people cross the street
- Increase numbers of creative seating for little kids, teens and the elderly
- Build parklets on vacant lots and in other underused spaces

LONG-TERM (1-3 Years)

- Mandate liquor stores to sell more affordable and healthy food options
- Public youth centers with academic support services, mentoring, art/music studios, athletic gyms, with affordable/healthy food provided
- More homeless shelters and therapy support for the homeless
- A significant amount of affordable housing for people earning minimum wage
- A Black Panther Monument to commemorate their activism in Oakland and beyond
- Installment of gender neutral bathrooms in public places
- A shopping mall with stores of local designers

NEXT STEPS AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY:

- We will reflect on the project and the project process as a class shortly after our presentation
- We plan to follow-up in the fall with the City of Oakland's Planning Department to see if there has been any progress implementing our ideas and to offer support/insight when needed
- Being that our school is internship-based, we are interested in exploring internship options with any parties involved with the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan
- Our students will continue to attend City Council meetings that have issues related to gentrification or pollution (coal trains)
- We will also decide as a class what ideas are most important to us and advocate for their implementation
- We are open to any level of collaboration that the city is interested in moving forward