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ASIAN AMERICANS

GETTING ROOTED IN OUR
PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE.



JANUARY 2022

IN OAKLAND

JUST CITIES PRODUCED ON BEHALF OF THE
OAKLAND ASIAN CULTURAL CENTER.

Oakland General Plan Deeply Rooted in Oakland Partnership Publication.

OAKLAND'S ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY

1849
THE GOLDRUSH and famine pulled/pushed Chinese people to California.¹

1854
THE CITY OF OAKLAND was established.²



1863-1869
THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD
Thousands of exploited and mistreated Chinese laborers built the railroad. Oakland became an industrial center during the railroad construction.⁷



1882
THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT, the first law to ban the immigration of an entire ethnic group, passed due to Anti-Chinese organizations and propaganda.⁹

OAKLAND'S JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY was primarily centered in Chinatown and West Oakland. Japanese Americans operated many businesses throughout the city.⁸

1930s - 1940s

FILIPINX AMERICANS IN OAKLAND
By the 1940s, there were over 600 Filipinx Americans in Oakland. They served in the U.S. military and worked in different industries in Oakland.¹⁰

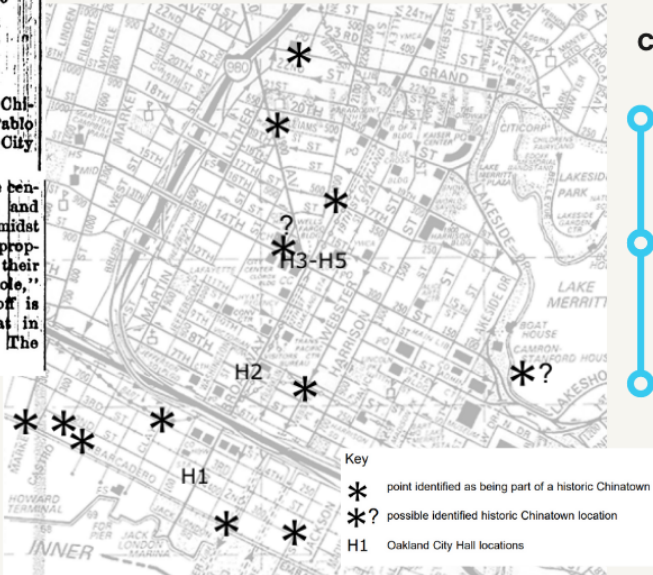


1860s - 1900s

THE CHINESE QUARTERS.
The Filthiest Hole in the City. Houses sitting in Green Alms and Stagnant Pools—Where is the Board of Health?
We yesterday paid a visit to the Chinese quarters, situated on the San Pablo road, a few blocks north of the City Hall,...

[This] "settlement" is right in the center of a beautiful part of the city, and seems like a "plague-spot in the midst of a paradise." The contiguous property-holders can do nothing with their land till the removal of the "stink-hole," and while property a few blocks off is rapidly augmenting in value, that in close proximity is almost valueless. The reasons are obvious.

ANTI-CHINESE SENTIMENTS IN OAKLAND | Between 1860 and 1900, 10 Chinatowns were formed as anti-Chinese City leaders and residents constantly sought to remove them.³



CHINATOWN EXAMPLES

TELEGRAPH & 17th (1865-1867)
Burned down by a mysterious fire.⁴

SAN PABLO & 19TH (1867-1870s)
Oakland City officials ordered Chinese residents to leave to build a new city hall.⁵

8TH & WEBSTER (1870-present)
Although named Chinatown, Japanese and Filipinx Americans were a part of the community in the early 20th century as well.⁶

DISCRIMINATORY PLANNING

RACIAL HOUSING COVENANTS barred the sale of properties to specific racial groups. One of the first racial covenants in Oakland targeted Asian people.¹¹

REDLINING marked neighborhoods of color as "hazardous" to investment. In Oakland, the areas surrounding Chinatown were redlined.¹²



1960s - 1980s



THE ASIAN AMERICAN MOVEMENT activated Asian Americans across the Bay Area to organize and provide the basic services their communities needed such as housing, legal assistance, and healthcare. Asian Health Services, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, Oakland Asian Cultural Center, and many more organizations were created and continue to be based in Oakland.¹⁵



2017

NO STADIUM AT LANEY | To protect their community from displacement, residents, educators, and students organized in opposition to the A's stadium at Laney College. As a result, the A's stadium proposal did not go forward.²³

1950s

FREEWAY DISPLACEMENT

Construction of Nimitz Freeway destroyed several blocks of Chinatown, including 2,000 low income housing units.¹³

1965

THE IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1965 established a new policy based on reuniting immigrant families and attracting skilled labor to the U.S.¹⁶

1993

THE PACIFIC RENAISSANCE PLAZA opened after years of community organizing. It became the center of Chinatown, hosting OACC, the Asian Branch Library, a number of businesses, and affordable housing.¹⁹

1960s

URBAN RENEWAL
BART demolished three blocks of Chinatown, displacing hundreds and relocating Madison Square Park to build the Lake Merritt station and BART headquarters.¹⁷

1970s - 1990s

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT | Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Lu Mien, and other Southeast Asians refugees resettled in Oakland after fleeing the wars in Southeast Asia.¹⁸



2003-2007

ELDER EVICTION

Residents of 50 publicly subsidized housing units in Pacific Renaissance Plaza received unjust eviction notices. In response, community leaders organized and fought for the tenants, mainly elders, to remain in their homes. After 4 years, the units were preserved as permanent affordable housing.²⁰

2008-2021

INCLUSIVE PLANNING AT LAKE MERRITT

The Oakland Chinatown Coalition engaged community and advocated for key improvements in housing, open space, and public safety on the Lake Merritt BART Station area plan.²¹ In 2021, EBALDC was selected to build 233 affordable housing units at the site.²²



1942 - 1946

JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT
Japanese Americans in Oakland were detained without due process and placed in internment camps. They were forced to give up their homes and businesses.¹⁴



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY + DISPLACEMENT TODAY AMONG ASIAN AMERICAN OAKLANDERS

Oakland is home to diverse, innovative, and culturally rich communities, who have exerted resilience in the face of rising housing costs, displacement, and other pressures that impact one's quality of life and ability to stay in their home and community. Many Asian American Oaklanders who live across the city navigate housing challenges.

Rising Rents Over the Last 20 Years - Chinatown rent increased by 96%.



Rent increases significantly impact one's ability to stay in their home and community. In Oakland, median rent increased by 40% from 2000 to 2019.¹

- Most neighborhoods throughout Oakland have experienced at least a 30% increase in median rent, with some areas experiencing more than 100 or 200% percent increases in rent.²
- For example, the following Asian American communities experienced median rent increases of nearly 100% or more: Chinatown, Piedmont Ave, Eastlake, and San Antonio.

There are wide disparities in homeownership rates among Asian Americans.

Homeownership can help families stay in the Bay Area and build generational wealth, though not all Asian Americans have access.

- For example, 72% of Taiwanese Bay Area residents are homeowners, compared to only 39% of Cambodian Bay Area residents.³

Rising income inequality in the U.S. is greatest among Asian Americans.⁴

Low income Asian Americans are impacted by rent increases and other housing affordability issues, a reality that challenges the model minority myth. For example, in Alameda County, over 40% of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese residents earned less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Line in 2009⁵-2011.⁶

Low income Asian American households in some Oakland neighborhoods have decreased from 2000-2019.

- Low income Asian American households have decreased between 6-31% in parts of Chinatown, Downtown, Eastlake, Ivy Hill, and San Antonio, as some residents continue to experience gentrification and displacement pressures.⁷
- Chinatown elders who rent, do not speak English, and rely on their walkable and cultural neighborhood are the most vulnerable to these pressures.⁸



As neighborhoods become more expensive and people and local businesses can no longer afford to stay, communities change over time through displacement and gentrification.



Asian American communities across Oakland are at risk of gentrification or displacement, such as Chinatown, Eastlake, and San Antonio.

Poster by Christine Wong Yap.

Others such as Ivy Hill and Civic Center are experiencing early/ongoing gentrification. These are the neighborhoods that need focused policies to protect and prevent continued displacement of Oakland residents.⁹

DO THESE EXAMPLES REFLECT YOUR LIVED EXPERIENCE?

The City of Oakland is updating the General Plan for the first time since the 1990's. This plan represents Oakland's equitable vision and policies for housing, transportation, parks, transportation, and environmental justice for the next 20-30 years. Share your thoughts at <https://bit.ly/ogpzineq> to inform the policies of the General Plan.

WHERE ASIAN AMERICANS, LIVE WORK AND PLAY IMPACTS HEALTH

In the United States, the model minority myth prevents people from knowing about the problems many Asian Americans experience. This leads to a lack of policies that focus on the needs of Asian Americans. The following three sections show how these Oaklanders are impacted by housing overcrowding, pollution, and traffic.

When families cannot afford housing costs, many people resort to multiple families living together. Overcrowding can cause individuals to have anxiety and depression.¹

Asian American households are disproportionately overcrowded in Oakland.

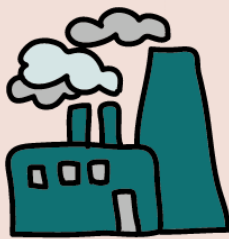


Neighborhoods with a concentration of Asian American households have a higher overcrowding rate (10%) than the city as a whole (8%).²

- For example, overcrowding in the following renter Asian American communities ranges from 20-42%: Saint Elizabeth, San Antonio, and East Peralta.³

In Oakland, Asian American communities have the highest pollution burden.

Poor indoor and outdoor air quality in Oakland can cause residents to have respiratory health issues like asthma. Asthma can be caused by living near freeways, warehouses, factories, or living with secondhand smoke, pets, mold, and lead. Intense asthma attacks (breathlessness, wheezing, coughing and chest tightness) require immediate treatment.



- In Oakland, majority Asian American communities have the highest average pollution burden across all races.⁴
- For example, the following Asian American communities have higher rates of emergency room visits due to asthma per 10,000 persons: Produce and Waterfront, Downtown, Chinatown, Civic Center, and Saint Elizabeth.⁵

Chinatown has the highest rates of severe and fatal pedestrian collisions in Oakland.

In the U.S., car collisions are one of the leading causes of death⁶ and pedestrian collisions are 4 times more likely to happen in lower-income neighborhoods.⁷ These collisions injure and kill pedestrians. Streets with wider lanes, limited crosswalks or limited traffic lights bring faster cars and higher chances of collision. The following examples share Asian American communities that have high car collisions.



- In Chinatown, every street has high rate of severe and fatal pedestrian collisions.⁸
- 30% of streets in majority Asian American communities have the highest rates of pedestrian collisions in Oakland, the highest percentage for any community.⁹
- For example, the following Asian American communities have high car collisions (2015-2021): Downtown (369), Produce and Waterfront (323), and San Antonio (309).¹⁰

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Where Asian Americans live, work and play impacts your health

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STOP MUST EVICTIONS in OAKLAND

ABOUT THE OAKLAND ASIAN CULTURAL CENTER

The Oakland Asian Cultural Center (OACC) was founded in 1984 by a coalition of volunteers who recognized the need for a strong artistic and cultural force in the Chinatown area.

OACC builds vibrant communities through Asian and Pacific Islander arts and cultural programs that foster inter-generational and cross-cultural dialogue and understanding, collaboration, and social justice. Since opening its own facility in 1996 in the heart of Oakland's Chinatown district, the OACC has presented countless high-quality cultural programs including performances, workshops, festivals, school tours, classes, and exhibitions.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
[HTTPS://OACC.CC/](https://oacc.cc/)

RECOMMENDED MEDIA

Images of America: Oakland's Chinatown by William Wong | Available at Oakland's Asian Branch Library

Hometown Chinatown by L. Eva Armentrout Ma | Available online at Oakland's Public Library

Kelly Loves Tony: from Spencer Nakasako's Trilogy | Available at Oakland's Main Library

Oakland Chinatown Today, Oakland Chinatown Tomorrow hosted by OACC with panelists Ted Dang, Alvina Wong, Tiffany Eng, and Joyce Pisanant | <https://youtu.be/FOkWPqJfnNc>

Oakland Chinatown Oral History Project | <https://www.chinatownmemories.org/>

