

## Hoover/West MacArthur Vision Statement

### **Summary**

One of the earliest areas to be settled in Oakland, Hoover/West MacArthur was largely working-class until the end of World War II, when it was abandoned by those with financial means, cordoned off by freeways, and turned into a containment zone for the impoverished and unemployed. Businesses and jobs evaporated, while crime and blight took their place. Government and private investment focused on improving the quality of life in other neighborhoods, while this neighborhood absorbed others' social problems.

The community is broken. To fix it, we need to disperse affordable housing and increase homeownership. Our housing stock is a valuable city resource that has been left to decay. We need to attract residents with disposable income, who don't soak up social services, who can fix up the housing stock, who will in turn attract retail businesses. The more people have a stake in the community, the safer and more attractive they will make it. To date, the city has exhibited no capacity to effect positive change. Private investment, then, is the key to improving our community and our quality of life.

### **History of the area**

Hoover/West MacArthur – roughly, the triangular area bordered by San Pablo Avenue, 40<sup>th</sup> Street and the 980 freeway – is a largely residential section of the West Oakland Project Area. The area was settled early in Oakland's history, due to convenient service by trains, horse carts and ferries. The Oakland Railroad ran along nearby Telegraph Avenue starting in 1864. In 1881, the Oakland Mole was completed<sup>1</sup>, providing train and ferry service to and from San Francisco; trains ran from Piedmont along 40<sup>th</sup> Street starting on June 1, 1904.<sup>2</sup> In 1886 a cable car railroad extended down San Pablo from 14<sup>th</sup> Street to 42<sup>nd</sup>, servicing the horse track in Emeryville<sup>3</sup>. Shortly after, the Oakland Traction Co. ran a streetcar line out Grove Street, now Martin Luther King Jr. Way. By 1932, 648 trains per day used the Mole to transport 42,500 passengers.

The area is split in half by the 580 freeway. The area below the freeway, colloquially known as "Ghost Town"<sup>4</sup>, was annexed into Oakland in 1872 and was largely settled by 1878. A wave of immigrants, mostly Italian and

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<sup>1</sup> The Oakland History Timeline, compiled by the Oakland History Room of the Oakland Public Library, shows the Mole opening for business in 1882.

<http://www.oaklandphotojourney.com/pages/timeline.html>

<sup>2</sup> Demoro, Harre W., *The Key Route*, Glendale, CA: Interurban Press, 1985, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> "The Oakland Cable Railway. . . opened: 19-Nov-1886. Broadway from Seventh Street to San Pablo. San Pablo Avenue to Park Avenue in Emeryville." Thompson, Joe, "Cable Car Lines in Other California Cities", 2004, <http://www.cable-car-guy.com/html/cccaoth.html>.

<sup>4</sup> "generally speaking...MLK at MacArthur down to Grand...and that entire north-south cut over to San Pablo" – from "A short history of Ghost Town", Antonioli, Dan, 2005, <http://www.611ecovillage.com/neighborhd.html>.

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Portuguese<sup>5</sup>, settled into JAMMI<sup>6</sup>, the area above the 580 freeway, after the 1906 earthquake. Although some early inhabitants may have been wealthy<sup>7</sup>, both areas became largely working class in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with employment provided by Oakland's many small manufacturing concerns, as well as larger employers (To mention a few: Judson Iron Works in Emeryville, which employed 350 in 1882, made tacks and files. The Lusk Cannery in Temescal was the largest cannery in the West<sup>8</sup> if not the world<sup>9</sup> by 1888. Pacific Iron & Nail Co. employed 250 on the estuary at the foot of Market Street. The Key Route maintained "vast Emeryville shops" from 1906 to 1957<sup>10</sup>).

The completion of the first transcontinental railroad, ending in Oakland, in 1869<sup>11</sup> eventually brought a small but significant African-American population of railway workers to West Oakland. By 1915, of the 4,008 African-Americans in Oakland, roughly six percent lived in the Ghost Town area<sup>12</sup>. But during World War II African-Americans started to settle in Oakland in sizeable numbers, increasing from 8,462 in 1940 (3% of the city's population) to 47,562 (12%) in 1950<sup>13</sup>. The intensity of the war effort lowered barriers of discrimination<sup>14</sup> and made jobs available that African-Americans would not previously have been hired for.

The rise of the motor car, with construction of freeways and bridges, contributed to white flight to the suburbs in the 1950s, and the end of the segregation era in the 1960s gave middle-class blacks the choice to live further a-field as well.

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<sup>5</sup> "The Portuguese. . . also came to work for the railroad, primarily as laborers rather than tradesmen. . . By 1892 Oakland was considered the unofficial Portuguese capital of California." -- "A Brief History of West Oakland", Douglass, Robert, Putting the "There" There: Historical Archaeologies of West Oakland, Anthropological Studies Center, 2005, Chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> JAMMI: "Just Above the MacArthur Maze Interchange", the area framed by Emeryville, highway 580, highway 24, and the Temescal Creek. Essentially, this is Census Tract 4010. Only the portion from 40<sup>th</sup> Street south is within the West Oakland Project Area.

<sup>7</sup> "The buildings show that some pretty big spenders were scattered throughout the area in the early days." -- e-mail from Betty Marvin, 7/18/07.

<sup>8</sup> Walker, Richard A., Industry Builds Out the City: The Suburbanization of Manufacturing In The San Francisco Bay Area, 1850 – 1940, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Pastron, Alan, et al, Archeological Sensitivity Study and Testing Program for the Uptown Oakland Project, Oakland: City of Oakland, 2005, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Demoro, Harre W., The Key Route, Glendale, CA: InterUrban Press, 1985 p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> "On November 8, 1869, the Oakland Long Wharf became the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad." Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakland\\_Long\\_Wharf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakland_Long_Wharf).

<sup>12</sup> Based on an analysis of street addresses in the Tilghman, Charles, Colored American Directory, Oakland, 1915, approximately 250 adults from 150 African-American families lived in Hoover/West MacArthur, chiefly clustered around 35<sup>th</sup> Street.

<sup>13</sup> City of Oakland History Timeline at <http://www.oaklandnet.com/celebrate/Historytimeline.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> "President F. D. Roosevelt issuing Executive Order No. 8802 in 1941, eliminating discrimination in defense industries and the government itself." -- Earl Warren Oral History Project, <http://content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=hb938nb6fv&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00008&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=calisphere>

"with Roosevelt's Executive Order the color bar in employment began to fade. The order directed that the vocational training program be conducted without reference to race, and it stipulated that all future defense contracts should include non-discrimination clauses." Wheeler, B. Gordon, Black California, New York, 1993, p. 215.

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“Growing racial integration was accompanied by increasing economic segregation between the affluent communities of the hills and the formerly prosperous urban core.”<sup>15</sup> The city’s population dropped nearly 12% between 1950 and 1980<sup>16</sup>. The result was that the Hoover/West MacArthur area transformed into a predominantly African-American neighborhood, and an impoverished one<sup>17</sup>. Government policies intentionally isolated the area by constructing the broad 980 freeway between Hoover/West MacArthur and downtown<sup>18</sup>, while poverty was institutionalized by concentrating subsidized housing in the area, including construction of some 17 Oakland Housing Authority properties. Meanwhile, globalization brought the demise of Oakland’s traditional job base, manufacturing. “In the decade of the 1980’s alone, Oakland lost 37,000 manufacturing jobs.”<sup>19</sup> Over-fishing, urban sprawl and improved transportation had caused the decline of the local canning industry. Low-paying service jobs were mostly what remained for workers who lacked costly education. The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980’s dealt the area another blow<sup>20</sup>, as did the closure of the Oakland Army Base in September 1998. The area became a containment zone for Oakland’s social problems, providing housing of last resort. By 1990, the area was 81% black<sup>21</sup> and overwhelmingly poor.

Devaluation of property in the area contrasted with prosperity in other Bay Area communities. The dot-com boom brought highly educated and skilled young, single workers to the Bay Area and housing pressures increased. High crime and poor schools, impacted by dysfunctional social structures, continued to contribute to an exodus of families from the inner city. By 2000, African-Americans constituted just 72% of the population of Hoover/West MacArthur<sup>22</sup>, while the population as a whole increased 11%. The white constituency, meanwhile, increased by 50%. These changes did not result in significant economic impact; nearly half the inhabitants still earned less than the Federal poverty line.

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<sup>15</sup> “Weed and Seed Strategic Plan”, City of Oakland, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Population table found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakland%2C\\_California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakland%2C_California)

<sup>17</sup> In 1999, 45.7% of persons over age 16 in Hoover/West MacArthur were below the Federal poverty level (3,428 of 7,509 measured) – U.S. Census FactFinder for census tract 4014 and block groups 4, 5 and 6 of census tract 4010.

<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to believe that the decision to demolish the 35<sup>th</sup> Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and place the 580 freeway there was not influenced in part by the concentration of African-Americans on those streets, as documented in the “Colored American Directory” of 1915.

<sup>19</sup> “Weed and Seed Strategic Plan”, City of Oakland, 1994.

<sup>20</sup> The San Jose Mercury News reported on August 18, 1996 that the U.S. government had been involved in a ring that sold cocaine in the U.S. and guns to a rebel movement in Nicaragua. One of the alleged drug lords was based in the Bay Area and his family owned property in Oakland. “The cocaine that flooded in helped spark a crack explosion in urban America”.

<http://www.narconews.com/darkalliance/drugs/day1main.htm>

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Census, 1990, for census tract 4014 and block groups 4, 5 and 6 in census tract 4010.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census, 2000, for census tract 4014 and block groups 4, 5 and 6 in census tract 4010, including the “more than one race” designation.

### **Current challenges**

Decades of disinvestment, isolation, and concentration of poverty have left Beat 06X (or “Beat 6”, as the police denote the Hoover/West MacArthur area) with the highest level of stressors in the city of Oakland<sup>23</sup>.

*HOUSING:* The housing stock is seriously deteriorated<sup>24</sup>. Beat 6 is over-concentrated with public housing,<sup>25</sup> containing over six percent of the City’s OHA properties<sup>26</sup> and over seven percent of available Section 8 rentals<sup>27</sup>, even though Hoover/West MacArthur holds only 1.8% of the city’s population. Beat 6 is also predominantly rental: 79%, according to the 2000 census.

73% of Section 8 renters are African-American<sup>28</sup>, but only 35.7% of residents of the City of Oakland are African-American<sup>29</sup>. The population of Beat 6 is 72% African-American. Concentrating Section 8 renters in Beat 6 results in racial segregation.

The housing stock in Hoover/West MacArthur is aging. The community is built-out (leaving little room for new projects) and most dwellings were built before World War II. Deferred maintenance has resulted from poverty, the high percentage of rental housing (and absentee landlords), and the very basic standards required by Section 8<sup>30</sup>. The result is prevalent dilapidation.

*CRIME:* Open-air drug markets persist at various locations in the area. In Beat 6 there were 95 narcotics reports in the three-month period April – June 2006. For the city as a whole, there were 915 such reports. In that time period, Beat 6

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<sup>23</sup> Measure Y – Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004 – Monthly Update, May 2006.

<sup>24</sup> The San Francisco Chronicle reported on February 15, 2007, that the City of Oakland was suing the Oakland Housing Authority, “citing persistent squalid conditions at numerous public-housing complexes the agency manages.”

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/02/15/BAG9705CKM8.DTL>

<sup>25</sup> “West Oakland is considered saturated in the number of publicly assisted housing units in the neighborhood (over 20% of all public housing in Oakland is located in West Oakland)” – “Neighborhood Knowledge for Change: The West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project”, Pacific Institute, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> “The West Oakland Weed and Seed Initiative Evaluation Report” of July 2006 (p. 10) notes that the area is over-represented with public housing.

<sup>27</sup> Based upon an analysis of the addresses of available rental properties posted on the OHA website on October 26, 2006. The OHA website listed 332 Section 8 rental opportunities. Of these, 24 were located within Beat 6. Within Beat 6 are 17 of the city’s 268 Oakland Housing Authority sites.

<sup>28</sup> Statistic provided by Just Cause Oakland, in an e-mail dated 10/11/06.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0653000.html>.

<sup>30</sup> For example, one electrical outlet per room is sufficient to meet Section 8 standards if there is a ceiling light. In contrast, the National Electrical Code (1981) requires sufficient receptacles so that no point along the floor line is more than six feet from a receptacle. (see Oakland Housing Authority inspection checklist at [http://www.oakha.org/owner/inspect\\_checklist.html](http://www.oakha.org/owner/inspect_checklist.html))

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recorded 23 of 181 reports of prostitution. Beat 6, therefore, reported over 10% of the city's narcotics violations, and over 12% of the city's prostitution reports, while comprising less than 1% of the city's area, and less than 2% of the city's population.<sup>31</sup>

Urban miners are a routine sight, their stolen shopping carts piled high with cans and bottles filched from recycling bins that residents pay Waste Management to empty. Empty homes are at risk for break-ins by thieves who will strip out copper pipe and wire to sell to local recycling businesses. The police rarely investigate property losses, which are treated as insurance claims.

*INJURIOUS BUSINESSES:* Few legitimate businesses serve the neighborhood, and many of those that do are undercapitalized.

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board has designated Beat 6 a high crime area. West Oakland exceeds ABC's liquor license concentration limit by 28 licenses. Some 12 of the city's 359 liquor stores are in Beat 6, or 3.3%<sup>32</sup>, to serve 1.8% of the city's population.

Alcohol, narcotics and prostitution comprise much of the economic activity in the area. The remainder is a mix of low-investment enterprises requiring little formal education (e.g. braiding parlors and nail salons) and auto uses that have negative environmental impacts (detail shops, oil changers, gas stations and tire stores). Adding to the area's social woes, halfway houses flourish on government grants.<sup>33</sup> Nonprofits take advantage of lower property costs to pepper the area with transitional housing, confident they will not be challenged by a politically marginalized, desperately impoverished community, and aided by the eagerness of government agencies to fund such programs in areas where resistance is not expected.

Suitable sites for neighborhood-serving retail have dwindled as housing has spread to prime street-corner locations, while churches (paying few taxes to support the community) proliferate through the neighborhood, taking advantage of lower property values to occupy former store fronts.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> From CrimeWatch II. Beat 6 also had 91 of 2,389 assault reports (both aggravated and simple) in the same time period, or 3.8%.

<sup>32</sup> From "Liquor Store Report Card: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly", Neighborhood Law Corps, 4/27/04.

<sup>33</sup> Of 479 registered sex offenders whose addresses were identified in Oakland as of September 22, 2007, 27 (or nearly 6%) have a last known address in or near Hoover/West Mac, including three at the California Hotel, an Oakland Community Housing Inc. property heavily subsidized by the City of Oakland. <http://www.city-data.com/so/so-Oakland-California.html> On May 22, 2007, the Community Economic Development Agency (CEDA) recommended loaning OCHI \$1,000,000 to "protect the households living in these units" and others threatened by OCHI's fiscal problems.

<sup>34</sup> Olivet Institutional Missionary Baptist Church at 807 27<sup>th</sup> Street replaces a former Safeway supermarket. Tree of Life Baptist Church, Emmanuel Baptist Church, and Perfect Peace Church at 3651, 3700 and 3208 Martin Luther King respectively, all occupy former commercial property. On Market Street, the Perry Temple Church of God in Christ (35<sup>th</sup> & Market), New Hope Baptist

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*BLIGHT:* Litter, pollution, weeds, graffiti and decay characterize the area. A poorly educated, impoverished, transient populace without a stake in the community is not one that will take much interest in cleaning and landscaping its surroundings. Absentee landlords add to the impression of decay when they view their properties as “cash cows” requiring only essential maintenance. Recent price appreciation has encouraged long-term owner occupants to cash out to speculators, who turn the properties into marginally maintained Section 8 rentals, in hopes of flipping them in a few years for significant profit. Since major thoroughfares cut through the area, litter and soot collect from vehicles passing through. The sense of indifference and decline encourages illegal dumping in freeway underpasses and vacant lots. Boarded-up and weed-strewn buildings attract drug dealers who anticipate reduced community concern or observation of their activities.

*POOR SCHOOLS:* Schools close and re-open every few years. The ones that remain are known for poor test scores, and serve a high percentage of disadvantaged students<sup>35</sup>. Those parents who are able to do so send their children to private or parochial schools, or manage to get their children admitted to better public schools outside the neighborhood.

Schools are a barometer of the health of the community. Broken families, neglected and undernourished children, expectations of failure and absence of role models result in under-performing and challenged schools. Children who are not ready to learn disrupt classrooms and degrade the quality of education for themselves and others. High truancy rates<sup>36</sup> lower available funding. “Our students are clearly affected by the highly stressful conditions that confront them in their neighborhoods”, resulting in “a long pattern of academic underperformance<sup>37</sup>”. Two of Hoover/West MacArthur’s three elementary schools were closed in 2004. One of those, Longfellow Elementary, reopened as the Independent Studies Academy for two years, then closed for a year, and now houses the Oakland Military Institute.

*DEARTH OF JOBS:* The city’s unemployment rate is 8.44%<sup>38</sup>, but the rate in Hoover/West MacArthur is much higher<sup>39</sup>. The historic job base, blue-collar

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Church (36<sup>th</sup> and Market), Seventh Day Adventist Church (34<sup>th</sup> and Market) and the Olivet Outreach Mission occupy corner sites at intersections.

<sup>35</sup> In 2007, the OUSD website stated that 84% of the student enrollment at Hoover Elementary School is “socioeconomically disadvantaged,” as is 69% at the Oakland Military Institute ([www.omiacademy.org](http://www.omiacademy.org)).

<sup>36</sup> Hoover Elementary School has a 58.09% truancy rate, compared to a statewide average of 24.79%. (California Dept. of Education Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office, 5/28/07)

<sup>37</sup> Executive Summary School Accountability Report Card for Hoover Elementary School, 2005-6, from the Oakland Unified School District homepage.

<sup>38</sup> September 2004, <http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-West/Oakland.html>.

<sup>39</sup> 34.8% of households in Hoover/West MacArthur had no wage or salary income in 1999, while 16.7% of households received public assistance (of 2,517 households in census tract 4014 and

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manufacturing concerns and heavy industry, vanished in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as corporations found the same work could be done more cheaply off-shore and products transported using containerized shipping. Mass-production techniques priced smaller concerns out of business. Less attractive, lower-wage retail and service jobs followed the flight of the middle class to the suburbs. Rising incarceration levels<sup>40</sup>, and computerized background checks, now preclude some residents from being considered for jobs that would have been available to them in the past. 1,625 jobs exist within Hoover/West MacArthur for 7,165 residents<sup>41</sup>; it is not known how many of those jobs are held by residents of the area.

*LACK OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES:* While Hoover/West MacArthur consumes more than its share of police resources and housing subsidies, other types of government services under-serve the area. There is no library, nor other public amenities. What has happened to the available park space? The area has no sizeable park. The 25<sup>th</sup> Street Mini-Park has been “temporarily closed” and fenced-off for years due to toxic contamination and criminal activity<sup>42</sup>. There is no hospital, doctor’s office or medical clinic. Rain gutters clog with trash; street medians are poorly maintained and lack necessary irrigation to support flowers or grass.

*POORLY PLANNED STREETSCAPES:* Most streets in the area have a canopy of electrical wires, with more street poles than trees. The streets are broad, which accommodated the streetcars of yesteryear, but which now divide and isolate the residents. Frequently, off-street parking is insufficient so the view is cluttered with cars. The north-south streets are used as thoroughfares rather than as locally serving access routes. There is little in the way of street furniture or planter boxes. The street median on West MacArthur is bare dirt, and on 40<sup>th</sup> Street is unkempt bushes and trees, standing in stark contrast to lavishly landscaped medians further east on 40<sup>th</sup> Street<sup>43</sup>, and on San Pablo Avenue in Emeryville.

### **Current strengths**

The area is home to a small number of vocal and committed community activists, who work for neighborhood improvement through the Beat 6 Neighborhood

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block groups 4, 5 and 6 of census tract 4010, 877 households had no wage income and 420 received assistance (U.S Census FactFinder)).

<sup>40</sup> In 2007, California had 170,588 persons behind bars (475 per 100,000), up from 168,985 in 2005 (466 per 100,000). ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_prison\\_population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_prison_population)), (<http://www.nicic.org/Features/StateStats/?State=CA>)

<sup>41</sup> “Draft Environmental Impact Report for the West Oakland Redevelopment Plan”, City of Oakland, 2003, p 3-9.

<sup>42</sup> “Nancy Nadel’s Policy and Practice Newsletter”, volume 22, July 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Redevelopment money from the Broadway/MacArthur/San Pablo redevelopment area was used to fund improvements to the 40<sup>th</sup> Street median strip east of Hoover/West MacArthur in 2006, as part of the Neighborhood Project Initiative Program, per e-mail from Kathy Kleinbaum dtd 5/14/07.

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Crime Prevention Council, the West Street Watch and the publicly elected West Oakland Project Area Committee for redevelopment (“WOPAC”). A Main Street Board of Directors was formed in 2006 to plan a transformation of San Pablo Avenue into a vibrant business corridor.

Throughout its history, the area has enjoyed ready access to public transportation. Located near multiple bus lines, the MacArthur BART station, five freeway entrances and the Bay Bridge, Hoover West MacArthur offers numerous transit options and a short commute to downtown Oakland, Emeryville or San Francisco.

A significant number of distinctive Victorian houses have been preserved in the area. Many structures date from the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.

The long-awaited MacArthur Transit Village is expected to bring over 600 new residents and increased business activity to the northeast corner of the area.

### **Vision for the future**

Redevelopment efforts, along with other public and private initiatives, should endeavor to transform the area back to what it was when first settled: a place where people want to live, rather than where conditions force them to live. Public housing should be gradually dispersed until the area shoulders no more than its fair share. Homeownership should be actively promoted, until the ratio of homeowners to renters is in sync with the citywide average. Housing should again be oriented toward the working class, rather than the idle class. Schools should partner with Bay Area industries to provide realistic, forward-looking job training for area residents that will result in long-term employment at living wages. Neighborhood-serving retail should be pursued. City services and amenities should mirror those enjoyed by other Oakland neighborhoods.

*IMPROVE HOUSING:* The main problems with the existing housing are that too high a percentage of it is subsidized, that too much of it is transient, and that much of it is deteriorating and in need of substantial repair.

The Oakland Housing Authority (“OHA”) should be encouraged to build any new units in those other areas of the city that it currently under-serves. Newly developed housing in Hoover/West MacArthur should strive to contain as high a percentage as possible of market rate units, and new “affordable” (i.e. subsidized) units should be oriented to first-time homeowners, not rental. OHA should closely monitor its existing units, ensure they remain in good repair, and address responsibility for the behavior of residents and visitors. As OHA units age and need to be rebuilt, efforts should be made to ensure that OHA serves the entire city, not just certain flatland neighborhoods. Where OHA properties do not architecturally contribute to the community, they should be replaced with

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buildings designed to enhance their surroundings, if not eliminated and placed somewhere else.

Absentee and Section 8 landlords can be identified via sustained perusal of public records. Buildings belonging to those landlords should be identified and monitored to ensure they meet applicable code standards. If and when they do not, the landlords should be contacted and appropriate steps taken to bring them into compliance, or to disqualify the property from participation in the Section 8 program. The city's Neighborhood Housing Rehabilitation Program should be leveraged to assist those landlords in making needed repairs. The city's blight ordinance should be fully utilized as a tool to encourage recalcitrant landlords to maintain their properties in a manner that boosts the neighborhood.

According to the U.S. Geological Service, there is a 62% probability that another strong earthquake (6.7 or greater on the Richter scale) will cause property damage in our area<sup>44</sup>. Most buildings in Hoover/West MacArthur are in need of seismic retrofitting. An incentive program should be developed to reward property owners who actively address this issue<sup>45</sup>. This program should a) provide no-cost professional assessment of the need and cost to retrofit individual properties, devoid of the threat of penalty for discovery of existing code violations, and b) assist with the cost of such retrofitting, depending upon the financial need of the property owner.

Redevelopment funds should be used to encourage home-ownership. Examples of such efforts would include a) assisting first-time homebuyers to navigate the credit and purchase processes, b) providing down payment assistance, c) purchasing of available, suitable properties for rehabilitation and resale in a program that would require the buyer to occupy the property for a set length of time. Existing Hoover/West MacArthur renters should be targeted as likely recipients of such aid programs. Timelines for improvements should exist.

*ABATE CRIME:* Widespread computerization, augmented by the prevalence of cell phones, is quickly transforming our society into one where behavior in public is routinely recorded and no one is anonymous. Cameras now record activities at an increasing number of locations in Hoover/West MacArthur, and those images are both viewable on the internet and accessible to law enforcement. Some cameras respond to gunshots by focusing toward their source. Personal data is collected on all of us by grocery stores, credit bureaus and direct mailers. Some companies profit from mining such data and selling information about persons of interest online. Anyone with a cell phone can discretely photograph and transmit images of our actions in public places.

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<sup>44</sup> "Home Seismic Strengthening Initiative", City of Oakland, 2007, p. 1.  
<http://www.oaklandnet.com/HomeownerSeismicstrength.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> The City of Oakland's New Homeowner Voluntary Seismic Strengthening Reimbursement Incentive Program offers up to \$5,000 in subsidies for retrofitting. However, existing or long-term homeowners do not qualify for this program, only new homeowners.

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While we may personally decry the loss of personal privacy in this new era, we can also take advantage of this trend to assist the police in restoring to us the ability to exist safely and without fear in our homes and streets. Placement of the right observation equipment at well-chosen locations, and actively monitored and recorded, could result in collection of evidence that will remove dangerous elements from our proximity.

New concepts in law enforcement, such as community policing, problem-solving officers and Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils offer the promise of more effective and efficient law enforcement. However, implementation of these new tools has been inept, due to chronic understaffing in our police department, seesawing police policies and priorities, and the inability to quickly and effectively get solid returns from Measure Y funding<sup>46</sup>. We need to be unrelenting in demanding our elected officials remain focused on fulfilling our need for effective use of crime-prevention funds.

*SUPPORT BENEFICIAL BUSINESSES:* No further liquor licenses should be issued within the Hoover/West MacArthur area, for any reason<sup>47</sup>. Residents are frustrated with corner stores that seem to attract loiterers and criminal activity, while merchants are equally frustrated at the expectation they can somehow abate such activity near their businesses without consistent police assistance. A reasonable set of standards and procedures should be developed, with the input of residents, the police and store owners, so that responsibilities are clearly delineated and accountability for appropriate action can be measured.

Business development loans and grants should be made available to local entrepreneurs, along with training and assistance about how to start, maintain and grow a small business. The Main Street program, and the city's current retail study, should be leveraged to develop San Pablo Avenue as the commercial corridor it deserves to be. Construction of any further ground-floor housing on San Pablo, or at other prime intersections (e.g. Market and West MacArthur) should be discouraged, in order to encourage business of sufficient density to create a walkable retail shopping area. Existing businesses that pollute (fumes, liquids, noise etc.) or that cater to auto rather than pedestrian traffic, should be offered relocation assistance to move elsewhere.

*ALLEVIATE BLIGHT:* The city's blight ordinance should be consistently and routinely enforced. At the Great American Cleanup on May 12, 2007, it was announced that the police had swept the area in the days preceding and had

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<sup>46</sup> Although "councilmembers insisted the City would get at least 802 police officers total. . . staffing actually **declined** after Measure Y was written." -- Oakland Residents For Peaceful Neighborhoods, <http://www.orpn.org/lawsuit.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> Although the City Attorney's office, in a report on April 27, 2004, described Oakland as "already over-concentrated with liquor stores" and stated that the normal practice is to deny a liquor license application in an area with an undue concentration of liquor outlets, yet the new Trader Joe's on College Ave. was awarded one without question.

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issued some 95 blight citations. Code Compliance was said to have identified 300 blighted properties. Enforcement of this sort should be habitual, not sporadic.

Our political representatives should be urged to enhance Oakland Municipal Code 8.38.040<sup>48</sup> to ensure that illegal dumpers not only bear the cost of cleanup, but also contribute to the cost of detection. In 2006 there were 14 stakeouts, citywide, of dumping “hotspots” at a cost of \$2,000 per stakeout<sup>49</sup>.

Redevelopment funds should be used to increase the number and quality of stakeouts in our neighborhood. Surveillance cameras<sup>50</sup> should be modernized to capture essential detail, and community volunteers should be recruited to scan the many hours of recorded tape to assist in identifying dumping incidents.

As stated in the West Oakland Redevelopment Plan, programs should be developed to assist property owners in maintaining and upgrading their properties.<sup>51</sup>

*IMPROVE EDUCATION:* Oakland public schools have a long history of underserving Oakland’s youth, largely due to being overwhelmed by underlying social needs. Huey Newton reportedly graduated from Oakland Technical High School unable to read, but through self-motivation overcame that obstacle and eventually earned a PhD from UC Santa Cruz in 1980<sup>52</sup>. Many adults in Hoover/West MacArthur lack basic educational skills that are essential to obtaining meaningful employment, understanding the problems of their community, and navigating the processes of government. Local job training programs should be funded that provide relevant instruction that will predictably lead to employment in expanding industries<sup>53</sup>.

The Oakland Unified School District and area charter schools should both be contacted to attempt to locate charter schools that will offer improved education to Hoover/West MacArthur children within vacant or underutilized school facilities in our area.

*PROVIDE MEANINGFUL JOBS:* A recurring rhetorical theme in West Oakland is that local construction projects should include jobs for West Oakland residents. When a freeway ramp in the MacArthur Maze melted from a truck explosion on

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<sup>48</sup> This is the section of the Oakland Municipal Code that makes an illegal dumper liable for cleanup. See “City of Oakland Agenda Report on the Litter Enforcement Unit” from the Public Works Agency, 4/24/07.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> At its meeting of August 8, 2007, the WOPAC voted to recommend spending \$200,000 of redevelopment money for the purchase and maintenance of ten public security cameras.

<sup>51</sup> See goal 9 of the West Oakland redevelopment plan, as well as the Housing and Affordable Housing Program described on page 13 of the first Five Year Implementation Plan.

<sup>52</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huey\\_P.\\_Newton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huey_P._Newton)

<sup>53</sup> At its April 11, 2007 meeting, the WOPAC approved recommending that \$100,000 be spent to support the Job Training Project of the Alliance for West Oakland Development.

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April 29, 2007<sup>54</sup>, how many West Oakland residents were tapped to work on its reconstruction? Programs that offer job training in the construction industry have been around for some time, yet there seems to be a disconnect when developments actually need workers. The city should maintain and publicize a database of West Oaklanders with specific job skills, should work with developers to identify the appropriate time to contact and interview prospective employees, should facilitate those contacts, and should maintain statistics on the success rate of placing West Oaklanders in construction jobs. Developers should be held accountable for the level of employment they bring to the community.

The whole subject of jobs must be reexamined. Workers might need an incentive to relocate to areas where jobs exist that suit their skills.

Largely residential Hoover/West MacArthur does not have appreciable space to devote to manufacturing or light industry. However, local merchants and nearby businesses could be encouraged to actively seek workers from West Oakland via incentives based upon their hiring practices. Such incentives, in a redevelopment context, might include facilities improvement grants or subsidies of outreach programs.

*IMPROVE GOVERNMENT SERVICES:* Councilmember Nancy Nadel has suggested opening a “pocket library”<sup>55</sup> at 3141 West Street, where the Quality Food Market has recently been vacated by fire. The 25<sup>th</sup> Street Mini-Park needs to be decontaminated, refurbished, and reopened while addressing concerns of neighbors about the criminal activity it had attracted. Most importantly, though, Hoover/West MacArthur needs a community center where residents can meet, use computers, receive education and participate in sports or group activities.

A task force of city workers should be assembled and focused on providing a comprehensive package of services tailored to the community’s special, pressing needs.<sup>56</sup>

*ENHANCE STREETSCAPES:* Medians should be irrigated and attractively landscaped. Advantage should be taken of wide streets to include bike paths. Curb outs can assist in traffic calming. Diagonal parking can be judiciously used to organize vehicle clutter. Under-grounding of wires will simplify the visual

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<sup>54</sup> A similar explosion on a nearby ramp killed one person and injured 10 on February 6, 1995. <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/e/a/1995/02/06/NEWS1435.dtl>

<sup>55</sup> “Nancy Nadel’s Policy and Practice Newsletter”, volume 22, July 2007.

<sup>56</sup> At a Town Hall meeting on September 17, 2007, Mayor Ron Dellums announced that Beat 6X would be targeted for a community improvement initiative that would involve multiple city departments. The San Francisco Chronicle reported on September 21, 2007 that “There are also discussions at the state level about focusing on a designated section in one of Oakland’s underserved neighborhoods and devoting a full range of state, county and city services to turning the community around - one neighborhood at a time.”

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aspects of the streetscape and will provide additional opportunities for tree planting.

In summary, Hoover/West MacArthur needs to transition from a containment zone for Oakland's social problems into a healthy neighborhood where residents can walk the streets without fear but with honestly-earned money in their pockets, enjoy a variety of retail shops, reside in safe, well-maintained structures, meet, talk and live together as a community.