



News from: **City of Oakland**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Restored Ogawa Plaza Anchors Downtown Renaissance

City of Oakland highlights recent successes, pledges continued support for downtown business community

Oakland, CA — By all accounts, Downtown Oakland is experiencing a true renaissance. More than 100 major new restaurants, 25 clubs and bars, 30 galleries, 30 annual festivals and well-attended performances at the iconic Fox and Paramount theaters are creating critical mass and generating great buzz. This – in addition to an influx of residents snapping up newly-constructed housing – is creating a bustling 24-hour downtown that is garnering regional and national media attention including the *New York Times* ranking Oakland the 5th best place to visit in the world.

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Frank H. Ogawa Plaza has just undergone a \$93,000 restoration to return this beloved treasure to a community gathering place for all; the City is working to offset this cost through insurance. Ogawa Plaza was a key component in the City's \$123.7 million civic center capital project completed in 1998. This public investment leveraged additional private-sector investment, giving rise to the renaissance Downtown Oakland is experiencing today.

The recent restoration of Ogawa Plaza included installation of new sod, repairs to the sprinkler system and installation of vandal-proof irrigation boxes. Preservation of the spectacular Jack London oak tree planted by the famed Oakland author's wife in 1917 was an important part of the Plaza restoration. The work will restore the Plaza as an important community gathering place. In a typical year, Ogawa Plaza hosts more than 70,000 people at 50 public events, including the City's premier music and arts celebration, Art + Soul Oakland.

Attracting Investment in Downtown

Named after long-time Oakland City Councilmember Frank H. Ogawa, the Plaza has served as Oakland's front yard, where citizens gather to celebrate our great city through arts, culture and recreation. The 1998 civic center capital project, including restoration of City Hall, renovation and expansion of the Wilson Building and construction of the Plaza and Dalziel Building, totaled \$123.7 million. Funding came from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, State of California, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency and other local funds and bonds.

Ogawa Plaza was a key component in the City's comprehensive plan to create a community-oriented government and revitalize downtown. The plaza brought renewed vitality to the junction of 14th Street and Broadway and was a catalyst for further investment in Downtown Oakland. The Rotunda Building underwent renovation and reopened in 2000. In 2002, Shorestein opened the new 21-story, 487,000-square-foot 555 City Center building. More than 4,500 new housing units

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were constructed downtown. The long-shuttered Fox Theater re-opened in early 2009 and further bolstered Uptown's ascension as an entertainment and dining destination.

Private sector investment continues in downtown Oakland. In addition to the scores of new restaurants, galleries, clubs, bars and major festivals that have sprouted up in the last several years, City staff report that the trend is continuing with nearly 30 new businesses opening in downtown in just the past year alone. Moreover, some 10 new businesses are building out their spaces and another 15 have signed new leases in the past couple of months. To further spur private investment, the City offered grants for façade improvements through the now-defunct Oakland Redevelopment Agency. Approximately 40 downtown façade improvements, leveraging more than \$1 million in private investment, were completed in the past year.

Adding to this thriving mix of new businesses is **popuphood**, the wildly successful retail pilot project that has brought several new stores to Old Oakland and is now expanding to other commercial areas. The popuphood venture has fast become a national model, generating positive media exposure from coast-to-coast, and around the world.

Downtown Oakland has also become a hub for innovative companies. Pandora's 51 percent growth in active listeners – now totaling some 55 million – and attention-grabbing IPO have created a buzz dubbed the "Pandora effect" **that's ignited an innovation-driven tech hub in Downtown Oakland**. It mirrors the impact Google has had in Mountain View and Twitter in San Francisco.

Last year, *Fast City* named Oakland among 15 U.S. cities that make up the "Nation of Innovation," citing the number of tech companies, like Pandora and Ask.com, headquartered here and the fact that Oakland consistently ranks among America's most sustainable cities, with "green-energy startups galore."

While tech start-up CEO's are attracted to Oakland's affordable office rents and the unique character of much of the available office space, their workers, who tend to be on the younger side, like Downtown Oakland's happening restaurants, bars, art galleries and two concert theaters as well as the city's sunny skies, diverse and affordable housing options and easy access – from BART to bike lanes and freeways to the free Broadway Shuttle.

From renewable energy, alternative fuels, green building and environmental consulting, **more than 250 green businesses have also flocked to Downtown Oakland**. Forward-thinking companies like BrightSource Energy, Sungevity, Integral Group and Lucid Design Group are also attracted to the downtown vibe as well as City policies that support energy-efficiency, transit-oriented development, recycling and green-jobs training.

And Downtown Oakland continues to serve as **corporate headquarters for Clorox, Kaiser Permanente, Cost Plus World Market, Ask.com and Matson Navigation**, in addition to the **University of California Office of the President**. Oakland's **four major hospitals** – two of which are located on the perimeter of greater Downtown Oakland – **are investing \$2 billion in new construction and seismic upgrades**, with Kaiser Permanente opening a state-of-the-art medical

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office and new 349-bed hospital and Sutter Health investing in an elaborate new patient care pavilion.

Key economic indicators show growth in Oakland's economy.

- Oakland's unemployment rate for September 2012 is down to 13.1%, from 15.5% in September 2011 and 16.7% in September 2010.
- According to figures released by the State of California's Employment Development Department, Oakland businesses recently added 2,000 jobs.
- The total number of businesses licensed in Oakland has grown to 42,841 in FY 2012 from 40,941 in FY 2010, an increase of 4.6%.
- Total sales tax revenue for all of Oakland is up 11% for first quarter 2012 from the same period in 2011.
- For Downtown Oakland, sales tax revenue is up less than 1% in first quarter 2012 compared to first quarter 2011, and up 5% compared to first quarter 2010.
- The commercial vacancy rate for Downtown Oakland is currently at 14%, down from 15.6% in 2010 and 17.7% in 2003.

Especially given the tough budget shortfalls the City has faced for the last four years, the added revenue coming in from downtown businesses helps support civic programs and services citywide.

City leaders have pledged to build on efforts of the past year to continue to nurture and protect the downtown business environment. The City and business community are working together to bolster confidence to increase foot traffic and enhance Oakland's ability to attract new business, investment and jobs for local residents.

"We are proud of downtown Oakland's nationally recognized renaissance. Our businesses, residents and workers have come together to build a dynamic community," said Mayor Jean Quan. "While we value diverse opinions and free expression, we will not tolerate violence, vandalism or acts of destruction that threaten the safety and wellbeing of our community. A thriving downtown is key to economic prosperity, social justice and public safety for all of Oakland."

City's Commitment: Facilitate Peaceful Expression, Protect Safety and Property

As the anniversary of the removal of the Occupy Oakland encampment approaches, the City of Oakland anticipates demonstrations. Keeping peace on our streets and protecting the safety of Oakland residents and businesses is our top priority. We will not tolerate destruction, violence or overnight camping.

Through June 2012, the City of Oakland has incurred costs of approximately \$4.9 million in response to activities related to Occupy Oakland. This includes personnel overtime, mutual aid, supplies, technology security enhancements, glass installation, portable toilets and other supplies. The restoration of Frank H. Ogawa Plaza represents an additional \$93,000 expense to restore this civic amenity for the enjoyment of all Oaklanders.

The City of Oakland has filed lawsuits against three separate defendants who were involved in previous Occupy Oakland demonstrations. One individual, a 24-year-

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old Elk Grove man, was found guilty of felony vandalism for shattering windows and was sentenced to six months in jail, five years probation and full restitution to the City (\$6,654.43), plus other court fines. The other two cases involving spray paint vandalism are proceeding through the court system.

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Background on Frank H. Ogawa

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Frank H. Ogawa served the public for 33 years and was the first Japanese American to serve on a City Council of any major metropolitan city in the continental United States. After serving on the City of Oakland's Park Commission, Mr. Ogawa was appointed to the City Council in 1966, where he served until his death on July 13, 1994. Ogawa was dedicated to serving his community. He was an international statesman that helped open doors of trade and commerce to Asia from the Port of Oakland and also forged Oakland's sister city relationship with Fukuoka, Japan.

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