

Introduction

This report describes the community engagement process for the development of the Cultural Plan and outlines some of the main themes from our conversations with community members, leaders, and activists. This report also includes some demographical data collected from the participants. Overall, there were approximately 300 community members engaged and 227 completed a demographical survey. There were a total of 14 community meetings in 14 different locations through out the City of Oakland.

We would like to thank every single community member that shared their art, culture,
and voice with us along the journey.

Methodology

There were two methods for engagement. Cultural Conversations and Community Dialogues. There were a total of **300*** participants.

Cultural Conversations were designed to be small and intimate conversations facilitated by the Manager of Cultural Affairs. Participants included leaders in the community, activists, and cultural organizations leaders. Cultural Conversations were offered in two rounds. Round I was intended to gather community priorities and share details of the Cultural Affairs Office. Round II was intended to be more pointed conversations on specific topics relevant to the development of the plan.

Below is a series of tables describing the dates of engagements and the number of participants. The engagements were intentionally scheduled in different days of the week and times of the day and at different locations in the city to reach as many people as possible

Cultural Conversations Round I engaged a total of **97** people.

Date	Location	Number of Participants
August 24, 2017 Thursday 4-6pm	Peralta Hacienda Center for History and Community 2488 Coolidge Avenue Oakland CA 94601	32
August 26, 2017 Saturday 10am-12pm	Farley's East 33 Grand Ave Oakland, CA 94612	18
September 9, 2017 Saturday	RBA Creative 3718 MacArthur Blvd Oakland, CA 94619	31

* There were less than 10 community members that participated in multiple engagements. This number represents every participant that signed the sign-up sheets.

4-6pm			
September 14, 2017	E. M. Wolfman Bookstore		16
Thursday	410 13th St Oakland, CA 94612		
6-8pm			

Cultural Conversations Round II engaged a total of **40** people.

Date	Topic	Location	Number of Participants
October 7, 2017 Saturday 10am-12pm	The Creative Sector: Non-profit, for-profit, or all of the above?	Zoo Labs 1035 7th St Oakland, CA 94607	9
October 16, 2017 Monday 4-6pm	Why we are here: Making new work/Making a new world	Red Bay Coffee 3098 E 10th St Oakland, CA 94601	8
November 2, 2017 Thursday 4-6pm	What does equity look like?	Intertribal Friendship House of Oakland 523 International Blvd Oakland, CA 94606	23

Community Dialogues were designed to reach the broader community. These were facilitated by several community facilitators and followed a similar format at each engagement. Participants were asked four main questions:

- What are things we like of Oakland?
- What is our cultural identity?
- In what ways could we help make our communities be better places to live?
- How can the city of Oakland help residents thrive in place?

The community dialogues were held in diverse geographic areas of the city and in different days of the week as well as times of the day. The community dialogues engaged a total of **163** people.

Date	Location	Number of Participants
September 15, 2017 Friday	Rockridge Branch Library 53366 College Ave Oakland, CA 94618	47

6-8pm		
September 17, 2017	Eastside Arts Alliance 2277 International Blvd Oakland, CA 94601	14
Sunday		
7-9pm		
September 18, 2017	Oakland Asian Arts Center 388 9th Street, Suite 290 Oakland, CA 94607	11
Monday		
10am-12pm		
September 20, 2017	Flight Deck 1540 Broadway Oakland, CA 94612	32
September 23, 2017		
Dimond Branch Library 3565 Fruitvale Ave Oakland, CA 94602		
Saturday		
2-4pm		
October 12, 2017	Heartlands Merchants Association 5856 Foothill Blvd Oakland, CA 94605	12
Thursday		
10am-12pm		
October 14, 2017	East Oakland Boxing Association 816 98th Ave Oakland, CA 94603	26
Saturday		
10am-12pm		

Demographics

There were several demographic data points collected from the participants at the different engagements. A simple survey* was used and a total of 227 surveys were collected. There were two parts to the survey, the first part included demographic questions about the participants and the second part asked the participants to rate what was important to them in terms of culture.

These are the results from the first part of the survey.

- **Age:** The average age of the participants who attended was 49 years. The youngest participant was 16 years old and the oldest was 93 years old.
- **City:** The great majority of participants said they lived in Oakland. Only a few listed Piedmont, San Francisco, Berkeley, Richmond, San Leandro, Martinez, NY, and a few didn't answer the question.
- **Neighborhood:** All neighborhoods in Oakland and beyond were represented.

* The survey was created by the lead Cultural Plan consultant and is included as an appendix to this report.

- **Primary Language:** All of the participants listed English as their primary language. A very small number of participants listed another language such as Spanish, Chinese, or Arabic.
- **Gender Identity:** The majority of the participants identified as female approximately 70% (158) and approximately 30% identified as male (63) and from all the participants approximately 23% (52) identified as LGBTQ. There were also some participants that chose not to answer this question.
- **Disability:** Approximately 83% of the participants did not answer and/or stated they did not have a disability. And only approximately 11% stated they had a disability. Of those that reported a disability about 50% said their disability was accommodated, while the others did not answer the question. There one participant who commented on her disability not being accommodated. Her comment, "I'm dyslexic and recorded notation would be helpful for these meetings."
- **Education:** For the most part the participants were highly educated with approximately 37% reporting they held a bachelors degree and 35% reporting holding a masters degree and 7% reporting holding a doctorate degree.
- **Race/Ethnicity:** Approximately, 44% of the participants identified as European/ European American, 27% identified as African/African American, 11% identified as Asian/Asian American, 8% identified as Latix, 2% identified as Middle Eastern, and 2% identified as Native American. All participants.
- **Household Income:** Approximately 19% reported an income of less than \$25,000, 8% reported an income of more than \$25,000, 37% reported an income of over \$40,000, and 27% reported an income above \$100,000,
- **Employment Status:** Approximately 59% reported being employed full time and approximately 15% reported being employed part time.

The survey also asked about family status, number of adults in household, number of dependent children in household, and job type.

The second part of the survey asked participants to share what they considered important about their cultural life in Oakland. When participants were asked to rate how important arts and culture where to the quality of life in Oakland, the majority said very essential. The rest stated it was very important, no one surveyed stated that it was not important at all. This demonstrates that overall, the community members who participated in the cultural plan engagements were invested individuals and fully understood and supported the arts and culture. Furthermore, the great majority stated they were essential to ensuring a high quality of life in the City of Oakland.

Participants were then asked to rank their top four choices of the most important things for City government to do in order to support and make the culture life in Oakland better, these were their choices:

- All people of Oakland feel their culture is respected
- Opportunities to participate in classes, gatherings, and performances related to my culture
- Opportunities to participate in classes, gatherings, and performances related to other cultures
- Making Oakland a place that people from everywhere want to visit
- Helping community members beautify and care for their neighborhood
- Making it easier for me to participate in City decision-making

Responses varied tremendously, many participants ranked all #1 and many didn't rank options at all. Many wrote personal comments and their comments echo the overall themes of the Cultural Plan community engagements, below are a few organized by theme:

Affordable Space and Housing

Supporting artists financially and with space that's affordable

Affordable "work + live" spaces for artists

Keeping spaces for artists affordable

House all people + provide a basic living stipend for all

Enact more tenants-rights, make it possible to create art/ music/ dance/ spaces

Facilitating and creating affordable and free performance spaces for events, rehearsals and meetings, especially in the evenings.

Make it possible for Black/Brown to remain in Oakland where they can culturally express themselves through affordable housing, homeownership programs, equitable education

Funding

Create an environment that meets organizations where they are rather than punishing them with fines and unattainable requirements.

Ensure the City sponsored events reflects the diversity of Oakland and celebrate it as our strength.

Arts + cultural funding, here is our tech tenants tax fund?

Providing more funding for artist + arts orgs.

Fund cultural arts, hire local artists, commission artists, streamline applications, insurance

Help artists access city "arts" funds more easily than currently is the case; this includes organizations + individuals who have ideas for public art + know artists to do that, but don't have the funds.

Livable City

In the words of my grandmother: "Take care of your own backyard before inviting folks to live here" Thank you.

Creating a city that is liveable for artists/ creative

Making sure that policy actions center needs of marginalized groups so that they will not be left behind and pushed out.

Very very very important to have a "safe", clean, city

Beautify the city.

Cultural life in Oakland is fantastic and first rate- the most important thing the city can do is to maintain residents who contribute to this culture: working artists and culturally diverse. working class, immigrant individuals

That while we promote unity + collective agendas that we also acknowledge, support, + respect the space needed for identity-based enclaves. i.e. immigrant communities. I'd suggest a definition of "culture" for Oakland we developed.

Community Outreach

The community outreach was layered and depended heavily on community partners. There were several ways in which the information was communicated to the community and partners. The official launch of the community engagement was announced in an official press release released by the City of Oakland. In addition, the announcements for the cultural conversations were sent to the official list of grantees from the Office of Cultural Affairs and other key stakeholders in the City of Oakland. Many of the host sites also did outreach via their newsletters and word-of-mouth in their communities. The outreach for the community dialogues was similar. Host sites invited their communities and the information was widely distributed via reminder emails, newsletters, local newspapers, and postcards. The communications were in available in Spanish, English, and Chinese.

The partners who participated in the outreach included:

OPL	City MBK
FOPL	OSA
Oakland Library Advocates	Dellums Institute
EBALCD	MOCHA
NCP's	Junior Arts Center at the Lake
Hosts of Community Dialogues	Allen Temple
Hosts of Cultural Conversations	Kingdom Church
Cultural Conversations participants	East Oakland Building Healthy Communities
Unity Council	CAST
Visit Oakland	Family Independence Initiative
Business Districts	Hewlett Foundation
Oakland Grown	Rainin Foundation
Oakland Indie Alliance	Historical Society
StreetWyze	Youth Radio
DOSP Equity Assessment Team	Justice Collaborative
Story for All	FOLP BOD
Vicera	Nextdoor - College Court & environs
Turtle and Hare	Facebook
SPUR	City e-blast (1900 people)

Facebook Boost	TownSquared
City MBK	Oakland Central BID

The engagements offered were designed to be accessible and offer options and included the following strategies:

1. The first round of cultural conversations all followed the same format and content. They were intentionally designed to do so to provide multiple opportunities to community members to attend one of the four offered.
2. The second round of cultural conversation was topic-specific in hopes that community members would show up to the one they cared the most for.
3. The community dialogues also followed the same format and content, again this was a choice by design to give community members options and pick a date and time that worked better for their schedules.

There were also several community organizations that took a larger leadership role in recruiting community and proved to be a successful model of recruitment. For example, the community dialogue held at the East Oakland Boxing Association. EOBA collaborated with their standing community partner the East Oakland Collective (EOC) to message the importance of the dialogue to their constituents and also announce it as part of the series of town hall meetings they hold on a regular basis in East Oakland. This partnership proved successful for a couple of reasons:

1. EOBA and EOC are anchored community institutions well recognized in the community.
2. As such, these organizations have a successful track record for organizing.
3. These organizations also hold trust in the community.
4. These organizations understand the importance of culture in our City but culture and arts are not their exclusive purpose. This is an important point to note, for the community dialogues the ideal target audience was community members who indisputably hold culture dear and care about the future of the City; however, are not cultural workers or cultural leaders. Community anchor organizations that provide services and also support the community in other areas are ideal to reach a larger broader net of potential participants.

Unfortunately, this was the last community dialogue but it represents an important lesson for future community engagement processes to be carried out by the Office of Cultural Affairs.

Another example of a successful recruitment model was the demonstrated by the Flight Deck. The Flight Deck leadership was contracted to facilitate the community dialogue they hosted. This particular community dialogue consistently covered the same content as the other dialogues but artists facilitated it and the facilitators were given full control over the activities and process to solicit and engage with participants. This dialogue proved the importance of acknowledging the culture of the host site and also that content can be creatively presented.

As far as best practices for community engagement and perhaps well demonstrated by this process, is the fact that community members tend to show up to civic engagement events when there are multiple topics covered all around centered the main theme. For example, culture may be the main theme but if there is a meeting in

deep East Oakland where poor health indicators and low educational attainment indicators are the primary focus of the anchor community organizations, a potential strategy is to create a community dialogue where culture is discussed as a preventive measure and a way to improve health indicators and educational attainment indicators; hence, community members who are familiar with the pressing community health needs and issues they are more likely to show up. This is even more important because if topics are combined, the new topic becomes more familiar.

Community engagement requires time and more often than not these processes always follow a tight timeline, raising community awareness is critical to setting the right foundation and developing strategic partnerships is critical. The partnerships are more critical when trying to reach hard-to-reach populations. One of the main gaps in this process was the lack of the Asian and Latino community voice. There were several engagements in locations where these communities are highly represented. The participant pool was very diverse but there were no events in which translation was needed and this flags an issue of not reaching the monolingual members of these communities.

Summary of Findings

Below is a summary of the findings. The findings are divided thematically and by process in which they were collected that is during cultural conversations or community dialogues.

Cultural Conversations. There are several main themes from the first round of cultural conversations: displacement, cultural investments, space, and equity.

- Displacement was a prominent theme. The participants acknowledged and pointed out the rapid changes taking place in the City of Oakland, which are forcing many artists, and organizations feel financial pressure and ultimately are being displaced.
 - Participants asked questions such as what the City could do, has done, and in some instances has failed to do to ensure the cultural diversity and history are preserved.
 - The rising cost of housing and the rising cost of renting space are constant stresses.
 - An undercurrent theme of urgency was asking the City to take a stronger leadership role to keeping and creating affordable housing and spaces by working with developers and landowners.

- Equity was important to all participants. All wanted to know how to create a shared understanding of the definition and also a clear vision of what equity looks like in practice and implementation for the Office of Cultural Affairs and the City as a whole.
 - Taking into consideration geographical diverse areas in the City of Oakland and the context specific needs of these communities to provide equitable opportunities to seek funding.
 - Taking into consideration the diversity of the artist community, language access, disability access and the capacity to find opportunities and complete complicated processes.
 - Age diversity as well gender diversity were lifted as important points of equity.

- Cultural investments need to be supplemented to provide resources for artists, cultural workers, and cultural organizations. Comments included concerns about how to equitably share Oakland’s new wealth to be inclusive and support culture and arts.
 - Organizations need to diversify their funding sources and need support to do so effectively within their limited resources and capacity.
 - There are successful models of making limited resources support arts and cultures and the City of Oakland should acknowledge and learn from best practices.
 - Making a clear connection and reinstating the fact that arts and culture are wise community economic development investments.
- Space was a pressing issue for many participants. Simply said the overall sentiment was that spaces are disappearing and as the artist community continues to grow and strengthen.
 - Participants called for the City be a true advocate and take the lead in fair negotiations with new developers to create and make new spaces available for artists.
 - There were conversations on existing spaces and how some were inaccessible due to rental fees.
 - There were also conversations on existing spaces that are being adequately maintained.
- There were also conversations around the arts commission, arts education, and cultural districts.

During the second round of *Cultural Conversations* these are some of the high level findings:

- The Creative Sector: Non-profit, for-profit, or all of the above
 - For the creative sector to survive there needs to be innovation and flexibility; however, the City should support this exploration.
 - Creating sustainable incubators for the creative sector to grow; however, for that there needs to be a structure and a person to take the lead.
 - Teach artists how to be entrepreneurs and how to value their time and talent. As the cost of living in Oakland continues to rise, local talent must stay to continue the culture and legacy. In addition, these small independent creative businesses are an integral part of the ecosystem of the culture and economy of the City.
 - There is also a need for more education and awareness in topics such as funding for artists, opportunities for artists, and workshops on policies and regulations.
- Why we are here: Making new work/Making a new world
 - Inspiration can come from many different places such as conversations with people of different ages and backgrounds, everything around us, stories, community, and even from chaos.
 - A theme from the conversation was also that of not duplicating efforts to support artists but to leverage those existing and make them work to those in need. There were ideas of creating directories to share work and improving communication platforms.
 - The City was asked to act as a catalyst and a connector between businesses, artists, and community.
 - Supporting small-business development for the creative sectors was also listed as a priority.
- What does equity look like?
 - The housing crisis is not only causing long-time residents to be displaced but it is also creating a demoralizing situation for arts and culture in the City of Oakland. The community must unite and resist cultural gentrification.

- Equity means a lot of different things but at the heart of it all, it means that everyone gets what they need and not just what everyone else gets.
- Culture is dynamic, rich, and fills in a gap in all of our lives. It is something we hold sacred and colors our identity.

Community Dialogues. The comments from the community dialogues have been organized by overarching themes. These themes represent the community voice, concerns, and priorities in the face of a changing city where the arts and culture are growing and strengthening in the mist of challenge.

“I want our city leaders to love us the way we love our city.” – Community member

Undoubtedly, there is a strong sense of *Oakland pride*. Participants identified places, people, murals, parks, weather, food, and energy. Participants connected deeply with each other when asked about what they liked about living and being in Oakland. Diversity was critical and identified consistently as the most important benefit of living in Oakland. Diversity and most importantly the acceptance of all different layers of diversity from cultural, to ethnic, to age, and gender, everyone agreed that in Oakland all are welcomed. There was interesting contrast when Oakland natives and those who have been here for a long time spoke about what Oakland signified for them and their families vs. those who have only been in Oakland less years. Many said that the cultural history of Oakland was endangered and called for the City and their fellow citizens to fight against the trend by participating more and lifting up the local work of artists. An idea that came up multiple times was that of creating or having a welcome packet describing the arts and culture of Oakland for newcomers. Native Oaklanders were not completely opposed to the new wave of people coming into the city or the growth of the new economy of the city, but were opposed to unjust displacement and the lack of understanding of the history of Oakland. An example that came up several times was that of the drumming at the Lake, a long-time tradition loved by many but that has caused discontent among some of the newer community members because of the “noise.” This constant influx of new people is just beginning considering all of the new housing planned for the city in the next 5 years; however, this an opportunity for the Office of Cultural Affairs to step into a role of a liaison and connector using arts and culture as a point of unity and collaboration.

“The city can work to bridge the gap between our communities and development to create thoughtful development.” – Community member

New housing developments are a common sight in the city of Oakland and for the most part these new developments represent *displacement of residents and artists*. The housing boom in Oakland is limiting the ability of many to continue to afford to live and work in Oakland. Community members shared many stories of losing neighbors, family, and community members causing fragmentations in the historical and social fabric that has for many years made Oakland unique and desirable. Despite the many frustrations, community members remained optimistic and suggested solutions such as asking the City to work more closely with developers to ensure affordable housing is a priority.

“There can't be culture without a space to exist.” - Community member

Community members spoke fervently about the *lack of space* to practice, show, and keep culture and the arts. Many community members wanted to learn more about options of mixed used for more retail and gallery space in new developments and also of more common spaces such as facilitating street and neighborhood festivals around the City. Community members spoke of the need of public spaces where art could be shared with the community and offered to ensure traditions and history could be preserved.

“Education. The key of life. Educate first, everything else will follow. Giving all people a sense of belonging. Revisiting the past to move together into the future.” – Community member

The age diversity of community members who participated in the dialogues was an indication of the need to *educate the community*. Participants expressed a desire to making sure young people had to opportunity to learn about the rich cultural history of Oakland. The intergenerational knowledge of community life, art, and culture was important to all the participants. Participants expressed a need to organizing with young people to create change and advocacy and also to foster community, which will encourage involvement and lead to higher civic participation.

“Our neighborhoods are not the same. How do we remove infrastructure that divides neighborhoods?” – Community member

The community dialogues covered the city geographically and were for the most part very diverse. At all the community dialogues, participants recognized segregation and *geographical disparities*. Participants spoke passionately about what has happened in West Oakland and how those dramatic changes have led to displacement and a sense of lost identity for many. Participants also pointed out the lack of investment in East Oakland while it sits on the margin of gentrification and displacement. Participants called for the City to take action and to support East Oakland.

“No matter what happens. No matter what changes. No matter how many times I have to go to City Hall and say how I feel, Oakland is my city and I am never leaving.” – Community member

There was a shining light in all of the community dialogues. Despite the challenges and the daunting future of the City, hope was strongly felt and shared. Participants often talked about their worries and the uncertainties but they always remained hopeful and deep in their hearts believed that Oakland would survive and rise to the top just as it always has. Oakland was many times described as a resilient city and a city made of people who care deeply and will always unite to stay true to their roots and legacy.

Conclusion

One of the participants in the last round of community conversations, shared the following: “Culture comes from our roots and it’s what grounds us.” This comment embodies the essence of the community engagement process. Community members showed-up and participated in robust conversations about what culture means, what we all love about Oakland, our fears and concerns, and most importantly how we all have deep roots in our City and in the richness of our unique culture. The community engagement completed

in this phase of the development of the Cultural Plan is only the first step to uniting a City that often times seems like it's breaking at its core and the for the Office of Cultural Affairs to step into the space of advocating for "the secret sauce" of Oakland.

