



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OAKLAND PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

On November 17th, 2007, over 400 people came together for "Building Oakland for Everyone: A Summit on Jobs, Housing, and Justice," a community-labor gathering at St. Anthony's School Gym. The participants, representing over 30 organizations and labor unions, came together in hopes to outline a new path for development in Oakland—one that builds Oakland for everyone.

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OAKLAND  
FOR EVERYONE**

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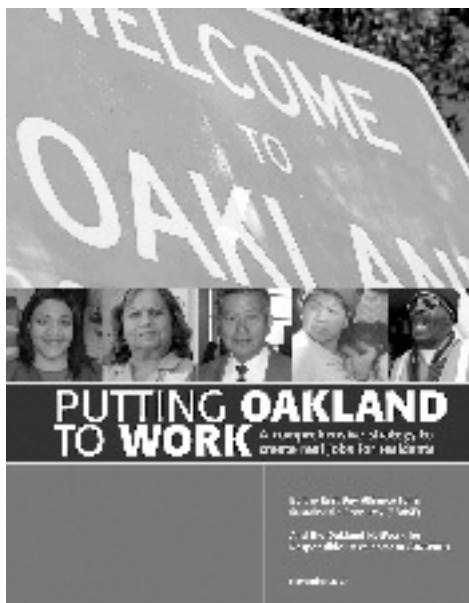
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**“Building Oakland for Everyone”** means creating an inclusive Oakland, where opportunity and prosperity are shared throughout our neighborhoods, among all races, ethnic groups, and ages. It means attracting jobs that support families rather than dead-end, low-wage jobs that keep people in poverty. It means building apartments for our families now and for our children in the future—not just luxury condos for out-of-towners. And it means growing clean, green industries to keep our neighborhoods healthy and provide jobs, instead of investing in toxic industries that pollute our neighborhoods and make our children sick.

The “Building Oakland for Everyone” Summit was co-sponsored by the Oakland NetWork for Responsible Development (ONWRD) and the Oakland People’s Housing Coalition (OPHC). These two coalitions include over fifteen Oakland housing, environmental, labor and community organizations with expertise in workforce development, job quality, affordable housing, tenant protection and environmental justice. For a complete list of the organizations see back cover.

A report, entitled *Putting Oakland to Work*, released by the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE) and ONWRD the day before the Summit



helped inform participants, showing that extreme income disparity, skyrocketing housing costs, extensive joblessness, and poverty wages threaten Oakland’s economic stability and resident prosperity.

This summary explains why we convened a People’s Summit on economic development and documents the gathering. Here we summarize the Summit’s program, the participants and their reflections, and how to continue building the movement to “Build Oakland for Everyone”.

# Why a People's Summit on Development?

OAKLAND IS ONE of the most desirable cities in the Bay Area; current and prospective residents are attracted to its quality of life, climate, natural beauty, culture and diversity. Oakland boasts a rich history, a thriving homegrown arts scene, and a diversity of neighborhoods. With more than 150 languages spoken here, nearly 400,000 people are proud to call Oakland home.

Despite its tremendous potential, natural beauty, and rich diversity, many residents and workers face profound challenges. Widespread poverty and stark income inequality are facts of life in Oakland. The crisis of street violence exacts a high toll on residents and communities. The underside of Oakland's proud industrial legacy includes contaminated land and polluting industries located next to low-income communities of color. Meanwhile, many Oakland residents face significant barriers to accessing employment and economic opportunity and affordable housing.

## The Potential of Development

Development is a widely discussed issue in Oakland. However, unlike many communities, Oakland stakeholders largely agree on one thing: Oakland needs investment and development. The question isn't whether or not development should happen in Oakland—it's how.

New development—from housing to stores, offices to industry—has the potential to worsen or improve our

quality of life. Development can be a powerful force addressing the pressing needs of working families, creating healthy communities, and revitalizing cities and regions. However, development can also make social inequality worse. It can fuel growth in the low-wage service sector, exacerbate the hourglass economy, and sharpen the divide between the top and the bottom of the income scale. It can drive up housing costs, displacing long-term residents from their communities. Development can be either a boon or a bust for communities, depending on how it is done.

The organizations behind the "Building Oakland for Everyone" Summit believe that a vibrant economy with broadly shared community benefits are within Oakland's reach. Development that creates good-paying jobs, affordable housing, and clean and safe communities is possible and necessary if Oakland is to be a model city.

This is exactly why the "Building Oakland for Everyone" Summit was convened. Residents and workers from all over Oakland came to share their experiences with low-paying, dead-end jobs, overpriced housing, violence in their streets, and pollution in their neighborhoods. Seeing the connections among these issues, they called for comprehensive solutions. Through the Summit, frustration with the current state of Oakland was transformed into hope in the vision of "Building Oakland for Everyone."



## A POWERFUL GATHERING

ON THE MORNING of November 17, 2007, over four hundred individuals from all over Oakland gathered at St. Anthony's School Gym. While people trickled in, participants enjoyed breakfast and chatted with neighbors. Banners representing the participating organizations decorated the gym walls. Children ran underfoot, bringing a sense of hope and joy to the day. By 10:00 AM, the gym was packed and buzzing with excitement. Seated at tables, all 400-plus participants looked eagerly towards the stage. The crowd was multi-racial, multi-lingual, inter-generational and multi-issue.

Many participants were members of organizations affiliated with the sponsoring coalitions: the Oakland NetWork for Responsible Development (ONWRD) and the Oakland People's Housing Coalition (OPHC). The Summit was endorsed by numerous labor and community organizations. Additionally, representatives affiliated with a host of **community, housing, labor and environmental groups** also participated. For a complete list of coalition members and endorsers please see back cover.

A number of elected officials, government staff, and honored guests attended. Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson,

Alameda County Board of Education Trustee Gay Cobb, Oakland City Councilmembers Jane Brunner, Pat Kernighan and Nancy Nadel, Oakland School Board members Greg Hodge and Kerry Hammil and Oakland City Auditor Courtney Ruby. Also in attendance were Josie Camacho from Mayor Ron Dellums' office, Dr. Sandra Witt from the Alameda County Department of Public Health and Port Commissioners Margaret Gordon and Victor Uno.



## Listening and Learning

The morning was spent listening and learning. First, the crowd witnessed the premiere of the short documentary, *Oakland Speaks*. The film highlights five Oaklanders' struggles with low-wage jobs, unemployment, housing, and unsafe, unhealthy conditions in their neighborhoods.



After viewing the film, several residents attested to the poor living and working conditions in Oakland. These testimonials empowered individuals in the audience—many of whom face similar issues. ONWRD and OPHC leaders made brief presentations on concrete steps Oakland can take to begin addressing development issues responsibly. These steps are summarized in the *Moving Forward* section on page 13.

Following the presentations, elected officials responded to what they had heard and explained their own visions for "Building Oakland for Everyone." Many of the elected officials congratulated the participants on the diversity of the gathering and echoed the call for real affordable housing, good-paying jobs and an end to the violence.



## Sharing Experiences, Taking action

Over lunch, participants gathered in thirty-three groups of five to ten people each to discuss their experiences and hopes for Oakland. The small breakout groups, held in English, Spanish, and Cantonese, enabled people to meet new neighbors and to identify common experiences across races, ages, interests and issues. They laid out their hopes for good jobs, affordable homes, and healthy communities in Oakland, and articulated messages for their council members and Mayor Dellums.



After an hour of discussion, participants turned their attention back towards the stage. To bring the day to a close, the crowd was called on to put their hopes into action by signing a postcard urging City Council members to support a new economic development strategy that

- ❖ Puts Oakland residents to work in living wage jobs.
- ❖ Creates housing that Oakland's families can afford.
- ❖ Builds safe, healthy communities.

Then, with a resounding "I'll be there!", participants collectively committed to be present for future policy and project fights to ensure new development creates good paying jobs, affordable housing and other community benefits.





## CONCERNS AND HOPES

THROUGH THE *OAKLAND SPEAKS* film, the participant testimonials, and the afternoon breakout groups, Oakland residents and workers expressed their hopes for and concerns about new development in Oakland. This section summarizes the common themes participants conveyed.

### JOB ACCESSIBILITY AND JOB QUALITY

All of the thirty-three breakout groups noted jobs were a key concern for Oaklanders. Many participants expressed frustration with the lack of good-paying jobs and the need to establish training programs and use scarce land wisely to generate jobs.

- ❖ Oaklanders suffer from a **lack of good jobs**. One resident identified “growing up in communities where good jobs are not the norm” as a key challenge to overcome (Group #3). Twenty-five of the groups described their ideal for a quality job. One group said a good job “protects immigrant workers, allows employees to unionize, creates a system of grievances, and provides good benefits and training” (Group #5). Residents called on the City to **improve low-wage jobs** by establishing a “higher minimum wage so that we can afford to live here” (Group #1).
- ❖ Multiple groups noted that even if good jobs do come to Oakland, these **jobs are not accessible** to Oaklanders and that “decent paying jobs are not given to Oakland residents” (Group #27). To remedy this situation, participants called for “jobs for individuals at varied levels of education” (Group # 16) and “**local hire requirements** for new companies” coming to Oakland (Group #13).
- ❖ In defining good quality jobs, eleven groups highlighted **union jobs** and **rights to organize** as critical. “Having a union made a difference in work experience in terms of benefits and job security” explained one member of Group #10, “having good paying secure jobs will stabilize families and communities.” To ensure that level of quality, a number of groups called on the city to support **card check neutrality** and **labor peace** “to keep employers from intimidating workers. The City should guarantee this with new developments” where the City has an economic interest (Group #9).



- ❖ Twenty-one groups pointed out the need for **job training programs and career ladders**. Participants specifically asked for “more good jobs and training programs from development projects” (Group #4) and “skill centers to work with people who are hard to employ” (Group #13). In new development projects, “apprenticeships should be provided by employers to provide training” (Group #9).
- ❖ The City should take a more active role in economic development that meets Oaklanders needs. According to one group, the City “needs a **long-term economic development policy** that matches the schools we have with the jobs that are brought in.”
- ❖ Participants noted that “job creation in Oakland should be linked to **land use policy**” (Group #15). Three groups specifically asked the City to protect industrial land, saying, “developers are trying to re-zone areas currently zoned industrial to residential, but we need to **preserve industrial land** as it currently exists to attract businesses that can create jobs” (Group #15). Multiple groups highlighted the **West Oakland Army Base** as a major opportunity to put Oakland residents to work in family-supporting jobs.



**Trinette Grant**, an Oakland resident and a member of Teamsters Local 70, drives a truck for a local company. At the Summit, Trinette testified that most of the new developments create high-end housing and retail, which result in low-wage jobs with no benefits. Trinette called on the City to utilize its powers to attract companies that provide accessible, good-paying jobs, ensure local hiring, and commit to job training for Oakland residents.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Twenty-seven groups addressed the lack of affordable housing in Oakland. Many groups called on the City to take concrete steps through policy, counseling and increased funding for affordable housing.

- ❖ Most new homes are out of reach for Oakland’s working families. Six break-out groups specifically discussed the **high cost of housing**. The recent trend of building expensive condominiums only exacerbated the crisis, with one group citing that “luxury condos are a threat to affordable housing” (Group #6). As a baseline, the City should adopt a policy of “**no displacement** while encouraging development” to ensure the current residents can continue to live in Oakland (Group #8).
- ❖ The current **foreclosure crisis** weighs heavily on the minds of Oaklanders. Three groups specifically acknowledged it as a key issue. “Housing costs and subprime loans are problems,” one group noted and the City should do “more work with housing counseling agencies” to address the problems (Group #8).
- ❖ Oaklanders recognize that the struggle to create affordable housing continues. To establish more policies and programs that serve Oakland’s housing needs, residents and workers from across the City will have to come together to “break the power of developers and their influence with elected officials” (Group #12)
- ❖ Oaklanders expressed frustration with the **lack of city intervention and regulation** in creating enough affordable housing, saying that “more programs are necessary to help people stay in their community” (Group #6). Participants suggested a range of solutions including:
  - ▶ “Don’t let developers build unless they agree to build affordable housing”, Group #21 explained. Eleven groups specifically named **inclusionary housing** as a tool for creating more affordable housing. Inclusionary housing has been on the table for many years in Oakland and one group said out right “**Vote yes on an inclusionary housing ordinance**” (Group #21).
  - ▶ Create affordable housing for families, through first time homebuyer program and new rental housing of construction. “Young families need assistance to buy homes and provide decent opportunities” for their children. (Group #9). We can “keep families in Oakland with **bigger units (of housing)**” in new development projects (Group #21).
  - ▶ Increase the production of affordable housing by setting aside more public money for new affordable housing construction. Put “**more development money** towards affordable housing,” one group explained, and direct it towards creating affordable housing for Oakland’s families with the lowest incomes (Group #8).
  - ▶ Protect current residents through “strong **rent control** that help communities and families stay put,” (Group #9) and pass “laws protecting tenants and residents from **condo conversions and foreclosures**” (Group #16).

During the morning testimonies, **Shirley Burnell** of ACORN explained the detrimental effects of new housing developments that do not provide real opportunities for working families. The high cost of housing hurts not only individual families but also entire communities. As a long time Oakland resident, Shirley described her own role in this escalating fight, detailing her participation in lobby visits, policy discussions, and strategy planning, and her commitment to keep solutions grounded in the reality of community needs.



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND HEALTH

Fourteen breakout groups expressed concerns about environmental health and justice as a critical issue. Low-income communities disproportionately bear the brunt of exposure to toxic emissions and must be taken into account within the City's plans for job creation.

- ❖ Seven groups described what a healthy community would look like. Participants in Group #30 explained that a healthy community is one that is "clean, safe, drug & crime free, with clean air and water."
- ❖ Residents and workers are exposed to **multiple toxics** in their neighborhoods. "Truck pollution and toxic byproduct from industry development in neighborhoods are creating unhealthy and unsafe neighborhoods," Group #14 explained.
- ❖ Exhaust from **diesel trucks** driving through and idling in West and East Oakland neighborhoods was one of the most often cited pollution sources. To remedy this situation, residents called for "low emission trucks for drivers" (group #6) and new routes to keep trucks out of residential areas.
- ❖ Residents at the Summit echoed the stories heard in Oakland Speaks, criticizing new housing being built near industrial plants. "Neighborhoods should be involved in establishing zones for industry and residential," and in creating **buffer zones** between industry and housing (Group #7). If industrial land is converted to housing, those projects "need the highest level of **environmental remediation**" to avoid detrimental health problems (Group #27).
- ❖ The **Port of Oakland** was identified as a decision-making body that could improve environmental health. Oaklanders noted, however, that "ports are not paying attention to neighborhoods," (Group #21). Residents called on the Port to reduce pollution, get trucks out of neighborhoods, and fix the flawed trucking employment structure.
- ❖ To create jobs without compromising worker and resident health, ten groups called on the city to create green-collar jobs. **Green-collar jobs** are in the growing industries that reduce oil dependency, curb greenhouse gas emissions, eliminate toxins, and protect natural systems. These jobs are often entry-level with family-supporting wages and career ladders. The City can "create green jobs and provide financial mechanisms to launch them," (Group #12), including allocating "City grants to go for the purchase of solar panels" and training and hiring Oaklanders to install them (Group #7).



In *Oakland Speaks*, **Maxine Oliver-Benson**, a member of Communities for a Better Environment, shares her experience with unsafe and unhealthy conditions. As an East Oakland resident, Maxine explains how multiple women in her neighborhood contracted cancer after moving to the area. She points to new housing under construction on a formerly industrial site, directly across from existing industrial operations, and she argues that developers should be required to provide community health clinics to address the resident needs their projects create.

## VIOLENCE

Oakland has experienced escalating violence in the last few years, including a spike in the number of homicides. Participants in thirteen break-out groups named violence in their neighborhoods and concern for their personal safety as a critical issue. Violence was not planned to be a central focus of the Summit but was clearly an issue on many of the participants' minds.

- ❖ Many groups noted the **connection between violence and other community issues**. "Crime is being isolated as a separate issue when it is integral to jobs and housing" (Group #14). Given how integrated these issues are, participants called on the city to craft a "strategy to reduce crime with city agencies working together (police, housing)" (Group #8).
- ❖ To address violence, participants called for more **community policing**—where police officers live in the neighborhoods in which they work and have relationships with the residents. To emphasize the point, one group explained "fund crime prevention not just policemen" (Group #9). In addition, residents urged the city to focus on services and alternatives for youth, including "more drug and alcohol counselors for the youth" (Group #26).
- ❖ Oakland has a substantial number of **formerly incarcerated residents**. To support these individuals returning to the community, two groups highlighted the need for "jobs for people after they are released from prison and an opportunity for education" (Group #4).
- ❖ Participants made the connection between the **lack of good-paying jobs and violence** in their neighborhoods. As one group explained, Oakland needs to "increase jobs so crime life isn't that attractive" for young people (Group #8). One group stated simply, "better jobs equal better and safer neighborhoods," (Group #27).

**Fadeelah Muhyee**, a young Oakland resident and participant in Ella Baker Center's Silence the Violence program, testifies to the violence in her neighborhood in Oakland Speaks. Like many residents, Fadeelah makes the connection between violence and lack of opportunity for young people. "Why would young people work at Burger King," Fadeelah poses, when they can make "so much more money in one night on the street? We need to bring in more opportunity."



## EDUCATION

While not a central focus of the summit, education's critical link to job access, violence and overall community health, made it a topic for twenty-one of the groups. Education is clearly a key building block of a healthy and equitable community. Education is linked to new development because new developments increase educational needs and provide opportunities for job training and placement for students

- ❖ Sixteen groups expressed frustration with Oakland schools. To improve quality, residents called on the school district and the state to **increase resources** so that "all schools get quality resources and provide quality education," (Group #4). To create more opportunities for youth, we should "make Oakland's high schools quality schools that benefit our neighborhoods especially for people of color" (Group #17).
- ❖ A key component of a successful school is one where **teachers are supported**. To that end, two groups highlighted the "need to retain existing teachers" in Oakland schools (Group # 8), explaining that "teacher retention, more investment in schools is necessary to improve working and learning conditions," (Group #27).
- ❖ Participants warned against blaming students for the problems in the education system, and instead stressed the importance of engaging youth and supporting continued opportunities for **youth organizing and service providers**. Specifically, groups called for "more after school programs while parents are working," (Group #5).
- ❖ Six different breakout groups made the **connection between education and job opportunities**. These groups urged the City, the school district, and businesses to "integrate job training and internships into school curriculums," (Group #17). Job training should be connected to Oakland's growth industries "with career-focused education for jobs that are relevant to the local economy," (Group #28). "Strong vocational programs that connect youth with jobs" will prepare students for real opportunities (Group #8).



Martin Luther King  
SCHOOL



## MESSAGES FOR ELECTED LEADERS

DURING THE DISCUSSIONS, participants documented messages for City Council members and the Mayor on the importance of and steps towards “Building Oakland for Everyone.” Many participants expressed hope that City Council members would respond to their concerns.

- ❖ **Expect more from developers and from businesses.** At least fifteen of the breakout groups called on the City to expect developers and companies doing business in Oakland to create real opportunities and community benefits for residents and workers. One group noted that “we need community benefits from every development project.” To guide these expectations, one group called on the City Council to “support a statement of principles of how Oakland should develop” (Group #24).
- ❖ **Increase responsiveness and accountability of City government.** Thirteen groups asked for Oakland City Council members to be more responsive and accountable to residents, community organizations, and unions. One group called on the City Council to “not cater to developers and instead cater to residents of Oakland,” while another group encouraged council members to hold office hours for community members to meet with them, creating a “real public process, not a one minute democracy” (Group #10 and Group #13).
- ❖ **Prioritize comprehensive solutions.** Ten groups called on the City Council to develop long range and integrated plans. The participants in these groups recognized that the issues Oaklanders face are interconnected, and therefore should also have integrated solutions. “Affordable housing is not the solution in isolation: livable wage jobs, toxic pollution, neighborhood business and shopping are all interconnected” (Group #12). Addressing these issues, another group called on the city to look to “integrated, inter-agency, inter-organizational problem solving” (Group #13).
- ❖ **Encourage community participation.** At least eight of the groups noted that the City Council should create more opportunities for community participation. They strongly believe that “we have to come together and make change” (Group #4). Residents and workers affected by development decisions deserve to be involved in making and shaping those decisions. “Community organizations and unions need to be involved at the outset of development plans, not after the deal is cut,” Group #31 noted. Clearly, Oaklanders believe that “Oakland can become a model city if we uphold community principles” (Group #23).

# BUILD OAKLAND FOR EVERYONE

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# Moving Forward

AT THE END of the day, Summit participants were full of hope and conviction that change in Oakland is necessary and possible. Participants realized that Oakland is at a crossroads, and that the future of our city and our neighborhoods depends on how we choose to approach development. We can harness and steer development to create justice and vibrancy in Oakland, or we can allow development to lead to further degradation: displacement of long-term residents, violence in our communities, worsening economic conditions, and continued racial segregation.

The two coalitions that co-sponsored the Summit, the Oakland People's Housing Coalition (OPHC) and the Oakland NetWork for Responsible Development (ONWRD) will continue their work to bring affordable housing reform and responsible economic development to Oakland. At the Summit, the coalitions outlined specific steps the City can take, including:

- ❖ Put 10,000 high-need Oakland residents to work in living wage jobs by prioritizing industry sectors that provide job entry and job ladders, as well as providing good pay to support families.
- ❖ Expect more from new development, including expanding existing local hire, labor standards, and the evaluation of potential project impacts.
- ❖ Create housing that Oakland's families can afford by requiring new development projects to include affordable housing, increasing funding for affordable rental and ownership housing, and strengthening tenant protections.
- ❖ Build safe, healthy communities by separating homes and industries, promoting sustainable construction practices, enforcing worker health and safety laws, and attracting green businesses that provide healthy, good-paying jobs.



# Sponsors and Endorsers

**Oakland NetWork for Responsible Development (ONWRD)** is a coalition of Oakland-based community, labor, environmental and housing organizations working to transform economic development policy and win greater community benefits. ONWRD is committed to advancing the values of **economic justice, social equity, environmental responsibility, democratic inclusion, and transparent and accountable government** in Oakland's economic development.

Oakland Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)

Central Labor Council of Alameda County, AFL-CIO

Communities for a Better Environment

East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE)

East Bay Community Law Center

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO)

Just Cause Oakland

Public Advocates, Inc.

Urban Habitat

Urban Strategies Council

The Workforce Collaborative

**Oakland People's Housing Coalition (OPHC)** is a coalition of community, housing, interfaith, tenant, and labor organizations that is calling for a comprehensive affordable housing agenda in Oakland. The Coalition is developing and organizing around housing policy solutions to meet the needs of low-income communities and communities of color, preserve Oakland's diversity, and create a great model city.

Oakland Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)

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East Bay Community Law Center

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Just Cause Oakland

Oakland Green Party

Oakland Tenants Union (OTU)

Public Advocates, Inc.

Urban Strategies Council

## Endorsers

Alameda County Green Party

American Federation of State County Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3299

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 192

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA)

California Nurses Association (CNA)

Carpenters Local Union 713

Centro Legal de la Raza

East Bay Young Democrats

International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) Local 70

International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Northern California District Council

Lucha Unida del Jornalero

Union of Needletrades Industrial Textile Employees Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees (UNITE HERE) Local 2850

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 5

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1877

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 24/7

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) United Healthcare Worker (UHW) West

SEIU United Long Term Care Workers (ULTCW) Union Local 6434

## Funding Support:

Akonadi Foundation

French American Charitable Trust

McKay Foundation

Rosenberg Foundation

Solidago Foundation

The San Francisco Foundation

Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock

Photos: Adelaide Chen and East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy