



June 1, 2023

Mayor Sheng Thao
Council President Bas
Members of the City Council

Oakland's halting recovery in the post-COVID environment is challenging the long-term health of our downtown business, residential, and cultural ecosystem. While some of the underlying factors are national and/or regional, there are city issues, specifically around public safety, that threaten a sustained economic recovery.

To address these challenges a downtown stakeholder coalition has been meeting over the past few months to coordinate and consolidate private and public investments and actions to assist in the recovery of Downtown Oakland. The members of this group include arts, education, commercial and residential developers, BIDs, local retailers, as well as downtown's largest employers.

While the stakeholder group is relieved that the mayor's proposed budget includes public safety academies that will hopefully keep up with force attrition, it remains concerned over the level of personal and property crime impacting Oakland. The revenue generated by Oakland businesses form a critical pillar of support for the city's operating budget. A strong and robust tax base ensures there are sufficient financial resources available to provide essential services such as public safety, education, infrastructure, and social programs. However, tax revenues from Downtown merchants, employers, and property owners—the largest contributor to the City's general fund--lags behind other commercial areas and remain below pre-COVID levels.

Addressing public safety should be the Mayor & Council's priority, given that any "return to normal" is predicated on people feeling safe in our city. Downtown stakeholders have taken on much of this responsibility themselves by implementing, at their own expense, strategies including street activations, daytime incentives for residents and businesses, Public Right of Way enhancements, private security, and increased ambassadors. In a cursory review, the amount of additional investment spent on BID assessments, additional security measures as well as restoring damage from criminal activity by just these stakeholders exceeds \$8 million annually and by no way represents all expenditures.

While we recognize and appreciate the budgetary challenges facing the city as well as discreet district challenges, we are asking you to make a critical investment in

Downtown Oakland's recovery by increasing city resources to supplement the investment of time and financial resources by these stakeholders by doing the following:

- 1) Ensure that grant funded walking officers are staffed – 15 total – with a significant number deployed downtown. If necessary, augment these positions with redeployed sworn staff during high intensity periods.
- 2) Commit one million dollars annually to continue the previous investments made to increase ambassadors across all commercial corridors, with a focus on downtown.

Implementing strategies to improve public safety can help create a safer environment, enhance the quality of life, and promote economic development. We appreciate the holistic approach of the public safety measures outlined in the budget including better 911 response time, extending MACRO city wide, and securing funds for academies over the next two years. By combining these strategies, Downtown Oakland can become a safer environment for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Prior to the pandemic, Downtown Oakland was on its way to becoming a shining example of how a vibrant business and budding residential ecosystem could not only contribute financially to the local economy but also nurture a thriving and inclusive community. It served as a testament to the power of entrepreneurship, cultural diversity, and collaboration in shaping the daily fabric of city life.

Our stakeholders are committed to working with you to ensure a successful recovery and the re-establishment of that shining example.

Respectfully,

Downtown Stakeholder Coalition (Partial list)

HP Investors

Fennemore Wendel

Oakland Metro Chamber of Commerce

Blue Shield of California

Pacific Gas & Electric

Credit Karma

Marqeta

thredUP

Awaken Café

Aldin Company

Kaiser Permanente

TMG Partners

Paramount Theatre

Oakland School for the Arts

Oakland Kia/Chevrolet/Ford

Clorox

Holland Partners Group

Another Planet Entertainment

Oakland BID Alliance

Ridgemont Hospitality

Oaklandish

Comcast