

MARCH 30TH, 2024
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION POLICY REPORTS



2024 ANNUAL OAKLAND POLICY EQUITY CONFERENCE

EXPANDING ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY

Dear Conference Participants,

It was an honor and a joy to be together at the C2C Economic and Workforce Development Policy Equity gathering. We are deeply thankful for your participation—and all the expertise, wisdom, and passion you brought to the conference.

We will be compiling the work done by the roundtable groups and sharing with the community soon. Let us know if you would like to continue to receive communications. Also, let us know if you would like to stay connected with one of Saturday's roundtable topic areas. (AI/Tech Equity; Housing + Workforce Development; Summer Youth Employment/Opportunity; Small Business/Capital Markets; Equitable Green Economy.) Please feel free to share feedback and takeaways.

As promised, here are a few resources and upcoming events, conference attendees asked us to share:

- Councilmember Reid has provided this updated resource: [Black Youth Development \(BYD\) Book](#) to promote various, Black-led programs for young people.
- Black Cultural Zone's Community Skate on Sundays! [Info here.](#)
- Black to Yoga: Flow State Equinox Class, 510 Firehouse, April 26: [Info here.](#)
- You're invited to the Black Worker Initiative's [Youth Listening Summit](#) at Greenlining Institute, April 28. Community grant [link here.](#)
- Don't miss East Oakland Youth Development Center's [Black Futures Ball](#)
- Check out [Worksafe's 42nd annual celebration](#), June 5.
- Please check out [C2C's spring newsletter](#) to learn more about our community-centered research projects and summer youth employment program.

Once again, thank you to the generous support and thought leadership provided by District Works, Block, Inc., The Mills Institute, the Center for Transformative Action, Red Bay Coffee, Dream Brand Studios (photo/video), Jusla Eats, Eat Play Events & Catering, Black to Yoga, Oakland Public Library's Youth Poet Laureate Program, Tipping Point Community, ESO Ventures, Kataly Foundation, Black Cultural Zone CDC, Oakland Thrives, the City of Oakland's Workforce Development Division and the Mayor's Office, Northeastern University's student volunteers, all of the esteemed presenters, facilitators, notetakers, and YOU!

We wish you all well and are looking forward to further collaboration as we work to create equity and opportunity for all in our communities.

Alli, Niyat, and the C2C Team





HOUSING + WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: INTERSECTION STRATEGIES

As part of the two-day gathering, C2C organized a track that addressed the intersection between housing and workforce development. As the Day One conference panelists clearly illuminated, it is impossible to solve the housing crisis without incorporating access to quality jobs and employment training – and vice versa. We tend to work in our own issue areas due to lack of capacity, historical siloes, and often simply due to the complexity of each sector. Yet, we know that it is at the intersections, including equitable access to transportation, health care, mental health support, and other inputs, where we can often make the most impact. We make shifts when we approach each of these fields as deeply interconnected systems. The group that made up the roundtable included housing and economic development experts who have largely already adopted this systems’ mindset as we set out to identify current barriers preventing Oaklanders from specific zip codes and communities from accessing both housing and wealth-building jobs.

Participants from multiple organizations rolled up their sleeves for five hours to discuss these challenges as well as potential opportunities stemming from innovative policy, partnership, and financing ideas, including Black Cultural Zone CDC, City Council District 7, Northeastern Talent Acquisition Department, the East Bay Economic Development Alliance (EDA), the East Oakland Youth Development Center, Northeastern Oakland City and Community Outreach Department, Lao Family Community Development, among others.

Barriers highlighted include a persistent lack of available and accessible rental units, as traditional affordable housing has become unaffordable to build. In some cases, affordable housing can be more expensive to build than luxury housing. Another barrier is transitioning the many vacant and underutilized lots into affordable housing. With climbing costs of living and rising rental rates, the traditional Below Market Rate (BMR) rental program is not ineffective and there are additional restrictions preventing renters from using housing vouchers. Government financing restrictions place limits on the populations that can be served. Also noted were the extended travel times created due to gentrification and the transportation barriers impacting youth and their ability to access jobs, training, and other opportunities. Finally, there are risks and disincentives for property owners to rent to low-income families that must be addressed.

The group also cited many opportunities for collaborative action.

- **Incorporate wraparound services within every housing development**
 - Access to healthcare, onsite job training, resource managers, etc.
 - EOYDC hired a youth employment manager to help youth find suitable housing, job placement, furniture, medical care
- **Seek out innovative (non-governmental) financing to maintain more control over housing development and delivery**
 - Lao Family Community Development acts as their own general contractor so they can make their own subcontractor hiring decisions, prioritizing women and minority-owned businesses, and actively work to integrate youth and workforce training and jobs into housing development
- **Create a taskforce to work with the City to identify vacant land OR underutilized properties that can be redeveloped into affordable housing**
- **Establish “carrots and sticks” policy to incentivize development of vacant properties**
 - Sticks: Impose safety and health liens. Heavier penalties on abandoned property. However, consider a carve out for small homeowners.
 - Carrots: Offer tax credit, or reduced capital gains when owners sell to a nonprofit. Program **could have provisions for cleanup/remediation.**
- **Work with City to rezone underutilized commercial corridors to residential**
- **Reframe how we talk about housing options to avoid reinforcing harmful narratives and inequities**



HOUSING + WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: INTERSECTION STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

- **"Market-rate vs. affordable housing" subscribes to a deficit model**
- **Create policies to incentivize the permitting and construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**
 - Create incentives for homeowners to pay for ADU construction
 - Consider establishing an agency or nonprofit that guarantees rent and helps manage ADU to protect the homeowner
 - Enact a policy to grandfather in unpermitted ADUs
- **Partner with local nonprofits, construction unions, etc. to create training and pathways to stable, well-paying jobs**

It is almost impossible to sustain meaningful and sustainable employment without secure housing with access to transportation. And, without a living wage and accompanying necessary support, maintaining housing in the Bay Area is unattainable. C2C brought together key voices to tackle this intersectional challenge. While many systems of disparity are entrenched and difficult to overcome, the solutions lifted up indicate that these problems are not impervious to positive change. Human-centered pathways to quality training and employment will mean that people can stay in the communities they call home.

YOUTH + OPPORTUNITY: EXPANDING SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Robust summer youth employment programs are held up across cities as an investment with exponential benefits. C2C Director Dr. Alicia Modestino's decade of engaged research shows that early work experiences improve high-school graduation rates and boost students' employability and family finances. With benefits that last beyond the summer, youth jobs programs have a crucial role to play in shifting economic disparity and building community wellness. On the second day of the Community to Community (C2C) Impact Engine policy equity conference, at the roundtable discussion, "Expanding Summer Youth Employment Programs," leaders in the field discussed challenges and solutions and paved the way for strengthening collaborative efforts. Participants included Councilmember Treva Reid representing the city of Oakland's District 7, Selena Wilson, CEO of East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC), Malcolm Stanley, Director of Major Gifts & Donor Relations at the YMCA in San Francisco, Sofia Navarro, Interim Director of Economic and Workforce Development Board for the City of Oakland, and Quinallison Dovey, Program Analyst of the Economic and Workforce Development for the City of Oakland Workforce Development Division, Liz Soskin, Children's Librarian for the Oakland Public Library, Meghan Chang, Senior Program Director of the Enterprise for Youth, Marc Weiss, CEO of Global Urban Development, and others, gathered to discuss the ongoing efforts and challenges faced by summer youth employment programs.



YOUTH + OPPORTUNITY: EXPANDING SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Councilmember Reid emphasized the need for targeted outreach to marginalized communities (particularly black youth in East Oakland) to ensure equitable access to these programs. "We need to target the ones who can't find these programs," she stated. She talked about the alarming rates of trafficking of young Black women and girls in the region and the need for community awareness and action. EOYDC's leader, Selena Wilson talked about the importance of organizations with deep roots in the community and a multi-year, intergenerational approach to nurturing Oakland's young people.

Many summer youth employment programs are funded through the federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), but more unrestricted funding is needed. Director Navarro outlined collaborative efforts working in partnership with Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) to provide support to three providers Lao Family Community Development, Trybe Inc., and Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) – as well as the hope for a new round of less restrictive funds to support Oakland Forward job training providers coming up next year. The success of partnerships across city departments emphasizes the need for even greater alignment among city departments and community organizations to maximize impact. Challenges, such as limited staff capacity, high hurdles to obtain and manage WIOA dollars, and historical silos were cited as areas for policy change. Smaller providers and innovative programs often require philanthropic investments and creative partnerships.

Another topic that emerged included the need for increased accessibility and inclusivity in summer youth employment programs. The need for a targeted and participatory approach in program development with involvement from Black and Latinx youth was suggested. Councilmember Reid underlined the importance of youth commissioners to ensure younger voices are heard in the decision-making process. Participants discussed logistical challenges for organizations, including having the staff capacity to prepare for Request for Proposals (RFPs) and maintaining programs when the payments don't come in time to pay for summer youth and staff wages. Collaborative efforts between larger and smaller providers, businesses, and community colleges were encouraged to address city budget cuts to support community-driven initiatives.

As C2C has proven through our engaged, multi-year partnership with the City of Boston, the East Bay needs new investments and policies so that every youth can participate in meaningful summer jobs programs. Participants expressed appreciation for spaces created for developing collaborative programmatic and funding strategies. C2C and Northeastern University Oakland have an important opportunity to continue helping create forums like this to support ongoing conversations. The work to break down silos and deepen partnerships between city departments, providers, and industry is growing. Amidst challenges and constraints, the call for innovative policies to empower every youth in Oakland through robust summer youth employment and other programs can create pathways to futures of opportunity and economic freedom.



CLIMATE + JOBS: ADVANCING EQUITABLE GREEN ECONOMIES

California and Massachusetts are known for linking climate action to equity and justice—not just in planning, but in programs. Likewise, Oakland's climate equity plan and Boston's Green New Deal prioritize equity.



CLIMATE + JOBS: ADVANCING EQUITABLE GREEN ECONOMIES (CONTINUED)

While participants in the workshop appreciate this leadership, most expressed varying levels of frustration on what is being delivered in Oakland (and Boston).

Two interrelated aspects of equity are procedural equity, which asks whose voices are heard and how these voices influence program content and implementation, and distributional equity, which asks who is receiving the benefits of climate action. Many workshop participants expressed frustration that Oakland isn't delivering on either aspect. Several people asked whether city staff involved with Oakland's Equity Plan are making connections with city residents. They noted that neither residents individually nor grassroots organizations have been involved in conversations about implementation and are not at the table when important decisions are being made. The consensus was that city politics and bureaucracy are holding residents and grassroots back.

Oakland has some leading examples of citizen (or community) science being used to report data (e.g. West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project) but they seem to be isolated examples, rather than a strategy the city is facilitating. Workshop participants expressed a desire for grassroots groups to be engaged in reporting impacts of Oakland's Equity Plan on their communities.

As to distributional equity, Oakland's Equity Plan looks good on paper, some noted that there has been little implementation. When funds are available there are often issues with implementation. Many would like to see more investment in efforts to keep their neighborhoods clean at a basic level. Some suggested that Oakland should look to Sacramento, which has launched several climate equity initiatives in disadvantaged neighborhoods such as reducing pollution exposure, increasing access to healthy food and exercise, and launching the first electric vehicle car share program for disadvantaged communities in the state.

Sacramento has received a high level of input from residents on which actions to prioritize and also has created an Environmental Justice Factbook to document the work that has been undertaken.

City officials agreed that Oakland needs more staff to work to address climate and environmental problems. Further, there aren't dedicated funding mechanisms to support residents and communities to participate in decision making on priority actions. Oakland can benefit from an Urban Forest Plan developed with public and private partnerships to increase funding for tree restoration in California (with the goal of increasing tree canopy cover by 6%). While the city seeks to increase the number of trees, it is not uncommon for families in some Oakland neighborhoods to get rid of trees to reduce liability. Many residents are concerned that increasing the number of trees could spur gentrification.

Representatives of many workforce training organizations presented their programs in green economy occupations. Across the board, participants agreed that leading practice programs offer hands-on learning experiences, pay trainees, offer comprehensive wraparound services, and have strong relationships with employers. Providing these comprehensive services is expensive and will require additional state, federal, and philanthropic funding.

An important discussion focused on the advancement pathways for youth in many "green" occupations. Increased involvement from labor unions in green job apprenticeships would create more opportunities for disadvantaged youth to enter the trades. Nobody wants to replicate the mistake of many workforce training programs in funneling Black and Latinx kids into career paths that don't offer fulfillment or quality jobs that allow for advancement. Fortunately, the East Bay has several successful programs including Rising Sun Center for Opportunity, Civicorps, Cypress Mandela, Youth Employment Partnerships, Planting Justice, and others. Increasing visibility of these programs may inspire more funding and scalability.

Northeastern Boston Policy School professor Joan Fitzgerald is leading a team working with the City of Boston examining these issues and how Boston can create more career pathways for disadvantaged youth. Dr. Marc Weiss, CEO of Global Urban Development, discussed how collaborations must be undertaken by grassroots groups, while the government plays a supporting role. He believes that Northeastern Oakland could be a model green campus and pave the way for green initiatives throughout the region.



EQUITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP + AI: ENSURING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Institutions across many sectors are navigating the critical need to address AI and technology equity in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape. During the second day of the Community to Community (C2C) Impact Engine Spring policy conference in Oakland, experts from multiple fields convened to discuss ongoing efforts, upcoming initiatives, policy recommendations, and collaborative opportunities in the field. On Day One of the conference, Northeastern Oakland's Head of Partnerships, Carrie Maultsby-Lute, facilitated a panel who are each addressing AI and tech equity uniquely. Christie Chung, Executive Director of the Mills Institute, reminded the audience that machines will never be able to imitate humans and that we must center humanism in our work even as we embrace new technologies.

Damon Packwood, founder of Game Heads works with Oakland's youth creating career pathways to creative tech careers using their innate talents and smarts. He explained that no matter their accomplishments, including designed the costumes for the recent animated Batman movie, they still are confronted by the barriers created by racism and stereotyping. Block Inc.'s Global Social Impact Lead, Ahmed Ali Bob, who hosted the conference, is a living example of how the tech sector can be in service to community.

Ali Bob supports artists, entrepreneurs and nonprofits to participate and thrive in local economies and among his leadership roles, serves on the Oakland Workforce Development Board. Ben Wanzo of ESO Ventures, encouraged the audience to think about how we can make impact real and sustainable for entrepreneurs – to go beyond pitch competitions to creating the supports for thriving local businesses.

During Day Two's roundtable discussion on the topic, Karimah Omer, Associate Director of Partnerships at Northeastern University Oakland, stressed the importance of addressing ethical concerns, highlighting the dual role that AI plays as both a study tool and a means to detect AI-generated content to emphasize the need for responsible usage guidelines.

The discussion revealed several initiatives currently underway to promote AI equity, including prompt engineering (enhancing user inputs) to create accessibility for diverse user groups. The integration of AI education across all academic disciplines was proposed as a vital step towards inclusivity to ensure that students from all backgrounds can harness AI's potential.

Policy Recommendations:

Jerry Chang, Collaboration and Venture Designer of [Elevate Community Solutions](#), emphasized the need for policies that nurture entrepreneurship through AI so that it can be positioned as a tool for equalizing job and college opportunities.

Kyle Valiton, Director of Programs at Port Labs, raised questions about the impact of AI on education systems and how classrooms can adapt to AI while ensuring robust assessments. He pointed out that although AI can streamline many processes, it cannot replace the critical thinking skills that are central to education.

Emily Krantz, Presidio Graduate Student, advocated for a new college learning format where 20% of time is dedicated to learning and 80% to solving real-world problems. This approach would require AI tools to be integrated into the curriculum to aid in problem-solving and project-based learning.

The discussion also explored potential funding streams and investment collaborations. Participants agreed on the necessity of diverse and inclusive decision-making bodies to ensure equitable outcomes. Collaborative efforts between students and teachers, and academic and industry professionals, are critical for developing effective policies and programs.

Omar reiterated the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in AI development. She stressed the need for holding companies accountable for their AI products and ensuring that AI tools do not perpetuate biases. Discussants acknowledged the complexities of AI ethics and the need for continuous dialogue and collaboration to navigate these challenges effectively.



EQUITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP + AI: ENSURING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY (CONTINUED)

Participants expressed their commitment to leveraging their expertise and experiences that will one day influence sound policies that promote AI equity and access to AI tools and education to enable individuals to use AI wisely and responsibly. Several upcoming events aimed at fostering dialogue and innovation were promoted as key platforms for ongoing discussions about AI ethics and applications to convene thought leaders and practitioners to explore practical solutions and best practices:

- [Cerebral Valley's series of events](#)
- [A Cross Cultural Examination of the Age-related Positivity Effect in Memory](#)



BRIDGING CAPITAL MARKETS TO DIVERSE SMALL BUSINESS ECOSYSTEMS

Small businesses are significant contributors to the economy. They are essential to wealth creation in underinvested communities. A thriving small business sector creates enormous benefits including workforce opportunities, especially for those who may not have access to higher education and the requirements

necessary to obtain employment in large corporations. Small businesses are also part of the fabric of local communities, they save workers and the environment from the costs of commuting, keep parents closer to children and family, and they tend to invest in their neighborhoods

It is difficult for small ventures to grow and then remain sustainable as there are high barriers for entrepreneurs to enter new markets. This roundtable, led by Alfredo Mathews III, ESO Ventures, included Debra Gore-Mann, Greenlining Institute; Ravi Karra, Aisera Engineering; Pearl Gupta, Northeastern Oakland; Steve Snider, District Works; Keith Spears, Tides Foundation; Martha Hernandez, ESO Ventures; and others. Participants shared challenges and solutions for scaling successful models in Oakland and beyond.

Participants proposed multiple solutions to the hurdles small businesses face:

Some participants proposed the need to advance initiatives to help businesses grow from \$200-\$500k to \$1-5 million to become sustainable – and to aggregate and standardize capital products so that models can scale. Oakland might look to other cities that have invested in business corridors and small business ecosystems that leverage resources and share other support structures.

Discussants suggested the need to reform policy and expand funding that specifically supports entrepreneurial pathways with aligned capital. Government bodies need to both create transparency for processes and update definitions and regulatory frameworks to contemporize policies to serve today's small business industries. Rethinking how cities tax small businesses and in turn build philanthropic and government subsidization for operational expenses will be transformative.

ESO Ventures specifically works to support small business owners through growing “confidence, competence, capital, contracts, and community.” Contributors discussed the power of developing networks of support for emerging businesses and developing products, including a shared database of resources, capital funds, and other tools based on location and other defining features of the community and business type.

The topic is not new, but this discussion developed connections and ideas across organizations. C2C was honored to host this important conversation as part of ongoing work to build research partnerships toward creating equitable solutions and repairing the wealth and health divide in our cities.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To watch highlights of the conference, click [here](#).

Thank you again to our panelists, moderators NU staff, volunteers, and all attendees. We also thank the wonderful local businesses (Jusla, Eat Play, and Dream Brand Studios) for the catering and media support. Thank you to Pack Network for organizing the live stream and supplying the recordings.

Gratitude to Rat K'Deee, Ana Rodriguez, Ahmed Ali Bob, and the District Works' Hospitality Crew for your generosity and leadership.

Community-to-Community (C2C) is an impact accelerator founded to use data and analysis to design, implement, and evaluate public policies that push the needle forward on complex problems found in our communities. We are scholars, researchers, policymakers, students, and community organizers working to utilize a community-engaged research approach that fosters long-term mutually beneficial partnerships. Read more about our work, news, and events, or get in touch by visiting [our website](#).

To stay in the loop on all things C2C, sign up for our newsletter and follow us on social media!

