

# Neighborhood Block Party Guide

A series of how-to guides for residents working to improve their neighborhoods.

## Why Have a Block Party?

Dear Oakland Resident,

For generations, block parties have served as a way for neighbors to meet each other. Some block parties are organized around holidays such as the 4th of July or Labor Day. Others may start because of an issue (traffic, vandalism) affecting the neighborhood. Whatever the reason, block parties often lead to further gatherings, which in turn lead to neighborhood improvements such as new playground equipment, or a neighborhood clean up campaign.

You don't have to live in a neighborhood of single family homes to be involved in a block party. Block parties can happen everywhere - in townhouse complexes, apartment buildings, or even in a park near a condominium. A block party is simply a group of neighbors who work together to organize an event for their neighborhood.

This guide is organized so that all necessary information, forms, and "do's and don'ts" are in one place. So don't hesitate! Gather a couple of neighbors, pick a date, follow the instructions in the guide, and invite everyone to join in!

An easy way to start is to have a neighborhood block party on National Night Out - held annually on the first Tuesday in August. Call Brenda Ivey in the Neighborhood Services Unit for more information at (510) 777-8621.

Sincerely,

Wayne Tucker  
Chief of Police



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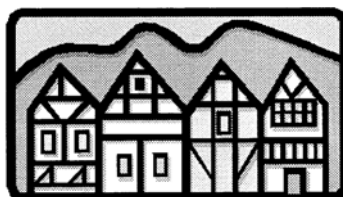
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# *10 Reasons To Have a Block Party*

1. To have fun - no excuse is needed to celebrate!
2. To meet your neighbors. When you know who lives in your neighborhood, the more likely you are to identify strangers or suspicious people.
3. To increase the sense of belonging in your neighborhood.
4. To organize a Home Alert group by calling Brenda Ivey at 238-8621 or a Citizens of Oakland Respond to Emergencies (CORE) group by calling Harriet Wright at 238-3947.
5. To make additional connections within the community. When you know people, you can exchange skills or resources and perhaps organize a book club, baby-sitting co-op, share walking to school duties, or find new friends for your children.
6. To plan a campaign for traffic slowdown, get better lighting, or address other interests.
7. To "use" the street for one day, to, for example, roller blade, play hockey or play other games.
8. To meet some of the old time residents in the neighborhood and learn the neighborhood's history.
9. To have a neighborhood clean-up day, play some good music and barbecue once all of the work is done.
10. To start a yearly neighborhood tradition of getting together at least once a year!

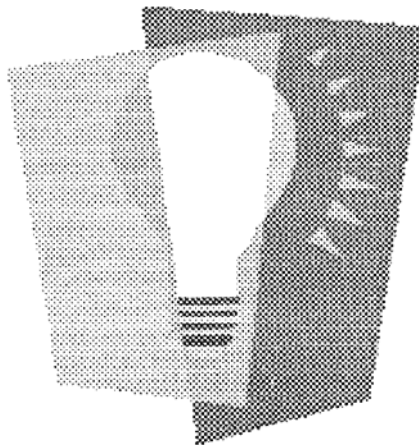
## How to Get Started

1. Gather a few neighbors and divide up the tasks. Decide on a possible theme, activities etc. Decide what to do about food.
2. Start knocking on doors to find out if there is enough interest and, if so, which day would be the best for the most people.
3. Pick a date and time (mid-afternoon to evening works best). Plan to end the event before 9:00pm in order to respect bedtime and neighborhood peace and quiet. Think of an alternate plan in case of poor weather.
4. Go door to door:
  - Hand out an invitation (use the one included in this guide, or create your own).
  - Ask people to fill out the Block Party details sheet and let them know where to return it (use the one included in this guide, or create your own).
  - Ask people to sign the petition form (included in this guide) so you can close off the street, if you want. This will indicate that neighbors have no objections to the street being blocked off. While only a majority of neighbors needs to sign the petition, each and every neighbor on the block that will be blocked off needs to be approached about the petition. If a neighbor is unavailable, make a note of your attempt. Call the City of Oakland's Police Department Special Events Unit; ask for Officer Mike Morse, 510 238-3154. Officer Morse will guide you through the application steps. If the party is sponsored by OPD, it is possible that fees may be waived.
  - Recruit volunteers.
5. Decide if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block or will people be able to invite friends/relatives (if yes, how many). Make this clear in your flyer/invitation.



## *Good Ideas*

- Invite a City council member, school principal or city staff member to your block party.
- Call the Police, Fire, or other City departments to obtain literature, give-aways, or to request a presentation. See the City of Oakland's "Helpful Phone Numbers" handout, at the back of this Guide, for ideas.
- Make sure you have a sign-in sheet with the names of everyone who attends the party and everyone you contacted; after all, the idea of a block party is to connect neighbors.
- Identify special talents your neighbors might have - you may be living next to a magician, singer, dancer, artist, radio host or prize winning cook.
- Plan lots of activities for children.
- Include activities that encourage people to meet each other. Use nametags and include children by asking them to create the tags.
- Make sure that people with disabilities can participate in the activities and include their attendants (those with Seeing Eye dogs or in wheelchairs).
- Institute a bathroom policy "everyone to use their own" so that home security is maintained.
- Inspire clean up after the party by rewarding children with a prize for packing up garbage.
- Have a block/street clean up as part of the party.
- Distribute an evaluation form to participants (to get a good response, number the forms and have door prizes for returned entries).



## REMINDERS

- Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on city streets or in parks.
- Residents should observe security precautions, for example lock back doors to houses, and keep equipment in sight.
- In hot weather food spoils quickly: all perishables such as mayonnaise, salads or meats should be stored in coolers and be kept at the proper temperature.
- Food cannot be sold on city streets unless the proper permits have been obtained.
- Loud amplification of music is prohibited.
- Observe safety precautions for all activities, for example keep barbeques away from activities for children.
- Post signs the day before reminding everyone to remove cars and that the street will be closed.



# YOU ARE INVITED TO



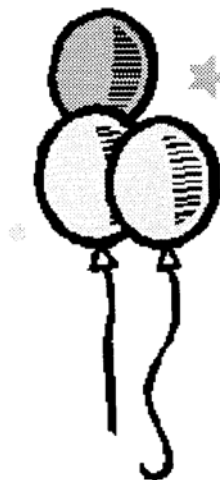
# A BLOCK PARTY!

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE: \_\_\_\_\_

THEME/EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_



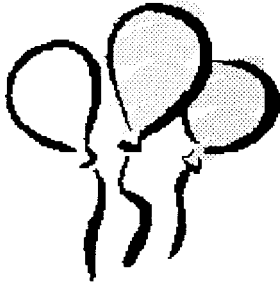
To RSVP, or to help out, please phone:

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_, or

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_



# Block Party Details



We are glad you can join us for the Block Party:

On \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
(date) (time)

We are asking each family to bring:

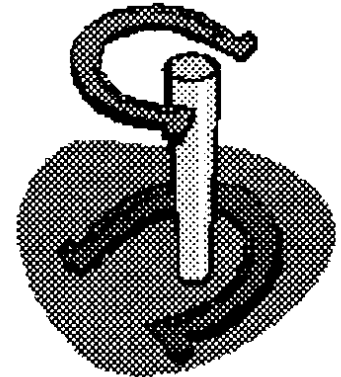
- chairs to sit on
- your own meats or vegetarian food to barbecue
- 1 salad and 1 desert to share (make enough for \_\_\_ people)
- your own beverages or coffee and tea will be provided
- your own non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery
- other

In addition, do you have the following that could be used:

\_\_\_\_\_ A barbecue

\_\_\_\_\_ A table

\_\_\_\_\_ A cooler



Do you have a talent that you would like to share with us?

Suggestions for activities you could organize?

Please return this form by \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to:

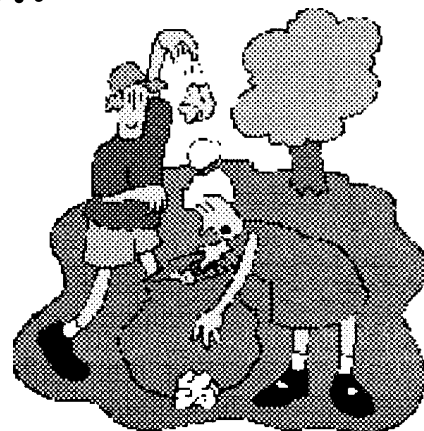
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_



# Block Party Evaluation Form

To help us plan future block parties,  
your feedback is appreciated.



What were the 3 best things about this block party?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What 3 things would you change for next time?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like the neighborhood connections gained at the block party to be maintained during the year?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to help with the planning of future neighborhood events?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

if yes, please leave your name and phone number

with \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

Please leave this form at (address) at \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank You*

# *Suggested Activities for Getting to Know Your Neighbors*

## **4th of July**

- Find which neighbor can trace their family origins back the farthest.
- Find out which neighbor is the newest "American".
- Play charades using American heroes.
- Decorate a cake using icing to create the American flag.
- Play patriotic music, or music by American composers.

## **Neighborhood History**

- Research your neighborhood's history at the Oakland Main Library's *Oakland History Room*.
- Identify any special people that lived in your area such as the longest resident, politician, artist, eccentric, hero, etc. Have partygoers guess who, what, where through charades and other games.
- Cultural Connections
  - Have everyone bring their favorite family dish.
  - Teach everyone how to say three things in another language.
  - Use a map to indicate where everyone originally came from.
- Record the story of how everyone came to live in the neighborhood and what he or she likes best about it.

## **Neighborhood Action**

- Discuss what issues/concerns people have (keep this to a predetermined time: remember, a block party should be fun).
- Establish teams to explore how to resolve the concerns.
- Make plans to have a neighborhood clean-up.
- Build a bench, plant a garden, paint street numbers, or plant a tree as part of the block party activities.

## *Getting Your "New American" Neighbor to the Block Party*

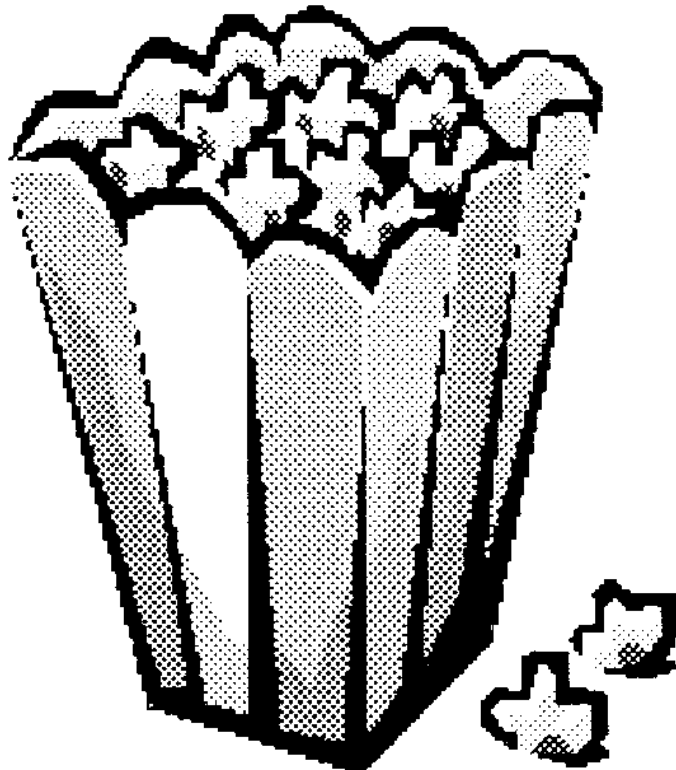
Many new citizens/neighbors want to meet their neighbors and make friends. It is important to make everyone feel at ease and to communicate clearly your intentions.

Here are some suggestions that may help new neighbors feel welcome:

- Use a translated description of what a block party is.
- If possible, knock on the door of a new neighbor with someone who speaks their language.
- Be specific about what the expectations are.
- Remember words like "barbecue", "face painting" or "potluck" may need to be explained.
- If you are blocking off the street for the day, explain about street parking changes.
- It may take more than one invitation for a new citizen/neighbor to fully understand what a block party is, so make a point of following up in the weeks leading up to the party.
- Make activities accessible to those with limited English language skills.
- Ask about special cultural/religious diet or activity constraints.
- Safety is a big concern for many new citizens because of past experiences or fear caused by not knowing the language.

## *Fun Family Activities For Block Parties*

- Invite a clown, balloon artist, or magician
- Have games using water balloons
- Rent a "Jump House" but remember: it must not be placed on the street, so use a neighbor's yard
- Play hide and seek
- Do face painting (Remember to use non-toxic paint)
- Organize a kids talent show or parade
- Use sidewalk chalk (Make it a game for the kids and give out prizes)
- Play Pictionary© or charades
- "Name that Baby" (Have everyone bring a childhood photo and see who can guess who's who)
- Play Musical Chairs
- Rent a Popcorn or Snow Cone Machine



**Use this petition ONLY if you want to fully close off your street or sidewalk for your block party. If you do not want to fully block off your street or sidewalk, this form, and a permit, are not necessary. If you have questions call Officer Mike Morse in the Special Events Unit at 238-3154.**

TF-696-3 (11/03)



**BLOCK / ENCROACHMENT PETITION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, residing at  
 (Print Name of Person Circulating Petition)

\_\_\_\_\_, request your  
 (Address and telephone number)

approval to hold a block party in the \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Block # and Street)

on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ Start \_\_\_\_\_ End \_\_\_\_\_ and to fully  
 block (Day) (Date) (Time) (Time)

off the street.

As required by the Oakland Police Department, I agree to install street barricades for the event, to clean the area after the event, to reimburse the City for any expenses that may have incurred as a result of the event, and to comply with any other conditions that are set forth in the permit to hold this event. I agree to take this Petition to each resident on the target block or give reason why resident was not contacted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (Signature of Person Circulating Petition) (Date)

**Resident:** If you approve of the proposed encroachment, please sign below and include your telephone number.

House #	Signature of Resident (or reason not contacted)	Telephone #
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

House #	Signature of Resident (or reason not contacted)	Telephone #
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HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

- Oaklanders Assistance Center... 444-CITY (444-2489)
Recorded Information on City Services (Cityline)... 238-2222

ALCOHOL OUTLET PROBLEMS

- Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)(State)... 622-4970
Alcohol Outlet- Illegal/Nuisance Activity (ABAT-Police)... 777-8680

ANIMALS

- Dead/Stray/Vicious/Nuisance Animals (Animal Services-Police)... 777-3333
Adoption/Licenses/Redemption (Oakland Animal Services)... 535-5602
Rats/Pest/Wildlife Control (Vector Control-County)... 567-6800

AUTOMOBILES/VEHICLES

- Abandoned Vehicles- on the Street... 238-6030
Abandoned Vehicles- on Private Property... 238-3381 or 238-6040
Automotive Repair Fraud (State)... 243-9410
Illegal/Nuisance Auto Repair (Code Enforcement)... 238-3381
Parking Enforcement... 238-3099
Towed Vehicle Info (Records-Police)... 238-3021
Traffic Operations Section (Police)... 238-3155
Truck/Commercial Vehicle Complaints (Police)... 238-6033

BUILDING & DEVELOPMENT

- Code Enforcement (Building Services-CEDA)... 238-3381
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)... 238-3716
Contractor Complaints (State License Board)... 800-321-2752
Engineering Services(Civil Engineering-CEDA)... 238-4777
Illegal Construction (Code Enforcement)... 238-3381
Permit Center (Building Services-CEDA)... 238-3443
Permit Information (Building Services-CEDA)... 238-3891
Permit Inspection Scheduling (Building Services-CEDA)... 238-3444
Planning Division (CEDA)... 238-3941
Property Improvement Assistance (County)... 670-5398
Property Improvement Assistance (Residential Lending)... 238-3909
Redevelopment Projects (CEDA)... 238-3015
Zoning Information (Zoning Division-CEDA)... 238-3781
Zoning Violations (Code Enforcement)... 238-3381

BUSINESS

- Business Development (CEDA)... 238-3627
Business License Section (Revenue Division)... 238-3704
Consumer Complaints (Department of Consumer Affairs)... 800-952-5210
Chamber of Commerce (Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce)... 874-4800
Economic Development (CEDA)... 238-3344
Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR)... 238-3344
Small Business Assistance (One Stop Small Business Center)... 238-3703

CITY OFFICIALS

- City Attorney... 238-3601
City Auditor... 238-3378
City Clerk... 238-3611
City Council... 238-3266
City Manager... 238-3301
Mayor... 238-3141

FIRE & EMERGENCY

- Emergency (Police)... 911
Emergency for Cell Phone... 777-3211
Disaster and Emergency Coordination (Emergency Services)... 238-3938
Fire Department Administration (Fire Services Agency)... 238-3856
Fire Dispatch- Emergency... 911 or 444-1616
Fire Prevention Bureau... 238-3851
Vegetation Fire Hazards (Vegetation Management-Fire Services)... 238-7388

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Hazardous Waste Illegal Dumping... 444-3322
Health Care and Health Services (Public Health Dept.-County)... 267-8000
Health Hazards- Private Property (Code Enforcement)... 238-3381
Household Hazardous Waste Disposal... 800-606-6606
Illegal Disposal in Storm Drain (Public Works)... 238-6544
Rats/Pest Control (Vector Control-County)... 567-6800
Restaurant/Food- Health Complaints (County)... 567-6700
Sanitation Complaints- Public Property (Public Works)... 434-5101

HOUSING

- Home Buyer Assistance... 238-6201
Homeless Information Hotline... 238-7454
Homeless Shelter Hotline (Eden CHAIN Line)... 800-774-3583
Home Repair Assistance (County)... 670-5398
Home Repair Assistance (Residential Lending)... 238-3909
Housing Condition Complaints (Code Enforcement)... 238-3381
Housing Department (Housing & Community Development)... 238-3501
Housing Development (Housing & Community Development)... 238-3502
Housing Rights (Sentinel Fair Housing)... 836-2687
Illegal Housing (Code Enforcement)... 238-3381
Public Housing Maintenance (Oakland Housing Authority)... 535-3130
Rent Control (Rent Arbitration Board)... 238-3721
Subsidized Housing (Section 8-Oakland Housing Authority)... 874-1500

NOISE COMPLAINTS

- Airport Noise... 577-4194
Noise Complaints- Temporary Problems (Police)... 777-3333
Noise Complaints- Permanent Problems (Code Enforcement)... 238-6777

PARKING

- Abandoned Vehicles- on the Street... 238-6030
Abandoned Vehicles- on Private Property... 238-3381 or 238-6040
Parking Citation Assistance... 800-500-6484
Parking Design- Review & Changes (Transportation Services)... 238-3466
Parking Enforcement... 238-3099
Parking Meter Repair... 238-6631
Residential Parking Permits... 800-500-6484

PARKS AND TREES

- Parks and Recreation General Assistance... 238-3092
Park Grounds Maintenance... 615-5566
Park Grounds Maintenance (East Bay Regional Parks)... 635-0135
Park Security (Ranger Section-Police)... 482-7888
Tree Problems (Tree Services)... 615-5850

# HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS con't

## POLICE & CRIME

▪Emergency (Police).....	911
▪Non-Emergency (Police).....	777-3333
▪Chief of Police.....	238-3365
▪Police Lieutenant Metro Area- Downtown.....	238-7146
▪Police Lieutenant Area 1- West Oakland.....	238-7149
▪Police Lieutenant Area 2- North Oakland & North Hills.....	238-7147
▪Police Lieutenant Area 3- East Lake & North Lake.....	535-5681
▪Police Lieutenant Area 4- Central Oakland & Central Hills.....	777-8521
▪Police Lieutenant Area 5- Central East Oakland.....	777-8520
▪Police Lieutenant Area 6- East Oakland.....	777-8524
▪Alcohol Outlet- Illegal/Nuisance Activity (ABAT-Police).....	777-8680
▪Animal Control (Animal Services-Police).....	535-5603
▪Crime/Illegal Dumping Anonymous Tip Hotline (Crimestoppers).....	238-6946
▪Criminal Investigation (Police).....	238-3744
▪Domestic Violence Help (A Safe Place).....	536-SAFE (536-7233)
▪Drug Activity Reporting Voicemail (Police).....	238-DRUG (238-3784)
▪Drug House Abatement (Beat Health-Police).....	777-8630
▪Gang Unit (Police).....	238-6409
▪Graffiti Removal Hotline (Public Works).....	238-4703
▪Litter Enforcement (Public Works).....	434-5101
▪Mail Theft (Oakland Postal Inspectors-Hotline).....	251-3413
▪Neighborhood Crime Prevention Coordinators (NSC).....	777-8710
▪Neighborhood Watch (Home Alert).....	777-8555
▪Park Security (Ranger Section-Police).....	482-7888
▪Payphone Complaints- Removal Requests.....	238-6280
▪Police Information (Patrol Desk).....	238-3455
▪Police Misconduct (Citizen's Police Review Board-CPRB).....	238-3159
▪Police Misconduct (Internal Affairs-Police).....	238-3161
▪Police Reports (Records-Police).....	238-3021
▪Public Housing Police (Oakland Housing Authority Police).....	535-3100
▪School Police (Campus Life & Safety Section-Police).....	637-0345
▪Traffic Operations Section (Police).....	238-3155

## SENIOR, DISABLED, & YOUTH SERVICES

▪Child Abuse (Child Protective Services).....	259-1800
▪Disabled Access Complaints (ADA Compliance Unit).....	238-4524
▪Disabled Services (Center for Independent Living).....	763-9999
▪Information & Referral- Seniors & Disabled (Dept. on Aging).....	238-3931
▪Senior Abuse (Adult Protective Services).....	567-6894
▪Senior Center Complaints.....	238-3434
▪Suicide Prevention (Crisis Hotline).....	849-2212
▪Transportation for the Disabled (Oakland Paratransit).....	238-3036
▪Youth Services Referral (YouthLink).....	877-YOUTH-41 (877-968-8441)

## STREETS, SEWERS, & PUBLIC WORKS

▪Community Clean-Up Volunteering (Keep Oakland Beautiful).....	434-5126
▪Creek Program (Public Works).....	238-6600
▪Curb and Street Repainting (Public Works).....	615-5595
▪Litter Enforcement (Public Works).....	434-5101
▪Median Strip Maintenance (Parks & Recreation).....	238-3092
▪Pothole Repair (Public Works).....	615-5566
▪Sewer Maintenance (Public Works).....	615-5566
▪Sidewalk Repair (Public Works).....	777-8416

▪Speed Bump Request (Transportation Services-Public Works).....	238-3466
▪Storm Drain Maintenance (Public Works).....	482-7853
▪Storm Drain/Creek Pollution (Illicit Discharge Inspector).....	238-6544
▪Street Cleaning (Illegal Dumping Hotline).....	434-5101
▪Street Light Repair (Public Works).....	615-5430
▪Street Maintenance & Repair (Public Works).....	615-5566
▪Street Resurfacing (Public Works).....	777-8395
▪Street Sign Repair (Public Works).....	615-5595
▪Street Sweeping (Sanitation-Public Works).....	434-5101
▪Traffic Signal Repair (Public Works).....	615-5430
▪Weeds- on Public Property (Fire Services).....	238-7388

## TRASH & BLIGHT

▪Abandoned Vehicles- on the Street.....	238-6032
▪Abandoned Vehicles- on Private Property.....	238-3381 or 238-6040
▪Blight on Private Property (Code Enforcement).....	238-3381
▪Bulky Waste Pick-Up Scheduling (Waste Management).....	613-8710
▪Community Clean-Up Volunteering (Keep Oakland Beautiful).....	434-5126
▪Code Enforcement (Building Services-CEDA).....	238-3381
▪Creeks/Clean Water Hotline (Public Works).....	238-6600
▪Freeway and Underpass Maintenance (Caltrans).....	614-5942
▪Garbage Collection Service (Waste Management).....	613-8710
▪Graffiti/Poster Removal Hotline (Public Works).....	238-4703
▪Household Hazardous Waste Disposal.....	800-606-6606
▪Illegal Dumping- on Public Property (Public Works).....	434-5101
▪Litter Container Complaints & Requests (Public Works).....	434-5108
▪Litter Enforcement (Public Works).....	434-5101
▪Public Housing Maintenance (Oakland Housing Authority).....	874-1520
▪Railroad Property Maintenance (Union Pacific).....	916-789-6355
▪Recycling & Garbage Collection Complaints (Public Works).....	238-7283
▪School Property Maintenance (Oakland Unified School District).....	879-8582
▪Shoes on Utility Lines- Removal (Public Works).....	238-3651
▪Street Cleaning/Sweeping (Public Works).....	434-5101
▪Trash- on Private Property (Code Enforcement).....	238-3381
▪Trash- on Public Property (Illegal Dumping Hotline).....	434-5101
▪Vacant Lot- Nuisance/Blight (Code Enforcement).....	238-3381

## VARIOUS AGENCIES & SERVICES

▪AC Transit.....	891-4777
▪Air Pollution (Bay Area Air Quality Management).....	800-334-6367
▪Airport and Waterfront (Port of Oakland).....	627-1100
▪BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit).....	464-6000
▪Birth /Death/Marriage Certificates (County Recorder).....	272-6363
▪Cable T.V. Complaints (City Clerk).....	238-3567
▪Consumer Complaints (Department of Consumer Affairs).....	800-952-5210
▪EBMUD- Water Service (East Bay Municipal Utilities District).....	835-3000
▪Events & Tourist Info (Oakland Convention and Visitors Bureau).....	839-9000
▪Legal/Civil Matters (Superior Court of Alameda County).....	272-6070
▪Library Information (Oakland Public Library).....	238-3134
▪Liens- Information and Payment (Central Collections).....	238-7030
▪Mediation/Conflict Resolution (East Bay Community Mediation).....	548-2377
▪Property Records (County Assessor).....	272-3787
▪Schools- Oakland Public (Oakland Unified School District).....	879-8582
▪Special Activity Permits (City Manager).....	238-6914