

A Road Map to a Thriving East Oakland where Black Children & Families Flourish and Belong for Generations to Come

Jamaica Sowell, Director of Programs and Policy, Roots Community Health Center, jamaica@rootsclinic.org; Timothy Zenor-Davis, Senior Program Coordinator for Neighborhood Development, Roots Community Health Center, timothy@rootsclinic.org; Tammy Lee, Director of Measurement, Evaluation, & Data Strategy, Oakland Thrives, tammy@oaklandthrive.org

Our Beloved Community: East Oakland 40x40

In the heart of East Oakland, there is a roughly 40 by 40 block area (from Seminary Ave to the Oakland-San Leandro border and from MacArthur Blvd to the Bay) that is home to the largest concentration of Black residents (over 30,000) who remain across Oakland's flatlands.

Rise East is a community-led, collective impact initiative to preserve, protect, and build the 40x40 community - by centering rather than displacing its Black residents. In the face of anti-Black racism and structural barriers to public safety, health, and upward mobility, our goal is to build an Oakland where Black children and families can return, remain, thrive, and flourish for generations to come.



Legacy Work: Building People Power in East Oakland

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, East Oakland was home to a thriving Black middle-class community. Black children & families were supported by the radical legacy of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School and Free Breakfast program. A Black child growing up in the East Oakland community felt safe and connected, proud of their cultural identity and hopeful of their future. An array of factors, rooted in racism, changed the fabric and trajectory of East Oakland, such as urban renewal policies that disrupted neighborhoods, new freeways that decimated once-thriving commercial corridors, and redlining practices which left Black residents with predatory loans and discriminatory appraisals.

Rise East aims to directly confront this history of institutional racism and extractive disinvestment. This is legacy work, rooted in ancestral and contemporary East Oakland movements committed to putting power and resources in the hands of the people. Rise East grew out of an over decade-long, community-led vision to develop a Black space and place (Black Cultural Zone) in East Oakland and strategically organize and invest in the 40x40 community.



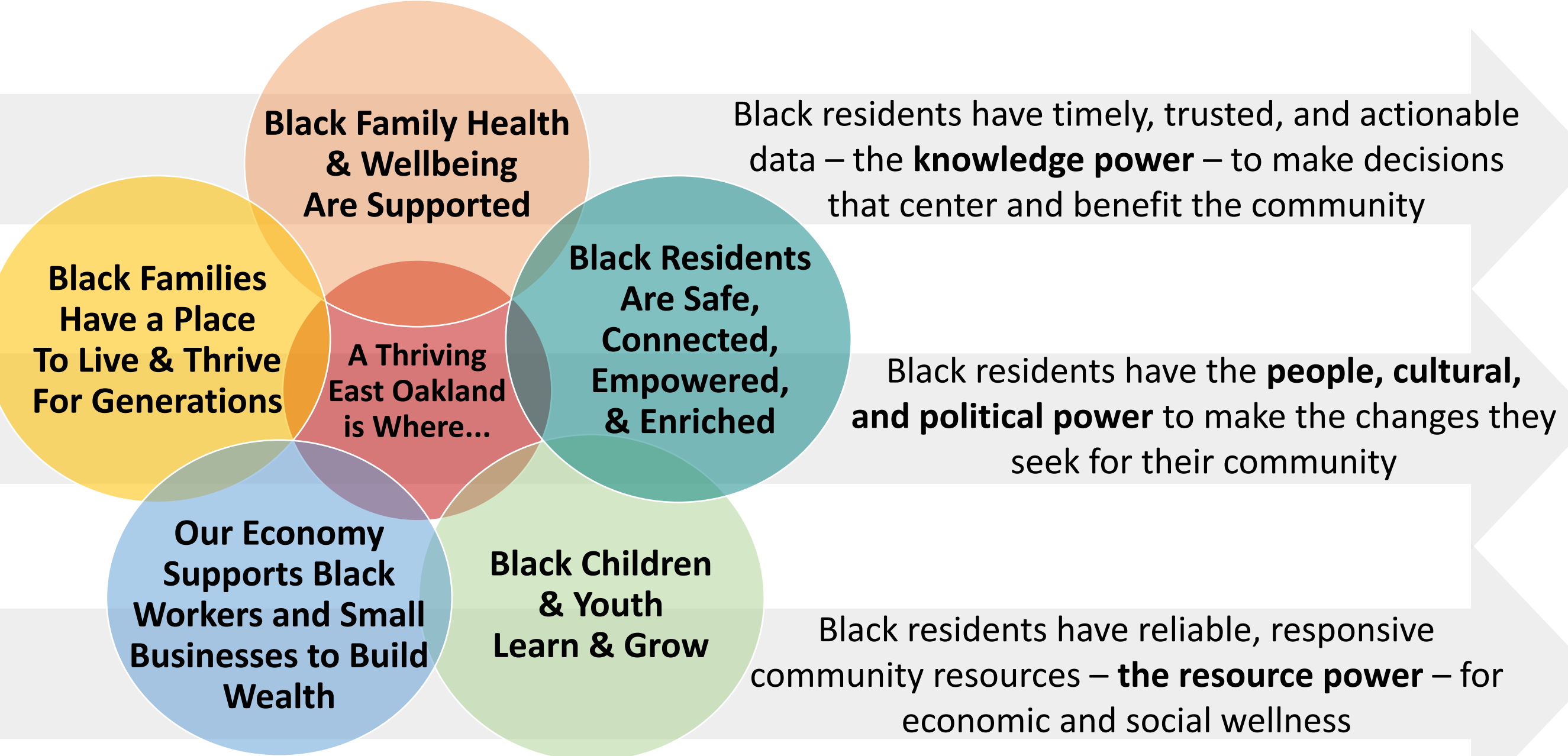
The 40x40 Council is a neighborhood coalition that was formed to transform the 40x40 into a place where all people have what they need to heal, thrive, rejoice and prosper. The 40x40 Council is partnering with Oakland Thrives, a citywide backbone organization with deep structural ties to the public sector, advanced data capabilities, and state & national connectivity, to implement Rise East, a collaborative effort guided by a 10-year plan.

Vision & Targeted Universal Lens

All residents should have opportunities for health, public safety, education, economic well-being, and multi-generational wealth. However, Black children and families in the East Oakland 40x40 face some of the greatest systemic barriers and inequities citywide.

Rise East centers and designs solutions for Oakland residents who have been historically the most cut off from opportunity and power. Improving conditions for the most marginalized ultimately will have ripple benefits for the whole 40x40 community and other flatland neighborhoods.

East Oakland has historically suffered from systemic othering, as it has been treated by institutions as an unwanted appendage to the body of Oakland. Rise East is an opportunity to counter the harmful effects of *othering*, foster *belonging* for those who have been most marginalized by systems and structures, and facilitate *bridging* between Black and Brown residents as well as the 40x40 and other flatland neighborhoods.



Power Amplifiers

- **Economic Power:** Rise East will seed and disperse the 40x40 Community Fund for economic, social, and cultural wellness. Fund will support Black families and small businesses, with initial focus on rapid-response funds for housing & economic stability; micro-grants for Black businesses; and healing funds for Black arts & culture.
- **Knowledge Power:** Rise East will help to launch the 40x40 Community Data Trust to build, host, and govern a robust repository of 40x40 data for community-level insights, action, advocacy, and system accountability.
- **People Power:** Rise East will help to build social capital by investing in community ambassadors, paid positions for residents to serve as peer navigators. We will also support youth-led innovation by scaling community liberation education programs and formalizing youth advisory bodies.
- **Cultural Power:** Rise East will invest in narrative change efforts to shift mindsets and lift community voices. This will include supporting local Black artists and multi-generational storytelling, expanding 40x40 narrative change healing circles, and launching the Town Story Collective campaign.
- **Political Power:** Rise East will invest in organizing and advocacy for neighborhood, policy and systems change. This will include analyzing how public funds are used through an equity lens.

Key Investment Areas

- **Black Children Learn & Grow:** All Black East Oakland youth have an enriching, holistic educational journey, connected with the supports, experiences, and personalized pathways needed to thrive and contribute their gifts to the world.
- **Black Residents are Safe, Connected, and Enriched:** All Black East Oaklanders live, work, and play in safe, vibrant neighborhoods, free of violence and with behavioral health supports, continuum of care pathways, and autonomy to resolve conflict.
- **Black Families have a Place to Live & Thrive for Generations:** All Black East Oakland residents live in affordable and stable housing; Black businesses and commercial spaces thrive; Black displacement ends and legacy residents return.
- **Our Economy Supports Black Workers and Small Businesses:** All Black East Oakland residents seeking to work have ready access to high-quality job skills training and livable wages, good work to make ends meet, professional advancement and ability to grow wealth.
- **Black Family Health and Wellbeing are Supported:** All Black East Oakland families and caregivers are healthy and thriving. Babies are born healthy. Young children grow up in enriching environments. Families and caregivers have resources to flourish.

