



ESTABLISHED IN 1964

MISSION

The mission of the Unity Council is to help families and individuals build wealth and assets through comprehensive programs of sustainable economic, social and neighborhood development.

OVERVIEW

The Unity Council (officially known as the Spanish Speaking Unity Council) was founded in 1964, incorporated in 1967, and received 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in 1968. A nonprofit community development corporation, the Unity Council is committed to enriching the quality of life for families who reside primarily in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood. Through its mission, the organization manages integrated programs that build economic, social and neighborhood resources to create a healthier, safer, and more prosperous community for families, residents and local businesses.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JOBS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The **Unity Council provides** comprehensive workforce development services that specialize in serving low-income limited English proficient (LEP) clients through the **One-Stop Career Center**, which annually serves over 1,200 individuals in seven different languages. Clients are prepared to enter the workforce through intensive case management, support services, on-site community college classes, and paid work experience.. All services are linguistically and culturally appropriate and take place at 1900 Fruitvale Avenue, a primary location with easy access to staff, transportation and community services.

HEALTH CARE SECTOR INITIATIVE

The **Healthcare Sector Initiative** is a job training program that builds the pool of qualified bilingual/bicultural healthcare workers and promotes career advancement within Alameda County's healthcare industry. In partnership with Merritt College, the College of Alameda and local community health clinics, the Unity Council offers dental and medical skills training to prepare limited English proficient clients for careers in medical assisting, dental assisting and medical interpretation. Training is phased to ensure that individuals gradually build their skill level, gain on-the-job training and access support services.

SOCIAL SERVICE ENTERPRISE

PERALTA SERVICE CORPORATION

Originally established in 1975, the Peralta Service Corporation (PSC) is a nonprofit Unity Council subsidiary that provides workforce development and job placement services for adults facing multiple barriers to employment. Each year PSC employs more than 45 adults by securing public space and building maintenance contracts with local business improvement districts, nonprofit organizations and other entities. PSC recently received funding from the Office of Community Services to implement a new weatherization training expansion component that will promote energy efficiency among local low to moderate-income households.

MIO: MADE IN OAKLAND

The Unity Council's newest initiative, MIO: Made in Oakland, is a social enterprise that will create over 60 living wage jobs with benefits in the sewing sector. Low-income adult participants are trained on pattern making, cutting and hand finishing to fulfill sample development and production orders placed by local garment and home fashion designers.

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

The **Fruitvale Business Improvement District (BID)** is a comprehensive neighborhood commercial revitalization program focused on the International Boulevard, Fruitvale Avenue, and Foothill Boulevard commercial corridors. In 2001, commercial property owners voted to adopt a BID to continue revitalization efforts started under the Main Street Program, a neighborhood revitalization model developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2006, owners renewed their commitment to supporting improvement activities for an additional five years. The BID continues the work of the Main Street Program which addresses five components of revitalization: safety and cleanliness, economic development, design, promotion, and community organizing. The Unity Council's accomplishments in this area include completing over 150 façade improvements since 1996, installing public art and streetscape improvements, offering business assistance for local merchants, and coordinating daily sidewalk cleaning, graffiti abatement, and tree and flower planting.

Before



After



Before and after photos of a Fruitvale Business Improvement District façade Improvement

PUBLIC MARKET

The **Fruitvale Public Market** is a small business incubator that provides affordable storefront space and business technical assistance services to micro-enterprises. The project was started to: 1) expand access to business opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses; 2) Promote job creation and micro-enterprise development; 3) enhance business opportunities in the Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods. Opened in 2008, the Fruitvale Public Market's 7,000 square foot indoor-outdoor market supports small businesses that add a colorful array of goods and services to the local Fruitvale community. In addition to retail space, entrepreneurs have access to business planning, management and marketing services that help sustain and promote business growth. The Fruitvale Public Market and the adjacent Plaza De La Fuente serve as a link between the Fruitvale Village and the International Boulevard commercial corridor.

FARMERS' MARKET

The **Fruitvale Farmers' Market** is a year-round biweekly market that provides high quality, locally farm grown fruits and vegetables to the Fruitvale community. The market transforms the beautiful plazas in and around the Fruitvale Village into active public spaces filled with farmers, craft vendors, and local musicians. The market also provides low-income residents with the opportunity to purchase fresh, healthy foods through government-sponsored food programs like Women Infants and Children (WIC) and Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). The Unity Council coordinates the market in conjunction with local community and health organizations to promote healthy and active lifestyles while addressing health concerns often found in lower-income minority communities. The Fruitvale Farmers' Market is located at 34th Avenue and East 12th Street.

HOMEOWNERSHIP CENTER

The Homeownership Center (HOC) works to create opportunities for families to develop financial security by expanding sustainable homeownership for lower income and underserved residents in Oakland and beyond. The HOC helps residents to improve their financial fitness and purchase their first home through a combination of homebuyer education, counseling and first-time homebuyer assistance. Recently, the HOC shifted its focus to expand the availability of bilingual foreclosure prevention workshops and counseling to homeowners at risk of losing their homes.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

The Unity Council's Head Start and Early Head Start programs operate at four sites located throughout Oakland, providing 513 very low-income families with early childhood development services from pregnancy through transition to preschool or kindergarten. Both of these programs provide individualized early learning development, comprehensive family services, and opportunities for family and community participation. Three service delivery options are available to meet the needs of the families. First, home based services offer visits and socialization experiences to pregnant mothers, newborns, and preschoolers. Second, half-day programs are available to the majority of children and their families. Finally, full-day childcare is available at two Early Head Start locations for families with childcare subsidies. All programs offer educational and early childhood development services, health and nutrition education, advocacy, social services and assistance with community resources.

YOUTH & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

YOUTH-RECREATION-AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Youth in the Fruitvale community have limited access to after-school recreational opportunities and programs that help them grow and develop in positive ways. Although the Fruitvale neighborhood has one of the highest concentrations of children living in Oakland, the neighborhood has the fewest after-school activities and teen centers. This is particularly detrimental to the 14 to 18 year-old population, as evidenced by the 50% dropout rate among Latino students in the Fruitvale neighborhood. With funding from the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth and Team Up for Youth, the Unity Council has begun addressing the critical sports and recreation needs of Fruitvale youth. The 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Program coordinates soccer, volleyball, softball and basketball leagues for over 500 youth who practice weekday evenings at the Cesar Chavez Education Center. The Girls Sports Program offers sports and outdoor recreational activities, including tennis, golf and kayaking, for girls ages 9 to 16 years.

FAMILY LITERACY

The Family Literacy Program promotes the literacy development and achievement of parents and their children as they learn together. Literacy is more than acquiring the skills to read and write; it empowers families to advocate for changes in government, education and communities. We recognize parents as the primary educators of their children, and while our main goal is to prepare children to enter school, we also help families learn to support and advocate for their children's education. This approach ensures that Latino students stay in school and achieve academic success.

AMERICORPS

AmeriCorps members are comprised of youth from the Fruitvale community who participate in leadership development and community projects. Members play a significant role in supporting and enhancing the Unity Council's One-Stop Career Center by providing multilingual tutoring and mentoring services. In addition to working directly with clients, AmeriCorps members create partnerships with community organizations and participate in service events. They also participate as volunteers in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) project which has completed tax returns for over 2,300 families and has returned over \$1 million in earned income tax credit (EITC) to the local community. The AmeriCorps program provides an excellent opportunity for youth from our community to develop into future leaders.

SENIOR SERVICES

Through three residential senior housing facilities and the Fruitvale-San Antonio Senior Center, the Unity Council provides high quality supportive services to over 1,000 low-income, monolingual and multi-ethnic seniors ages 50 and older. In February 2004, the senior center moved to a new City of Oakland facility at the Fruitvale Village and expanded its program to serve more Latino, Cambodian and Laotian immigrant seniors in partnership with Cambodian Community Development Inc. The Fruitvale-San Antonio Senior Center is dedicated to promoting healthy and on-going social, educational and physical development for seniors on a daily basis by providing information and referrals and a rich array of activities. Activities include exercise classes, pool, card games, chess, bingo, mental health discussion forums, arts and crafts, field trips and educational classes such as "Survival English", Cultural Studies, Computer Literacy, and Citizenship Preparation. Daily hot lunches are provided by BACS (Bay Area Community Services) for a small fee.

SPECIAL EVENTS (as scheduled)**DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS FRUITVALE FESTIVAL**

View from a music stage at the Día de Los Muertos Festival

Throughout the year, the Unity Council hosts various special events in the Fruitvale community. The largest event, the Dia de los Muertos Fruitvale Festival, celebrates life by remembering and honoring departed loved ones. The 2008 Festival drew more than 80,000 attendees from around the Bay Area and beyond. The Fruitvale Festival is the largest single-day Dia de los Muertos event in the United States, and has been inducted by Congresswoman Barbara Lee into the United States Library of Congress as a "Local Legacy" for the State of California.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT**COMMUNITY CENTERS****COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER**

The Unity Council's Community Resource Center, located at 1900 Fruitvale Ave, houses the administrative offices as well as many of the programs of the Unity Council. Also at the CRC are a Merritt College community satellite office and classes, and an Alameda County Healthcare for the Homeless office. It was built in 1977 and was not only the first commercial building built in the Fruitvale since World War II, it was also the first community resource center in the area where local residents could access a variety of different social services in the same place.

FRUITVALE VILLAGE

Completed in 2004, the Fruitvale Village is a transit oriented, mixed-use development located at the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Fruitvale station. The goal of the Fruitvale Village is to revitalize the Fruitvale commercial corridor and link the community's thousands of daily commuters to neighborhood businesses and services. A model for urban redevelopment, this project supports a number of amenities including a commercial/retail shopping area, a large pedestrian plaza, and community services ranging from health care clinics to early childhood development centers. In addition, the Fruitvale Village houses a public library, ARISE High School, West Coast Children's Clinic, various community organizations, a senior center, and 47 units of housing. The developer of the project is the Fruitvale Development Corporation, a support corporation of the Unity Council.



View of the Fruitvale Village

MASONIC TEMPLE

The Fruitvale Masonic Temple, built in 1908 by renowned Fruitvale architect/engineer Hugo Storch, was purchased by the Unity Council in 1998 as part of its Fruitvale Village revitalization efforts for the area. It has housed many fraternal orders (among them Ah Wah Nee Tribe, Woodmen of the World, Fruitvale Circle and the Masons). Later it housed Babe's Gym (George Foreman trained here) and the Oakland Fencing Club. It currently houses the Fruitvale Public Market and Farmacia Remedios. The Unity Council plans to renovate the Masonic Temple and transform it into a community cultural center for residents and visitors.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Through managing three developments (Posada de Colores, Las Bougainvilleas, Casa Velasco), the Unity Council provides over 180 units of affordable housing to limited-income seniors. Las Bougainvilleas, completed in 1998, has received several architectural design and service awards. The popularity of the senior housing developments is indicated by the waiting lists. Within five years the Unity Council, in partnership with a private developer, will build additional units of housing as part of Phase II of the Fruitvale Village development.

OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE

The Fruitvale district is one of Oakland's most densely populated neighborhoods with a high concentration of children but few parks and open spaces. The Unity Council addresses the lack of parks and recreational assets by utilizing a community stewardship model to sustain new and improved assets for the future. Development has been completed at the premier 9-acre waterfront park at Union Point on the Oakland estuary, along with park redesign at Josie de la Cruz Park. Plans for youth-driven improvements to Foothill Meadows Park, recently renamed in honor of César E. Chávez, and redevelopment of the Fruitvale Plaza Park on International Boulevard and 35th Avenue are currently underway.