



OAKLAND
CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE



**PORT OF
OAKLAND**

OAKLAND METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL OAKLAND / EAST BAY ECONOMIC INDICATORS REPORT

March 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Oakland's economic landscape in 2025 continues to reflect a complex recovery from the shocks and disruptions of the past few years. Broader U.S. economic trends have so far demonstrated resilience—marked by steady GDP growth, easing inflation, and a cooling but still strong labor market—but Oakland faces a more uncertain path forward. The city's employment growth, while positive in year-over-year terms, has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, and high-wage sectors have in particular been unable to regain momentum. Meanwhile, population declines suggest that cost of living concerns and shifting job opportunities continue to drive out-migration. City budget shortfalls remain a perennial and pressing challenge as well.



At the same time, there are signs of regeneration. Trade is slowly returning to form following the pandemic and subsequent supply chain interruptions. The Port of Oakland has made a historic deal with the Environmental Protection Agency to commit to zero emissions in cargo handling and recently released its *Strategic Plan 2025–2030*, which outlines economic development and modernization goals over the next five years.

Elsewhere, Oakland’s creative economy has contracted since 2019, but certain industries—such as *Visual and Performing Arts*—have shown growth, reinforcing the importance of the cultural sector as an economic driver. Additionally, business formation data suggests that, despite challenges, new creative ventures are emerging at a higher rate than the citywide average. Indeed, Oakland’s creative economy can play a key role in shaping the city’s identity and economic future.

As Oakland looks ahead, addressing economic disparities and fostering sustainable growth will require a multifaceted approach. The following report highlights the current economic state of the U.S., California, and the East Bay, providing in-depth analysis on the health of each respective economy, and an overview of what to expect over the next few years. The report also looks closely at the City of Oakland, providing detailed assessments on economic, demographic, business, and housing metrics for the city.

KEY FINDINGS

Employment Recovery Remains Uneven:

While total employment in Oakland grew by 1.0% in 2024, it remains 11% below pre-pandemic levels. Sectors such as *Healthcare* and *Government* saw notable gains, but high-wage industries such as *Finance and Insurance, Information, Professional Services, and Management of Companies* have continued to struggle.

Downtown Oakland Needs Revitalization:

The lack of workers returning to office since the pandemic has limited the economic activity generated during work days in Downtown Oakland, keeping recovery rates lower than many of California’s other major cities.

Consumers Are Worried:

Taxable sales have remained considerably below inflation-adjusted 2019 values, with total taxable sales more than 20% below pre-pandemic levels. Rising inflationary pressure has been the primary contributor to the slowdown in consumer spending.

The Creative Economy Shows Promise:

The creative economy contracted by 12.9% since 2019, but specific industries, such as *Visual and Performing Arts*, have shown growth and promise. The creative sectors remain an untapped resource for Oakland’s economy, and an area ripe for investment and strategic development.

Trade Is Slowly Recovering:

Trade at the Port of Oakland has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, with total throughput at 89% of the peaks of the previous decade. The recently approved *Port of Oakland Strategic Plan 2025–2030*, however, showcases the Port’s commitment to economic development by outlining several goals to be completed in the upcoming years to revitalize the Port.

Tourism Looks Uncertain:

Oakland’s image as a tourist destination has been hampered by the pandemic, with lower passenger throughput at Oakland’s airports, far fewer recreational and business tourists, and several hotels closing due to lack of demand.