



OAKLAND
CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE

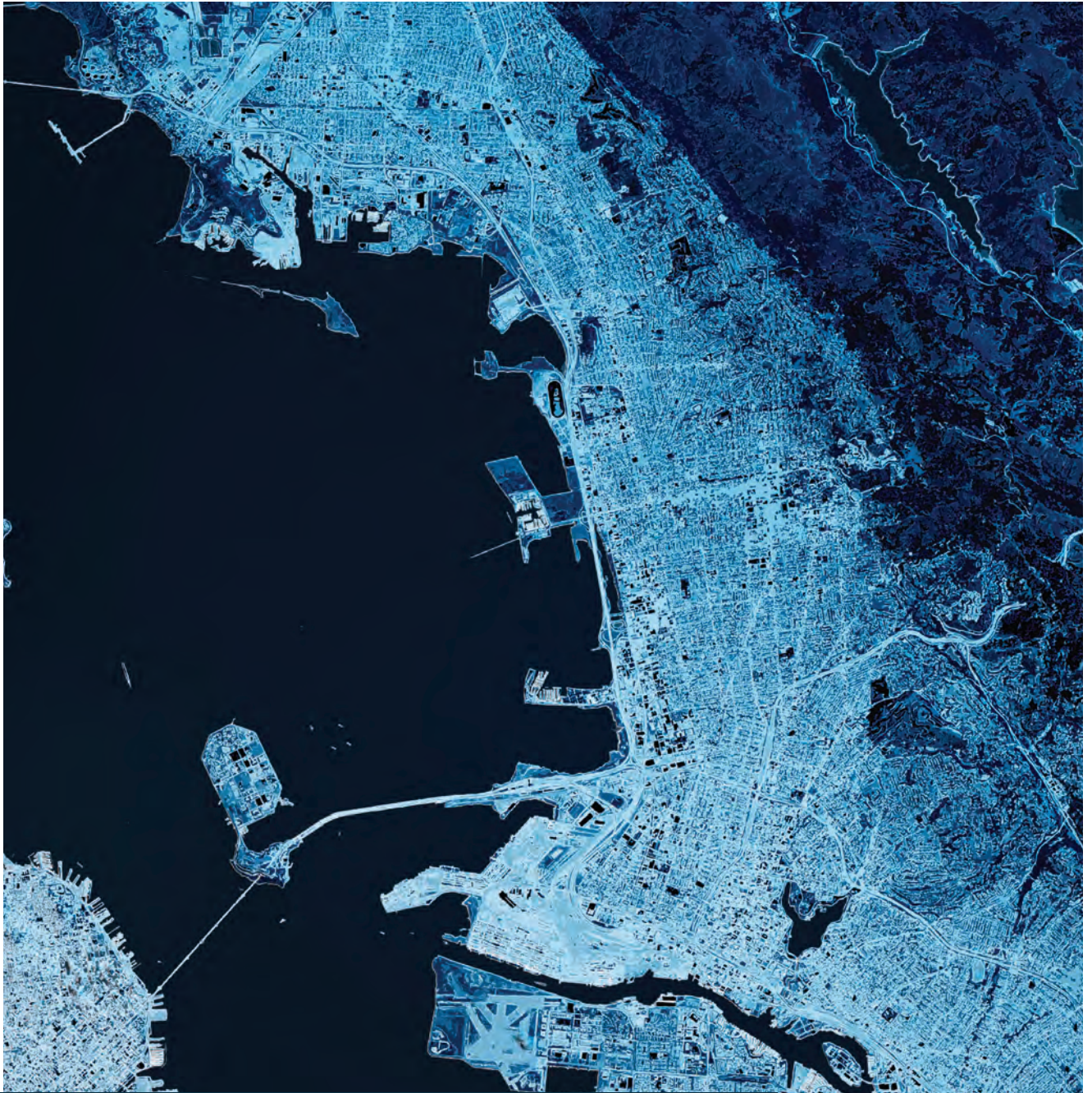


**PORT OF
OAKLAND**

OAKLAND METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL OAKLAND / EAST BAY ECONOMIC INDICATORS REPORT





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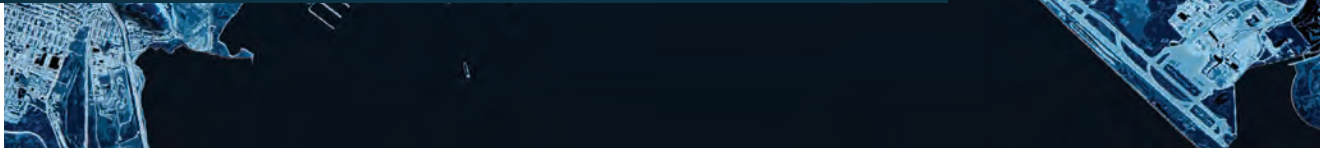


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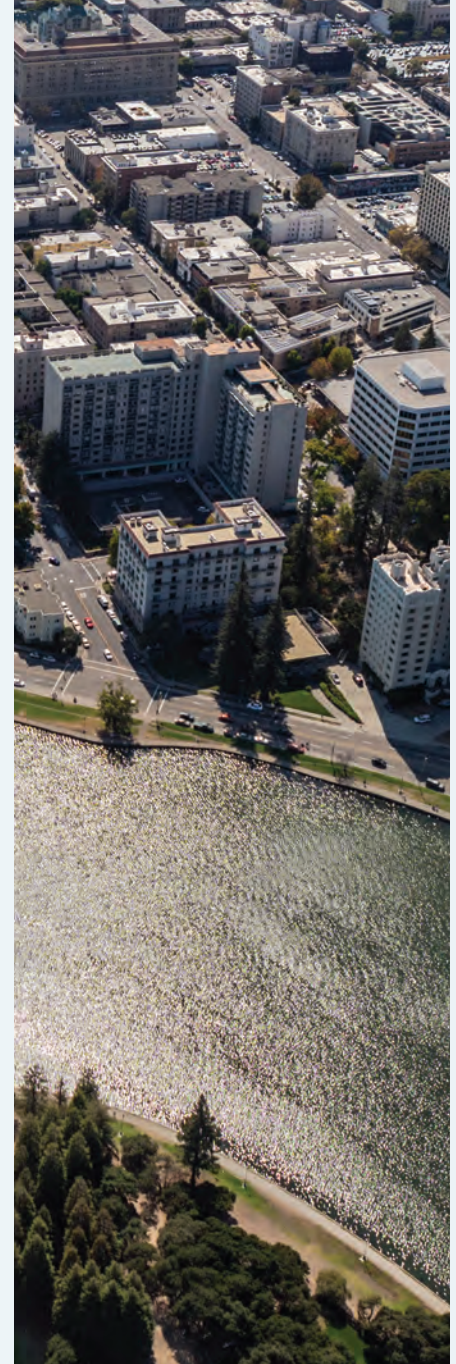


INTRODUCTION

The East Bay and Oakland economies are entering a period of structural adjustment. Changes in work patterns, evolving industry dynamics, shifting population trends, and new trade conditions are reshaping how economic activity is distributed across the region. While these forces are affecting urban economies nationwide, their impacts are particularly visible in Oakland, where major institutions, global trade infrastructure, and a diverse industry base intersect.

The city remains anchored by critical regional assets, including the Port of Oakland, Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport, an expanding health care sector, and a vibrant cultural economy. Yet changing workplace patterns and elevated office vacancy are altering the role of Downtown and reshaping patterns of economic activity across the city.

This report examines these dynamics at multiple scales. It begins with the macroeconomic forces shaping national and state economic conditions before examining trends across the East Bay and within the City of Oakland. Three spotlight sections then explore key drivers of Oakland's economic future: the health care sector, the Port of Oakland, and Downtown revitalization. Together, these indicators provide a snapshot of an economy in transition and highlight the forces that will shape Oakland's economic trajectory in the years ahead.



KEY FINDINGS

The national and state economies remain resilient but increasingly uncertain:

Inflation has moderated from earlier peaks but remains elevated, labor markets are beginning to cool after several years of strong growth, and geopolitical tensions and trade policy uncertainty continue to affect global supply chains and energy markets. These forces create a mixed economic environment in which stabilization in some areas is offset by new sources of volatility.

The East Bay economy is undergoing a gradual structural transition:

Regional employment has largely recovered from the pandemic but remains slightly below pre-pandemic levels, and growth has slowed compared with other California metro areas. Job gains are increasingly concentrated in service sectors such as health care and recreation, while goods-producing and trade-related industries face ongoing adjustments tied to shifting demand and supply chain dynamics.

Oakland's economy is stabilizing but undergoing structural realignment:

Employment has recovered modestly and now exceeds pre-pandemic levels, yet several historically important industries have contracted. Growth is increasingly driven by health care and government employment, while remote work and shifting industry dynamics are reshaping commercial real estate markets.

Health care is emerging as one of Oakland's most significant economic anchors:

Major investments by institutions such as Samuel Merritt University (City Center Campus), UCSF Health (Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland Modernization Project), and Stanford Medicine-Sutter Health (Stanford Medicine Sutter Health Cancer Center) are expanding clinical capacity, research activity, and workforce training in the city. These developments strengthen Oakland's role as a regional center for health care services and education while creating new pathways into health care careers for local residents.

The Port of Oakland remains a critical trade gateway but faces structural constraints:

Container throughput has remained relatively flat over the past decade, reflecting both competition from larger West Coast ports and limits on expansion capacity. Despite these challenges, Oakland maintains a distinct role as a leading export gateway for high-value agricultural products and remains a key node in the trans-Pacific supply chain.

Downtown Oakland is adapting to new patterns of urban economic activity:

Elevated office vacancy and reduced workplace activity have reshaped demand for retail, hospitality, and services in the downtown core. At the same time, investments in health care institutions, new housing stock, cultural activity, and entertainment are beginning to redefine Downtown's economic role beyond its traditional office-centered model.



MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

The economic conditions shaping the East Bay and Oakland do not exist in isolation. Global events, national trends, and state policies all interact to influence local labor markets, business investment, and the industries that drive regional growth. Understanding these broader forces provides important context for the regional trends closer to home.

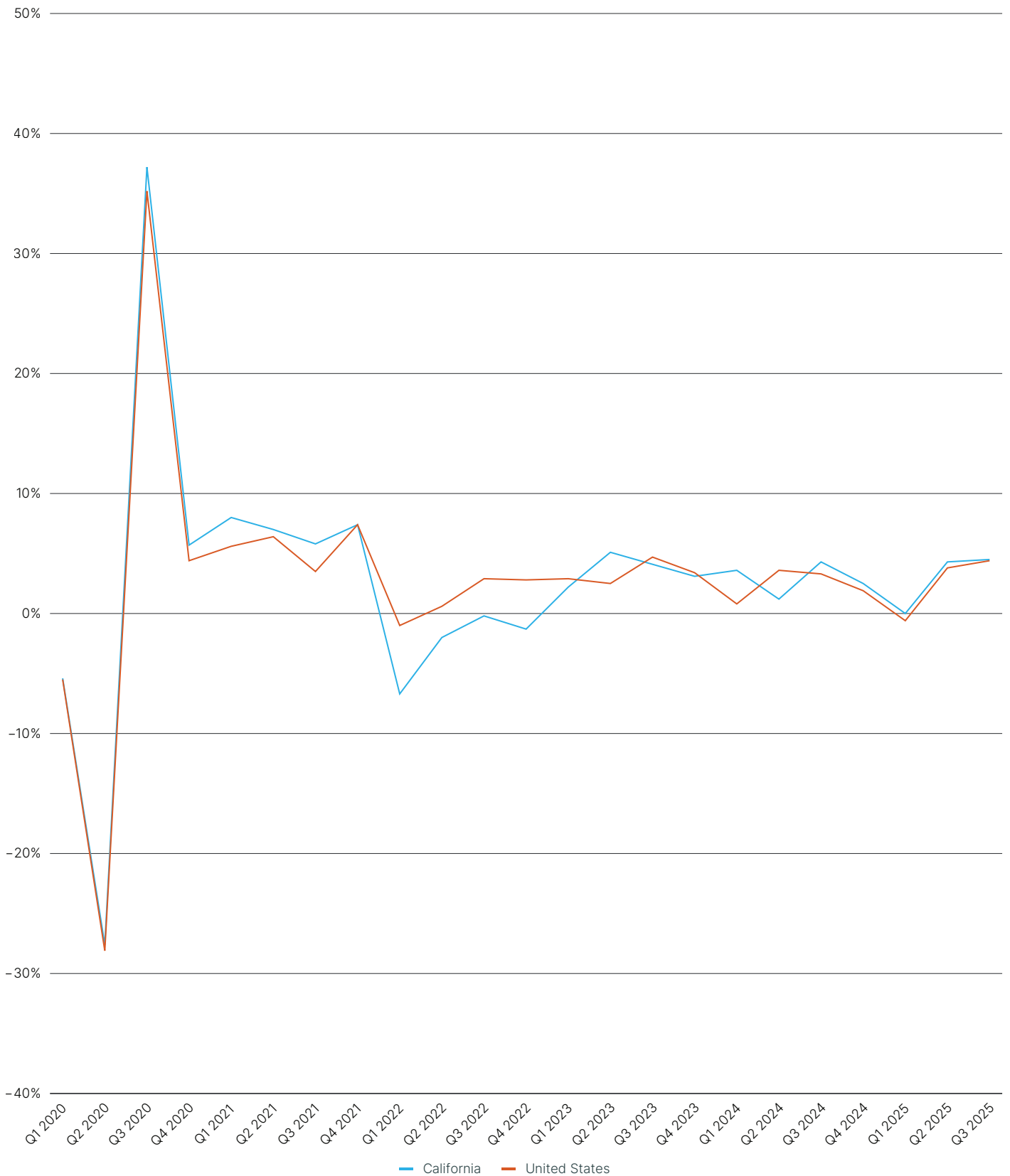
The trajectories of the U.S. and California economies have moved largely in parallel in recent years (Figure 1). Both experienced a sharp contraction in output during the COVID-19 recession followed by a rapid rebound. California's recovery lagged the national economy's in 2022 and 2023 due to pronounced slowdowns in the technology and entertainment industries but has returned to tracking national trends more closely over the past couple of years. This close relationship reflects the scale of the state economy itself. In 2025, California regained its position as the world's fourth-largest economy, underscoring its

outsized role within the United States and the degree to which shifts in California influence national performance.

Entering 2026, however, the economic outlook at both the national and state level remains difficult to interpret. Inflation has eased from earlier peaks but remains elevated, labor markets remain strong but show signs of adjustment, and geopolitical developments continue to affect energy markets and global supply chains. Rather than a single dominant trend, the current economic environment reflects a mix of stabilizing and disruptive forces shaping economic performance.

FIGURE 1: GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) GROWTH FOR THE U.S. AND CALIFORNIA

2020–2025



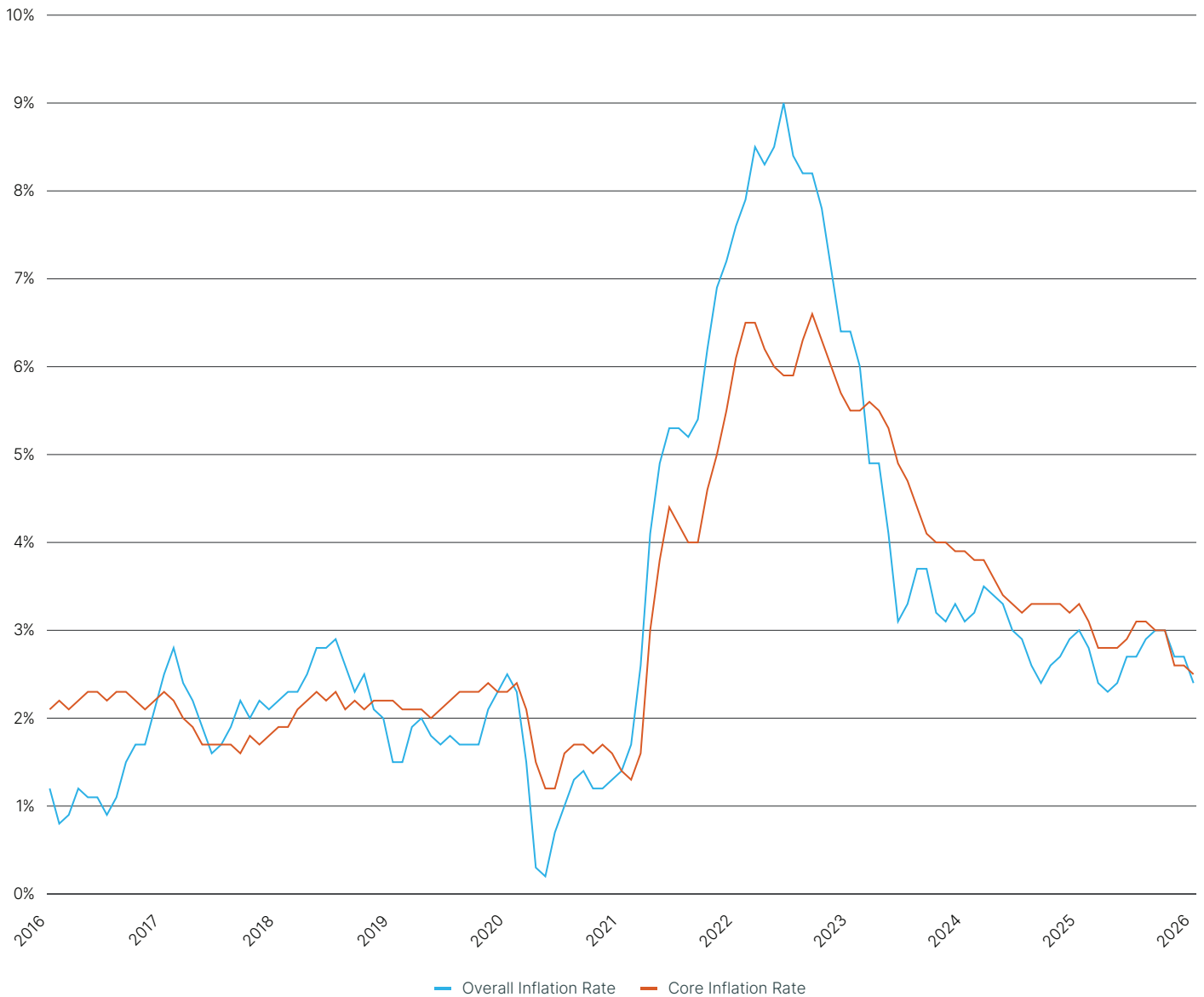
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, CVL Economics.

INFLATION

Inflation remains one of the most important macroeconomic forces shaping economic conditions across the country. After peaking during the early stages of the post-pandemic recovery, inflation has gradually declined but remains elevated relative to historical norms (Figure 2). Housing costs continue to account for the largest share of consumer price increases, followed by food and medical care (Figure 3). Although the pace of price increases has slowed, persistent cost pressures continue to affect household purchasing power and business operating costs across many sectors of the economy.

FIGURE 2: CHANGE IN U.S. CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI)

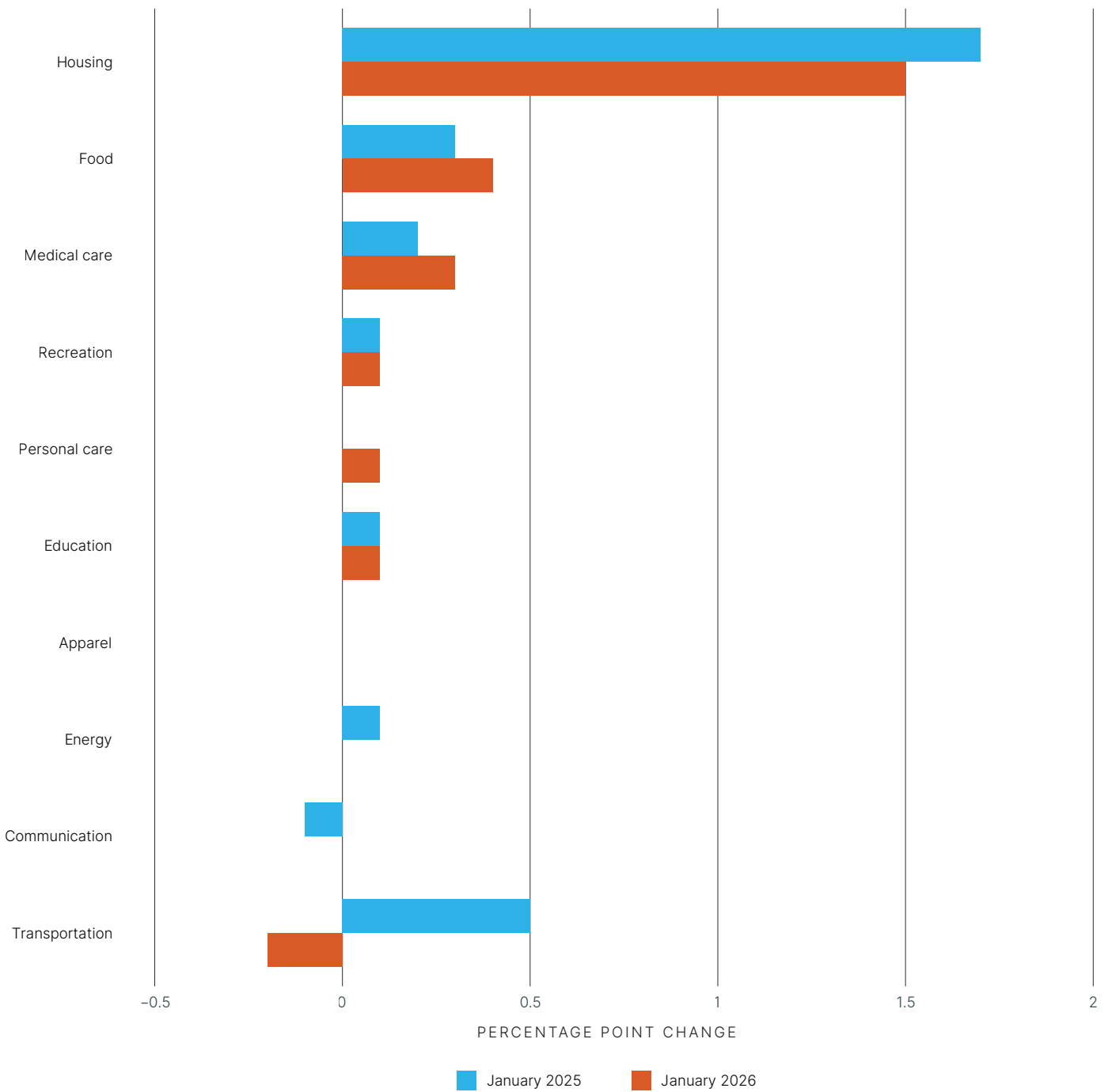
2016–2026



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 3: CONTRIBUTIONS TO CPI GROWTH BY MAJOR EXPENDITURE GROUP

JAN. 2016–JAN. 2026



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CVL Economics.

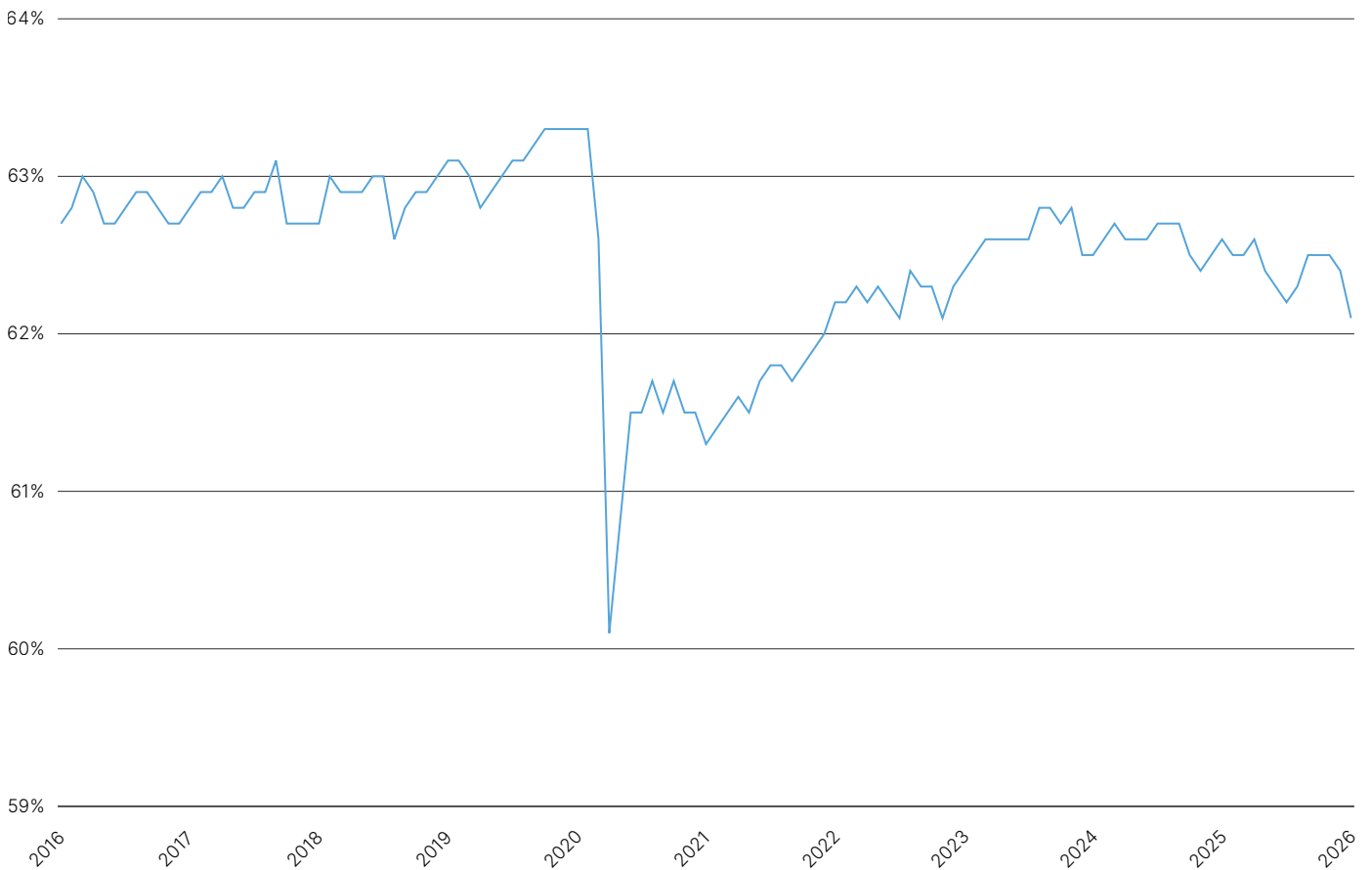
Energy prices have also reemerged as a source of volatility entering 2026. Escalating conflict involving Iran has pushed global oil prices higher and raised concerns about potential disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most critical energy corridors. Even short-term disruptions to global energy supply can quickly translate into higher fuel and transportation costs, contributing to renewed inflation concerns. Together, these dynamics underscore the uneven nature of the post-pandemic adjustment, with some price pressures easing while others remain difficult to contain.

LABOR MARKETS

The U.S. labor market remains relatively strong, but employment conditions have begun to moderate following several years of rapid job growth. National unemployment rates remain low by historical standards, yet job creation has become more uneven across industries. Labor force participation has recovered significantly from the sharp decline that occurred during the pandemic but remains slightly below pre-pandemic levels (Figure 4). Demographic changes, retirements, and evolving work patterns continue to influence labor supply, contributing to a labor market that remains tight even as hiring slows in some sectors.

FIGURE 4: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

2016–2026



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CVL Economics.

Immigration enforcement actions have also affected labor supply in several sectors of the California economy. Expanded workplace enforcement and raids over the past year have disrupted employment in industries that rely heavily on immigrant workers, including agriculture, construction, hospitality, and food processing. Overall, the number of people reporting to work in California’s private sector declined by roughly 3.1% following immigration enforcement operations, a drop comparable to workforce declines observed during the COVID-19 lockdown period.¹

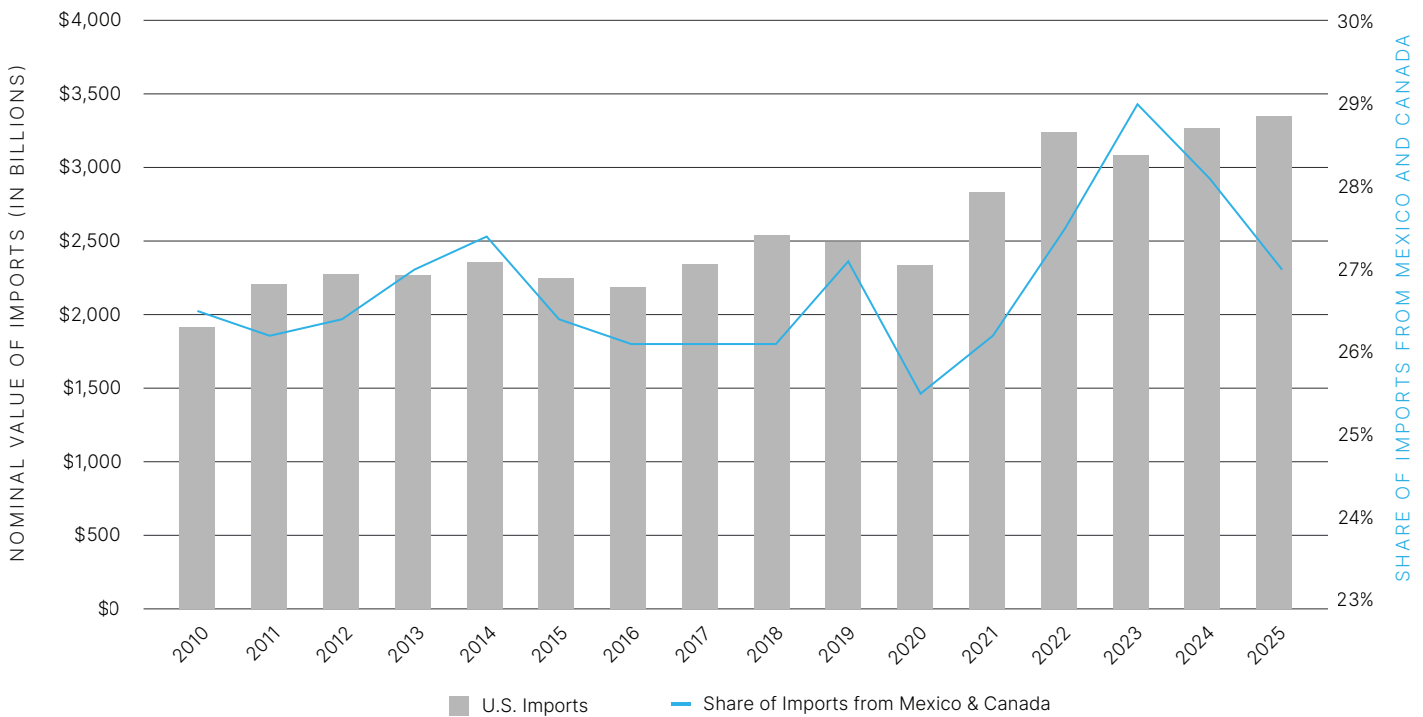
TARIFFS AND TRADE

Federal trade policy has become an increasingly important factor shaping the economic outlook. Over the past two decades, the total value of U.S. imports has grown substantially, reflecting the continued expansion of global supply chains and the national consumer demand for imported goods. Notably, the nominal value of imports has continued to rise in recent years despite the introduction of tariffs and other trade restrictions, suggesting that businesses and consumers have largely continued sourcing goods from abroad even as trade policy has shifted.

The geographic composition of U.S. imports, however, has begun to change. Mexico and Canada together account for a large share of U.S. trade and remain the country's largest trading partners, reflecting the deep integration of North American supply chains in industries such as automotive manufacturing, agriculture, and energy. Yet recent data indicate that the share of imports coming from these two countries has declined in recent years (Figure 5). U.S.–Canada trade, for example, is projected to fall for a third consecutive year—an unprecedented stretch in more than three decades—as trade tensions and stalled negotiations between the two countries have slowed cross-border commerce.²

FIGURE 5: U.S. NOMINAL IMPORT VALUE AND SHARE OF IMPORTS FROM MEXICO AND CANADA

2010–2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CVL Economics.

¹ Suhauna Hussain and Md Fazlur Rahman, "California's Economy Is Already Getting Hit by Immigration Raids," Los Angeles Times, July 30, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2025-07-30/people-reporting-to-work-in-private-sector-in-california-down-after-raids-report-says>.

² Ken Roberts, "U.S.–Canada Trade Fell For Third Straight Year, Latest Data Shows," Forbes, February 16, 2026, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenroberts/2026/02/18/data-to-show-canada-trade-to-have-fallen-third-straight-year-a-first/>.

ADDITIONAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Federal policy continues to shape the economic environment through large-scale public investment and industrial policy initiatives. Legislation enacted in recent years—including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act—has directed hundreds of billions of dollars toward infrastructure modernization, semiconductor manufacturing, and clean energy development. These programs are intended to strengthen domestic supply chains, expand U.S. manufacturing capacity, and accelerate the transition to lower-carbon energy systems.

Yet debates in Washington over federal spending levels, taxes, and long-term budget deficits have raised questions about the future direction of fiscal policy. Rising debt levels and increasing interest payments could lead to changes in government spending, taxation, or investment priorities, influencing economic growth and financial markets. Federal energy and climate policy represents another area of uncertainty. While legislation previously expanded incentives for clean energy development and emissions reduction, the

degree to which implementation of these programs will take place continues to evolve and may be influenced by regulatory changes and court decisions.

California's fiscal outlook presents a more complicated picture. After several years of volatile revenue tied closely to swings in technology sector wealth and capital gains income, the Governor's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year includes expanded spending across several major priorities, including education, housing, health care, and climate initiatives.³ The proposal reflects modest improvements in the state's revenue outlook following earlier budget shortfalls.

Even with this expanded budget proposal, however, significant uncertainty remains. California's revenue structure depends heavily on capital gains and high-income taxpayers, making state finances particularly sensitive to financial market performance. Budget projections also identify several risks that could weaken the economic outlook, including potential federal policy changes related to trade, tariffs, or immigration, as well as the possible responses to the volatility of financial markets.

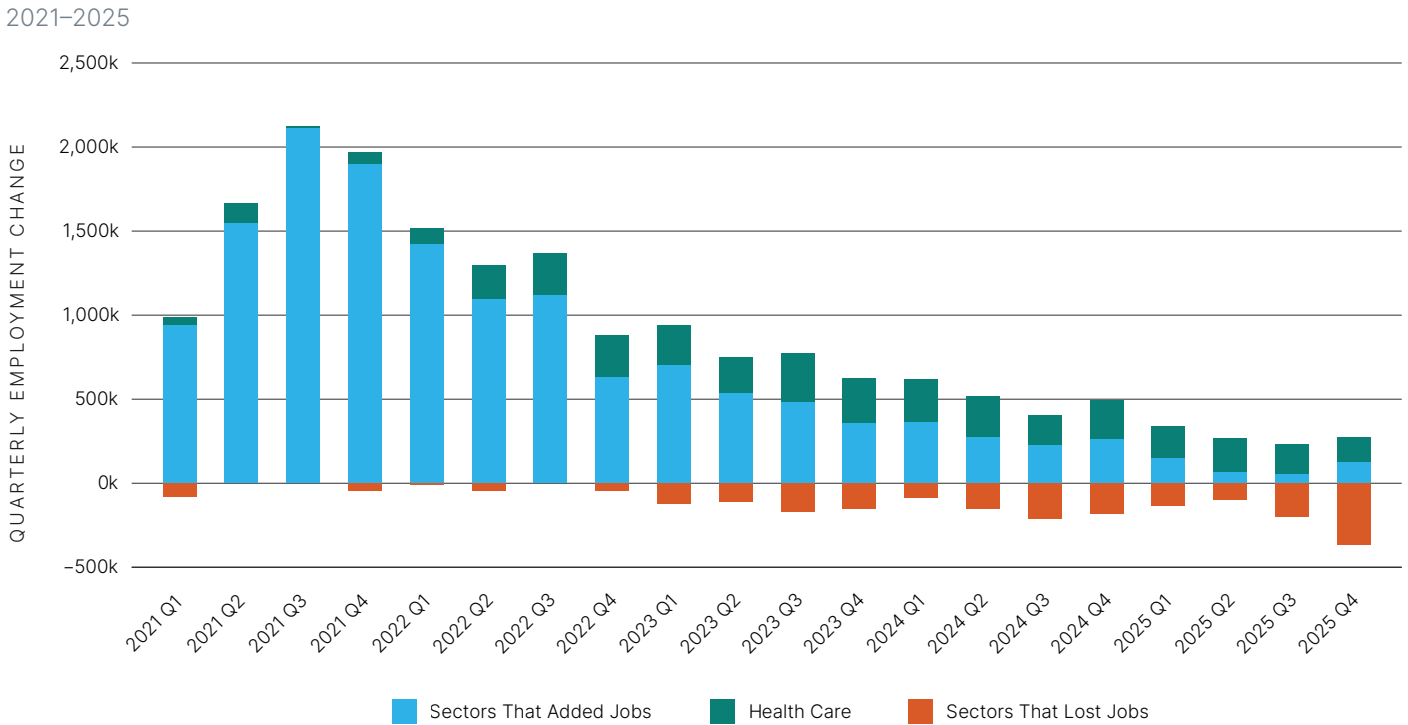
THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR

Finally, one of the most notable features of the post-pandemic labor market has been the outsized role of the Health Care sector in sustaining employment growth. Across the United States, it has consistently ranked among the fastest-growing sectors, driven by an aging population, rising demand for medical services, and the continued expansion of hospitals, outpatient clinics, and specialized care providers. In many

months during the recovery period, Health Care accounted for a substantial share of total job creation in the national economy (Figure 6). Hiring in hospitals, physician offices, and outpatient care centers helped offset slower employment growth in sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and retail.

³ Governor's Budget Strategy 2026–27, <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2026-27/pdf/BudgetSummary/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>.

FIGURE 6: ROLE OF HEALTH CARE SECTOR IN DRIVING U.S. EMPLOYMENT GROWTH



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CVL Economics.

More recent data, however, suggest that the pace of hiring in the sector may be beginning to moderate. Financial pressures facing hospitals, workforce shortages, and rising labor costs have introduced new challenges for health systems across the country. These constraints could slow employment growth even as demand for medical services continues to grow.

Despite these emerging headwinds, Health Care remains one of the most resilient sectors of the national, state, and regional economies. Beyond its role as a major employer, the sector

increasingly functions as an economic anchor, supporting research institutions, medical education programs, and a wide range of related services. These dynamics are particularly relevant in the East Bay, where hospitals, research institutions, and medical education programs play a growing role in the regional economy. The continued expansion of the Health Care sector is becoming an increasingly important component of Oakland's economic landscape and a driver of downtown economic activity.

These national and state level dynamics shape the broader economic landscape within which regional economies compete and adapt. In the East Bay and Oakland, they intersect with a regional economy anchored by major health care institutions, global trade infrastructure, and a diverse mix of industries and workers. The following chapters examine how these conditions are translating into regional trends and local dynamics shaping the region's economic trajectory.



THE EAST BAY

The East Bay economy continues to adjust to structural shifts that emerged during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. While the region, comprising Alameda and Contra Costa counties, has regained much of the employment lost during the initial downturn, growth has slowed considerably compared to other major metropolitan areas in California. This modest recovery reflects a combination of structural changes in the broader

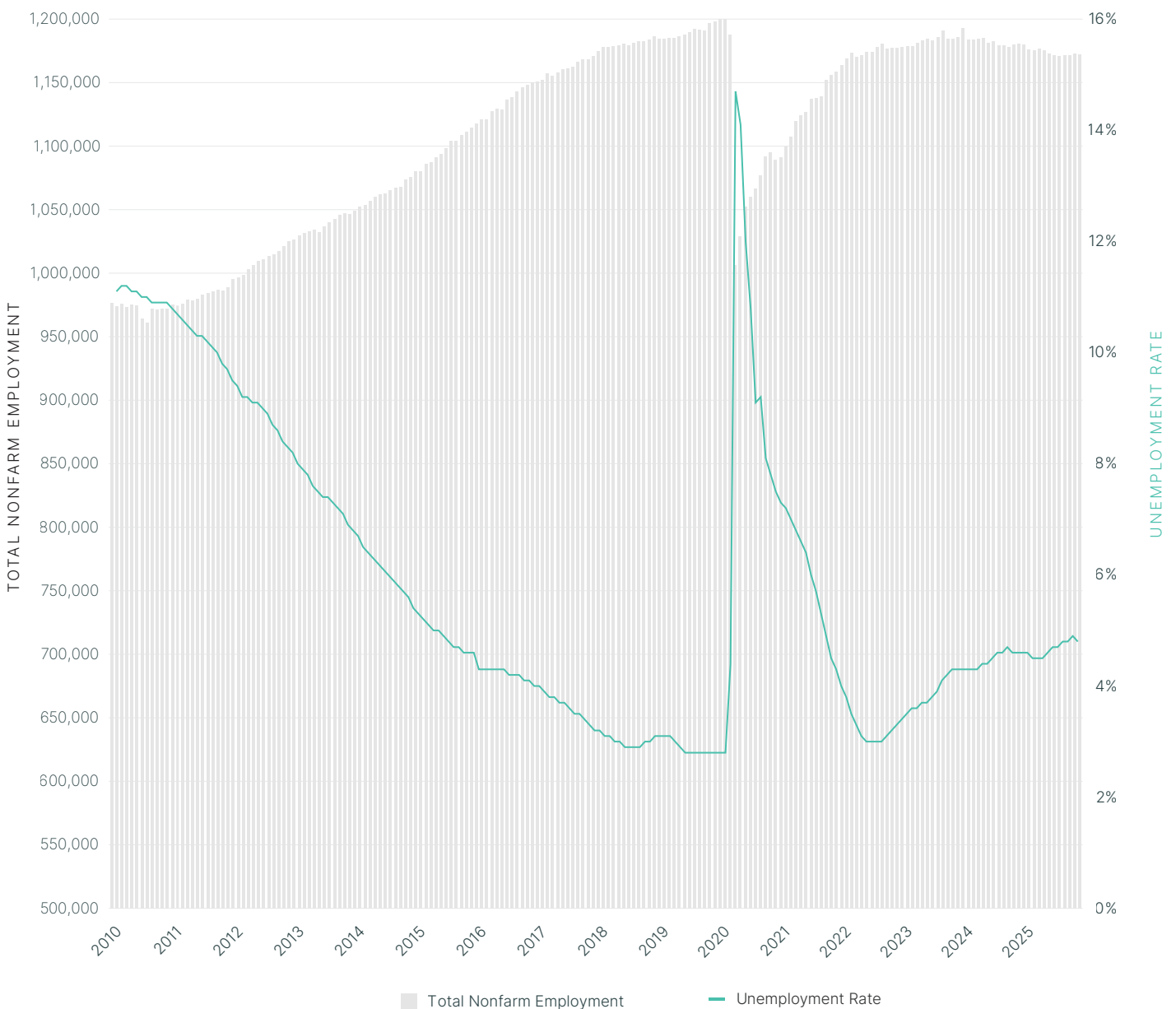
Bay Area economy including, but not limited to, the long-term impacts of remote work, population migration patterns, and evolving industry demand. Together, these shifts are reshaping the structure of the East Bay economy. Examining recent trends in employment, industry composition, and labor force dynamics provides insight into how the regional economy is evolving and helps frame the economic conditions shaping Oakland.

EMPLOYMENT

Over the past decade, the East Bay labor market expanded steadily, reaching nearly 1.18 million jobs by the end of 2025. However, the pace of growth has moderated in recent years, and unemployment has begun to rise modestly from its post-

pandemic lows. The regional unemployment rate increased gradually through 2024 and 2025 after reaching historic lows earlier in the recovery, signaling a cooling labor market following several years of expansion (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN THE EAST BAY
2010–2025

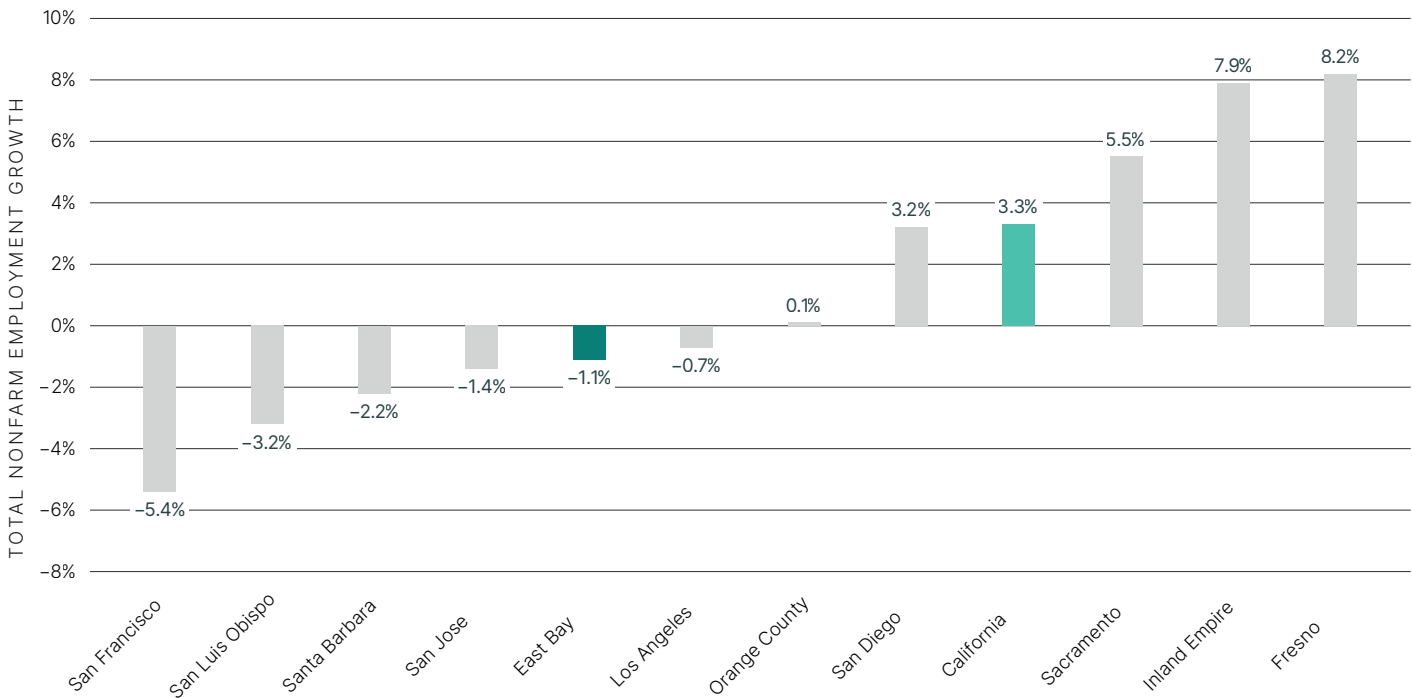


Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CA Employment Development Department, CVL Economics.

Ultimately, total nonfarm employment in the region remains slightly below pre-pandemic levels, contrasting with stronger recoveries in regions such as Sacramento, the Inland Empire, and the Central Valley, which have experienced faster job growth since February 2020 (Figure 8). These trends reflect larger economic shifts affecting the Bay Area, including slower population growth and industry restructuring in technology and professional services.

FIGURE 8: TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATE FOR SELECT METROPOLITAN AREAS

FEBRUARY 2020–DECEMBER 2020



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CA Employment Development Department, CVL Economics.

Recent employment trends reveal a growing divergence across sectors in the East Bay economy. Some industries have expanded significantly over the past five years, while others have experienced sustained declines (Figure 9).

Health Care and Social Assistance has been one of the region's strongest sources of job growth, expanding more than 24% since 2020; this reflects rising demand for medical services and continued investment in health care infrastructure across the region. Several of the largest investments driving this expansion are occurring in Oakland, where hospitals, research institutions, and health care education providers are strengthening the city's position within the regional health economy. The role these institutions are playing in Oakland's

economy is examined in greater detail in the Health Care Spotlight in the chapter that follows.

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation has also experienced strong growth during the recovery, reflecting the continued rebound of the region's cultural venues, events, and visitor economy following pandemic-era disruptions. Cultural activity plays a particularly visible role in Oakland, where arts institutions, festivals, and nightlife contribute to the evolving economic landscape of the downtown core. These dynamics are part of the broader story of downtown's ongoing reinvention, discussed later in the Downtown Revitalization Spotlight.

FIGURE 9: EAST BAY EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

DECEMBER 2025

| | Employment (in Thousands) | Year-over-Year Growth | 02/20–12/25 Growth Rate | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | | | East Bay | California |
| Total Nonfarm | 1,181 | -0.6% | -1.1% | 3.3% |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 20 | 9.1% | 6.3% | 13.5% |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 221 | 4.7% | 24.4% | 24.4% |
| Private Educational Services | 25 | 4.6% | -0.8% | 6.3% |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 19 | 1.6% | 4.9% | -1.5% |
| Other Services | 43 | 1.2% | 3.9% | 0.7% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 49 | 0.8% | 25.8% | 22.0% |
| Government | 169 | 0.7% | -4.0% | 3.8% |
| Mining and Logging | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0% | -14.6% |
| Retail Trade | 106 | -0.6% | -3.5% | 1.1% |
| Construction | 70 | -1.4% | -7.3% | -1.3% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 20 | -1.4% | -19.4% | -3.9% |
| Wholesale Trade | 41 | -1.9% | -8.8% | -4.7% |
| Finance and Insurance | 30 | -3.5% | -18.2% | -10.2% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 87 | -4.0% | -13.6% | -2.7% |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 97 | -4.0% | -4.9% | 0.6% |
| Administrative Support | 62 | -4.0% | -9.4% | -5.2% |
| Manufacturing | 95 | -6.3% | -6.9% | -6.3% |
| Information | 20 | -10.0% | -27.6% | -12.3% |

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CA Employment Development Department, CVL Economics.

In contrast, several industries tied to trade and goods production have experienced weaker performance in recent years. Manufacturing employment in the East Bay remains roughly 7% below its pre-pandemic level, while Wholesale Trade employment has declined by nearly 9% since 2020. These sectors have been affected by shifting global trade patterns, supply chain adjustments, and changes in consumer demand following the pandemic. The effects can be seen across the region's manufacturing base. Electric vehicle manufacturer Lucid Motors announced layoffs affecting hundreds of workers at its Newark facility as part of a broader effort to reduce costs and streamline operations.⁴ Smaller manufacturers have faced similar pressures. In 2025, the craft beer producer 21st Amendment Brewery closed its production facility in San Leandro, eliminating dozens of manufacturing jobs as the company consolidated operations amid slowing growth in the craft brewing industry.⁵

The Transportation and Warehousing sector presents a more nuanced story. Employment in the sector remains more than 25% above its pre-pandemic level, reflecting the surge in

logistics and distribution activity that occurred during the pandemic. However, growth has slowed in recent years as supply chains have stabilized and consumer spending patterns have shifted back toward services. Recent layoffs illustrate this adjustment. In 2025, FedEx shuttered shipping centers in Oakland and Emeryville, eliminating 174 logistics jobs,⁶ while a delivery contractor serving Amazon ceased operations at facilities in Oakland and Richmond, affecting more than 120 workers involved in last-mile delivery operations.⁷ These developments suggest that while logistics employment remains elevated relative to pre-pandemic levels in the East Bay, the rapid expansion observed during the pandemic represented an exceptional period rather than a sustained long-term growth trend.

The uneven performance across industries suggests the East Bay economy is undergoing a gradual structural transition, with employment growth increasingly concentrated in service-oriented sectors such as health care, government, and recreation, rather than goods-producing industries.

LABOR FORCE

Another important shift affecting the region is the slowing growth of the labor force. The East Bay labor force expanded steadily through the 2010s but contracted sharply during the pandemic as employment disruptions and migration patterns reshaped the regional workforce. While the labor force has gradually recovered in recent years, growth remains relatively modest compared with pre-pandemic trends (Figure 10). Population dynamics help explain this shift. After a decade

of consistent population growth, the East Bay experienced a notable outflow of residents during the early years of the pandemic, driven by rising housing costs, remote work flexibility, and migration to lower-cost regions. Although population levels have stabilized and begun to recover modestly, net migration remains volatile and continues to exert an important influence on regional labor supply (Figure 11).

⁴ Caroline Petrow-Cohen, "EV Maker Lucid to Lay off More than 300 Employees," Los Angeles Times, February 26, 2026, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2026-02-26/electric-vehicle-maker-to-lay-off-more-than-300-employees>.

⁵ Madeline Wells, "Bittersweet: Pioneering SF-born Brewery Is Shutting Down after 25 Years," SF Gate, September 4, 2025, <https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/sf-brewery-oracle-park-shutting-down-21031443.php>.

⁶ Aidin Vaziri, "FedEx Lays Off 174 Workers as It Shuttters Emeryville and Oakland Shipping Centers," San Francisco Chronicle, April 8, 2025, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/fedex-closures-alameda-county-impact-174-employees-20265491.php>.

⁷ Noi Mahoney, "Layoffs hit International Paper, J.B. Hunt, Hormel and More," Freight Waves, August, 29, 2025, <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/layoffs-hit-international-paper-j-b-hunt-hormel-and-more>.

FIGURE 10: LABOR FORCE GROWTH IN THE EAST BAY

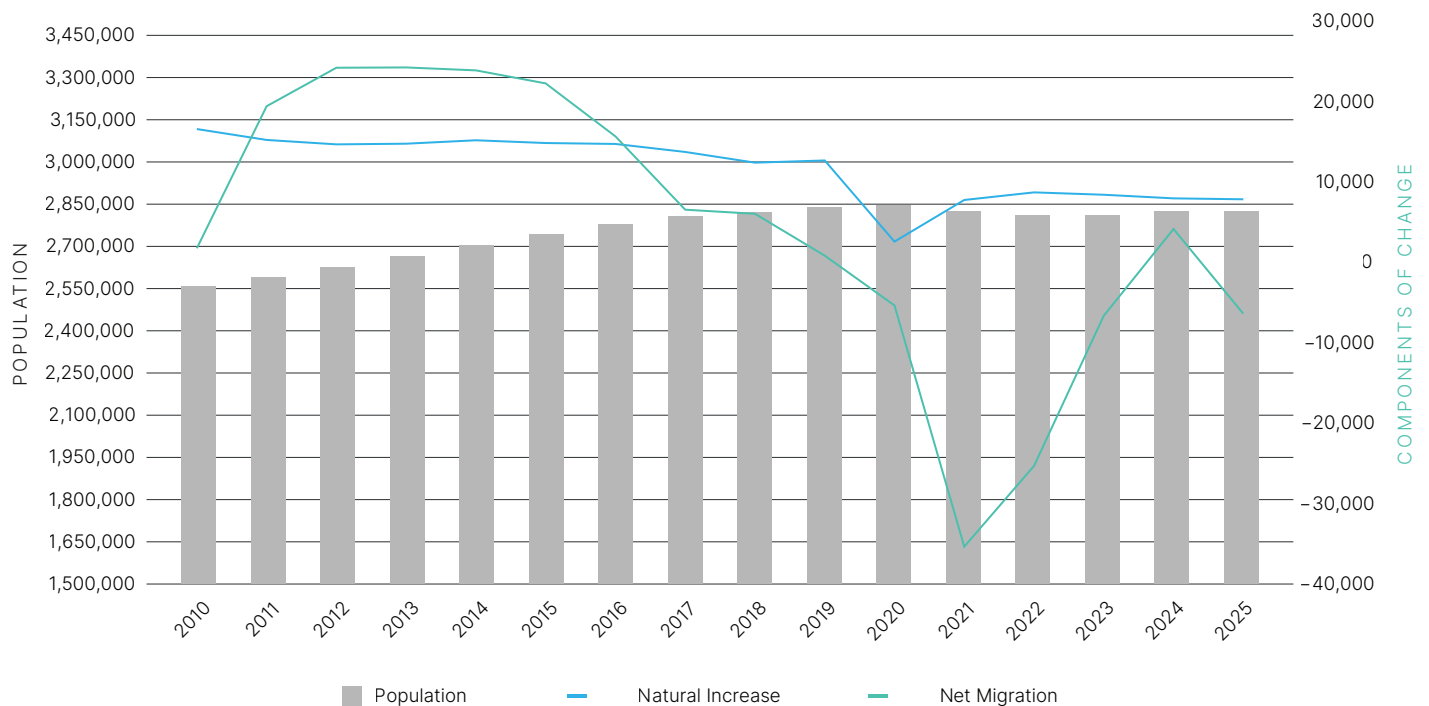
2010–2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CA Employment Development Department, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 11: POPULATION AND COMPONENTS OF CHANGE IN THE EAST BAY

2010–2025



Source: California Department of Finance, CVL Economics.

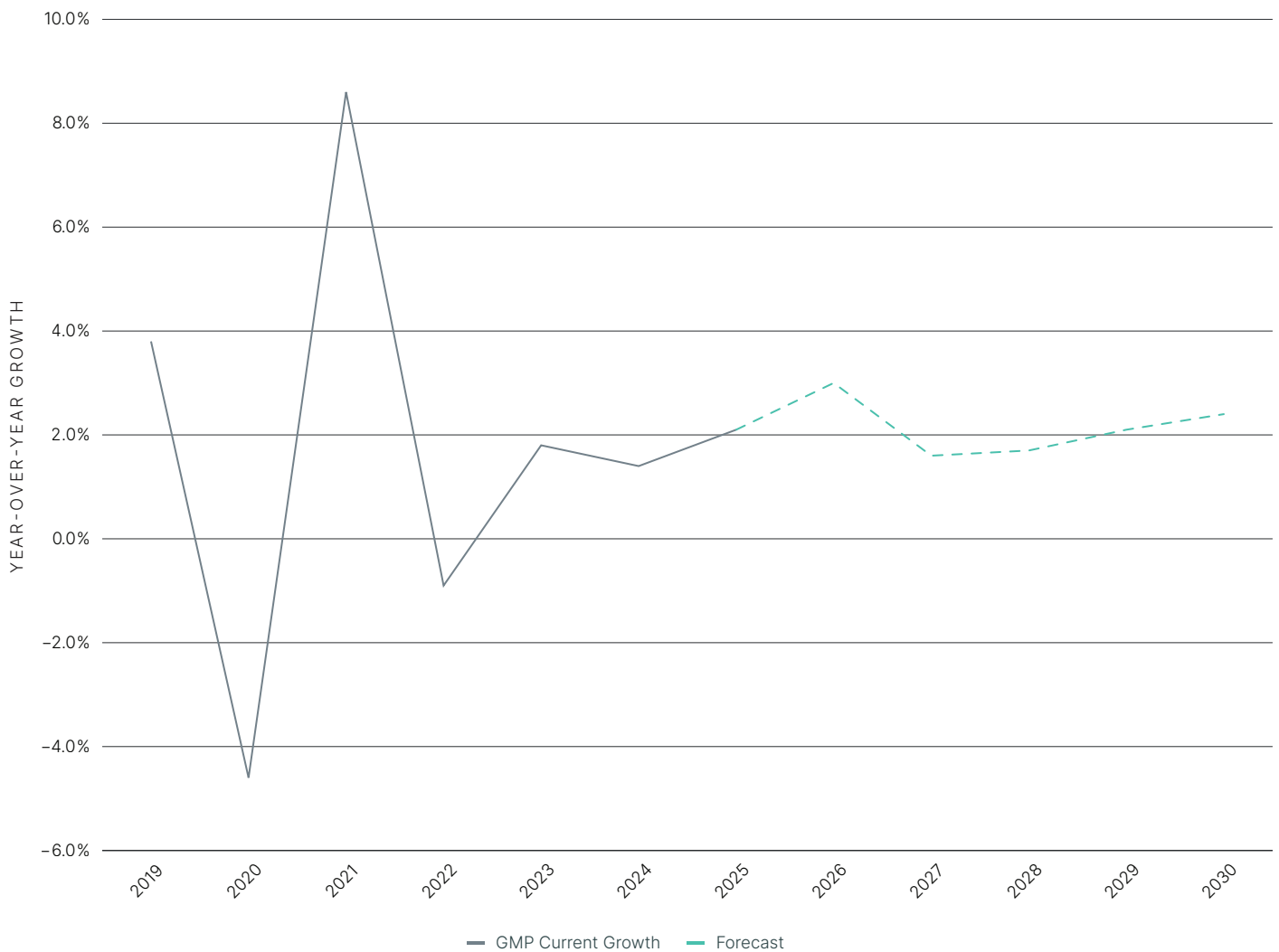
FORECASTED GROWTH

Looking ahead, forecasts suggest the East Bay economy will continue expanding over the remainder of the decade, though at a more moderate pace than during previous growth cycles. Regional gross metropolitan product (GMP) is expected to grow gradually through 2030 following the volatility experienced during the pandemic and subsequent recovery period (Figure 12). Employment growth is also projected to stabilize after the fluctuations of recent years.

Forecasts suggest relatively modest job growth through the latter half of the decade, reflecting a more mature stage of the economic cycle as well as structural changes affecting key industries (Figure 13). While these projections indicate steady regional growth, they also suggest that the East Bay will likely face continued challenges in sustaining the rapid expansion experienced during the previous decade.

FIGURE 12: PROJECTED GROSS METROPOLITAN PRODUCT (GMP) GROWTH IN THE EAST BAY

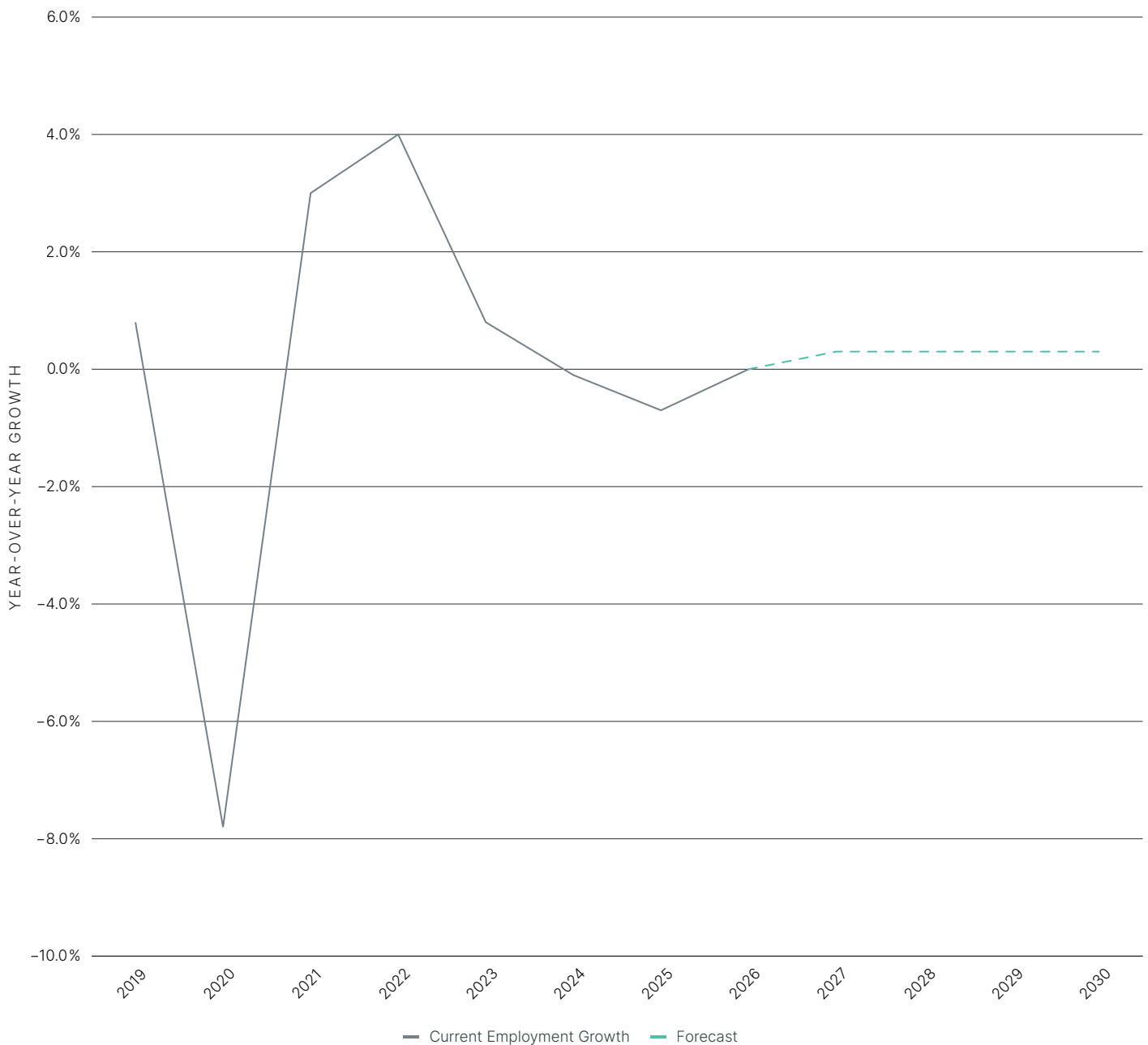
2019–2030



Source: Moody's Analytics, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 13: PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN THE EAST BAY

2019–2030



Source: Moody's Analytics, CVL Economics.

These regional dynamics provide important context for understanding Oakland's economic trajectory. As the East Bay's largest city and primary employment center, Oakland both shapes and is shaped by broader regional trends. Slower employment growth, shifts in industry composition and regional consumer demand, and evolving population patterns are all influencing the city's economic landscape. At the same time, Oakland's unique assets—including its seaport and airport, cultural economy, and growing health care sector—position the city to play a central role in the next phase of the region's economic development. The following section examines these dynamics in greater detail, focusing specifically on the economic conditions and emerging opportunities within the City of Oakland.



CITY OF OAKLAND

As the largest city in the East Bay, Oakland plays a central role as the region's economic engine. The city functions as a major employment center and hosts a diverse mix of industries and institutions that shape economic activity across the broader region. Major assets such as the Port of Oakland and the city's expanding health care sector continue to anchor important segments of the regional economy, supporting trade, logistics, medical services, research, and education.

At the same time, Oakland's economy is undergoing a period of structural realignment. Changes in work patterns, evolving industry dynamics, and shifting population trends are reshaping how economic activity is distributed across the city. These shifts are particularly visible in the city's commercial real estate markets, where elevated office vacancy and changing patterns of workplace activity are

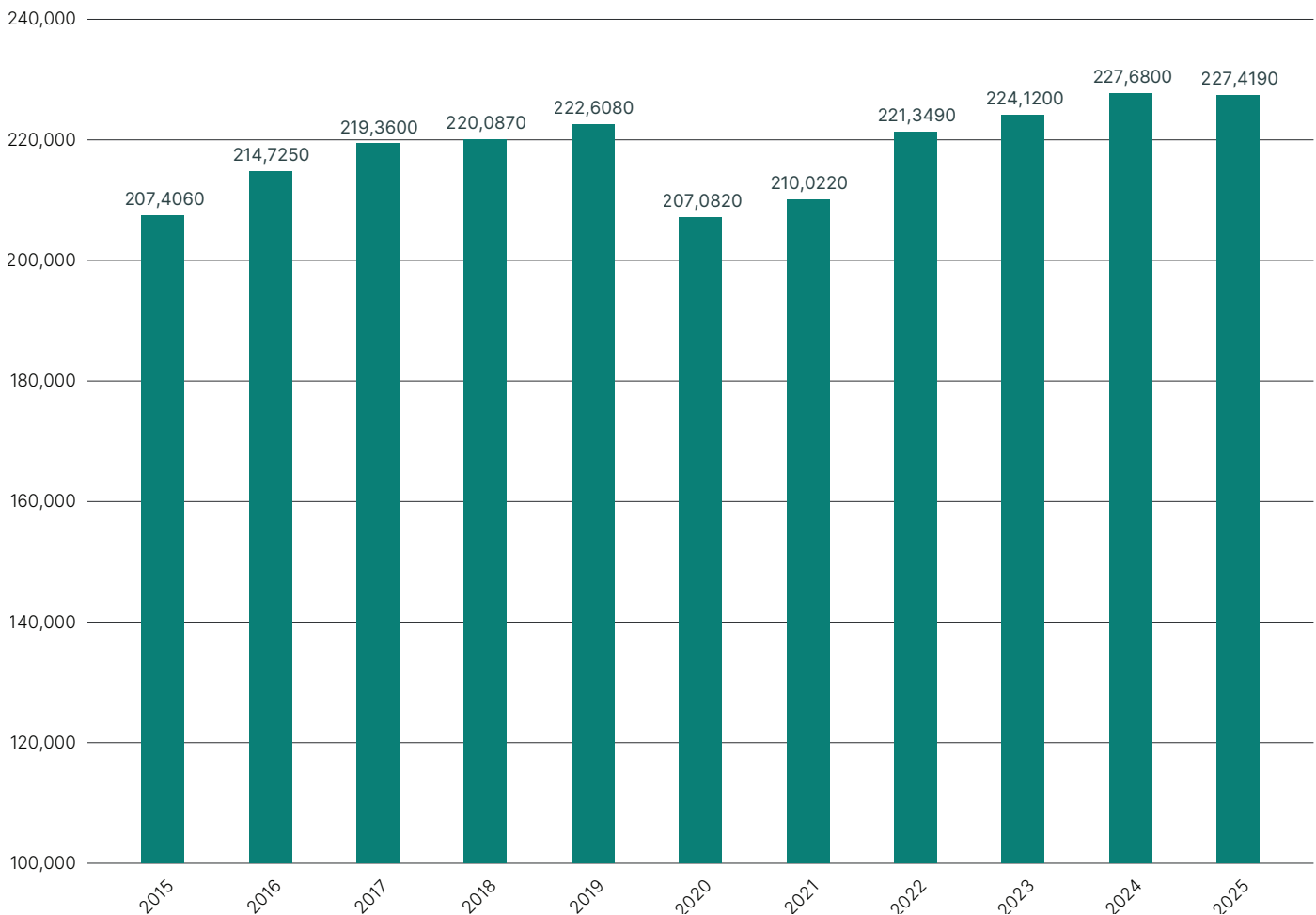
altering the economic role of Downtown. As with many urban economies navigating similar transitions, this realignment is producing short-term pressures alongside emerging opportunities. Examining recent trends in employment and labor force conditions provides an important starting point for understanding how these broader shifts are affecting Oakland's economy today.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE

Employment in Oakland has grown modestly over the past decade, though the local labor market experienced a temporary disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 14). Still, employment has since recovered, reaching roughly 227,000 jobs in 2025—slightly above pre-pandemic levels and outperforming the broader East Bay in this regard.

FIGURE 14: EMPLOYMENT IN OAKLAND

2015–2025



Note: Includes salaried and self-employed workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

Recent employment growth has been driven largely by growth in Health Care and Social Assistance and Government—Oakland’s two largest industries that together account for 40% of the city’s employment base (Figure 15). Meanwhile, several other industries have experienced notable employment declines. Sectors such as Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Transportation and Warehousing; Accommodation and Food Services; Retail Trade; Education Services; Construction; Finance and Insurance; Manufacturing; Wholesale Trade; and Information have all contracted since 2019.

FIGURE 15: OAKLAND EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

2025

| | 2025 JOBS | PERCENTAGE CHANGE | |
|--|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | | 2019–2025 | 2024–2025 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 47,412 | 17.3% | 1.8% |
| Government | 41,733 | 7.1% | 2.0% |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 17,714 | -1.5% | -1.9% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 16,247 | -10.5% | -1.4% |
| Other Services (except Public Administration) | 14,814 | 4.8% | 0.9% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 13,085 | -13.0% | -1.1% |
| Retail Trade | 11,017 | -8.6% | -1.5% |
| Admin. and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 10,788 | 17.4% | 1.1% |
| Educational Services | 8,050 | -1.9% | -0.4% |
| Construction | 7,645 | -1.9% | -1.8% |
| Finance and Insurance | 7,009 | -32.3% | -13.0% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 6,598 | 30.5% | 0.1% |
| Manufacturing | 5,411 | -13.6% | -3.0% |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 4,911 | 19.1% | -0.4% |
| Wholesale Trade | 4,632 | -21.1% | 0.0% |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 3,959 | 8.2% | -2.0% |
| Information | 3,612 | -15.7% | 1.2% |
| Utilities | 2,554 | 186.9% | 8.0% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | 224 | 37.8% | -8.5% |
| Total | 227,419 | 2.2% | -0.1% |

Note: Sorted by sector job count. Green shading indicates positive medium-term (2019–2025) employment growth and orange shading indicates negative medium-term employment growth.

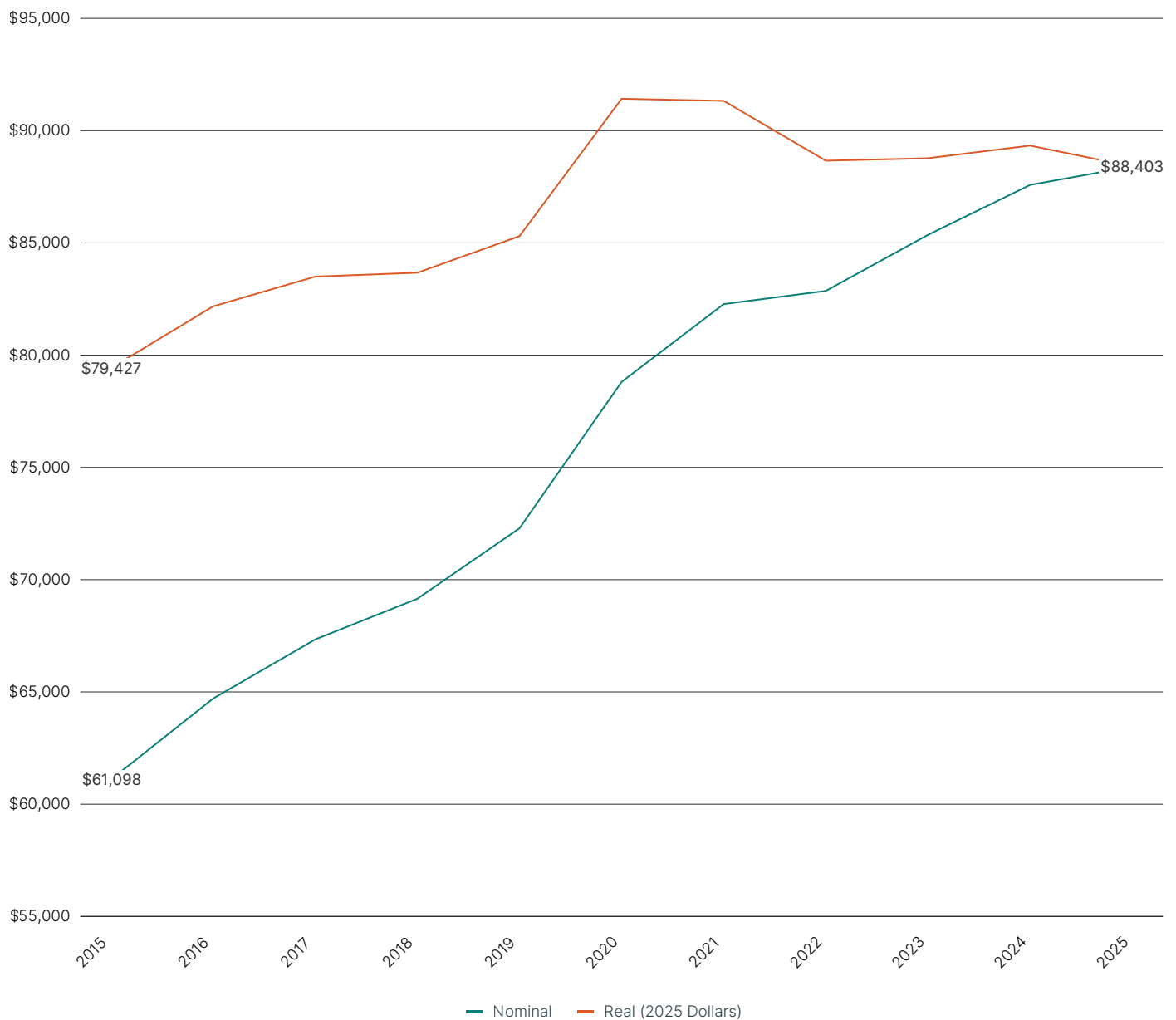
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

Declines in Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, and Transportation and Warehousing (despite regional gains) suggest reduced local employment tied to goods movement and port-supporting logistics, historically an important component of Oakland's economic base. Additionally, many of the other contracting industries (e.g., Professional Services, Information, Finance and Insurance) represent relatively high-paying or trade-oriented jobs that generate outsized value to regional economies.

Wage trends in Oakland show that seemingly steep increases in nominal earnings have not fully translated into gains in purchasing power (Figure 16). While nominal average wages have risen notably over the past decade, real wages—adjusted for inflation—have declined since peaking in 2020 and 2021. After reaching just over \$91,300 in 2021 (in 2025 dollars), real wages fell to approximately \$88,400 in 2025.

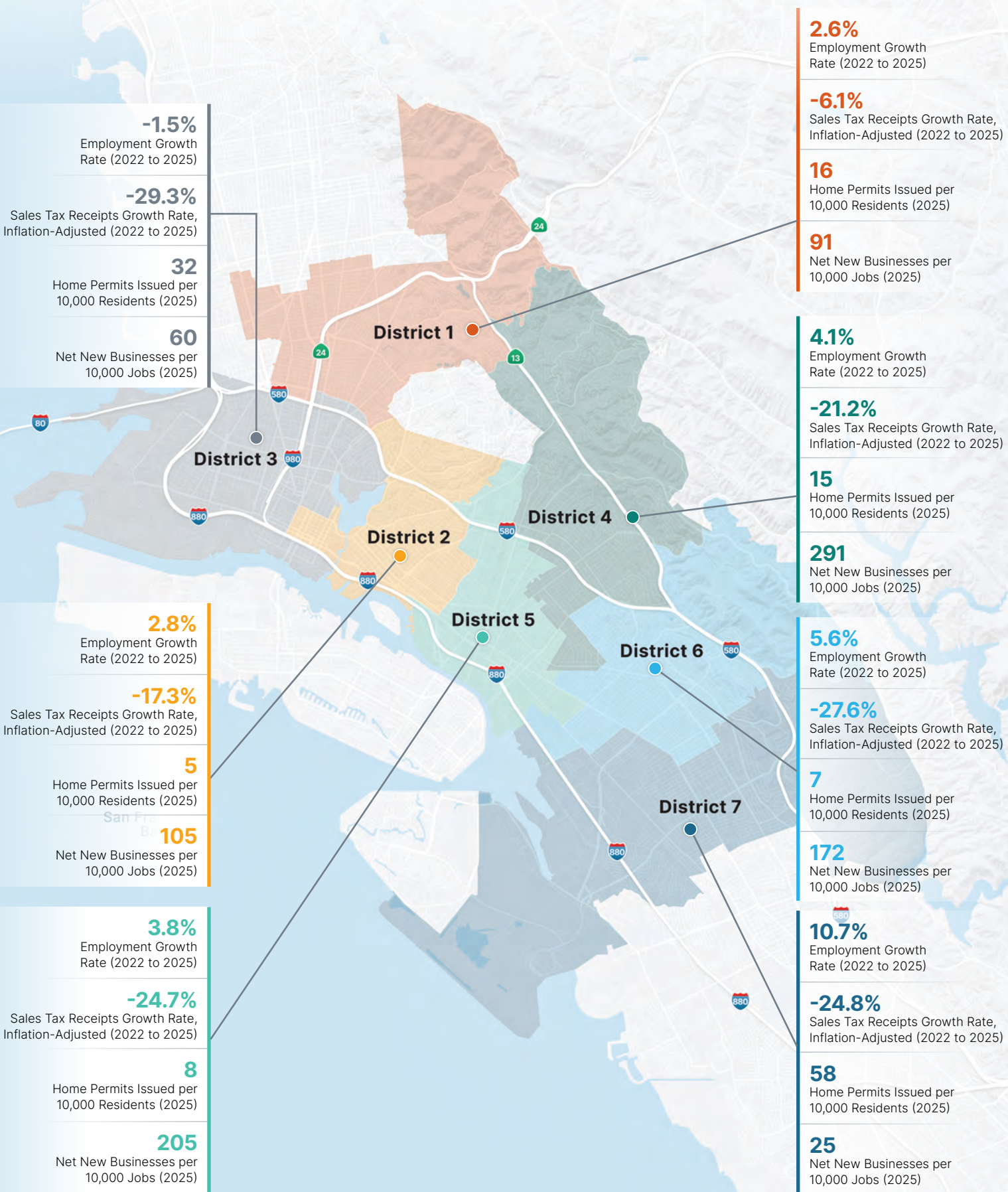
FIGURE 16: NOMINAL AND REAL AVERAGE WAGES IN OAKLAND

2015–2025



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Lightcast; CVL Economics.

FIGURE 17: SUMMARY OF KEY INDICATORS BY COUNCIL DISTRICT







SPOTLIGHT:

OAKLAND'S HEALTH CARE SECTOR

Oakland's role as a regional health care hub is being reinforced by a wave of new institutional investment and development. Building on the longstanding presence of major health care organizations including Kaiser Permanente, the city's largest employer with over 11,000 employees in 2025, major capital projects from Samuel Merritt University, UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, and a joint venture between Stanford Medicine and Sutter Health are expanding the city's health care infrastructure. At the same time, new facilities are creating additional clinical capacity in the city while workforce development initiatives are creating additional pathways into health care careers for local residents.

Samuel Merritt University: New City Center Campus

Founded in 1909, Samuel Merritt University (SMU) is a statewide leader in nursing and advanced practice provider education and is an Oakland anchor institution. With satellite campuses in Foster City, Sacramento, and Fresno, SMU's flagship Oakland campus accounted for 60% of total enrollment in Fall 2024 (for 75% excluding online students) and houses the University's administrative staff. Capitalizing on expanded academic programming and growing enrollment over the previous decade, SMU constructed its new \$240 million City Center Campus in Downtown Oakland, which opened in January 2026. The new campus, which replaces its previous campus in the Pill Hill neighborhood of Oakland, consists of 250,000 square feet of new educational facilities, including classrooms, labs, and offices. The new campus is expected to accommodate future increases in enrollment.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Commercial real estate plays a critical role in local economies by providing the physical space that supports business activity, employment, logistics, retail services, and visitor spending. The performance of office buildings, retail corridors, industrial facilities, and hotels serves as an important indicator of broader economic health and urban vitality. In Oakland, the commercial real estate landscape reflects a diverse mix of property types with distinct market dynamics.

Commercial Property Mix

Oakland's commercial real estate inventory reflects a diverse mix of industrial, office, and retail space, each with distinct market dynamics (Figure 18). Industrial space represents the largest share of commercial inventory in the city at roughly

32.7 million square feet, followed closely by office space at 31.8 million square feet, while retail accounts for a smaller but still significant 16.9 million square feet.

FIGURE 18: COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE SPACE IN OAKLAND

Q4-2025

| | INVENTORY (SQFT) | VACANCY RATE | AVERAGE RENT/SQFT | DOWNTOWN OAKLAND INVENTORY SHARE |
|------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Industrial | 32,745,255 | 8.3% | \$13.66 | 5.8% |
| Office | 31,831,926 | 17.6% | \$45.12 | 72.8% |
| Retail | 16,900,363 | 4.3% | \$26.85 | 19.3% |

Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Notably, office space is heavily concentrated in Downtown Oakland, which contains nearly three-quarters of the city's total office inventory. This concentration means that broader office market challenges—including elevated vacancy rates approaching 18%—have particularly significant implications for the health and activity of the Downtown core. In contrast, industrial and retail space are more distributed across the city, reflecting Oakland's role as both a regional logistics hub and neighborhood-serving commercial center.

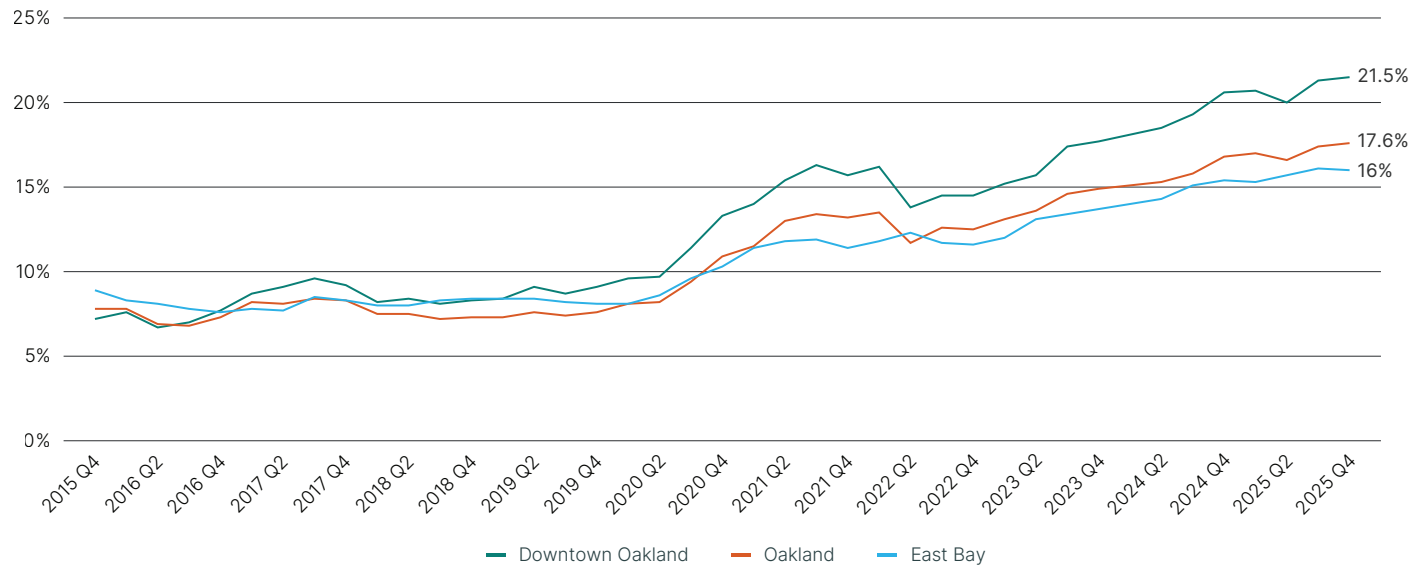
Office

Oakland's office market has experienced significant disruption over the past decade, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Office vacancy rates remained relatively stable between 2015 and 2019, generally hovering between 7% and 9% across Oakland and the broader East Bay (Figure 19).

However, vacancy began to rise sharply in 2020 as remote and hybrid work arrangements reduced demand for office space and have continued to increase since then. By the end of 2025, office vacancy in Oakland had risen to nearly 18%, while vacancy in Downtown Oakland reached nearly 22%.

FIGURE 19: OFFICE VACANCY RATE COMPARISONS

2015–2025

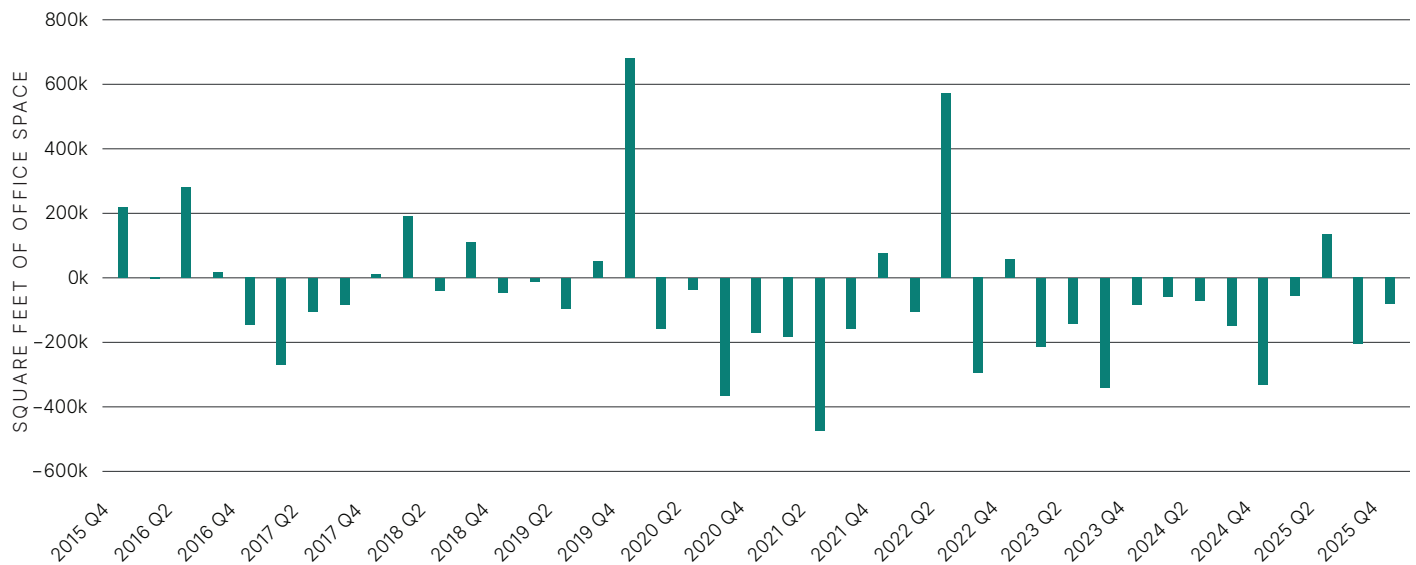


Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Rising vacancy rates reflect several years of negative net absorption, as tenants vacated more office space than was newly occupied (Figure 20). The Oakland office market experienced several quarters of significant move-outs beginning in 2020, with negative absorption persisting through much of the post-pandemic period. While the market has experienced occasional quarters of positive absorption, these gains have generally been insufficient to offset the cumulative reductions in occupied space as many firms downsized their office footprints or consolidated operations.

FIGURE 20: OFFICE NET ABSORPTION IN OAKLAND

2015–2025

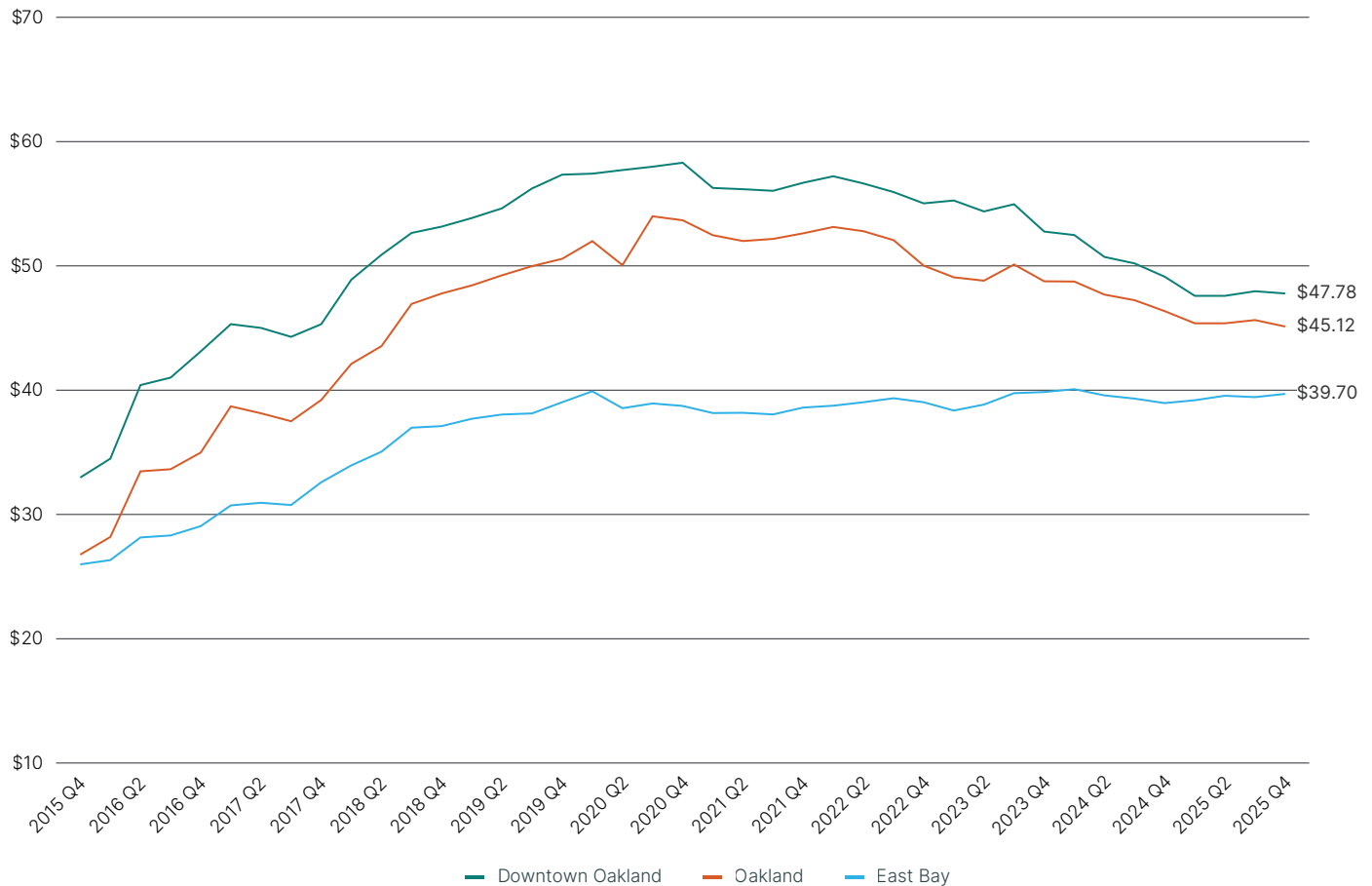


Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Despite the significant increase in vacancy rates, office rents in Oakland have remained relatively stable by comparison (Figure 21). Asking rents rose steadily between 2015 and 2020 before moderating in the years following the pandemic. By 2025, average asking rents in Downtown Oakland had declined to roughly \$48 per square foot but remain higher than rents across Oakland overall and the broader East Bay. This reflects the concentration of higher-quality, transit-accessible Class A buildings in the downtown core, where landlords have generally held firm on asking rents while offering concessions or tenant improvements to attract tenants.

FIGURE 21: ANNUAL OFFICE ASKING RENT PER SQUARE FOOT COMPARISONS

2015–2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

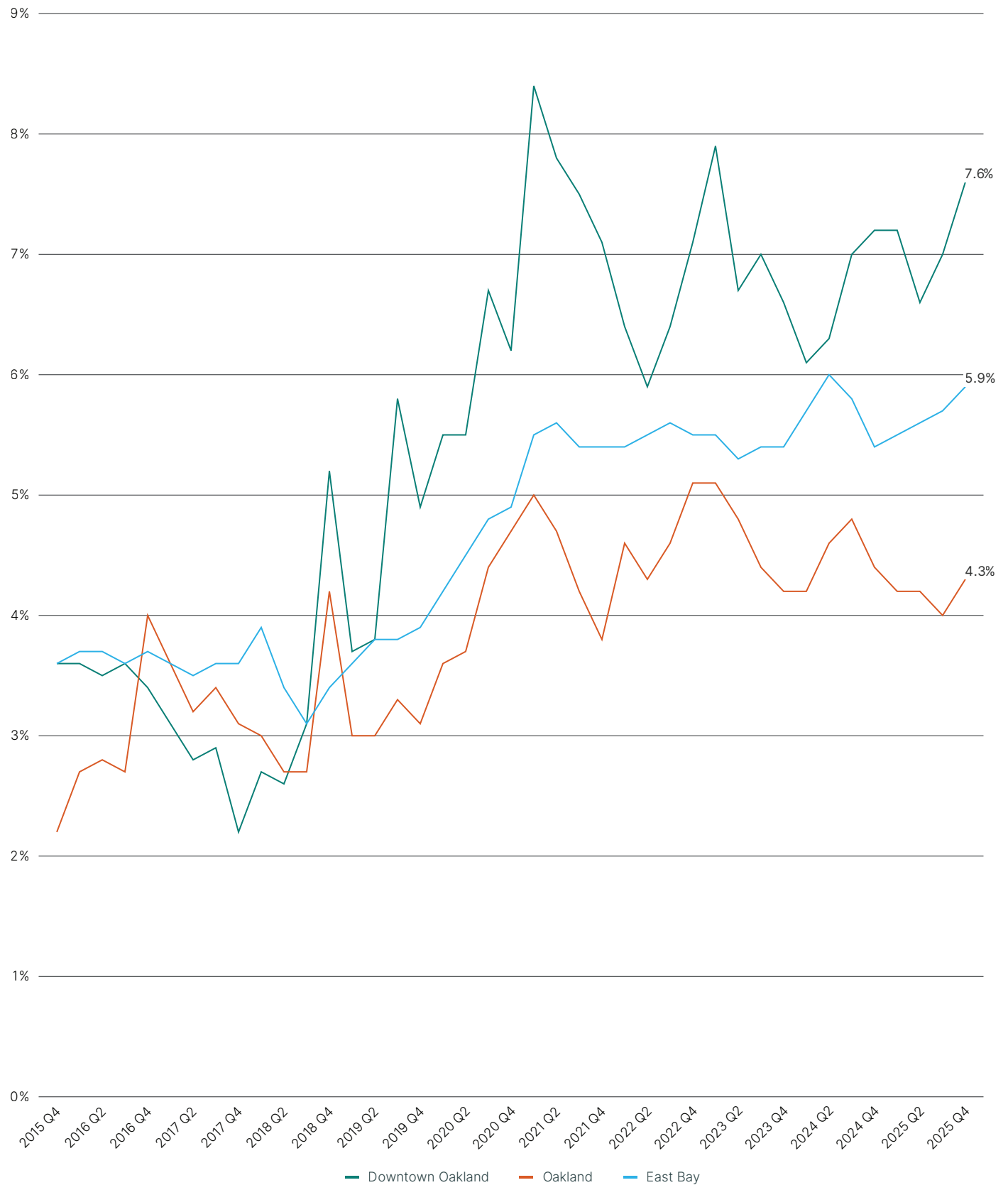
Retail

Oakland’s retail market has faced ongoing challenges in recent years, though conditions have remained more stable than those observed in the office sector. Retail vacancy rates remained relatively stable throughout much of the late 2010s but began to increase in the years following the pandemic (Figure 22). By 2025, retail availability across the East Bay had risen to approximately 6%, the highest level since the

Great Recession, reflecting a combination of changes in consumer behavior, retailer consolidation, and population shifts. Downtown Oakland has a higher retail vacancy than Oakland and the East Bay more broadly, as shifts in office activity have reduced daytime demand for restaurants, cafes, and convenience retail.

FIGURE 22: RETAIL VACANCY RATE COMPARISONS

2015-2025

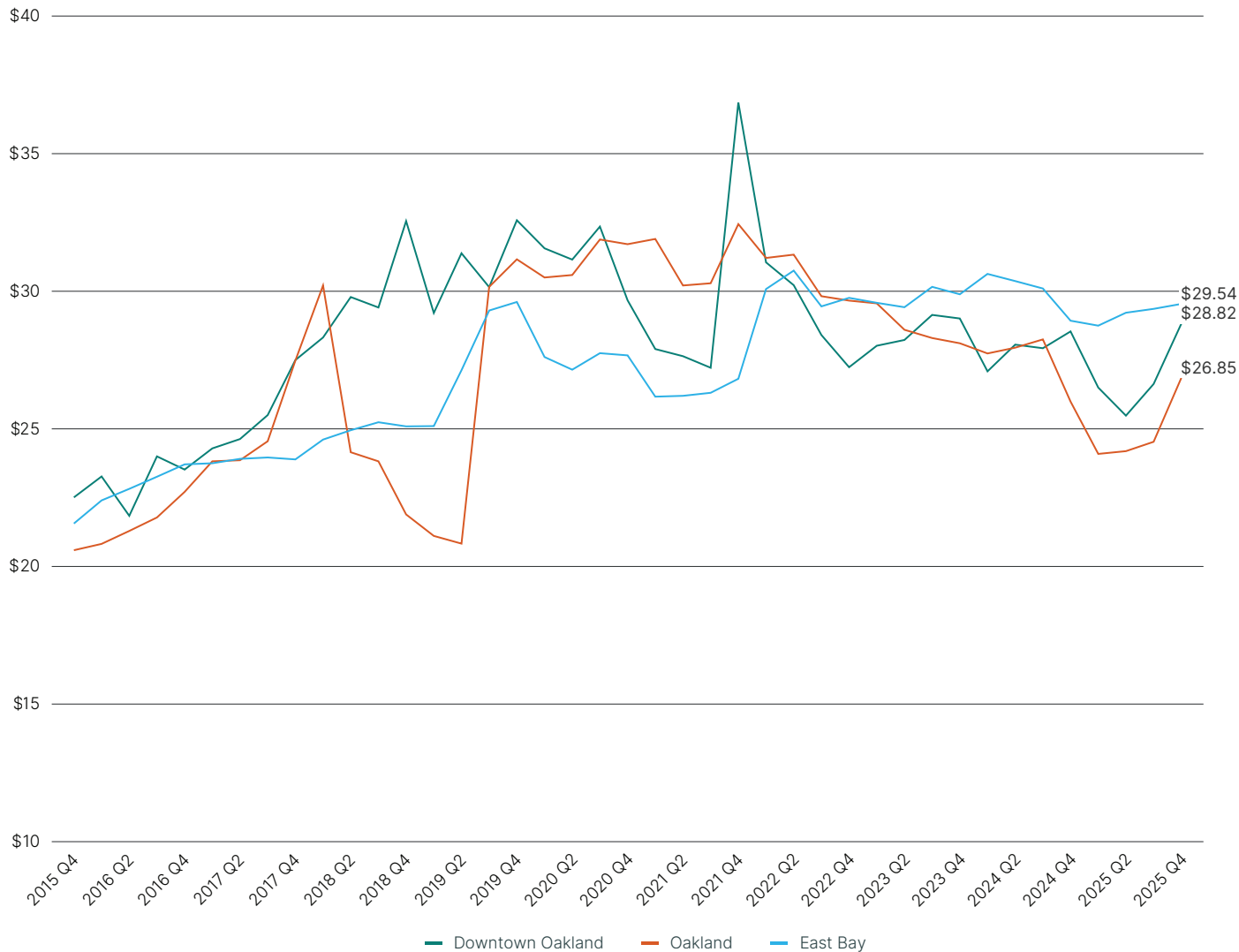


Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

At the same time, the broader East Bay exhibits slightly higher retail rents than Oakland (Figure 23). While the difference is modest, this pattern suggests that retail demand may currently be stronger in other East Bay submarkets—such as neighborhood commercial corridors, lifestyle centers, suburban retail nodes, and mixed-use districts with significant residential density—where retail activity is supported by nearby residential populations and regional consumer spending rather than office-driven foot traffic.

FIGURE 23: ANNUAL RETAIL RENT PER SQUARE FOOT COMPARISONS

2015–2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

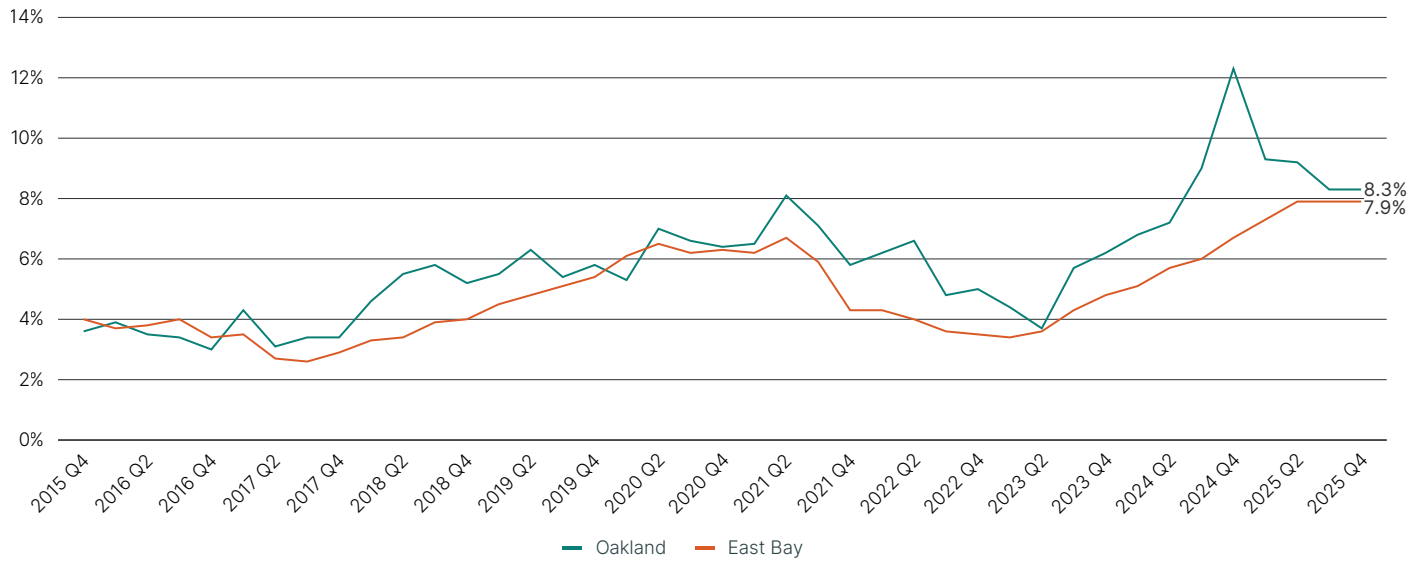
Industrial

Oakland’s industrial market has experienced a period of adjustment in recent years following a strong expansion earlier in the decade. Industrial vacancy rates remained historically low throughout much of the late 2010s but began to rise during the pandemic period as tenant demand

softened and several large facilities were delivered to market (Figure 24). Vacancy peaked in late 2024 at more than 12% before declining modestly to roughly 8% by the end of 2025, though it remains well above long-term historical averages.

FIGURE 24: INDUSTRIAL VACANCY RATE COMPARISONS

2015–2025

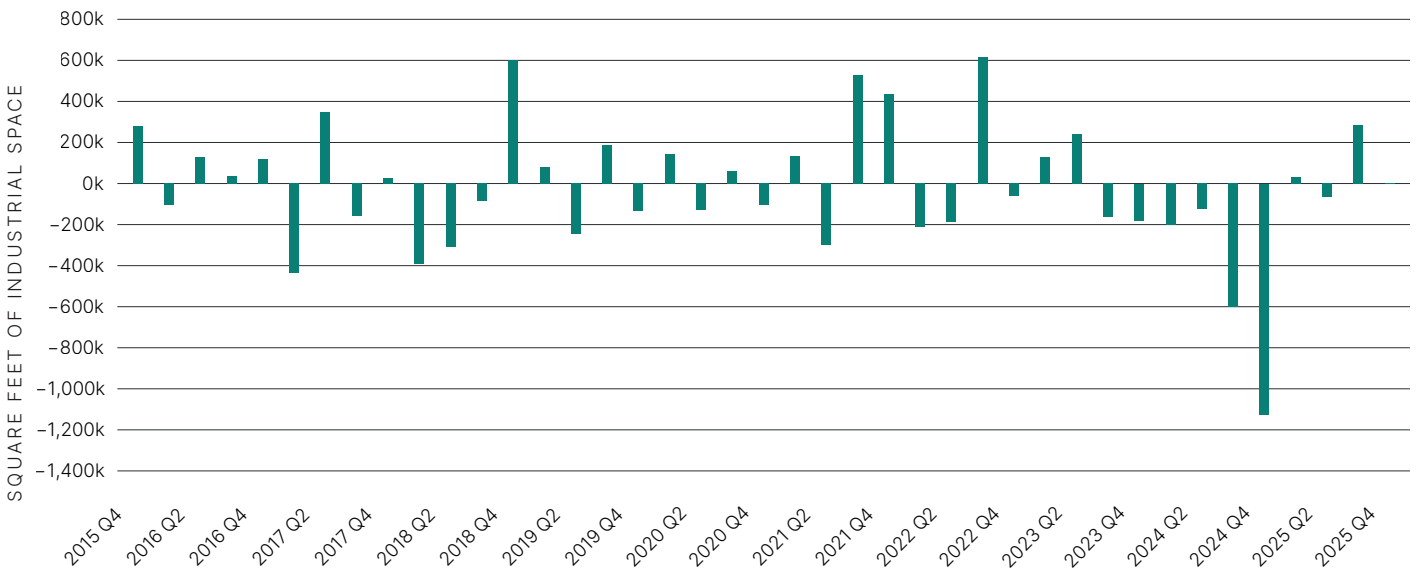


Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Demand conditions have also weakened in recent years. The industrial market has experienced extended periods of negative net absorption, as tenant move-outs and shifting economic conditions led to more space being vacated than newly occupied (Figure 25). While absorption turned positive in the fourth quarter of 2025, it remains too early to determine whether this represents a sustained recovery. Industrial rents have also cooled after years of consistent growth earlier in the decade across both Oakland and the East Bay more broadly (Figure 26). In Oakland, asking rents increased between 2021 and 2023 but have since flattened and edged slightly downward as vacancy rose and tenant leverage increased.

FIGURE 25: INDUSTRIAL NET ABSORPTION IN OAKLAND

2015–2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 26: ANNUAL INDUSTRIAL RENT PER SQUARE FOOT COMPARISONS

2015–2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Hospitality

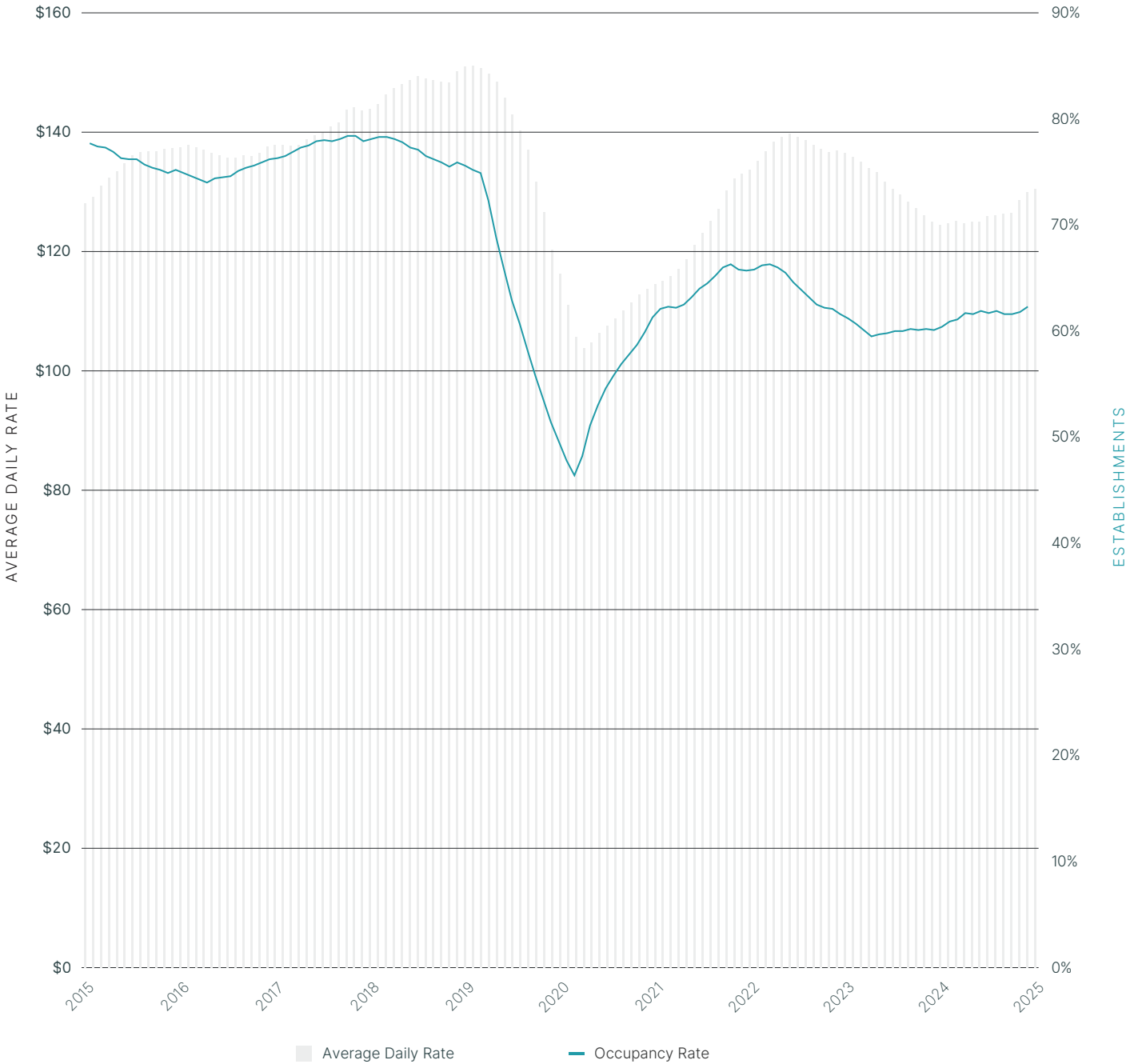
Oakland’s hospitality market has experienced a gradual recovery in recent years following the sharp disruption to travel and tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. The city’s hotel market includes approximately 54 properties with about 3,828 rooms. At the end of 2025, Oakland’s hotel occupancy

rate was 62.3%, reflecting a modest improvement of roughly 2.2 percentage points year-over-year; however, it still remains about 13 percentage points below pre-pandemic levels (Figure 27).

Additionally, hotel rates remained relatively stable in recent years. Over the past 12 months, the average daily rate (ADR) in Oakland was approximately \$130, showing minimal change compared to the prior year. However, ADR currently remains below pre-pandemic levels, when ADR was about \$20 higher.

FIGURE 27: AVERAGE DAILY RATE AND OCCUPANCY RATE OF HOTELS IN OAKLAND

2019–2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.



SPOTLIGHT: PORT OF OAKLAND

The Port of Oakland manages a diverse set of assets that play a significant role in the Bay Area economy. Importantly, the Port operates as a vital regional economic driver, supporting nearly 100,000 jobs (many of which are entry-level or do not require a college degree) and generating \$174 billion in annual economic activity and \$970 million in annual state and local tax revenue. Its operations span three primary areas: maritime cargo movement through the seaport, commercial and logistics aviation at Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport, and ownership of its waterfront real estate holdings. In recent years, each of these areas has been shaped by shifting economic conditions affecting the competitive position of the Port's assets among other major seaports, airports, and local commercial districts.

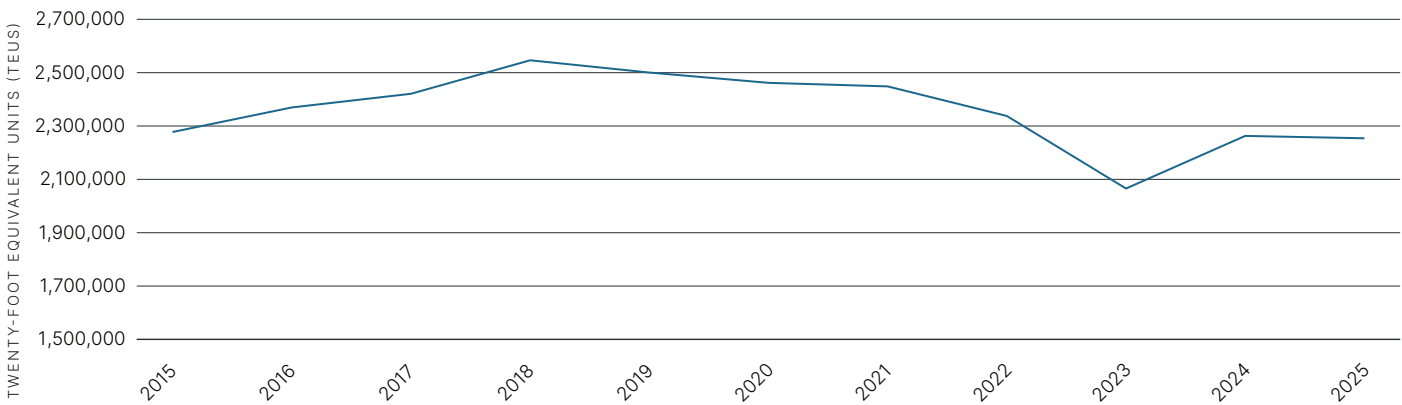
Seaport

Handling 99% of containerized goods moving through Northern California, the seaport at the Port of Oakland is the primary maritime gateway serving the region and a key node in the trans-Pacific supply chain. However, growth in container traffic at the seaport has remained relatively stagnant over the past decade, reflecting structural constraints that have historically limited the Port's ability to expand capacity and compete for import traffic with larger West Coast ports. Ongoing trade uncertainty associated with tariffs and broader consumer demand affects the seaport in the short term. At the same time, Oakland maintains a distinct position in the supply chain as an export-oriented seaport with a well-established and ever-growing strategic advantage in the export of premium agricultural commodities. Recent and ongoing initiatives at the seaport will build on its export-oriented success to improve capacity and access, and advance its strategy for sustainable long-term growth.

By the end of 2025, trade activity at the seaport was roughly the same as it was ten years prior. The throughput of twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs)—the standard measure of containerized cargo—at the seaport reached a ten-year peak in 2018, before declining to a trough in 2023 (Figure 28); this most likely reflects a broader cooling of consumer demand following the pandemic. Since 2023, however, overall throughput has recovered to just 1% below 2015 levels, despite relatively strong export performance. In comparison to other major West Coast Ports, the seaport at the Port of Oakland has fared in the middle: the Port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles—the two busiest seaports in the nation—have experienced significantly stronger growth than Oakland, while the Northwest Seaport Alliance (consisting of the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma) has seen a stronger decline (Figure 29).

FIGURE 28: CONTAINER THROUGHPUT TRENDS AT THE PORT OF OAKLAND

2015–2025



Source: Port of Oakland, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 29: CONTAINER THROUGHPUT COMPARISONS

2025

| SEAPORT | THROUGHPUT (TEUs) | 10-YEAR CHANGE |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Los Angeles | 10,239,318 | 25% |
| Long Beach | 9,881,595 | 37% |
| Seattle/Tacoma | 3,156,598 | -11% |
| Oakland | 2,253,976 | -1% |

Source: Port authorities (Long Beach, Los Angeles, NWSA, Oakland); CVL Economics

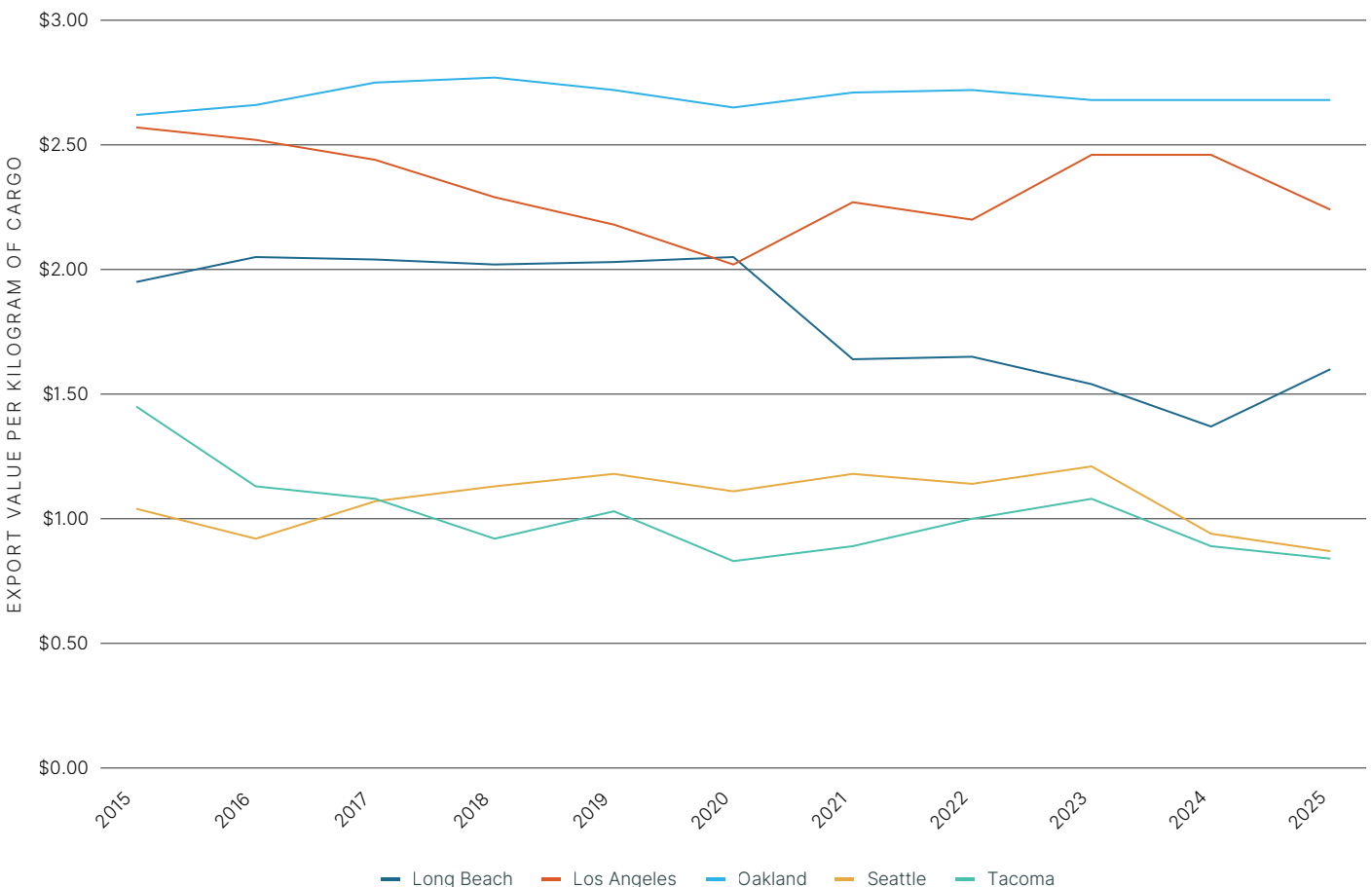
These recent trends reflect both longer-term structural constraints at the seaport and short-term economic and policy factors. Land availability limits the seaport's ability to expand its physical footprint amid growing competition from the San Pedro Bay Port Complex for import traffic. Additionally, the Greater Bay Area consumer market served by the seaport is relatively small in population and is not growing as fast as the markets served by other major West Coast Ports (i.e., Greater Los Angeles and Puget Sound). Further, tariff increases and heightened uncertainty surrounding U.S. trade policy has impacted container throughput at the seaport through disrupted goods ordering patterns, retaliatory tariffs, and softened consumer demand.

Still, while these constraints have affected the seaport's growth prospects, Oakland maintains a distinct role in the trans-Pacific supply chain. Unlike the San Pedro Bay ports,

which primarily handle import traffic, Oakland exports more goods than it imports and maintains a well-established and ever-growing strategic advantage in the export of premium agricultural commodities. Throughout the last ten years, per-unit export value has exceeded that of both the seaports of the San Pedro Bay Port Complex and the Northwest Seaport Alliance (Figure 30), hovering above \$2.50 per kilogram of cargo. This reflects the seaport's strategic location as the primary export gateway of wine from Northern California's premier wine regions—Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley—as well as agricultural products from the San Joaquin Valley. It is important to note that many of these premium commodities are currently subject to retaliatory tariffs from China, the seaport's single largest trade partner nation; this situation is worth monitoring closely while the full effects of the tariffs on trade at the seaport become clearer over time.

FIGURE 30: PER-UNIT EXPORT VALUE COMPARISONS (INFLATION-ADJUSTED)

2015–2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, CVL Economics.

Facilitating the seaport's expanding export-oriented role is its emergence as the dominant gateway for refrigerated containers among ports nationwide. As the bona-fide leader in refrigerated container throughput among all major U.S. ports, the seaport's robust cold chain ecosystem extends beyond California to include refrigerated agricultural products arriving by rail as far east as the Midwest. This system is further supported by superior transloading and handling capacity at proximate high-quality logistics centers, such as Cool Port Oakland, a 275,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art cold storage transloading facility on Port land with direct rail and truck access. Together, this combination of robust connectivity, transload capability, and specialized handling infrastructure reinforces the Port's role as a unique and critical gateway for time-sensitive, high-value exports.

Looking ahead, the Port is actively building on its export-driven success and addressing structural constraints to growth through various initiatives related to enhancing supportive infrastructure. Notable processing capacity and access improvements to the seaport include the recent addition of two fully electric Liebherr ship-to-shore cranes (the first two to be deployed on the U.S. West Coast), the ongoing 7th Street grade-separation project aimed at minimizing a major truck-rail transportation bottleneck in

West Oakland, and the ongoing Turning Basins Widening project aimed at mitigating cascading delays for vessels calling at the seaport.

Furthermore, the Port is advancing its sustainable growth strategy through several targeted initiatives aimed at ensuring that future growth is aligned with improving environmental outcomes. Most notably, the Port received a \$322-million award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to help fund the seaport's Clean Ports program (\$475 million in total investments) aimed at replacing diesel cargo handling equipment and drayage trucks to reach near zero emissions. This initiative will help the seaport mitigate longstanding environmental justice issues in residential areas proximate to the seaport and spur the creation of jobs to operate and maintain new zero-emissions equipment. This will supplement the Port's ongoing efforts, through its status as a public municipal utility, to maximize the purchase and use of zero-carbon electricity for Port and tenant operations and advance its broader decarbonization efforts across its seaport, airport, and tenanted properties.



Airport

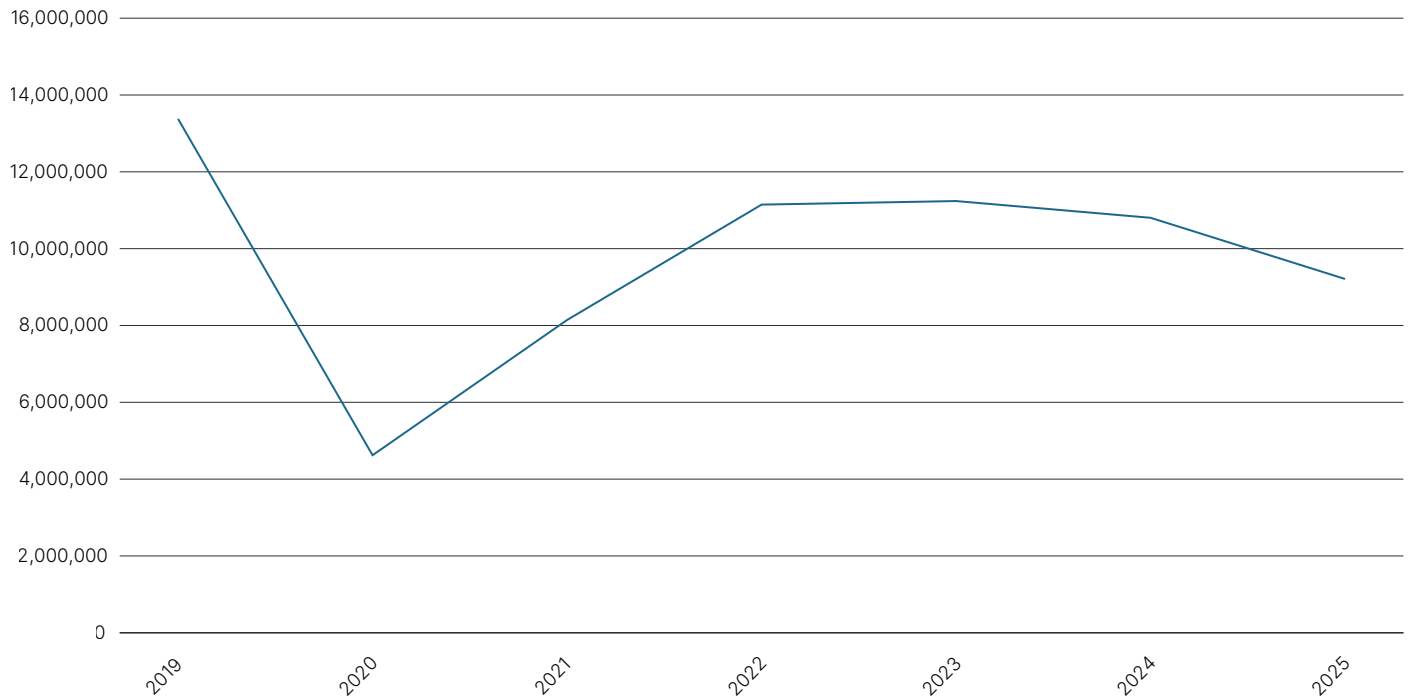
Another core function of the Port, Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport (OAK) is a major node in the Bay Area's transportation system, employing 9,000 people directly and generating \$1.6 billion in annual economic output. Accounting for half of the Port's annual operating revenues, the airport provides commercial aviation service for both domestic and international travelers and also hosts logistics facilities to major air cargo partners and local employers, FedEx, UPS, and DHL. However, both passenger traffic and air cargo activity at the airport have yet to recover fully from the pandemic. Recovery in passenger traffic has been constrained by a combination of shifting airline network strategies, reduced consumer demand for domestic travel, and broader economic changes affecting the Bay Area. While these challenges have slowed progress at OAK in recent years, the airport continues to pursue opportunities aimed at positioning itself for long-term growth.

Passenger volume at OAK has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels, constrained by a mix of factors, including weak consumer demand for domestic travel and airline shifts

that have affected the airport. OAK recorded 9.2 million commercial aviation passengers in 2025, representing just 68% of the Airport's 2019 pre-pandemic passenger throughput (Figure 31). OAK's historic position as a hub for intra-California travel has likely constrained its recovery in a post-pandemic economy characterized by reduced demand for both domestic leisure and business travel, especially in the Bay Area, where the economic effects of remote work have been most acute (e.g., elevated office vacancy rates, reduced transit ridership). Moreover, many major domestic airlines have redesigned their route networks across the nation in response to these trends, with many withdrawing from or reducing services at OAK. Similar to passenger traffic, air cargo throughput at OAK has been downward trending since before the pandemic, likely driven by reduced regional consumer demand (Figure 32). Still, OAK is the largest cargo airport in Northern California, handling over a billion pounds annually, and is uniquely positioned to benefit when macroeconomic conditions improve.

FIGURE 31: PASSENGER VOLUME AT OAKLAND SAN FRANCISCO BAY AIRPORT

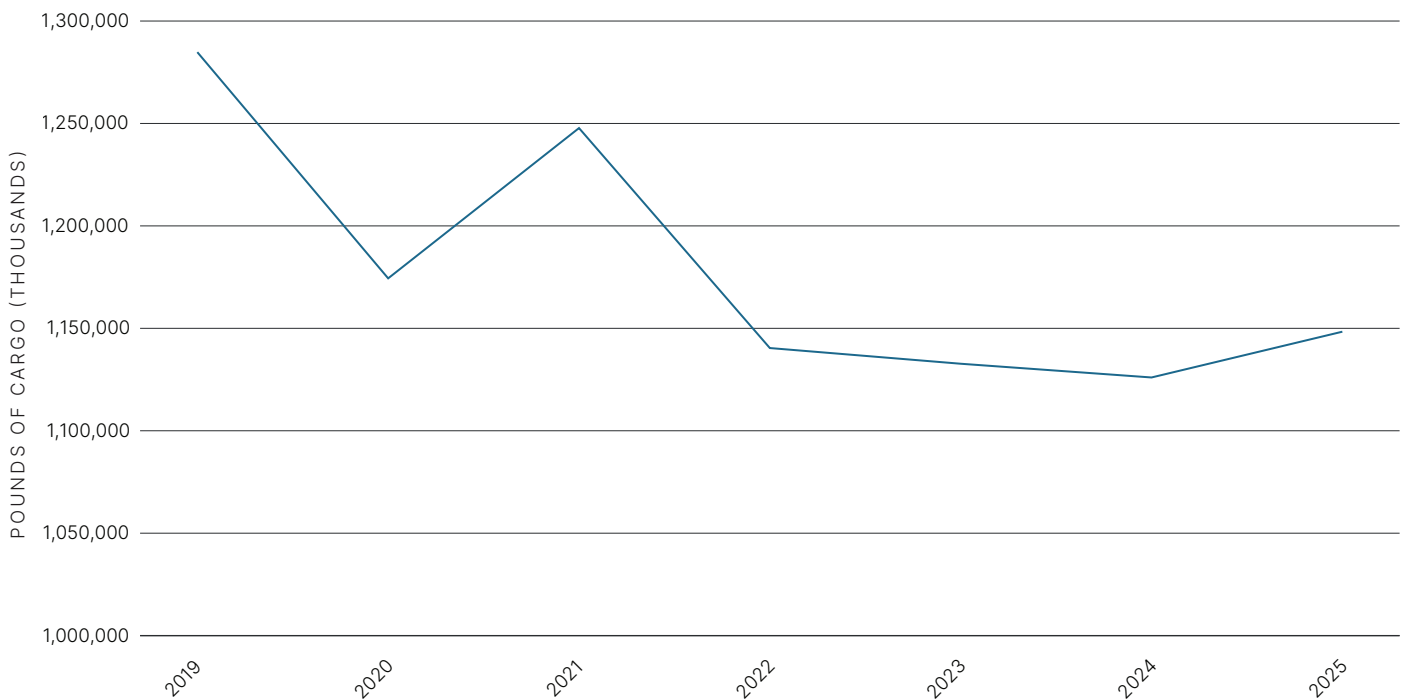
2019–2025



Source: Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 32: CARGO THROUGHPUT AT OAKLAND SAN FRANCISCO BAY AIRPORT

2019–2025



Source: Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport, CVL Economics.

Many airports aside from OAK have contended with passenger throughput challenges in the past year. Overall, the state’s major airports saw reduced passenger volumes between 2024 and 2025, with most experiencing declines or virtually no growth over this period (Figure 33). These changes likely reflect similar factors affecting OAK, including reduced consumer demand and airline route network shifts. At the same time, several high-traffic U.S. airports, including OAK, Los Angeles (LAX), San Diego (SAN), San Francisco (SFO) and Ontario (ONT), were among a group of facilities directed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to reduce flights by 10% to ease staffing pressures as a result of the Federal government shutdown in late 2025.

FIGURE 33: PASSENGER VOLUME COMPARISON BY AIRPORT
2025

| | PASSENGER VOLUME | YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE | PERCENT RECOVERED TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--|
| San Francisco (SFO) | 54,359,433 | 4% | 95% |
| Orange County (SNA) | 11,367,925 | 3% | 107% |
| Sacramento (SMF) | 13,912,718 | 2% | 106% |
| Ontario (ONT) | 7,116,708 | 0% | 127% |
| San Diego (SAN) | 25,320,556 | 0% | 100% |
| Los Angeles (LAX) | 73,376,375 | -4% | 84% |
| Burbank (BUR) | 6,219,479 | -5% | 104% |
| Long Beach (LGB) | 3,813,814 | -7% | 106% |
| San Jose (SJC) | 10,675,167 | -10% | 68% |
| Oakland (OAK) | 9,210,509 | -15% | 69% |
| Total | 215,372,684 | -2% | 90% |

Source: Visit California, CVL Economics

The three major Bay Area airports—OAK, SFO, and San Jose (SJC)—appear especially affected by current trends in commercial aviation, as none have fully recovered their pre-pandemic passenger volumes while most other major airports in California have. This suggests that both resident and visitor demand for air travel in the Bay Area remains weaker than other regions of the state. These conditions likely reflect a combination of factors, including reduced business travel associated with telework, reduced household spending on leisure travel, and potentially an oversupply of service in a highly competitive regional market. This latter trend coincides with the growth of several outlying airports (e.g., Schultz-

Sonoma County Airport, Monterey Regional Airport, Fresno-Yosemite International Airport) in markets historically served by the major Bay Area airports.

OAK, however, remains committed to its recovery and long-term growth as a major node in the nation’s commercial aviation network. OAK has acted quickly to restore popular destinations, including the introduction of service to San Diego via Alaska Airlines following the withdrawal of Spirit Airlines in 2025 amid the latter’s bankruptcy-driven restructuring. Alaska Airlines is also responding to rising passenger demand for additional connections from Oakland

to Seattle and Hawaii and will be adding 44,000 seats at OAK between May and July of this year. Additionally, OAK has seen a dramatic increase in international services, with several new connections to Mexico and El Salvador added in recent years by Volaris and Viva.

OAK is also undertaking significant capital investments aimed at modernizing its two existing terminals, upgrading supportive infrastructure and facilities, enhancing seismic and flood resilience, and planning the construction of a new third terminal to accommodate future travel demand and enhance passenger experience. To support its growth strategy, OAK has implemented an air carrier incentive program that offers marketing support and per-passenger credits for new domestic and international routes and new airline entrants.

Commercial Real Estate

Another core function of the Port of Oakland is its commercial real estate (CRE) division, which oversees nearly 850 acres of Port-owned waterfront property along the Oakland estuary, including the Jack London Square mixed-use district and the adjacent high-density waterfront residential development, Brooklyn Basin. Historically, many of the Port's waterfront properties functioned as part of Oakland's robust maritime and logistics infrastructure, but they have since transitioned into a mixed-use district including residential, commercial, and industrial land uses and are subject to the California Tidelands Trust.

While the Port's waterfront holdings have struggled to maintain a consistent daytime population over the decades, recent developments are providing new opportunities. Most notably, SB 304 (2025), which relaxes restrictions under the California Tidelands Trust on the types of commercial land

uses that can occur in Jack London Square, was signed into law late last year.¹³ The new law, which took effect January 2026, will allow community-serving retail in the neighborhood (e.g., grocery, personal care services) and could help diversify business offerings beyond tourism and visitor-focused retail. Oakland's most successful commercial districts (e.g., Rockridge, Piedmont Ave, Fruitvale, Chinatown) support business activity in part through balancing visitor- and community-serving amenity offerings.

Other key recent and forthcoming developments in the waterfront area include the new Oakland Alameda Water Shuttle, which provides direct access between Jack London Square and Alameda Landing, and Dave & Busters, an entertainment-oriented restaurant and bar expected to increase visitor activity in the district when it opens sometime in 2026.

¹³ Senate Bill 304 Public Lands: City of Oakland: Port of Oakland: Uses of after-acquired lands (2025-2026), accessed March 17, 2026, https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB304.

HOUSING

Housing is another central component of Oakland's economic landscape, shaping population trends, affordability, and the city's overall capacity for growth. Housing supply, construction activity, and market conditions influence where people live, how neighborhoods evolve, and the ability of local employers to attract and retain workers. Oakland's housing market has undergone significant shifts in recent years, particularly as a wave of multifamily development is reshaping the city's housing stock.

Housing Stock

As of 2025, the city contains approximately 191,000 housing units, including about 83,500 single-family homes and more than 107,000 multifamily units across buildings of varying sizes (Figure 34). This roughly balanced mix of housing is increasingly shifting as new development has been concentrated in multifamily housing. Over the past five

years, multifamily housing stock in Oakland grew by nearly 20%, compared with just 3% growth in single-family homes. Overall, Oakland's housing stock has grown faster than the surrounding region, increasing by 7.3% since 2020 compared with 4.9% in Alameda County and 3.9% statewide.

FIGURE 34: HOUSING STOCK IN OAKLAND

2020-2025

| UNIT TYPE | OAKLAND HOUSING STOCK (2025) | 2020-2025 CHANGE | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | | OAKLAND | ALAMEDA COUNTY | CALIFORNIA |
| Single Detached | 76,025 | 0.5% | 1.1% | 2.9% |
| Single Attached | 7,511 | 2.4% | 4.9% | 4.9% |
| Two to Four | 32,957 | 1.1% | 1.4% | 2.6% |
| Five Plus | 74,381 | 19.3% | 13.6% | 6.8% |
| Total | 191,411 | 7.3% | 4.9% | 3.9% |

Source: California Department of Finance, CVL Economics.

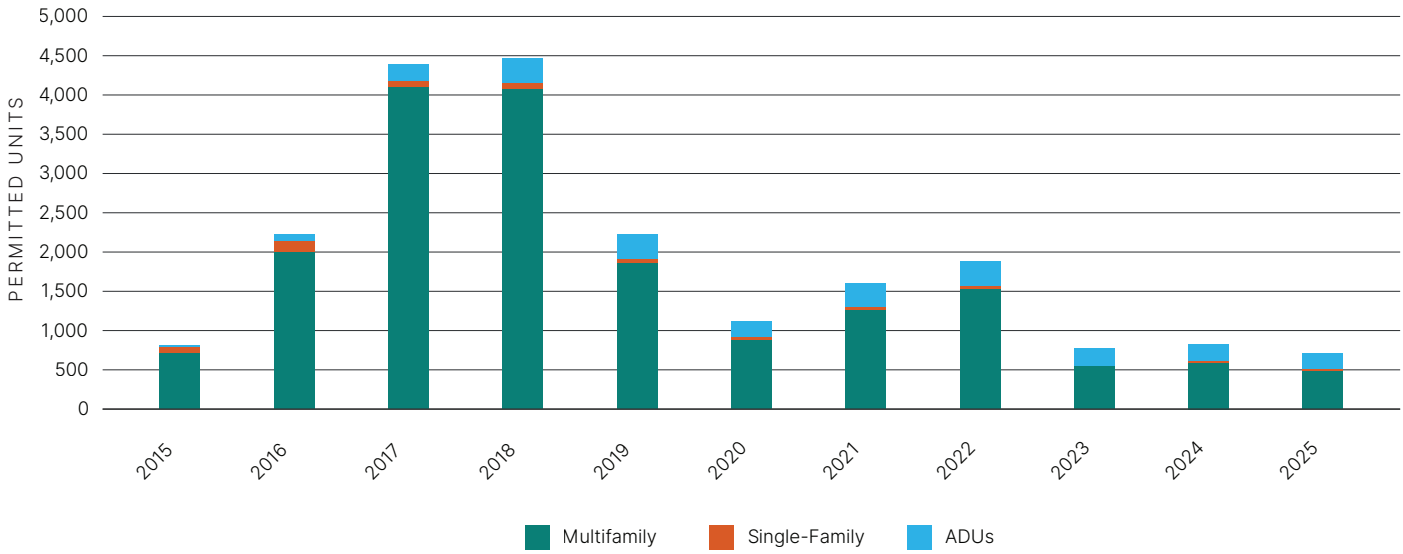
Housing Production Trends

Growth in Oakland's housing stock largely reflects projects that were permitted several years prior, as multifamily developments often take multiple years to move from City approval to completion. Residential permitting accelerated in the late 2010s, with multifamily projects accounting for the vast majority of new housing units permitted (Figure 35). Permit activity peaked in 2017 and 2018, when 4,395

and 4,474 total housing units were permitted, respectively. Although there was a smaller surge in 2021 and 2022, permitting activity has slowed considerably since the pandemic, with 714 housing permits issued in 2025, suggesting that housing stock growth may moderate in the coming years.

FIGURE 35: RESIDENTIAL PERMITTING TRENDS IN OAKLAND

2015–2025

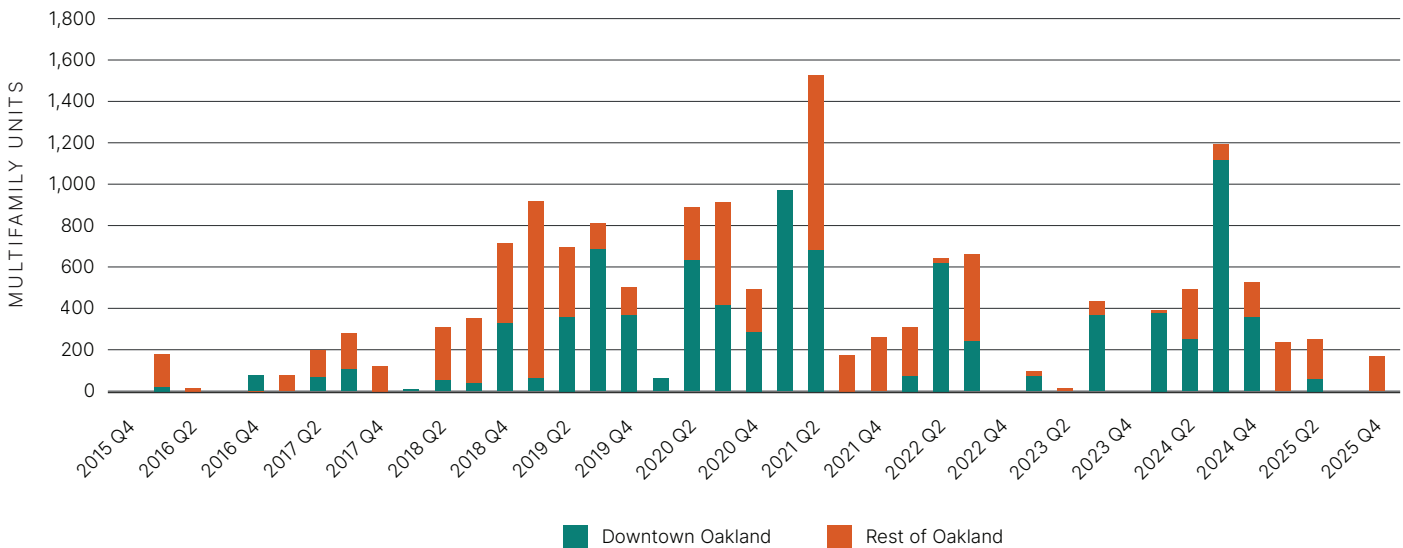


Source: City of Oakland, CVL Economics.

The surge in multifamily permits issued in the late 2010s in the city translated into a significant wave of new housing completed between 2019 and 2022, when nearly 10,000 units were added to the Oakland market (Figure 36). Much of this new housing was concentrated in Downtown Oakland, reflecting the city’s focus on accommodating growth in transit-accessible urban neighborhoods. A second wave of construction completions occurred in 2024, when 2,600 additional units were added in Oakland.

FIGURE 36: MULTIFAMILY HOUSING COMPLETIONS IN OAKLAND

2015–2025



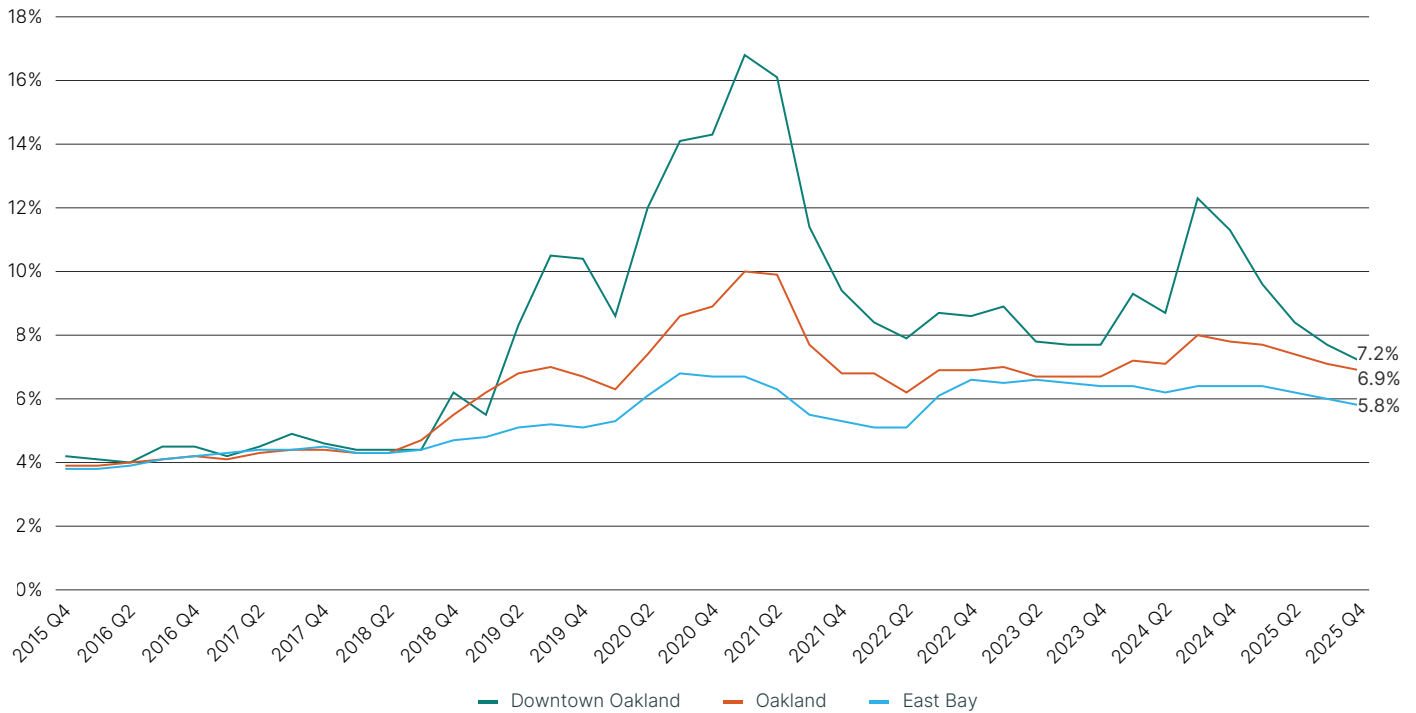
Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Multifamily Market Conditions

The wave of multifamily deliveries that coincided with the pandemic in the early 2020s had a noticeable impact on Oakland’s rental market, particularly in the Downtown submarket where much of the new housing supply was concentrated. Many of these projects began construction prior to the pandemic and came online during a period of temporarily weaker demand for urban housing. As a result, Downtown Oakland experienced a sharp increase in vacancy as pandemic-era shifts away from dense urban living coincided with a surge of multifamily deliveries between 2019 and 2022.

Downtown Oakland’s multifamily vacancy rate peaked at 16% in 2021, significantly higher than in the broader Oakland (10%) and East Bay (7%) markets during the same period (Figure 37). Following a second wave of deliveries in 2024, the vacancy rate increased again to 12% in Downtown Oakland, compared to 8% across Oakland overall and 6% in the broader East Bay. While much of this new supply has since been absorbed, vacancy rates in the Downtown core remain elevated relative to the surrounding region.

FIGURE 37: MULTIFAMILY VACANCY RATE COMPARISONS
2015–2025

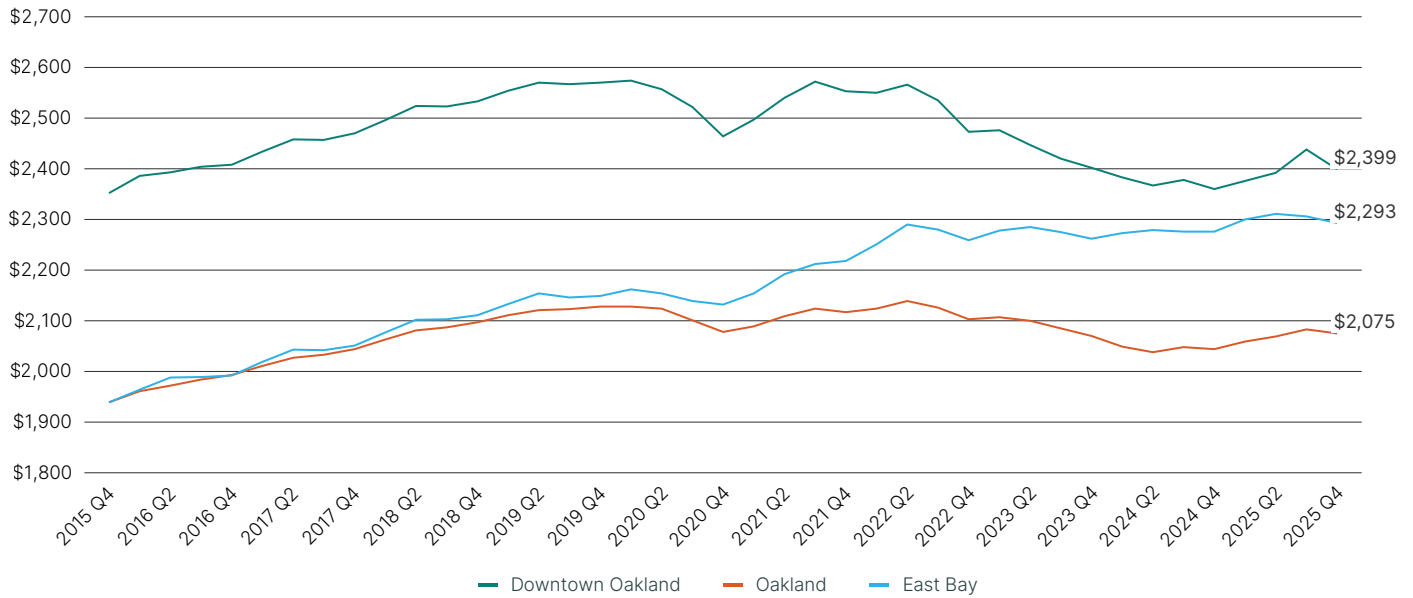


Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

Much of the recent construction consists of market-rate apartments, many of which command rents at the upper end of the local market. Leasing activity has therefore been slower in some newly delivered buildings, particularly during periods of softer demand for higher-priced rental housing. Downtown Oakland continues to command the highest rents compared to Oakland and East Bay overall (Figure 38), though rents in the Downtown submarket have declined considerably since their peak around 2020 due to demand pressures. Property owners have responded to these trends by offering leasing incentives—such as one or two months of free rent—to attract tenants and accelerate lease-up. The share of rental units offering concessions remains notably above pre-pandemic levels, at 3.2% in the fourth quarter of 2025 compared to 1.6% in the fourth quarter of 2019 (Figure 39).

FIGURE 38: AVERAGE MONTHLY MULTIFAMILY ASKING RENT COMPARISONS

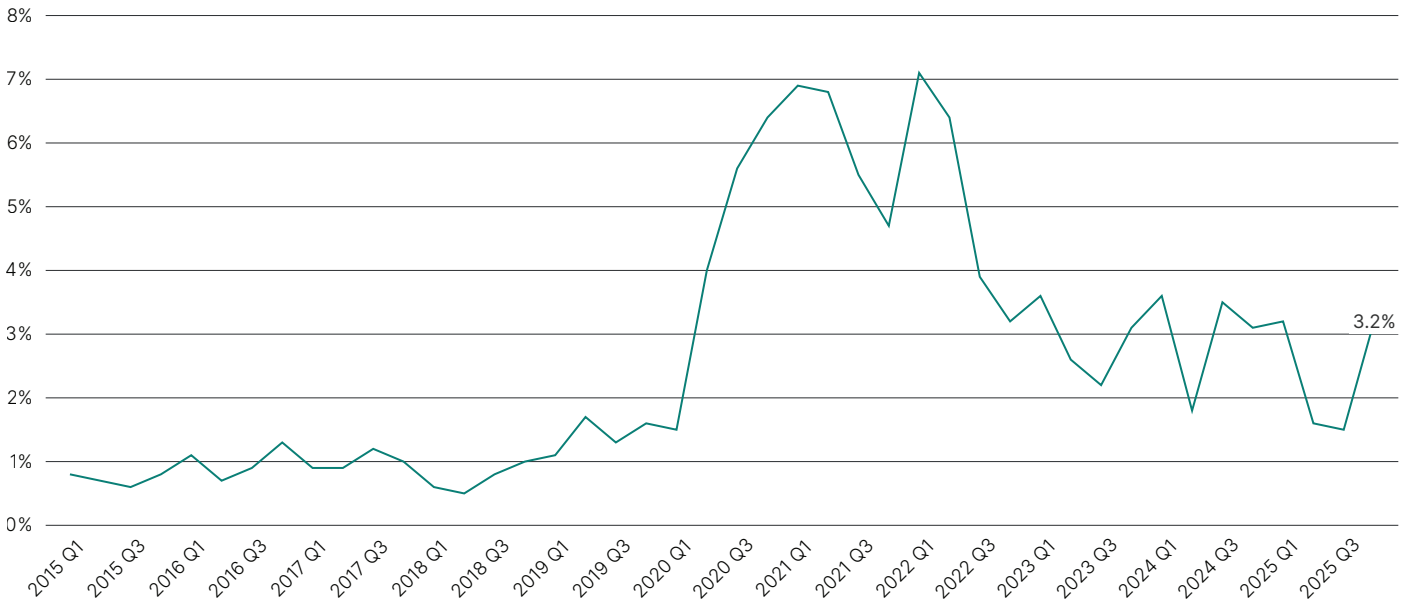
2015-2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 39: SHARE OF MULTIFAMILY UNITS OFFERING LEASING INCENTIVES IN DOWNTOWN OAKLAND

2015-2025



Source: CoStar, CVL Economics.

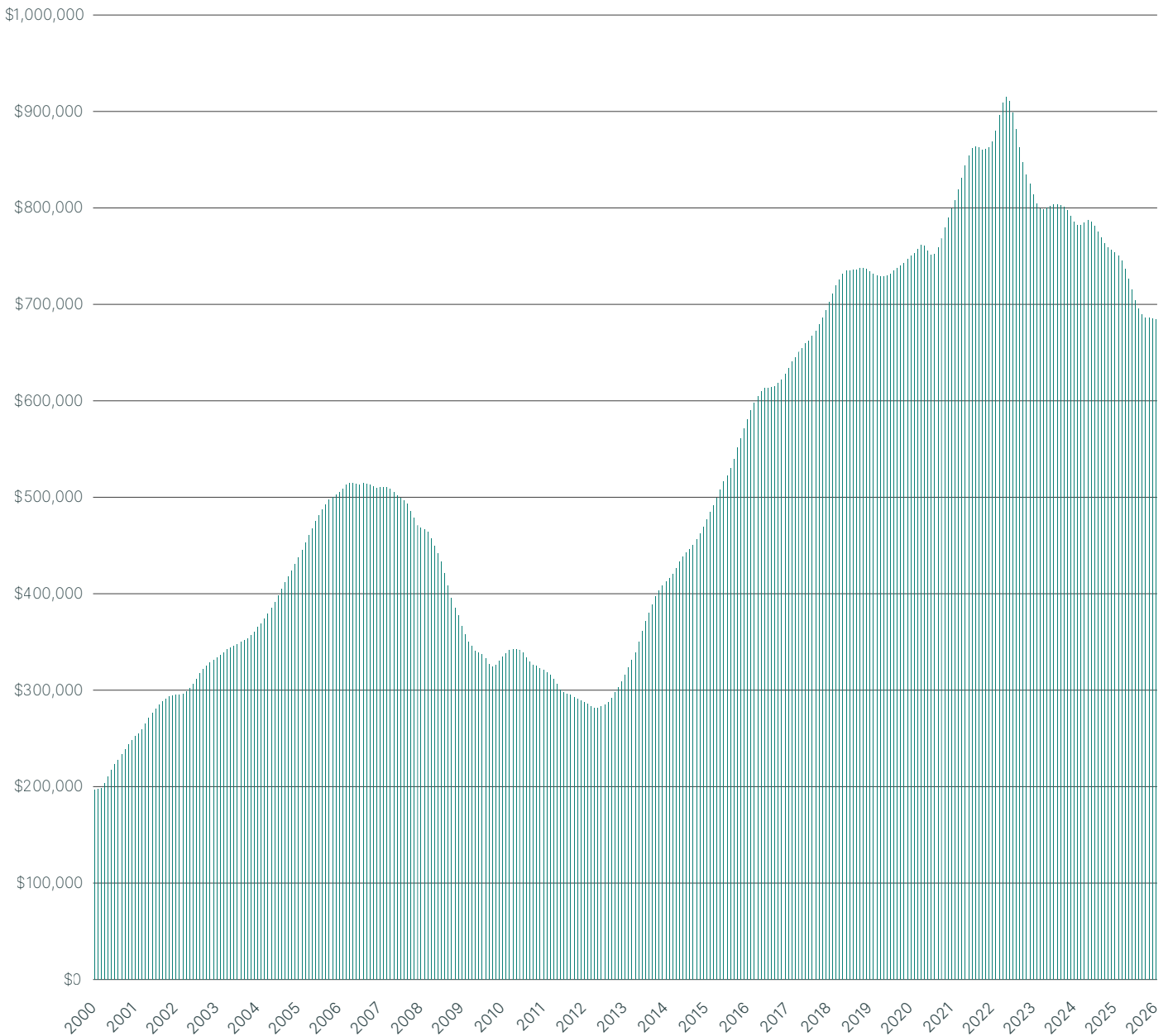
Rents across Oakland overall have followed a similar trajectory to downtown, declining modestly in recent years after steady growth prior to the pandemic. In contrast, rents across the broader East Bay have continued to increase more steadily, reflecting stronger regional demand in other areas of the region.

Single-Family Market Conditions

Following a period of rapid price appreciation during the pandemic housing boom, the single-family housing market in Oakland has cooled considerably in recent years. Oakland home values peaked in 2022, reaching approximately \$900,000 before declining steadily through 2025 as higher interest rates and softer demand slowed housing

appreciation (Figure 40). By January 2026, the typical single-family home value in Oakland had fallen to roughly \$680,000, representing a substantial adjustment from peak post pandemic-era prices. Compared to single-family housing costs in nearby cities, Oakland is relatively more affordable (Figure 41).

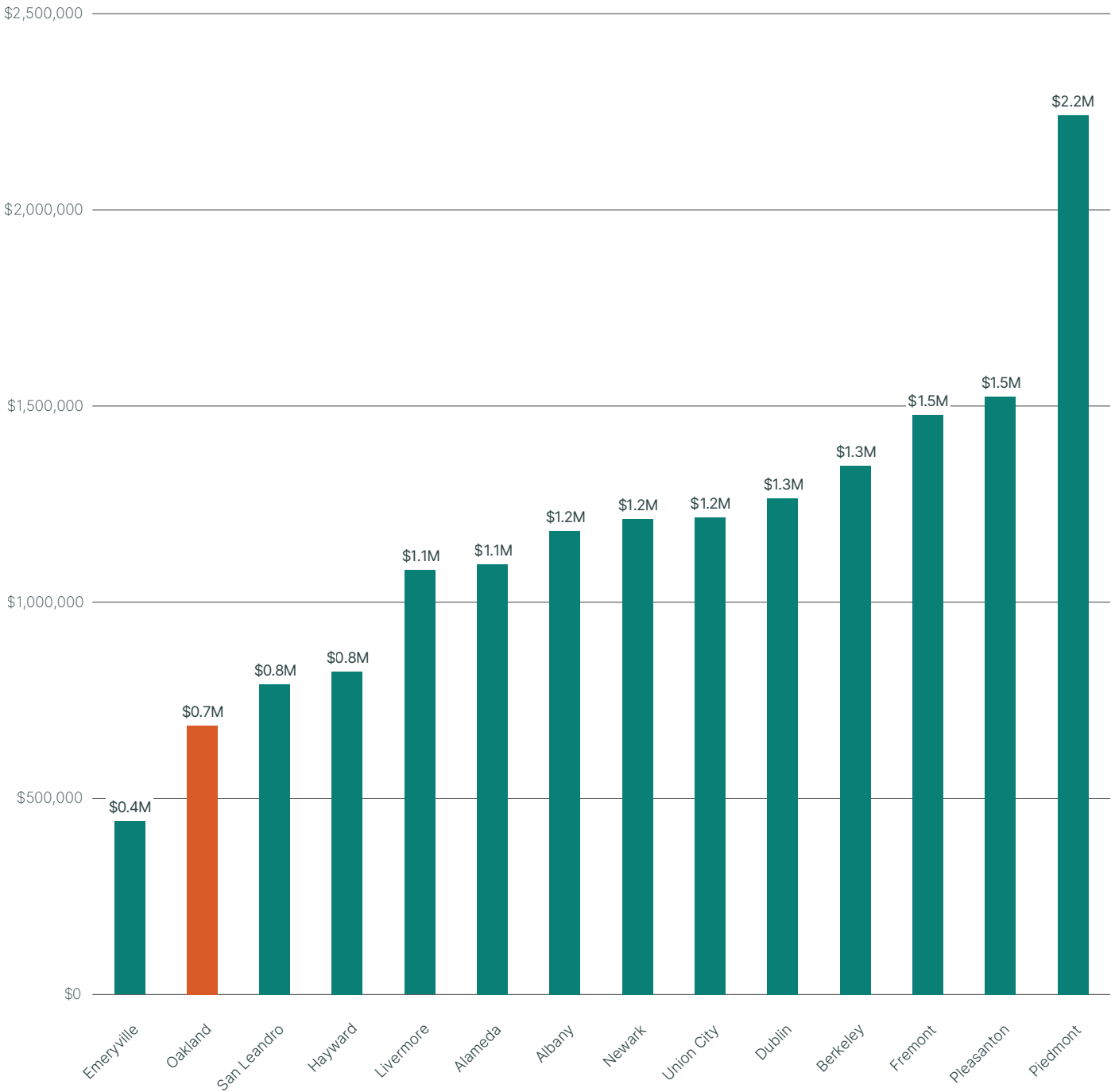
FIGURE 40: SINGLE-FAMILY HOME VALUES IN OAKLAND
2000–2026



Source: Zillow, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 41: SINGLE-FAMILY HOME VALUE COMPARISONS

JANUARY 2026



Source: Zillow, CVL Economics.

This cooling trend has been evident across much of Alameda County, but the magnitude of price declines in Oakland has been among the largest in the region. Between January 2022 and January 2026, single-family home values in Oakland declined by roughly 21%, while several nearby cities—including Berkeley, Alameda, and San Leandro—experienced more modest declines over the same period (Figure 42). In contrast, some suburban markets such as Fremont and Newark have continued to see modest price growth, reflecting continued demand for housing in lower-density suburban communities.

FIGURE 42: SINGLE-FAMILY HOME VALUE CHANGE COMPARISONS

JANUARY 2022–JANUARY 2026



Source: Zillow, CVL Economics.

Despite these recent declines, market indicators suggest that demand for homeownership in the Bay Area remains relatively strong compared with many other U.S. housing markets. In 2025, Oakland was one of only four of the 50 largest metropolitan areas nationwide where the typical homebuyer paid above the asking price, with buyers paying approximately 1.3% more than the listing price on average (Figure 43). The other metropolitan areas where buyers paid premiums include San Francisco, San Jose, and Newark, New Jersey. Although this premium is smaller than what was observed during the height of the pandemic housing boom, it underscores the continued competitiveness of the Bay Area housing market.

FIGURE 43: AVERAGE SALE PREMIUM FOR SOLD HOMES IN SELECT LARGEST U.S. MARKETS

2025

| MARKET | MEDIAN LIST PRICE | AVERAGE SALE PREMIUM |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| San Francisco, CA | \$1,450,000 | 3.8% |
| Newark, NJ | \$599,000 | 3.1% |
| San Jose, CA | \$1,580,000 | 2.3% |
| Oakland, CA | \$899,000 | 1.3% |
| Boston, MA | \$749,000 | -0.3% |
| Chicago, IL | \$369,900 | -1.3% |
| Seattle, WA | \$848,000 | -1.5% |
| Los Angeles, CA | \$925,000 | -1.9% |
| New York, NY | \$798,000 | -1.9% |
| San Diego, CA | \$925,000 | -2.5% |
| Sacramento, CA | \$599,000 | -2.9% |
| Denver, CO | \$608,900 | -3.8% |
| Atlanta, GA | \$409,900 | -4.5% |
| Houston, TX | \$354,900 | -5.9% |
| Austin, TX | \$474,958 | -7.1% |
| Miami, FL | \$599,000 | -8.1% |
| U.S. Total | \$399,900 | -3.8% |

Note: Average Sale Premium represents the average percentage difference between a home's sale price and its list price. Positive values indicate homes sold above their list price on average, while negative values indicate homes sold below their list price.

Source: Redfin, CVL Economics.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic trends play a central role in shaping Oakland's economic outlook, influencing labor force availability, housing demand, consumer spending, and long-term growth potential. Changes in population size, age distribution, and educational attainment can provide important insights into how the city is evolving and how its workforce and communities may change over time. Oakland experienced steady population growth throughout the 2010s, but like many large U.S. cities, the pandemic disrupted this trend as some residents relocated during a period of widespread economic and social uncertainty. In recent years, however, the city's population has begun to recover.

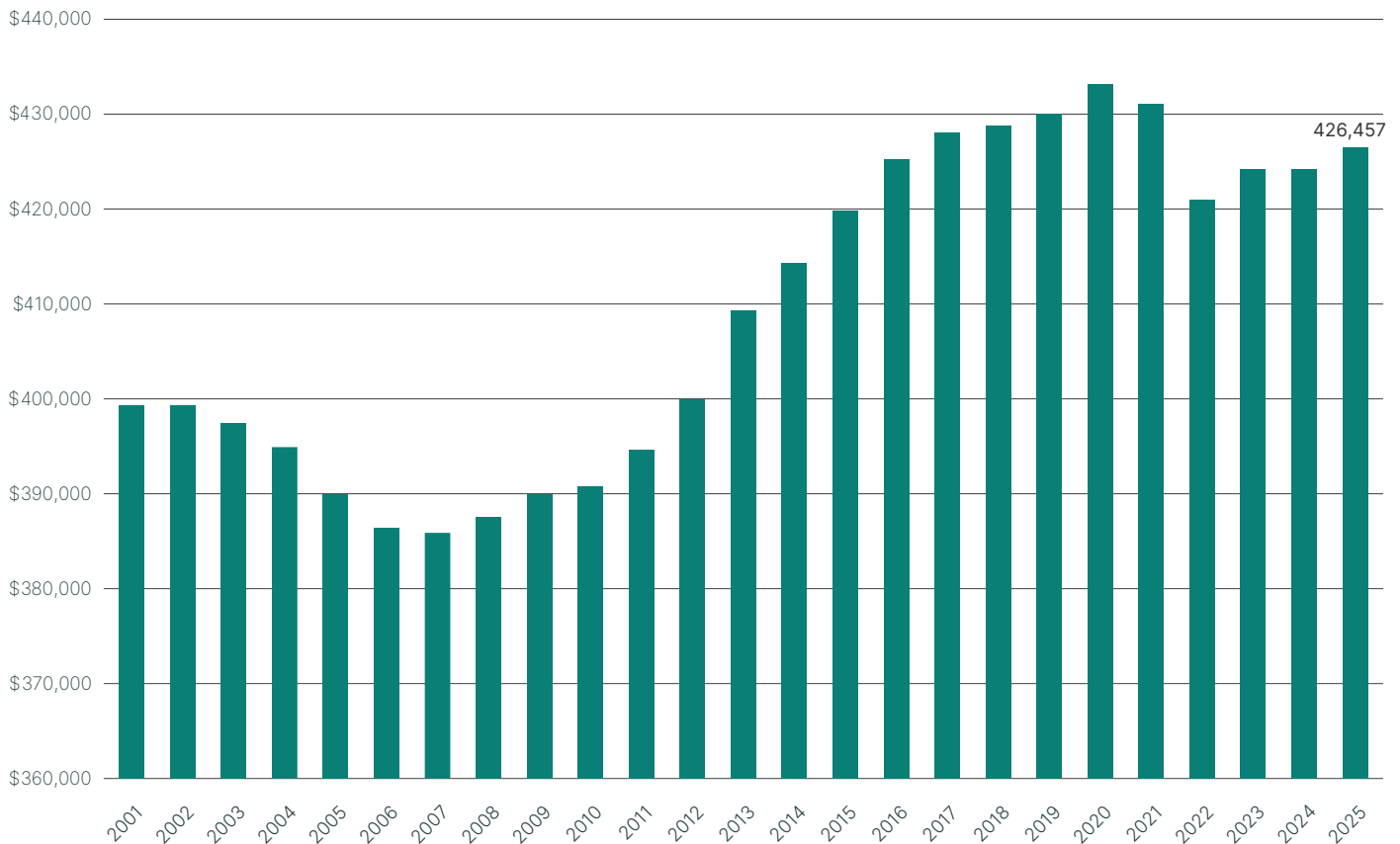
Population Change

Oakland experienced significant population growth in the decade leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city's population increased throughout the 2010s, peaking at approximately 433,200 residents in 2020 (Figure 44).

However, like many urban cities across the nation, the pandemic led to a reduction in population as some residents relocated in search of more space, lower housing costs, or greater flexibility amid the rise of remote work.

FIGURE 44: POPULATION TRENDS IN OAKLAND

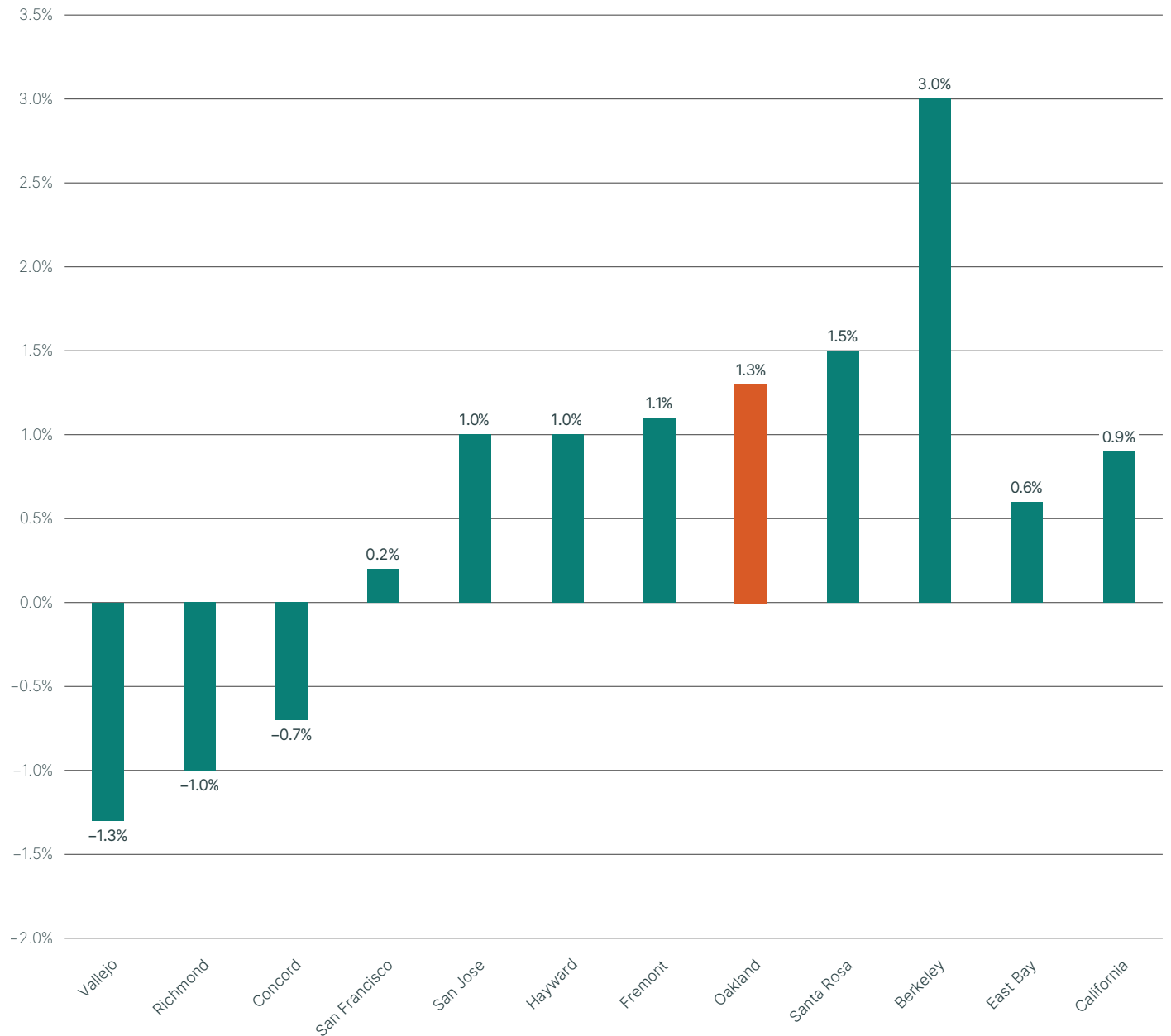
2001–2025



Source: California Department of Finance, CVL Economics.

Today, Oakland's population remains below pre-pandemic levels. In 2025, the city was home to about 426,500 residents—1.5% below the 2020 peak. However, population levels have been steadily increasing since 2022. Relative to other cities along the I-80 corridor and within the broader East Bay commute shed, Oakland has experienced comparatively stronger population growth in recent years (Figure 45). Between 2022 and 2025, Oakland's population increased by approximately 1.3%—outpacing several nearby cities such as San Francisco, San Jose, Hayward, and Fremont, and contrasting with continued population declines in Vallejo, Richmond, and Concord. While some cities experienced faster growth, including Berkeley and Santa Rosa, Oakland's recent gains place it among the stronger-performing cities in the region during the post-pandemic recovery period. Oakland's population growth in this period also outpaced both the broader East Bay and California averages.

FIGURE 45: POPULATION CHANGE COMPARISONS
2022–2025



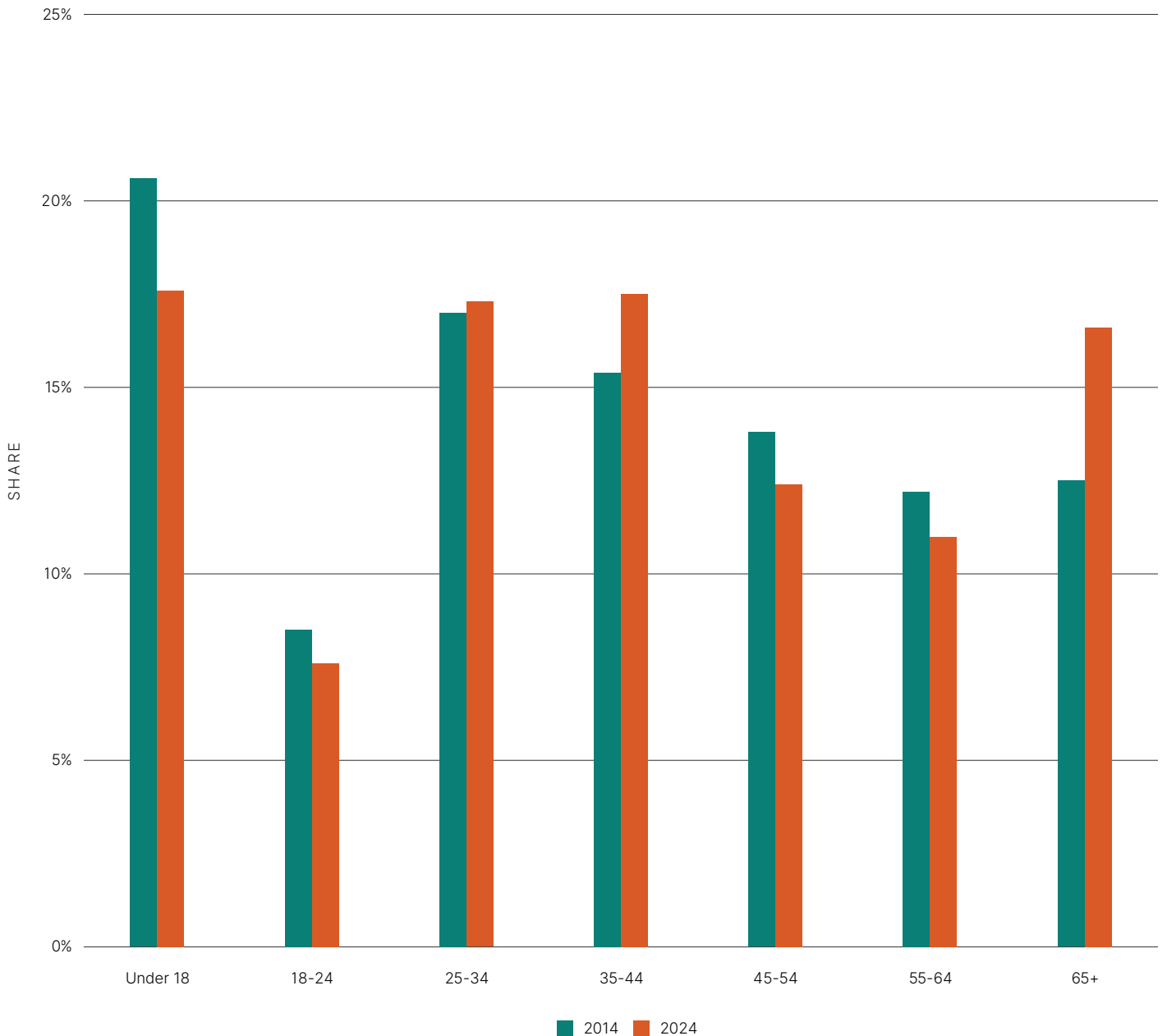
Source: California Department of Finance, CVL Economics.

Oakland Resident Demographics

The age distribution of Oakland residents has shifted modestly over the past decade, with growth among adults ages 25 to 44—particularly those in their mid-career years (Figure 46). This group represents the core of the working-age population and aligns with the increases observed in

educational attainment over the same period (Figure 47). The share of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher has grown notably since 2014, while the share of residents with less than a high school diploma has declined.

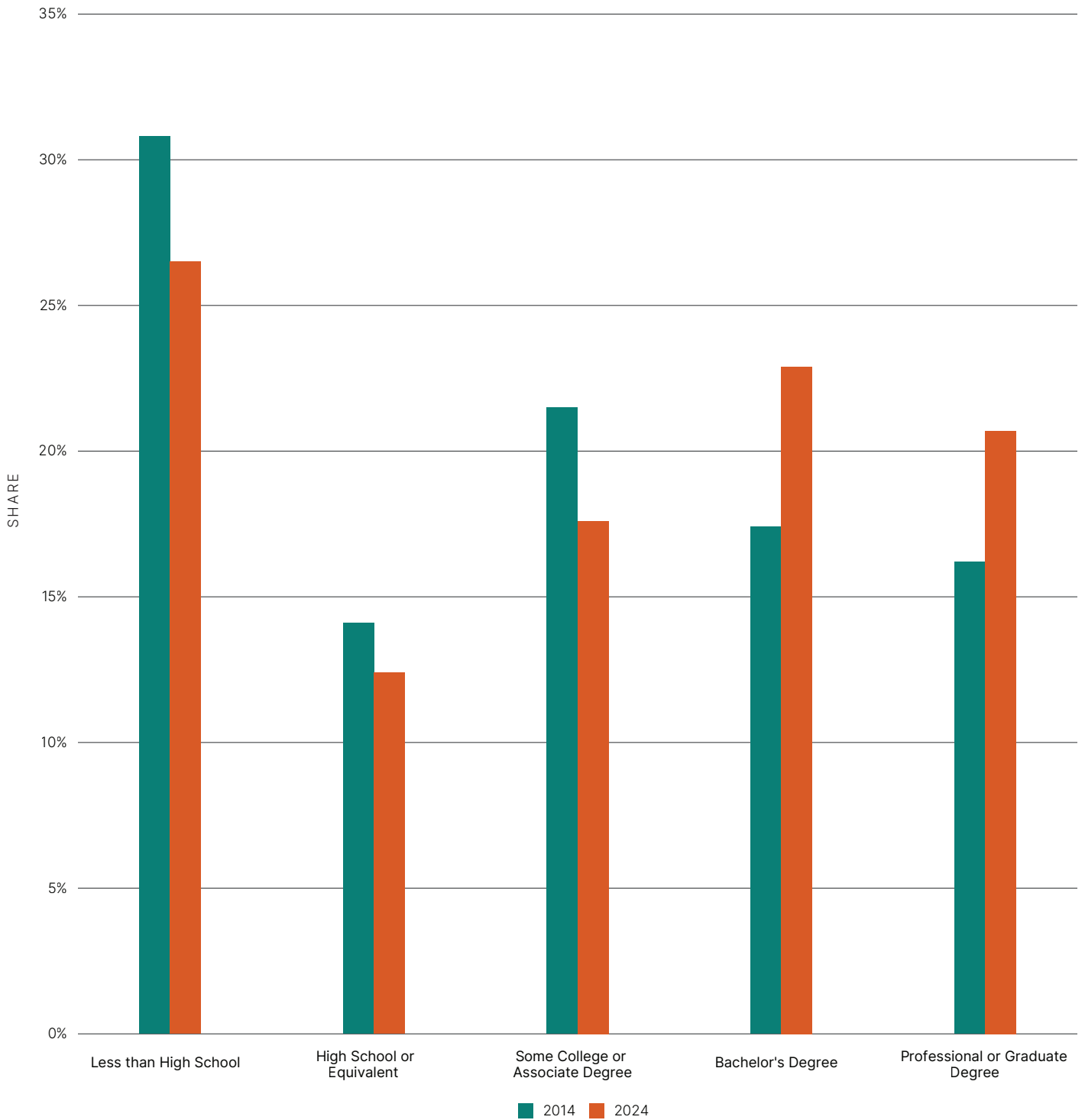
FIGURE 46: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUP IN OAKLAND
2014 vs. 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, CVL Economics.

FIGURE 47: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN OAKLAND

2014 vs. 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, CVL Economics.

At the same time, the share of residents under 18 has decreased, while the share of those ages 65 and older has grown substantially. These shifts are consistent with broader demographic trends—including declining birth rates and an aging population—and suggest that Oakland’s population is becoming modestly older overall.

FISCAL CONDITIONS AND BUSINESS ACTIVITY

Tax revenues account for more than half of the City of Oakland's operating revenues and therefore serve as an important indicator of the City's fiscal health and underlying economic conditions. Because many taxes are tied directly to economic activity, growth in the tax base generally reflects economic expansion, while declining tax bases can signal economic distress. In Oakland, recent trends across major tax sources present a mixed picture, with some economically sensitive revenues weakening in recent years while others remained relatively stable, supported in large part by real estate values and the stability of certain industries. Together, these dynamics suggest a resilient fiscal situation, though one that remains dependent on continued growth to fund the increasing cost of City services.

Total tax revenues in Oakland have grown 4% in inflation-adjusted terms over the past five years (Figure 48), driven mostly by voter-approved non-parcel taxes and partially offset by a non-economic administrative change affecting property taxes. Specifically, property taxes, which typically make up almost half of total City tax revenues, declined in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 due to a reduction in the citywide property tax rate associated with pension obligations. Absent this reduction, total taxes would likely have grown at a faster pace, more closely aligned with property taxes, which grew 15% between FY 2020 and FY 2024. Included in the City's property tax are numerous parcel tax sources dedicated to specific purposes. Other revenues that drove revenue growth include the City's business license tax—the City's single largest non-property tax revenue source—and utility consumption tax.

FIGURE 48: CITY OF OAKLAND TAX REVENUES
FY 2024

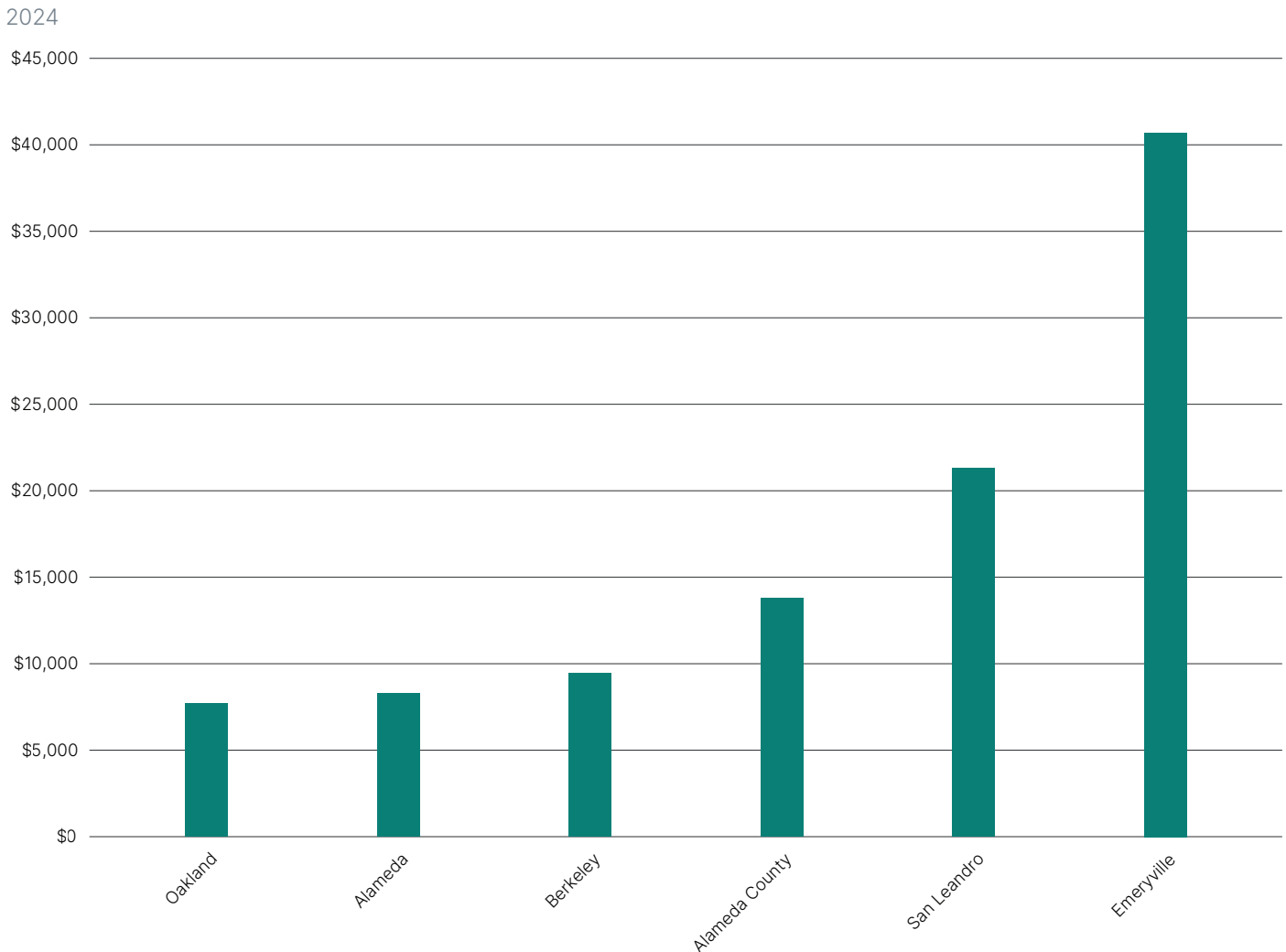
| SOURCE | REVENUE | SHARE OF TOTAL | REAL 5-YEAR CHANGE |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Property | \$475,547,000 | 43% | -1% |
| Sales & Use | \$94,092,000 | 9% | -9% |
| Motor Vehicle In-Lieu | \$683,000 | 0% | 61% |
| Gas | \$23,690,000 | 2% | 11% |
| Business License | \$129,666,000 | 12% | 7% |
| Utility Consumption | \$70,753,000 | 6% | 15% |
| Real Estate Transfer | \$93,220,000 | 8% | -18% |
| Transient Occupancy | \$20,866,000 | 2% | -32% |
| Parking | \$22,362,000 | 2% | 5% |
| Voter-Approved | \$152,094,000 | 14% | 100% |
| Franchise | \$14,676,000 | 1% | -40% |
| Total | \$1,097,649,000 | 100% | 4% |

Source: City of Oakland; CVL Economics.

At the same time, tax revenue growth in Oakland has been offset by several additional factors, some stemming from economic challenges and others from further administrative or one-off events. In FY 2025, large tax revenue declines occurred in franchise taxes, reflecting a newly implemented change in sewer revenue transfers, as well as in real estate transfer taxes, which fell following a major commercial property transfer that occurred in the previous fiscal year. Meanwhile, the City is contending with gradual erosion of its sales tax and transient occupancy tax bases—two revenues sources driven by economic activity in the city. Together accounting for 10% of total City tax revenues, sales taxes and transient occupancy tax declined by 9% and 32% in inflation-adjusted terms, respectively, over the last five years.

Sales tax and transient occupancy taxes are typically significant discretionary revenue sources for municipalities. Unlike property taxes, whose growth is either constrained by Prop 13 (for base ad-valorem property taxes) or ballot measure requirements (for parcel taxes), these revenues are not subject to similar policy limitations. They are also generally less volatile than real estate transfer taxes and can often be used more flexibly compared to revenues dedicated to specific purposes. In Oakland, however, these revenues play a relatively minor role in supporting the City’s fiscal health, as Oakland has historically been an underserved retail and hospitality market. For example, total taxable retail and food services sales per resident in Oakland are lower than in each of the city’s neighboring peer jurisdictions as well as Alameda County overall 49).

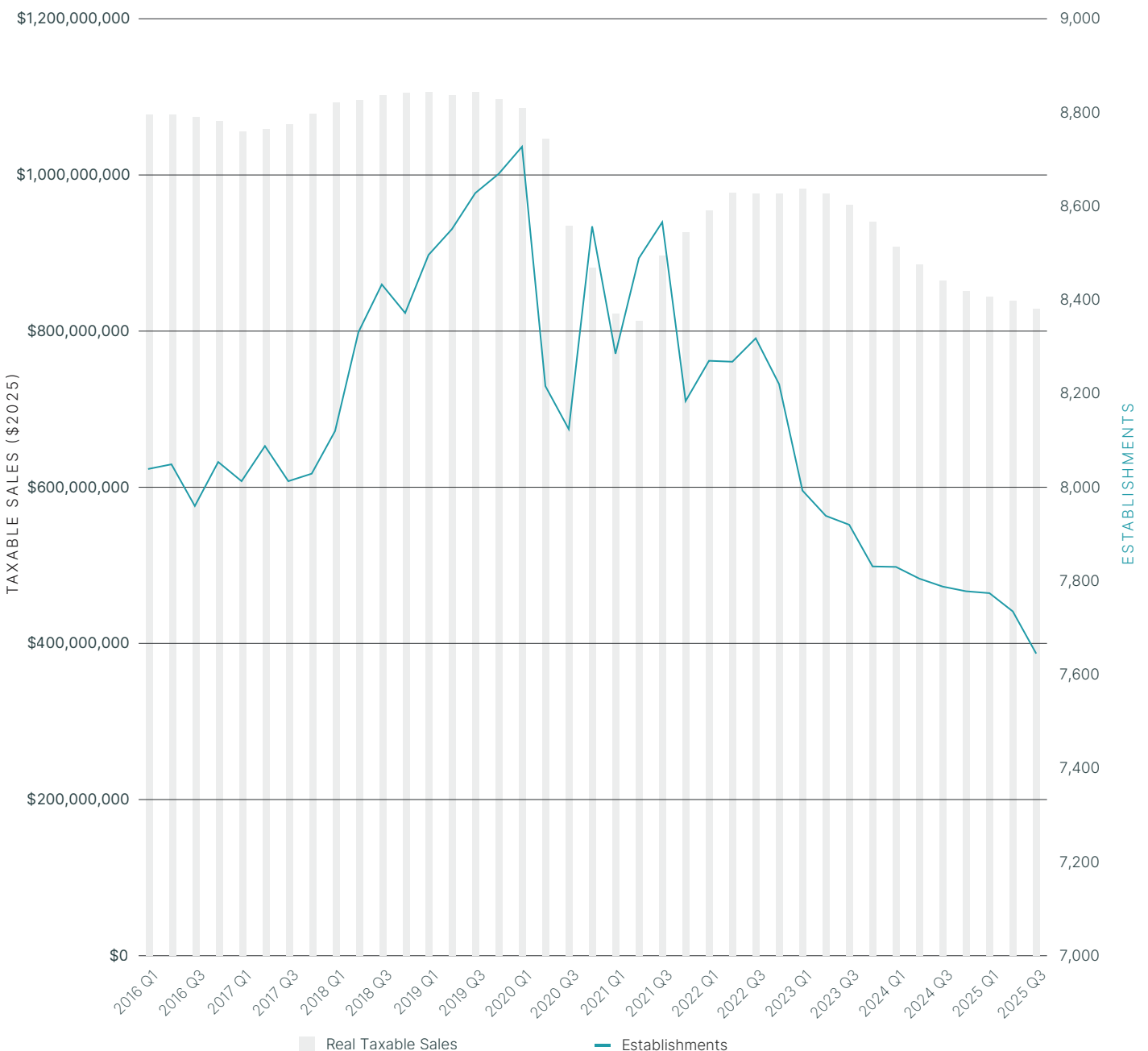
FIGURE 49: PER CAPITA SALES TAX COMPARISONS



Source: California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, CVL Economics.

While retail sales are a minor indicator of the City's fiscal health, it remains an important indicator of business activity occurring in Oakland. Reduced consumer demand for retail services in Oakland following the pandemic has weighed on the city's sales tax base (Figure 50). Adjusted for inflation, taxable retail and food services sales have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and the city has lost nearly 1,100 retail establishments since February of 2020. Although the City's new half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2025 will increase total sales tax revenues, it will not solve the underlying structural issues affecting retail activity in Oakland, which include a historically underdeveloped retail ecosystem, reduced consumer demand amid recent economic uncertainty and inflation, and potentially adverse perceptions of crime in the city.

FIGURE 50: TAXABLE RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES SALES IN OAKLAND
2016–2025

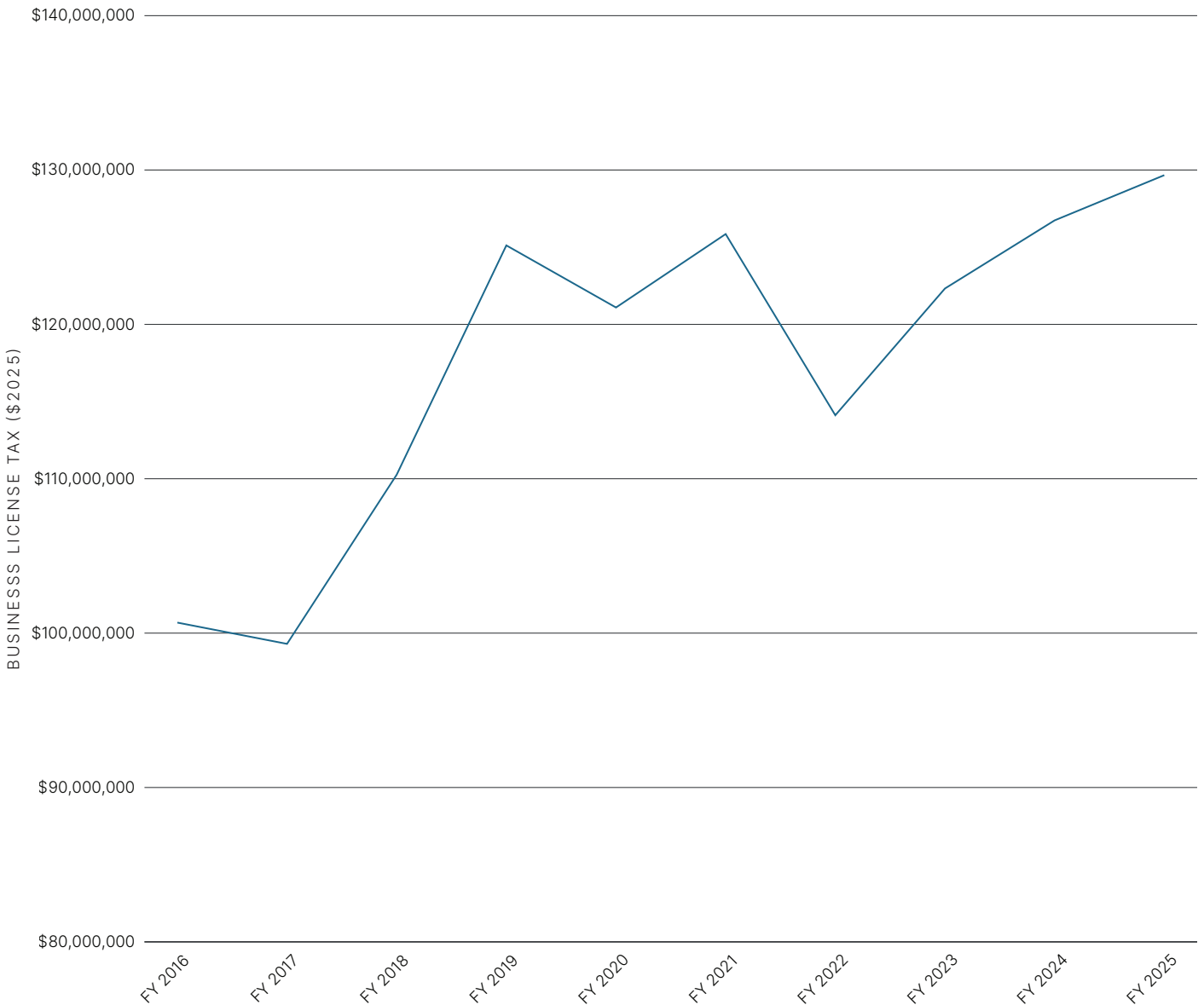


Source: California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, CVL Economics.

The City’s business license tax is another indicator of business activity in Oakland and reflects a more promising trend than retail activity. Levied as a percentage of gross receipts or real estate rental income for businesses in Oakland, with rates varying by type of business, the City’s business license tax grew by 7% between FY 2020 and FY 2025, surpassing pre-pandemic levels (Figure 51). Although the City saw the departures of several large companies in FY 2025, the lost revenue between FY 2024 and FY 2025 was more than offset by newly implemented changes to the City’s processes for recovering delinquent taxes, which are expected to increase collections in future years. Still, most of the City’s business taxes are generated by larger firms engaged in real estate leasing and business, personal, and professional services—sectors whose taxes continued to grow through FY 2025 and have shown stability in recent years despite elevated office vacancies and shifting macroeconomic conditions. To potentially advance small business activity, Oakland residents will vote this June on a ballot measure that would provide a one-year business license tax exemption for new businesses and existing businesses with annual gross receipts of \$1 million or less.

FIGURE 51: OAKLAND BUSINESS LICENSE TAX COLLECTIONS

FY 2016–FY 2025



Source: City of Oakland, CVL Economics.



SPOTLIGHT:

DOWNTOWN OAKLAND

Taken together, the indicators presented in this report point to a complex and often difficult moment for Oakland's economy. Slower job growth, pressures in commercial real estate and business activity, and shifts across several key industries reflect broader structural changes affecting urban economies across the country. Within this context, Downtown Oakland holds particular significance. As the city's primary employment center and the location of a large share of its office space, cultural institutions, and recent housing development, conditions in the downtown core play an outsized role in shaping Oakland's economic trajectory. Changes unfolding there therefore provide an important window into the broader forces reshaping the city's economy. Looking more closely at Downtown Oakland helps illuminate how these economic transitions are beginning to play out on the ground and what they may mean for the city's long-term economic future.

CHANGING CONDITIONS IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

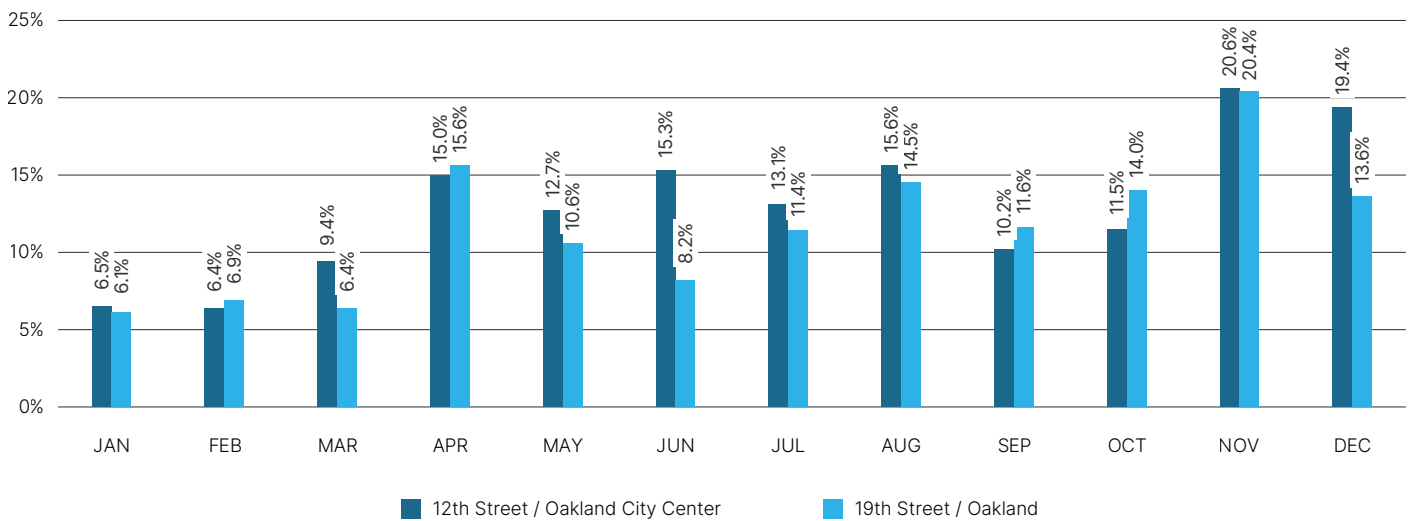
The COVID-19 pandemic cast a particularly long shadow over Downtown Oakland. Reduced office occupancy, rising commercial vacancies, and shifting work patterns weakened daytime foot traffic and constrained retail and hospitality activity in the central business district. And while office vacancies remain elevated as the market adjusts to long-term changes in workplace patterns, recent changes in several other indicators suggest the district may be beginning to regain momentum in new ways. Improvements in public safety conditions, rising transit activity, and renewed investment in cultural venues and institutions point to the early stages of recovery and reinvention in the Downtown core. These trends suggest that Downtown Oakland’s next phase may be shaped less by a recovery in office demand, but by a broader mix of cultural, educational, and visitor-oriented activity.

Improvements in public safety conditions may also be contributing to this shift. Citywide crime statistics indicate that public safety conditions improved across Oakland in 2025. According to Oakland Police Department data, overall violent crime declined by roughly 25% compared with the previous year. Homicides fell to 67 cases in 2025 (down 22% from 2024) while robberies and several property crime categories also declined significantly. Although these statistics reflect citywide trends rather than conditions specific to Downtown Oakland, improvements in public safety across the city may help support greater confidence among residents, workers, and visitors returning to the urban core.¹⁴

Recent transit data bears this out. Ridership at the 12th Street/Oakland City Center and 19th Street BART stations increased steadily throughout 2025, with year-over-year gains strengthening as the year progressed (Figure 52). Early in the year, ridership rose modestly compared with 2024 levels, but by late Fall both stations were recording year-over-year increases exceeding 20%, signaling a gradual return of commuters, students, and visitors to the Downtown core.

FIGURE 52: YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE IN RIDERSHIP AT DOWNTOWN OAKLAND BART STATIONS

2024–2025



Source: BART, CVL Economics.

¹⁴ Oakland Police Department, Citywide Weekly Crime Report, December 22 to December 28, 2025, <https://cityofaakland2.app.box.com/s/sjq7usfy27gy9dfe51hp8arz51ixad/file/2089040183469>.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND ENTERTAINMENT

One of Oakland's most distinctive economic assets is its cultural cachet. The city has long been recognized as a center for creative expression, music, visual arts, and culinary innovation. As Downtown adapts to shifting economic conditions, this cultural identity represents an important source of competitive advantage. Leveraging Oakland's arts, culture, and entertainment sectors may play an increasingly important role in attracting visitors, supporting small businesses, and generating activity in the downtown core.

Evidence of this recognition can be seen in the City's renewed investment in cultural leadership. In 2026, Oakland reinstated the Cultural Affairs Manager position after it had been eliminated in the previous year's budget. The role, now filled by longtime arts leader Lyz Luke, oversees the City's Cultural Affairs Division within the Department of Economic and Workforce Development and helps coordinate initiatives such as the City's cultural plan, public art program, and support for cultural districts and arts organizations. Restoring the position signals the City's recognition that arts and culture play a meaningful role in Oakland's economic development strategy and civic identity.¹⁵

Investment in major cultural venues is also helping to restore downtown's event infrastructure. The reopening of the historic Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts represents a significant milestone for Oakland's performing arts landscape.¹⁶ After years of closure and redevelopment planning, the venue is preparing to reopen with new programming and events, restoring a major performance space that historically hosted concerts, civic gatherings, and large cultural events. The Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts is one of the largest event venues in Oakland outside of the Coliseum stadium-arena complex,

and operators expect the facility to join the Fox and Paramount theaters in generating millions of dollars in annual revenue through ticket sales, private bookings, and philanthropic support. Its return could once again position the site as a major destination for regional performances and gatherings.

The importance of Oakland's cultural economy has been recognized at the state level as well. In 2025, Oakland's Black Arts Movement Business District was designated as one of California's official Cultural Districts, recognizing the area's historic role in fostering Black arts, music, literature, and entrepreneurship.¹⁷ The designation supports ongoing efforts to preserve and promote Oakland's cultural legacy while encouraging arts programming, creative businesses, and cultural tourism. State cultural district status can also elevate the area's visibility and attract new investment and visitors, positioning the district as a hub for culture-driven economic development in Downtown Oakland.

That cultural legacy is reflected not only in institutions and districts, but in the events and festivals that animate Downtown Oakland throughout the year. The Oaklash drag festival attracts performers and audiences from across the Bay Area and beyond, bringing thousands of visitors to downtown venues and surrounding neighborhoods.¹⁸ Organizers attribute the festival's continued growth in part to the expansion of year-round programming, which supports a broader ecosystem of queer arts, nightlife, and performance in Oakland. By cultivating ongoing events and partnerships with nonprofit arts organizations and local venues, Oaklash has evolved into more than a single annual event, helping to strengthen Oakland's creative economy and nightlife environment.

¹⁵ City of Oakland, "Lyz Luke Named Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Oakland," January 22, 2026, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/News-Releases/Lyz-Luke-Named-Cultural-Affairs-Manager-for-the-City-of-Oakland>.

¹⁶ Shomik Mukherjee, "An Iconic Performing Arts Venue Is Back Open. Can Oakland Keep It Alive?," The Mercury News, January 24, 2026, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2026/01/24/henry-j-kaiser-center-oakland-reopening/>.

¹⁷ City of Oakland, "Black Arts Mvmt & Business District Designated CA Cultural District," December 22, 2025, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/News-Releases/Black-Arts-Mvmt-Business-District-Designated-CA-Cultural-District>.

¹⁸ Tony Bravo, "S.F. Pride Is Struggling. Here's Why Oaklash Is Thriving," San Francisco Chronicle, May 13, 2025, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/entertainment/article/oaklash-drag-festival-20320991.php>.

Hand-in-hand with Downtown Oakland’s vibrant nightlife, its growing culinary reputation continues to reinforce the city’s cultural identity. For the second consecutive year, Oakland was named the No. 1 food city in the United States by Condé Nast Traveler’s Readers’ Choice Awards, which drew more than 750,000 votes in the 2025 survey.¹⁹ More than granting residents bragging rights, the ranking highlights Oakland’s exceptionally diverse dining scene and neighborhood-driven food culture, elevates its profile as a dining destination nationwide, and strengthens the role of restaurants in supporting the city’s evening and visitor economy.

Together, these venue investments, cultural designations, events, and culinary attractions contribute to a more active and diversified downtown environment, particularly during evenings and weekends when traditional office activity is limited.

INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT

Looking ahead, new institutional investments may further reinforce these emerging trends. One of the most significant is the opening of Samuel Merritt University’s new flagship campus in January 2026, a \$240 million project that relocates the university’s primary academic facilities to Downtown Oakland (see the Health Care Spotlight earlier in this report). The roughly 265,000-square-foot campus is expected to bring approximately 2,000 students and about 500 faculty and staff into the area on a daily basis, introducing a new and consistent source of daytime population in the downtown core.

Projects such as the Samuel Merritt City Center Campus illustrate how education and health-related institutions may play an expanding role in the future of Downtown Oakland. As the city center adapts to long-term changes in office demand, universities and other civic institutions may increasingly function as stabilizing anchors that support employment

density, foot traffic, and a more diversified mix of economic activity. Students, faculty, and staff traveling to and from the campus are likely to contribute to increased transit ridership and pedestrian activity. Moreover, the campus will attract a range of visitors and programming that generate additional activity. This type of institutional presence can help sustain demand for restaurants, retail, and service-oriented businesses that historically relied on office workers.

These developments suggest that Downtown Oakland’s future may increasingly depend on a broader mix of economic activity than in the past. Cultural venues, entertainment programming, educational institutions, and a growing visitor economy are beginning to complement the district’s traditional office base. As these elements continue to take shape, they may help support a more resilient and diversified downtown environment.

¹⁹ Madeline Wells, “For the Second Year in a Row, Bay Area City Is Named Best Food City in the US,” SF Gate, December 2, 2025, <https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/second-year-bay-area-city-named-best-food-city-21217364.php>.



CONCLUSION

The East Bay and Oakland economies are entering a period defined less by ongoing recovery than by structural adjustment. Changes in work patterns, evolving industry dynamics, demographic shifts, and new patterns of urban activity are reshaping employment, commercial real estate markets, and the role of Downtown within the city's economy. These changes mirror broader transformations affecting major urban economies across the country.

Oakland has navigated similar transitions before. From its historic role as a center of industry and trade to its emergence as a hub for health care, culture, and innovation, the city has repeatedly adapted to shifting economic landscapes. The assets that continue to define Oakland—its institutions, its workforce, and its distinctive cultural and economic character—remain powerful foundations for the next phase of the city's economic evolution and will shape how Oakland defines its place in the regional economy in the years ahead.

OAKLAND METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL OAKLAND/EAST BAY ECONOMIC INDICATORS REPORT

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