

## **OAKLAND MOVING FORWARD**

**By Ronald V. Dellums**

I became the Mayor of Oakland because I love this city. I am committed to its future, and consider it a privilege to serve its residents.

Oakland as the Model City is a cohesive community of diverse neighborhoods, with a coherent government, anchored in a vibrant economy, whose residents are healthy, well-educated and well-trained. It reflects both our realities and our dreams. First, Oakland's size, diversity, culture, and civic participation mean that it is already a "model" in many respects, and, second, I believe that our community needs a common dream – a vision of what we are collectively trying to achieve.

Public safety is "due North" in our strategy for this model city; it is our fundamental, overriding priority. Public safety is a multi-dimensional quality of life issue that drives and informs our other priorities. My public safety strategy addresses both crime and the root causes of crime. It encompasses violence prevention, economic development, education, health care, housing, employment and re-entry. All of our initiatives are rooted in the recognition that public safety requires a holistic approach.

In the past two years, we have achieved significant milestones. For the first time in Oakland's history, we have a fully staffed police department with more than 830 police officers protecting our streets, 57 problem-solving officers have been deployed covering every beat in Oakland, and a new geographic accountability model of policing has been implemented. The Police Chief now has expanded authority to change officer deployment to quickly respond to urgent public safety needs. We created a Public Safety Coordinator position to facilitate the delivery of coordinated public safety services. We have deployed street outreach workers to reach youth in trouble and have trained clergy to double the reach of our efforts. Our re-entry specialist is implementing a comprehensive re-entry strategy to help those leaving prison lead productive lives.

We have progressed in building our economy by protecting job-producing business with an industrial zoning policy; creating the Green Jobs Corps, which has become a national model; and launching the Oakland Partnership, a strategic planning and implementation body to build both core industries and emerging markets, including health care, logistics, and arts. As a result, Oakland is witnessing the growth of new offices, restaurants, and businesses.

We have worked with educators on one-of-a-kind projects to reduce the drop-out rate, create school-based health centers and family support services at every middle school, and recruit diverse and permanent local teachers.

Committed Oaklanders came together to create 41 Community Task Forces to focus on the needs and challenges facing this community and help us form a city government that is responsive to the people. Two-thirds of the task force recommendations have been implemented. And we have started a partnership with the State of California which will allow us to invest in more than 470 blocks citywide.

Still, inherent, structural impediments to a coherent city government remain. Recognizing this, I commissioned the Public Financial Management (PFM) Group to look at best practices from around the country as I sought to develop a seamless executive branch and fully operationalize the “Strong Mayor” form of government, which Oakland voters embraced in 1998.

This process was conducted in three parts. The first part, which required immediate intervention and resolution, began in July 2008 to address a fiscal crisis and take measures to close a \$42 million budget shortfall.

The second part is a restructuring plan, based on nationally recognized best practices, to implement a seamless executive branch. This blueprint, which I released publicly on January 13, sets out a framework for us to: fill vacancies and key leadership positions; establish performance standards and accountability measures; develop a long-term financial strategy; integrate our public safety efforts into all of city government; build stronger partnerships with our educational institutions; and foster even greater civic engagement.

I am pleased to announce the release of this report and strongly embrace its recommendations. I look forward to reviewing it with City staff, the City Council, and members of the community as we assess its content and consider next steps together.

The third and final part of this approach is the process of recruiting, interviewing and selecting the team of professionals who will help me achieve our Model City vision in Oakland. I will announce the members of that team during the week of January 26.

Oakland, like every city in the nation, faces tough challenges as we start this New Year. But we are also unique, and together we are seizing the opportunity to shape our own dreams for the city. Together, we can do great things.

*Ronald V. Dellums is the Mayor of Oakland. To see the PFM Group’s Strategic Planning Report, go to [www.oaklandnet.com](http://www.oaklandnet.com).*