

Economic revitalization Oakland style

"We need to create infrastructure that encourages social connection, supports neighborhoods and job creation, and healthy living. Oakland should be strong from the inside out: a city with strong infrastructure that can withstand shocks and recessions; strong businesses that can grow and thrive in Oakland; and a range of jobs and industries where Oaklanders can move up the ladder. "

— Libby Schaaf

What I Think

We must champion economic development throughout Oakland by creating better-paying jobs right here in Oakland. We have to make "made in Oakland" a reality, and you should also be able to "make it" in Oakland. Progress means having an inclusive economy and moving the city forward without moving long-time residents out. It also means growing our tax base so that sales tax and other business revenues can help grow City resources that in turn can improve Oakland.

Oakland has always been home to great businesses and innovative entrepreneurs. Born and raised in Oakland, and now raising my own family here, I have witnessed first-hand the economic vitality and cultural vibrancy that independent small businesses bring to the neighborhoods and commercial corridors we call home. Throughout my long civic career, I've worked to make Oakland a place where small businesses are encouraged to establish themselves, grow and thrive.

But while small businesses bring character to our communities, and represent "the engine of job creation and capital creation in our economy and in our country"¹, small business owners are struggling to access the opportunities that their grit and determination deserve. According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance,² "42 percent of local businesses that needed a loan in the previous two years had been unable to obtain one". Very small businesses (under 20 employees) and enterprises owned by minorities and women are having a particularly difficult time accessing small business loans, and so small businesses are increasingly being forced to rely on high-cost alternatives to finance their operations and expansion. Oakland needs to access creative new partnerships that will democratize access for these small businesses to get the capital they need to succeed and grow.

Oakland should use its amazing existing infrastructure, and new infrastructure with careful capital planning to support business and job growth. My detailed plan (available separately) to finance city projects and get the City on stable financial footing addresses this.

¹ <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pelosi-small-businesses-are-the-engine-of-job-creation-and-capital-creation-in-our-economy-and-in-our-country-96491134.html>

² <http://www.ilsr.org/rule/financing-local-businesses/>

What I Have Done

Facilitated funding for businesses “Made in Oakland”: I wrote and passed legislation making Oakland the first city to join the Kiva micro-lending program, making interest-free, crowd-sourced loans to support Oakland-grown businesses.

Cut red tape: I eliminated red tape in building approvals and made technology upgrades to the building process so new businesses can open their doors faster. My efforts were recognized by the Oakland Builders Alliance with a special award, as well as their first place endorsement to be Mayor.

Created flex parking to help Oakland small businesses: I created Oakland’s first Flexible Benefit Parking District to make parking more convenient and help small neighborhood businesses attract more customers and build their businesses.

Supported medical marijuana: I have supported Oakland’s growing medical marijuana businesses and have fought to end federal medical marijuana raids.

Help the port thrive: I served as a Director at the Port of Oakland, where I worked on bringing millions in outside funds to Oakland for transportation improvements, new jobs, economic development and reducing pollution.

What I Will Do

Support new business formation: Many new businesses are choosing to call Oakland home. Our diverse workforce and forward-thinking populace make Oakland the perfect place to innovate. But many companies struggle to grow from being an idea to becoming a successful business. This is true for startups graduating from high-tech incubators or co-work spaces as well as mobile food vendors and pop-up stores. We can do a better job of making it easy for these companies to start and grow in Oakland, every step of their journey.

Retain and expand existing businesses: Some of the best middle-wage jobs are in existing long-standing companies, like Kaiser. We need to proactively work with long-term employers to make sure they can stay and grow in Oakland. This is particularly true for industrial businesses and manufacturers, who often face development pressures. Through targeted industrial zoning, creating links between buyers and suppliers, and through other efforts to bring businesses together, we can make sure that these “Made in Oakland” companies feel at home and succeed.

Market Oakland as a great place for business: Everyone has heard of Oakland. But we need to directly market Oakland as a great place to start, grow and take your business to the next level. The Bay Area is a great environment for economic growth and Oakland already has one of the most identifiable brands within the region. Let’s use that to our strength and go out and tell our story. The Visit Oakland branding is an example to build on for job growth.

Partner with businesses to create training: Companies know best what training needs they have. The city can help connect employers with the City’s many training providers including community colleges to make sure the curriculum offered is up to date and state of the art.

Help workers secure jobs and prepare for careers: Training alone does not assure that someone gets a job. This is where it is essential to help workers think about the many parts of having



a career and about how to build and use a network to secure a job. Programs like LinkedLearning can connect K-12 students with employers and can get our young people on a pathway towards professional success.

Lift up our small businesses: There are so many ways to reduce the barriers facing small businesses. Last year as an Oakland City Councilmember, I was proud to work with City Attorney Barbara Parker to co-author legislation making Oakland the first city in the country to become a Kiva Zip trustee. Since then, the City of Oakland has vouched for 10 small business owners to access \$55,000 of interest-free microloans on Kiva Zip. And as an individual trustee, I'm proud to have personally vouched for 3 additional Oakland business owners to access another \$15,000! As well as disbursing dollars, by connecting borrowers with thousands of lenders that can become their customers, business advisers and brand ambassadors, we also aim to develop a network of support for our city's small business owners that provides them with social, as well as financial capital.

Make made in Oakland a reality: Oakland is not new to making things - it's our proud history and it's also our future. We can make "Made in Oakland" real by growing local manufacturing and providing incentives and assistance to small manufacturing enterprises that hire Oaklanders. We can help rehabilitate spaces to meet the manufacturing needs of the 21st century. We should be working our sister cities up and down the East Bay to grow the manufacturing sector.

Attract new employers: While most job growth comes from existing companies, Oakland should be prepared to roll out the welcome mat for successful companies looking to expand. Architecture firm Gensler recently opened an office in downtown. Oakland should be prepared to recruit and attract many other professional services firms (and any employers who fit our city's values) who are looking to tap into the East Bay workforce and possibly secure more affordable space. And by offering excellent service to all companies, Oakland will keep them around for the long-term.

Cut red tape for new and expanding businesses: We still have not made it easy enough to for businesses to work with the City. We can help small businesses expand by cutting red tape and streamlining city regulations and permits. We can do this by tuning into their needs and inviting them to co-create businesses processes that work.

Make neighborhoods with the highest unemployment into "Job Creation Zones": We can target high unemployment neighborhoods with tax credits, fee abatements, repayable loans, and channel workforce investments to particular sites. We can work collectively - across agencies - to get these tools working together in one neighborhood and make it model to replicate in other neighborhoods.