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PRESS RELEASE



**CITY OF
OAKLAND**

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR
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New Audit Report Assesses the City of Oakland's Fight Against Illegal Dumping, Offering Recommendations for Improvement

OAKLAND, Calif. (April 23, 2026): Today, the Office of the City Auditor released a report titled, [Performance Audit of Illegal Dumping: Improvements to the Accessibility of Legal Waste Disposal and the City's Enforcement and Remediation Policies and Operations Could Help Alleviate Oakland's Illegal Dumping Problem](#). The objectives of the audit were to:

- identify potential sources of illegal dumping in Oakland,
- evaluate the City's use of resources to promote effective clean ups and enforcement,
- identify workload and process improvements for clean ups, citing violators, and preventing recurrent dumping, and
- assess accessibility and familiarity with services that mitigate illegal dumping.

The audit, which the City Auditor's Office conducted in response to widespread community concern about illegal dumping, covered the City of Oakland's illegal dumping activities between 2019 through 2025, but also included financial data from as early as 2013.

The audit report details how multiple City departments have roles in the City's efforts to fight illegal dumping in Oakland, including Public Works, the City Administrator's Office, the Police Department, Code Enforcement, and the Finance Department. The City's Public Works Department has the most prominent role in the City's illegal dumping efforts within the public right-of-way. Public Works is responsible for cleaning up illegal dumping and managing the City's contract with the private hauler that serves Oakland residents and business operators with waste disposal. Since 2013-14, spending on clean ups has increased considerably, nearing \$12 million in fiscal year 2024-25. Public Works also has an Environmental Enforcement Unit (EEU) which cites illegal dumping offenders and provides outreach. Spending in that unit has also increased.

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The audit reviewed the City's methods for prevention, deterrence, and clean up, and concluded that legal waste removal should be more accessible and affordable. The audit team found that much of the illegal dumping in Oakland is residential in origin, and the City's contracted residential waste hauling is more expensive than it is for residents of other cities. Residential customers have access to bulky pickups, but this service – especially among multi-family residents – appears to be underutilized. The audit also found that dumpsters allotted to councilmembers and the Mayor through the City's hauling contract, have been underutilized, representing a loss of allotted legal waste disposal and contracted benefits to the City.

The audit identified opportunities for the City to strengthen enforcement of illegal dumping through legislative changes and improved regional collaboration. In addition, the audit noted that the City imposes special assessments on residential properties not subscribing to waste services, but it could impose special assessments on both residential and commercial properties. Furthermore, fines for illegal dumping violations are lower in Oakland than they are in other local jurisdictions. The audit report notes that progress in these areas was made during the course of the audit, but those efforts have not been finalized.

Lastly, the audit found that the actual clean ups of illegal dumping are effective, but environmental enforcement could be improved through finalized strategies, clear goals, procedures and performance management, regular review of enforcement and prevention strategies, consistent staffing and workload improvements, streamlined processes and interdepartmental coordination, and improved user access and updates via the City's online service request portal. Notably, the audit found that the lack of policies and procedures and overarching strategy led to inconsistent service delivery within the EEU with patrols focused on a 20-block stretch of the city for several months.

This audit made 17 recommendations to address the findings. The City Auditor's Office will follow up and report on the statuses of the recommendations until they are implemented.

Oakland City Auditor Houston stated, "I am proud that through our audit, we were able to respond to the concerns of so many stakeholders, and bridge the roles and understanding of different departments and jurisdictions to help make our community cleaner and safer for Oakland residents, business operators, and visitors. I am even more proud that we addressed root causes and identified opportunities to make legal waste removal more affordable and accessible to Oaklanders. Everyone deserves to live in a clean, safe city."

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You can read the full report [here](#). The City Auditor is available for in-person, virtual, or phone interviews. Please direct questions to Director of Communications, Dena Shupe at DShupe@oaklandca.gov.

ABOUT OAKLAND'S CITY AUDITOR MICHAEL C. HOUSTON

A career public servant, Michael C. Houston, has been a government auditor and investigator for 18 years. He worked as a performance auditor for the City of San Jose's independent City Auditor's Office from 2008 to 2017 and then as the Director of Compliance and Internal Control at California State University East Bay, where he directed the audit and investigation functions between 2017 and 2019. Michael joined the Oakland City Auditor's Office in 2019 as the Whistleblower Program Manager and was promoted to be the Assistant City Auditor in 2022. In a March 2024 Special Election, Michael was elected to complete the term of the previous City Auditor, who resigned mid-term. Michael has a Master of Public Policy degree from U.C. Berkeley, a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Sonoma State University, and is a Certified Internal Auditor.

ABOUT THE OAKLAND CITY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

The City Auditor's Office independently and objectively reviews City operations and services, and reports on their performance to the public. The Office's audits include recommendations to management and those charged with governance and oversight, on how to improve services, reduce costs, and increase public accountability. The Office conducts performance audits in accordance with Government Auditing Standards set by the Government Accountability Office under the U.S. Comptroller General. The City Auditor's Office operates a Whistleblower Hotline to receive and investigate allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse affecting or involving City of Oakland resources, employees, officials, or contractors. The Office also prepares financial ballot analyses for proposed legislation in accordance with the City Charter, and conducts analyses and reviews requested from the City Council. Visit www.oaklandauditor.com to learn more about Oakland's Office of the City Auditor or view a complete list of our released audits, investigations, and annual reports.