

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

**B**erkeley is a community with an estimated population of 102,743. Located in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, Berkeley has a temperate climate, and panoramic views of the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge from its hills. Within its densely populated area, Berkeley is bordered by hills and parklands on the east, and the bay on the west. This is where people representing a diversity of cultures, races, economic levels, lifestyles, and neighborhoods live, work, and thrive in our City.

Berkeley is a mix of residential and commercial areas, ranging from the crowded, bustling downtown to quiet residential neighborhood streets.

The Downtown area is undergoing rejuvenation; new housing projects are being built and ground-floor commercial space is nearing capacity. West Berkeley is a mix of manufacturing, commercial and residential uses and also includes the 33-acre Aquatic Park and the highly acclaimed retail and restaurant development on Fourth Street. Waterfront improvements are under way to purchase and convert a 170-acre area of privately held land into an East Bay Shoreline Park; the City-owned Marina on the west is the largest public-owned marina in Northern California.

Berkeley has many pleasant residential neighborhoods. South and North Berkeley homes and neighborhood commercial districts date back to the streetcar suburbs of the last century. The Berkeley Hills exemplify elegance while the South Campus/Telegraph Avenue retains the bohemian flavor of earlier generations.

Berkeley enjoys a proud reputation as a center for learning. Social, environmental, and political advocacy in the community complement Berkeley's distinct entrepreneurial spirit. The University of California—the flagship of the University of California System—is situated in the City, steps away from the bustling Telegraph Avenue area. UC Berkeley is renowned for its world-class research facilities with high-tech commercial spin-offs. In addition to the University, there are over thirty theological schools, many bookstores and as many library users as there are people in the City.

### **Population**

Berkeley residents reflect the City's international position as an educational center and its location in California's portion of the Pacific Rim. Many of Berkeley's residents are foreign-born, and a walk downtown or a visit to a local café or restaurant one may hear languages from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, in addition to English.

Berkeley leads the nation in innovative accessibility measures for the disabled, such as the establishment of the Center for Independent Living and the establishment of emergency transit services for the severely disabled. Downtown street intersections are outfitted with sonic devices for visually impaired pedestrians, and with curb cuts for wheelchairs. Major modifications to

public facilities continue as part the City's strives for full compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

## **Economy and Education Employment**

Berkeley's economic base is comprised of over 13,000 business and institutions covering government, educational, manufacturing, retail and service sectors which provide nearly 76,000 jobs and generate nearly \$4.2 billion in gross business receipts, and \$1.3 billion in taxable sales.

The composition of Berkeley's economic base, with the University of California as the largest single employer, has historically contributed to a relatively stable local economy. Berkeley's retail mix is a variety of restaurants, bookstores, specialty shops and boutiques, and an increasing number of green and sustainable businesses.

## **Community Safety**

Though the City's location and climate is appealing, these features also contribute to the community's heightened risk for natural disasters. The entire San Francisco Bay Area is seismically active and a major fault line runs directly through the City's densely built eastern hillsides. In addition, this area was struck by a large urban wildfire that destroyed 67 homes in October 1991, part of the regional total of 3,200 lost residential units.

The City continues efforts to prepare for and respond to future disasters. Most public facilities, including all public schools, fire stations, the Civic Center Building and the Central Library branch are seismically retrofitted. Community education also plays a critical role in ensuring that residents are well prepared and trained to protect life and property and partner in recovery efforts.

## **Arts, Culture and Recreation**

The City maintains 52 parks and two extensively used regional parks border the City's eastern edge.

At the center of the City's Arts District is the innovative Berkeley Repertory Theater Company. In addition, Cal Performances, an arts group associated with the University, hosts world-renowned lecturers, musicians, theater and dance groups. Berkeley writers and musicians have been honored with presidential recognition for their efforts. Many street fairs, festivals and performances in City parks further contribute to the cultural flavor of Berkeley's urban environment.

## **Health**

Berkeley is one of three cities in California with its own public health staff, providing valuable services in health education, maternal child and adolescent health, and mental and environmental health. As a result, the community scores extremely well on national Healthy Cities' performance indicators. Innovative programs include a mobile crisis team that works closely with the police as well as collaborating with the Berkeley schools to supplement services provided at the high school health clinic. Continuing efforts to address health inequity issues as

well as provide comprehensive services to members of the homeless community remain a top priority.

## **Housing**

Berkeley is a built-out city where land use has remained largely unchanged since 1900. Single-family neighborhoods define South and West Berkeley, while more mixed-use neighborhoods are found in and around the Downtown and University of California areas. Approximately 48% of Berkeley's land area is in residential uses. 94% of owner-occupied units were built before 1960. With median home values continuing to grow at record levels, housing affordability for both low-income renters and homebuyers remains an important community concern.

## **Transportation**

Berkeley's level of transit services ranks in the top ten metropolitan areas, nationwide. In addition to regional transit services, local policies and programs include employer shuttles, taxis, van service for the elderly, vans for the disabled and locally owned school buses.

Although over 37 percent of the people commuting by walking or bicycle in Alameda County live in Berkeley, traffic congestion and parking remain major community concerns. In addition to promoting a variety of policies that support public transportation, the City adopted a comprehensive Bicycle Plan, designed to create a model bicycle-friendly City, as well as a Pedestrian Charter.

## **Environmental Awareness**

Berkeley is active in the environmental movement and has the highest *per capita* membership in environmental organizations in the country. City environmental policy regarding recycling, energy conservation, and use of alternative fuel vehicles lead the nation. Berkeley is the first city of its size in the country to convert to 100% Biodiesel for its entire fleet.

## **Local & Global Citizenship**

Berkeley is home to many active neighborhood associations and community volunteers who work tirelessly for the benefit of all residents. Neighborhood and open space preservation ordinances were passed by citizen initiative and the citizens voted to declare the City a nuclear free zone. Council policy has banned business with corporations doing business with oppressive states such as the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Provinces of Adu, Kham, and U-Tsang as well as the use of rain forest products and pesticides.

The Berkeley community is actively engaged in political and social issues on many levels – local, national, and international. Long considered the home of free speech, City residents and officials continue work to ensure all voices are heard and that Berkeley remains a diverse, multi-cultural community.

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