How Parks and Green Space Support School Readiness

What is Kindergarten Readiness?
Kindergarten readiness (or school readiness) is multifaceted and means that children are healthy and ready for kindergarten, schools are ready to meet the needs of children entering their classrooms, and families and communities are ready to support children’s growth and development.

In a First 5 Alameda County study, children were more prepared for kindergarten when they lived in neighborhoods with more community supports. These may include having sidewalks, a park or playground, a library or a recreation center. It also includes the feeling of being safe, neighbors helping each other out, and places to go for resources.

Families are more likely to support children’s growth and development when they feel safe in their neighborhood.

San Antonio Neighborhood

At a Glance

Population: ~5,500 residents
Top 3 races and ethnicities: Asian: 39.9%, Hispanic: 34.9%, Black: 17.4%
Healthy Places Index Score: 13.7
Median Household Income: $32.4k
Reported Number of Neighborhood Assets: 3

An Opportunity for Change - San Antonio Park

San Antonio Park is a centerpiece to the San Antonio neighborhood. However, the 10.6 acres of land is highly underused by parents and their children. A survey conducted by the San Antonio Parent Action Research Team revealed that out of the 65 participants, only 5 reported taking their children to play in San Antonio Park.

Many parents stated that the park doesn’t offer the amenities needed for their children to thrive. The San Antonio Parent Action Group submitted a proposal to the City of Oakland for a full service Community Resource Center in San Antonio Park that would act as a hub for park activities that promote wellness, connection, culture and healing for people of all ages.

Parks in Oakland, CA

Each city can earn a maximum of 100 points. Points are awarded for 14 statistical measures across five categories: acreage, investment, amenities, equity, and access. The final scores in each category are then averaged to generate each city’s ParkScore.

When looking at racial equity, residents in neighborhoods of color have access to 26% less park space per person than the city median, and 69% less than those in white neighborhoods.

Residents in low-income neighborhoods have access to 19% less park space per person than the city median and 78% less than those in high-income neighborhoods.

The City Oakland General Plan sets a goal of 4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents for parks that meet the active recreational needs of the community.

However, city-wide, Oakland only provides just a little over 1 acre of local-serving parks per 1,000 residents.

The City Median
Neighborhoods of Color

White Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods of Color

White Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods of Color

White Neighborhoods

- 1,000 Oakland residents

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At a Glance

Median Household Income: $32.4k

Families earning at least $50,000 per year were significantly more likely than lower income families to report the availability of each asset in their neighborhood, pointing to the need to invest in assets for low-income communities.

The CA Healthy Places Index factors in various community conditions such as social, education, economic, environmental, etc. The census tracts representing the San Antonio neighborhood scored 19.7, meaning they have healthier community conditions than just 13.7% of all other CA census tracts.

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Reimagining San Antonio Park

What Can a Community Resource Center Offer?

Parent Support Groups
Sports and Recreation
Healthy Living and Cooking Classes
Access to Technology
Play Groups
Art and Cultural Classes

Why This Matters

Parks provide community benefits best when they are activated, meaning well-maintained, safe, equitably accessible, fully utilized and beloved.

The commitment to safe, inclusive and beloved parks for all is no less than a commitment to the civil right to equal, fair, safe access to public space.

Increased access to green space and community supports for children was associated with:

- Improved attention
- Improved self-discipline
- Improved memory
- Higher standardized test scores

Access to safe and well-maintained parks with their green spaces and recreation amenities is a recognized path to disrupting systemic health inequities and promoting wellness.

"I would like to see more rec centers in these neighborhoods. When I was raised we had a school and two blocks down there was a rec center. I think throughout Oakland, period, but especially this neighborhood because it's a large neighborhood with a lot of children."

"We love the parks but drive to go to certain ones instead of walking to the one that is a block from us! Because it is not kid friendly - even if there is a play set, it is not kept up, not enough trash cans, too many loitering of people smoking at times, old play equipment."

Parent Voices

Get Involved!

Want to connect with the San Antonio Family Resource Center? Reach out to:

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