

Elmhurst United Middle School

1800 98th Ave. Oakland, CA 94603 | <https://elmhurstunitedmiddleschool.org/>

1. Overview (pg 1)
 - a. Mission/Vision + Principal
 - b. Demographics
 - c. Race/Ethnicity
2. What Makes this School Unique (pg 2)
3. School and Neighborhood History (pg 2)
 - a. Development
 - b. Gentrification



**ELMHURST UNITED
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

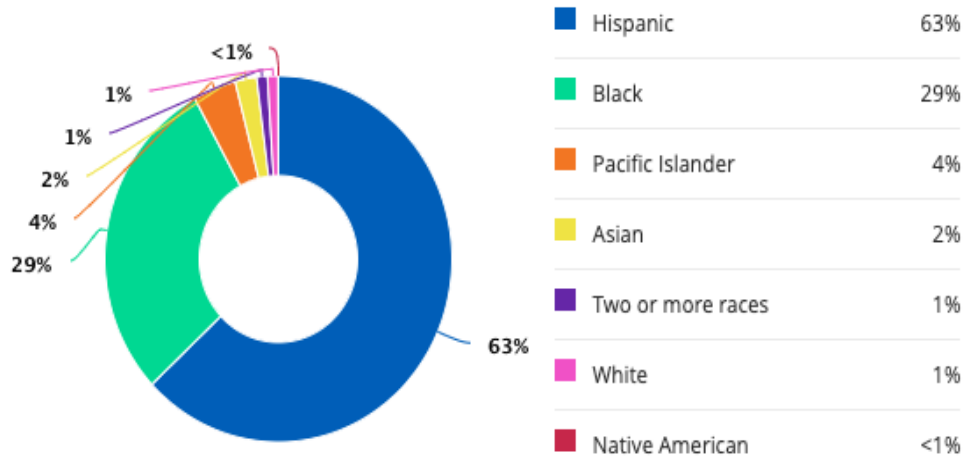
Overview

Mission/Vision: Elmhurst United seeks to build toward academic mastery for all students, while focusing on their C.A.R.E. values: Community & Self-Knowledge, Academic Mindset, Relationship Skills, and Effective Communication. Their school community balances a focus on academic support, with elective opportunities, and the desire to be in a deep relationship with students and families. Principal: Kilian Betlach

Demographics:

Total # of Students	Under-Resourced Students	Dual/Multi Language	Equity Rating	Students to Teacher Ratio	Students: Counselor
716	94%	33%	1/10	15:1	370:1

Race/ethnicity:



What Makes This School Unique

Elmhurst has seen steady improvement in retention [since 2014](#), and for the first time began this school year with a full team of teachers with at least one year of teaching experience. While Elmhurst isn't the only school in the district that has succeeded in keeping its staff, for a middle school (the type of school with the highest turnover in the district) in East Oakland (the region with the highest turnover), its retention is exceptional.



School and Neighborhood History

With the opening of the Elmhurst Annex School (E. Morris Cox), there was a need for a junior high school. The new school, [New Elmhurst Junior High](#), was built at the site of the Old Elmhurst School at 98th and Cherry and Birch Street. The New Elmhurst Junior High School opened in July 1927. During the 2019-2020 academic year, Elmhurst Community Prep and Alliance Academy [merged on their shared campus](#). Today, the school is called Elmhurst United Middle School.

The [Ohlone and Chochenyo nations](#) inhabited the coastal region of Central and Northern California that includes Oakland.⁴ Due to [Spanish colonization of the Ohlone and Chochenyo lands](#), there was a drastic change and evolution of the region over the years that leads us to it's physical layout today.

The Elmhurst district was named after the [groves of elm trees](#) that once covered the area. Real estate in Elmhurst was cheaper than in other parts of Oakland and this allowed workers in Oakland's canneries and factories the ability to enter the middle class and live in a more suburban environment. [During WWII, Elmhurst expanded](#) as the population of workers who moved to Oakland to work in defense plants and shipyards grew. Brookfield Village (west of the railroad tracks at 98th Ave) was developed in WWII as a planned community for defense workers. It included a shopping center, schools, and a park in addition to housing.

Development: From the 1940s to the 1960s, Elmhurst was home to canneries, glass manufacturing plants, and die-casting businesses. After the war, many of these plants shut down or relocated to cheaper areas, resulting in significant unemployment. Additionally, during the 1960s to the 1980s, many residents from West Oakland who were displaced by Urban Renewal Projects (such as the Main Post Office and Grove Shafter Freeway) moved to Elmhurst. This resulted in an increase in the area's African American population.

In the 1960s, the Elmhurst neighborhood of East Oakland by the San Leandro border was a suburban community populated by mostly white middle-class families. But Oakland was rapidly changing, and the city's public housing authority began building multi-unit affordable complexes among the single-family homes. Many white families argued against these buildings being allowed

to be constructed in the neighborhood for fear of an increase in crime and overcrowded schools. The objections were shaped by the not-so-subtle racism of the white residents, who begged their elected representatives to make it illegal to construct more big buildings in their neighborhood.

In 1971, the City Council responded to pressure from the homeowners and enacted the “first major ‘down-zoning’ in Oakland to protect a predominantly single-family dwelling neighborhood,” The neighborhood was no longer “zoned” to allow tall buildings on residential blocks.

Fifty years later, the council is considering “upzoning” the same East Oakland neighborhood and many others like it across town. The goal, say proponents, is to encourage the construction of multi-unit housing in a bid to make the city more affordable. But the deeper goal is to undo the legacy of single-family zoning, which originated as a means of preventing low-income residents and people of color, especially Black people, from moving into white neighborhoods.

Gentrification within the neighborhood: [Gentrification](#) is a process that includes economic and demographic changes to historically disinvested neighborhoods. It’s important to be aware of the process because new, affluent residents moving to a neighborhood for housing or business can contribute to significant increases in rent and real estate prices. These increases impact the most vulnerable and pressure low-income residents to meet the demand which alters their own household/family budget.⁶ Many Bay Area neighborhoods have [changed culturally and financially due to gentrification](#).

Elmhurst is not the image of the wealthy, white fortress that’s become associated with single-family zones. Even after the neighborhood was downzoned in 1971, it became quite diverse as white people moved out. Some residents in deep East Oakland are skeptical their neighborhoods will have access to the new opportunities and land value created by the likely upzoning. Others remember urban renewal and fear their communities will be targeted—that developers, gaining new permission to build, will tear down their houses and put fancy new apartments in their place. Undoing single-family zoning could play out differently there than in wealthy predominantly white areas.

East Oakland residents often describe a dual history of disinvestment and gentrification in their neighborhoods by the city and developers. Indeed, over the past century in Oakland, from the Upper Rockridge hills to the deep East Oakland flatlands, homeowners and real estate agents pushed for apartment bans, creating a pattern of housing segregation that has endured in our region, even after overt methods to maintain white-only neighborhoods were outlawed. There is a long and troubling history of exclusionary zoning being used in ways that disproportionately harm communities of color and that disproportionately undermine affordable housing.

Endnotes:

1. <https://elmhurstunitedmiddleschool.org/>
2. <https://eastbayexpress.com/the-first-of-several-oakland-school-closures-1/>
3. <https://abitofhistory.website/category/districts-neighborhoods/elmhurst/>
4. https://www.greatschools.org/california/oakland/17060-Elmhurst-Community-Prep-School/#Equity_overview
5. <https://oaklandside.org/2021/05/13/oakland-wants-to-ban-single-family-zoning-can-the-city-get-it-right/>