

Bret Harte Middle School

3700 Coolidge Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602

<https://www.ousd.org/bretharte>

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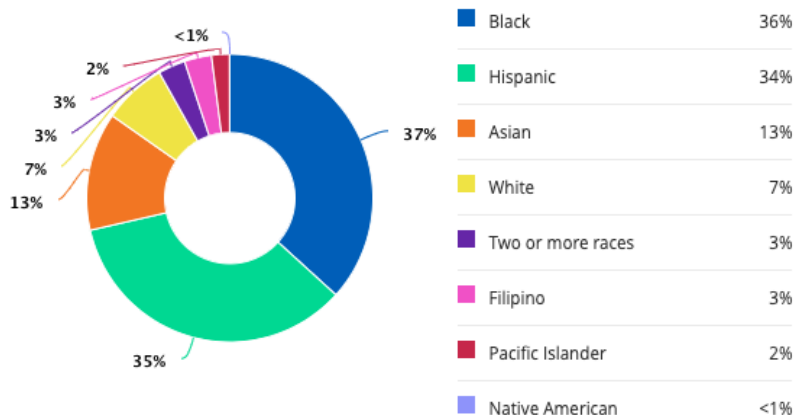
Overview

Mission/Vision: Bret Harte’s diverse community embraces mutual respect, hard work, and resilience to nurture the whole child in pursuit of academic excellence during the transition to young adulthood. Principal: April Harris-Jackson

Demographics:¹

Total # of Students	Under-Resourced Students	Dual/Multi Language Learners	Equity Rating	Students to Teacher Ratio	Students to Counselor Ratio
556	85%	31%	1/10	15:1	484:1

Race/ethnicity:



What Makes This School Unique

[Bret Harte Middle School](#) has a dedicated, experienced team of teachers and administrators with deep roots in Oakland. The exceptionally diverse student population, pulling from all areas of Oakland, has smaller class sizes with an average of 26 students per class. Students take part in two electives per day, plus an optional zero-period music elective. Bret Harte also offers an Accelerated Math for Advanced Learning course to help students prepare for high



school Geometry. Programs are available for Special Education and Newcomers. The Special Education Program supports children with special physical and learning differences, and the Newcomers Program supports children who have recently relocated to this country. Here are some additional opportunities Bret Harte offers to students:

- **On-site, no-cost medical and dental care** at the Rising Harte Wellness Center for students and their siblings
- **On-site, no-cost after-school program** through Oakland Leaf
- **On-site, no-cost breakfast and lunch** available to all students

School and Neighborhood History²

Before becoming Bret Harte, the school was named [Allendale-Fruitvale Junior High](#). In 1929, the school was renamed Bret Harte in honor of the American author and poet who wrote about his pioneer life in California.³ The school finally opened in 1930. Bret Harte was once known to have a predominantly white student population, but over time neighborhood demographics changed such that Bret Harte is now the most ethnically diverse middle school in Oakland.

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 its physical layout today.

Bret Harte is located within Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood. The name Fruitvale comes from the district's past as a home to many fruit orchards. This neighborhood is known as a Latinx cultural landmark in Oakland for the city's Latinx population. The increase of Latinx residents in Fruitvale was caused by major Urban Renewal projects during the 1950s and 1960s that destroyed many homes and businesses in West Oakland, where the first Latinx community had roots. During the 1960s, Oakland Latinx residents engaged in the Chicano movement to fight for their civil rights and self-determination. This movement sparked different communities to form organizations such as The Chicano Revolutionary Party, Black Panthers, and *La Chispa*, a community newspaper. When residents moved to the Fruitvale district, they organized themselves around issues of poverty and a lack of community services. During this time period, the Latinx community faced

inequitable access to high-quality schools, adequate services, and housing. Importantly, police brutality was a significant concern amongst the Oakland community.⁵

Development: Over the years, Fruitvale has undergone many redevelopment and revitalization efforts, including improvements to neighborhood streets. One project that's had a significant impact on the Fruitvale community is the development of the Fruitvale Village, one of the first [Transit-Oriented Development \(TOD\)](#) projects in both the city and country,



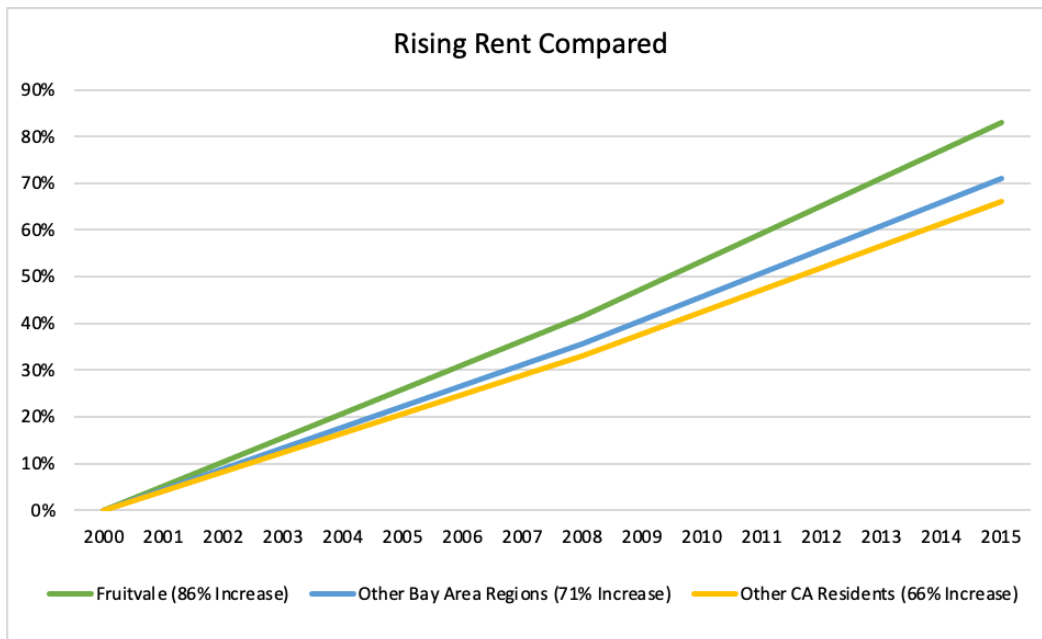
right off the Fruitvale BART Station. "Transit-Oriented Developments" maximize the amount of public transportation within walking distance of residential, business, and leisure spaces within neighborhoods. Fruitvale's TOD project was introduced during the rise of urbanization which encouraged other urban projects across the United States. The Fruitvale Transit Village is home to a bike station, Child Development Center, the Cesar Chavez branch of the Oakland Public Library, ARISE charter school, several retail/service businesses and residential apartments (with a significant percentage allocated towards affordable housing). Across from the Fruitvale Village is the Fruitvale Public Market, which complements the TOD with additional retail uses and a large public plaza where a weekly farmers market takes place.

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](#).

The Fruitvale Village is special because it was a community-driven effort, and it acts as a centralized hub where community members can access essential services, such as: transportation, education, affordable housing, healthful and affordable food, etc. It's also maintained by the majority of existing residents, who are reflective of the neighborhood's Latinx culture.

As the Fruitvale Village has become more incorporated into the neighborhood, residents' household income grew and the number of home buyers in the area increased, indications of gentrification. Additionally, data has also shown an immense increase in higher rents in Fruitvale by 83%, compared to 71% in other Bay Area regions, and 66% to other similar California neighborhoods.⁷ However, Latinx residents were able to stay in Fruitvale, while the Asian resident population also grew by 6%. [Long-term residents of Fruitvale noticed their community has changed](#) and have found it harder to find affordable housing. This community will continue to change drastically over time, and in response, the Unity Council, a non-profit Social Equity Development Corporation, began the construction on a 94-unit building to provide affordable housing with future plans to build more market-rate units and retail units for long-time or

incoming residents. The Unity Council improves quality of life by building communities where everyone can work, learn, and thrive. As changes amongst a region take time to be implemented and seen, strides are being made to provide inexpensive housing while maintaining the cultural history of Fruitvale.



Endnotes:

1. <https://www.greatschools.org>
2. <https://oaklandplanninghistory.weebly.com/index.html>,
3. <https://abitofhistory.website/2019/11/01/then-now-oakland-schools-part-8/>
4. <https://native-land.ca/>
5. https://localwiki.org/oakland/History_of_Mexican_and_Latino_Americans
6. <https://metroideas.org/blog/gentrification-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters/>
7. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/03/29/development-without-gentrification-oaklands-fruitvale-is-the-model-report-says/>