

Options for Supporting Educators with Housing Assistance

Lindsay Maple + Leslie Valencia, PLUS Fellows | Client: Oakland Unified School District

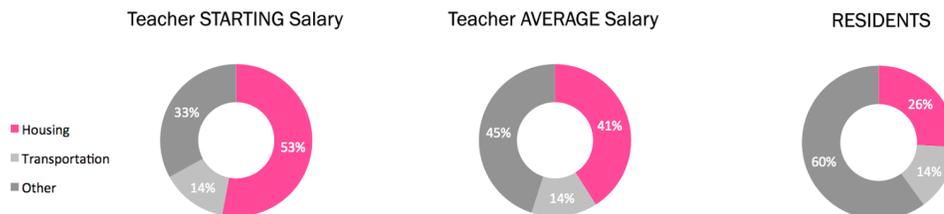
ISSUE *Cost burdened households spend >30% of their income on housing, while severely cost burdened households spend >50% of their income on housing.*

With an average OUSD teacher salary of \$58,033 (which occurs at the earliest when a teacher is in their *fourth year with a doctorate or tenth year with a BA*) and a median city-wide one-bedroom apartment rent at \$1,980, many teachers are considered cost burdened. New teachers (with 2015 starting salaries of \$44,880) are severely cost burdened. **At least 40% of OUSD’s teachers are likely cost burdened households; at least 14% are likely severely cost burdened households.**

Amidst rising housing costs, OUSD began the 2015-16 school year with a **teacher shortage for 70+ classrooms**. Each year, OUSD **loses almost 13% of its teachers** and must spend **\$12 million to replace them**. Given these challenges, it is imperative that OUSD identify actions to attract and retain teachers, including policies to alleviate housing burdens.

The policy conversation around housing assistance for educators in high-cost areas is fairly new and growing quickly. Some districts have opted to develop district-operated housing for educators, but interim policies and incentives should be considered as intervention strategies.

OAKLAND AVERAGE HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS
The Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index



SCOPE **What strategies can Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) consider to alleviate the impact of rising housing costs on teacher recruitment and retention?**

METHODS Extensive interviews were conducted with district leaders, policymakers, and developers from national teacher housing cases to determine the current context and ongoing conversation of this growing issue. Models of district-developed housing were investigated in-depth as case studies.

FINDINGS

Policy options for school districts to address housing costs for employees fall into two categories: **Infrastructure** and **Advocacy + Incentives**.

Infrastructure Strategies:

- Partner with developer to build district-sponsored housing for OUSD employees
 - Utilize legal tools within CA Edu Code for underutilized and surplus land
 - Evaluate and implement lessons from LAUSD and Santa Clara cases
 - Consider shared equity homeownership opportunities
- Sell surplus land to earn funds for other teacher housing support options
- Other innovative housing solutions to consider:
 - Purchase and rehabilitate existing housing for district-operated rentals
 - Allow accessory dwelling units and tiny homes

Advocacy + Incentive Strategies:

- Improve Housing Assistance Services to Connect Teachers to Available Resources
- Provide Cost of Living Index Subsidies and/or Vouchers to Offset Housing Burden
 - Transportation, food, child care, housing, continuing education
- Establish Student Loan Forgiveness
- Incentivize Teaching in Oakland with Competitive Salaries for Bay Area
- Advocate for State & Local Policies Aligned with Affordable Housing Goals
 - Request debt forgiveness from former state/county bonds
 - Coordinate campaign for county housing bonds in next election
 - Strengthen renters' protections and add legal safeguards for teachers
 - Obtain permission for state-funded housing to prioritize OUSD teachers

RECOMMENDATIONS

A needs assessment of OUSD teachers will identify which strategies are likely to be most beneficial in attracting and retaining teachers. Decision points include: (1) determine where in teacher career pathway to strategically implement interventions, and (2) find the right combination of supports that will incentivize teachers to teach in Oakland.

