

# VISION 2025

From  
Charity to  
Justice



50 YEARS OF SERVICE

## St. Mary's Center

*A Community of Hope,  
Healing & Justice*

## VISION

St. Mary's Center envisions a future where Seniors and Preschool Families in West Oakland enjoy housing security, health, and well-being in a thriving community they help to create.

## MISSION

St. Mary's Center is a community of hope, healing and justice dedicated to improving the well-being of Seniors and Preschool Families in West Oakland by meeting basic needs for food, housing, and social connection.

We build on a strong foundation of direct service provision with participant-led advocacy that amplifies the voices of people directly impacted by hunger, homelessness, and inequity, to create a more just and caring society.



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## A Constant Mission Meets Today's Crisis

*Give a man a fish  
and you feed him  
for a day;*

*Teach a man to  
fish and you  
feed him for a  
lifetime.*

This proverb has informed St. Mary's Center's work since our earliest days. Today the need for food, clothing, shelter and social connection for Seniors (women, men and non-binary people alike) or quality early childhood education for Preschoolers is more urgent than ever. Our mission remains yet the world has changed.

***We cannot continue to teach people to fish when the river has run dry.*** We face a crisis in housing affordability for low-income Seniors, and inadequate sense of urgency to make change. Our forgotten and overlooked Seniors contributed their lives to a vital, resilient community and should enjoy golden years in secure housing, good health, and community. Yet St. Mary's Center Seniors, surviving on \$942 per month, in the new category called "acutely" low-income, must grapple with the nation's most expensive housing market.

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of today's homeless population. Nearly half of our unhoused Seniors became homeless for the first time after age 50, according to the UCSF Benioff Housing and Homelessness Initiative.

*Source: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29783004/>*

Homelessness disproportionately impacts Black Seniors, who enter St. Mary's Center carrying the burden of a lifetime of discrimination in education, housing, healthcare, employment, and finance. They face not only the greater risk of becoming unhoused but also barriers to becoming and remaining housed again.

We know from our decades of serving Seniors what works to support them now and in the future. The field of social work has evolved from a volunteer-based network of faith and grassroots organizations (much like St. Mary's Center has grown since the initiation of Sunday Dinners in 1973) into a system of professional case management, service navigation and housing development. Generations of St. Mary's Center volunteers have built an agency that has unique assets to shape policy and beat back future crises.

## Proud Past, Bright Future

St. Mary's Center's services were essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the crisis revealed long-standing social and racial inequities. St. Mary's Center quickly pivoted to new service delivery, providing 63,143 meals and 11,334 bags of groceries for nearly 800 individuals and families in 2020-2021. We moved 27 homeless Seniors staying in our Emergency Winter Shelter to transitional and permanent housing or medical facilities in just three weeks to protect their health.

The rapid changes required during a global health crisis are part of a continuing evolution in our work to meet basic needs and address hunger, homelessness, and social isolation. Our strong volunteer corps is now buttressed by professionals and paraprofessionals with certification in clinical social work, human services, community health, public policy and administration.

St. Mary's Center incorporated as an independent 501(c)3 public charity in 1992. Today St. Mary's Center offers comprehensive social and community services in five locations along the San Pablo Avenue corridor in West Oakland. We're proud to have been a part of the giving and receiving that volunteers and participants share over a meal, and to offer a path to hope, justice and healing for all.

Following the Loma Prieta earthquake, which destroyed many inexpensive housing options, we expanded our services to unhoused Seniors and initialized today's portfolio of 41 units of transitional housing in three locations that help Seniors in their journey to a permanent home.

We are proud to trace St. Mary's Center's roots back to 1939 and education, nutrition, and social programs initiated by Sisters of Social Service. A 1973 survey by Oakland Community Organizations helped direct our plans to serve Preschool Families and Seniors with education, nutrition, counseling and social services. Our flagship event, Sunday Dinners, began with an all-volunteer team in 1973 and continues nearly fifty years later.

## Serving Changing Hoover-Foster, Clawson, and McClymonds Neighborhoods

While we are firmly anchored in the San Pablo Avenue corridor, the community at St. Mary's Center has informed County, City, National, and International advocacy for policies and system change. Our DNA is infused with the spirit of service and advocacy.

The neighborhoods we serve in West Oakland include multi-generational African-American families drawn by the Great Migration to northern transportation and manufacturing industries during the Second World War. A vibrant cultural center, West Oakland was home to jazz clubs, professional and trade associations, women's organizations, educational and faith-based initiatives. Many beautiful Victorian homes have served as cornerstones for generations of family including musicians, doctors, lawyers, tradespeople and journalists.

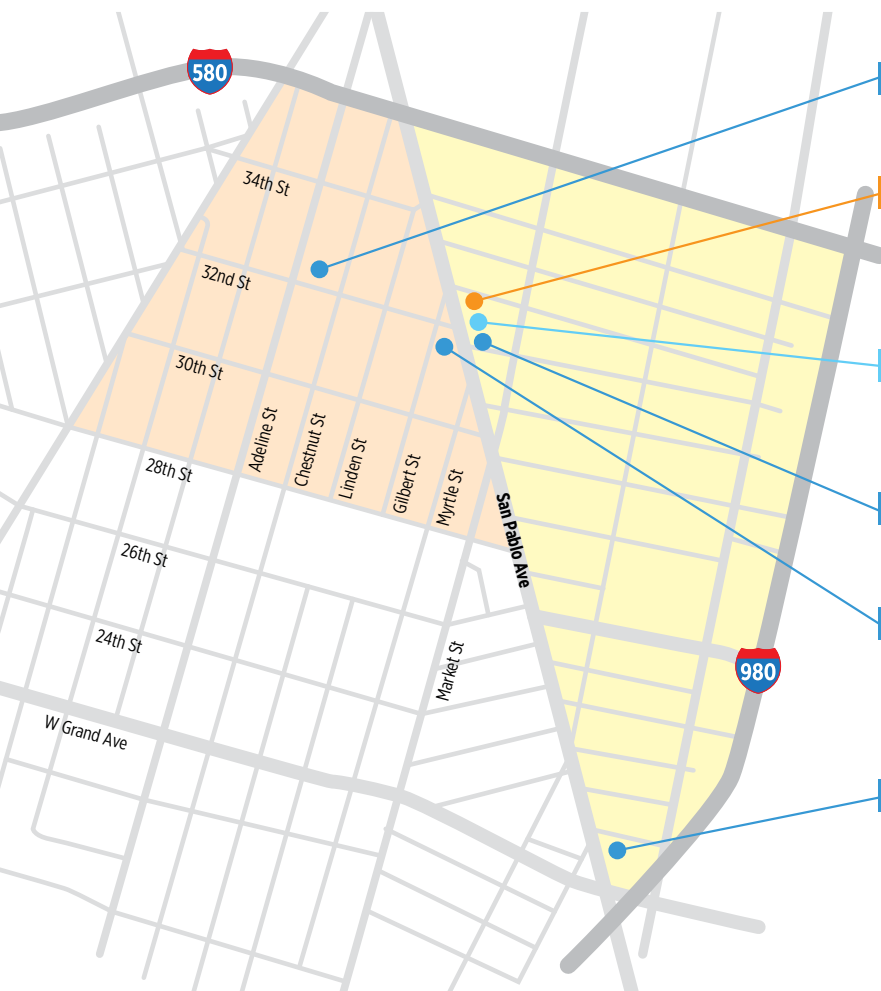
The practices of disinvestment, redlining, financial and employment discrimination prevented many families from remaining in their homes and building wealth. Today, the neighborhoods of Clawson, Hoover-Foster and McClymonds include nearly 10,000 residents with just one-third identifying as Black. As long-time Black residents leave the community, community culture and cohesion are threatened. *Source: Enterprise Opportunity 360 Community Dashboard*

To support this community, St. Mary's Center will provide housing opportunities for acutely low-income Seniors, and continue supporting their basic needs and social network. We will assist Preschool Families with high-quality early childhood education and reliable childcare, with a focus on expanded bilingual Spanish services for long-time and immigrant families.

# Hunger, Poverty, Housing Impact Health

CENSUS TRACT	HUNGER & FOOD INSECURITY	POVERTY	HOUSING		HEALTH	
	CalFresh Food Stamp Receipt	% Below Federal Poverty Line	% Home Ownership	% Doubled Up (Overcrowded)	% Uninsured	Life Expectancy
<b>4014</b>	12.5%	34.1%	18.9%	6.8%	12.2%	73.5
<b>4015</b>	12.8%	17.5%	35.7%	10.4%	7.3%	77.3
<b>Bay Area</b>	11.2%	8.9%	43.6%	3.1%	4.3%	81.5

Sources: Enterprise Community Profile, American Community Survey, San Francisco Chronicle and Association of Bay Area Governments.



## St. Mary's Center Facilities

### PRESENTATION HOUSE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING ESTABLISHED 2015

1114 32nd Street

- ▶ 9 single-room occupancy units with shared kitchen and baths

### COMMUNITY CENTER & ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS ESTABLISHED 2006

925 Brockhurst Street | Mailing: PO Box 23403, Oakland, CA 94623

- ▶ Serves hot lunch 312 days each year
- ▶ Events and activities offered to reduce social isolation and improve health

### ST. MARY'S CENTER PRESCHOOL 24 FULL-DAY SLOTS ESTABLISHED 2008

3208 San Pablo Avenue

- ▶ Head Start services add Family Advocate supports, medical/dental/vision screening to 24 full-day slots

### CLOSER TO HOME TRANSITIONAL HOUSING ESTABLISHED 2007

3202 San Pablo Avenue

- ▶ 7 single-room occupancy units with shared kitchen and baths

### NEW HOMES FOR SENIORS OPENING 2025

3135 San Pablo Avenue

- ▶ 73 studio and one-bedroom apartments for formerly homeless and extremely low-income seniors in partnership with SAHA developer
- ▶ First floor community space for case management and other uses

### FRIENDLY MANOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING ESTABLISHED 1996

2298 San Pablo Avenue

- ▶ 25 single-room occupancy units, with community computer lab
- ▶ Under renovation 2022

## Tackling Structural Racism by Engaging Black and Brown Voices

Racial disparities are a key driver of homelessness. The impact of housing, education, employment, and health care discrimination can be seen in the disproportionate share of African American Seniors engaged in homeless services at St. Mary's Center. Black Seniors are especially vulnerable during crisis periods, for example, from 2018 to 2020, the percentage of homeless Seniors enrolled in services who are Black increased from 65% to 85%.

This is consistent with findings from Alameda County's Point-in-Time count, showing that Black and Indigenous Alameda County residents are twice as likely to experience homelessness as white or Latino residents.

*Source: [https://everyonehome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ExecutiveSummary\\_Alameda2019-1.pdf](https://everyonehome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ExecutiveSummary_Alameda2019-1.pdf)*

Every One Home, the Alameda County Continuum of Care for planning and resource allocation, found that current policies and practices replicate systems that produce disparate outcomes for African-American clients and has undertaken an analysis of new system models and practices to reverse these results.

*Source: <https://everyonehome.org/centering-racial-equity/>*

St. Mary's Center has stepped up to lead both direct service work and policy formation to address institutional racism and build the leadership of people of color, especially Black Seniors.

In 2021, St. Mary's Center initiated an innovative training program to build leadership capacity among a cohort of 15 people with lived experience of homelessness. In partnership with East Bay Housing Organizations and Every One Home, we recruited, trained, and launched a group of advocates to share their experiences. One participant was appointed to a leadership board where she helped make recommendations on \$43 million in public funding for homelessness services, focusing on accessibility, accountability, and uplifting the dignity of people being served.

In 2022, we expanded this program to a cohort focused on developing a policy agenda to frame implementation of Measure W, Alameda County's successful 2020 ballot measure to deliver \$150 million annually for the next ten years to prevent, reduce and overcome homelessness.

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we converted the process of "registration" for Community Center services to "membership" to better reflect Seniors' connection to St. Mary's Center. As we continue the re-opening process, staff and our elected Council of Elders will shape the benefits and responsibilities of membership.

With strong membership and advocacy bases, St. Mary's Center will bring the voices of people with lived experience to the table and shape local policy and programs. The Vision 2025 Framework for St. Mary's Center builds on a proud tradition to create a brighter future by uniting service and advocacy.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

In the period 2023-2025, St. Mary's Center will prioritize four key desired outcomes and related strategies to meet our mission and vision.

### A FORCE FOR WELL-BEING

Seniors at St. Mary's Center are members of a community of hope, healing, and justice that supports their well-being through access to housing, high-quality services and resources, reduced social isolation, and services for mental and physical health.

### A GREAT START IN LIFE

Preschoolers at St. Mary's Center, and their families, prepare for success in kindergarten and life through a play-based curriculum that supports social skills, language development and respect for cultural inclusion and family choices.

### A STRONG, HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Both the immediate community we serve and the greater neighborhood enjoy greater health, capacity to direct their own future, and are engaged in developing resources, networks and structures to meet self-determined needs.

### A LEADER IN OUR FIELD

St. Mary's Center is recognized as a leader in delivering high-quality programs and services, achieving results and impact, and in bending the arc of justice work in homelessness toward respect and self-determination for clients. We secure resources adequate to sustain programs and community.

*"We learn so much from  
the Seniors every day."*

—St. Mary's Center Employee



# STRATEGIES

## **STRATEGY 1 Build a continuum of basic needs support for seniors on their journey to live their best lives**

*St. Mary's Center will improve the well-being of Seniors by feeding the hungry, finding fellowship with the isolated and partnering with Seniors to maintain secure, quality housing.*

- A. Build a bridge from crisis intervention to long-term well-being: connect basic needs support like food and income stabilization and interventions along a path to long-term security and sustained engagement with St. Mary's Center.
- B. Provide a continuum of housing services from information & referral to case management and housing navigation, prioritizing client choice, sustainable options, and supporting physical and mental health.
- C. Operate safe, decent affordable transitional or interim housing that supports Seniors' journey to a stable permanent home and provides a quality habitat.
- D. Assess our portfolio of offerings and focus core services, partnering with respected community organizations to strengthen auxiliary programs.

## **STRATEGY 2 Expand Early Childhood Education Opportunities for Preschoolers & Families**

- A. Continue to engage and implement Head Start resources, providing families with benefits advocacy and children with medical/vision/dental and behavioral health screenings.
- B. Undertake a feasibility study for expanding child development services such as a second preschool site or toddler childcare.
- C. Expand Parent education, engagement and enrichment program to a robust offering of family and child activities, supports and resources

## **STRATEGY 3 Community Impact through Advocacy**

- A. Create a community of hope, healing and justice that brings people from diverse walks of life, faith traditions, and professional / vocational backgrounds together to share respect, learning and vision for a just society.
- B. Create learning and leadership development opportunities so Seniors with lived experience or expertise of homelessness can share their journey and assist others by making policy and program changes, as seen in Senior Advocates for Hope and Justice.
- C. Expand Membership program developed during the pandemic to include annual meetings and provide a vehicle for participation in program design and evaluation.
- D. Participate in and lead campaigns that change conditions in the community, for example, prior work to increase SSI income for Seniors, CalFresh SNAP (food stamps) eligibility, and homelessness services.
- E. Expand onsite staff training capacity to include creation of workforce development program serving existing staff and program participants to create career pathways for people with lived experience/expertise in homelessness to play leadership roles, particularly Black participants and employees.



To implement this Vision 2025 strategic plan and move from charity to justice, St. Mary's Center has created a 50th Anniversary Fund to provide urgently needed resources that meet our mission and build a foundation for future success. We will uphold the highest standards of our basic needs and direct service program offerings, while upgrading facilities and modernizing programs to align with our social justice mission.

## HOUSING FOR HOMELESS & LOW-INCOME SENIORS

### 3135 SAN PABLO AVE.

<b>Construction costs</b> (partial) for 72 new homes for Seniors with studio and one-bedroom apartments, meeting space, energy efficiency, and open space for exercise and community living	<b>\$ 10,000,000</b>
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<b>Complete and furnish common areas and 72 homes for Seniors</b> at 3135 San Pablo Av. with beds, dressers, kitchen equipment, couches, tables, etc.	<b>\$ 700,000</b>
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<b>Build out Housing Resource Center</b> on first floor to provide Seniors with high-quality case management services incorporating technology for service coordination and housing search	<b>\$ 1,300,000</b>
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<b>3135 San Pablo Ave. Total</b>	<b>\$ 12,000,000</b>
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### TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Repair and upgrade <b>Friendly Manor</b> for transitional housing serving Seniors with multiple chronic illnesses	<b>\$ 3,500,000</b>
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Upgrade <b>Closer to Home</b> to meet immediate fire safety, accessibility and program requirements, and commission study for conversion to upgraded facility	<b>\$ 122,850</b>
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Upgrade <b>Presentation House</b> to meet immediate fire safety, accessibility and program requirements	<b>\$ 104,526</b>
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<b>Transitional Housing Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,727,376</b>
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## SAFE, PRODUCTIVE FACILITIES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

### COMMUNITY CENTER AND OFFICES

Repair and upgrade current St. Mary's Center facilities to meet code and accessibility requirements, including Community Center (kitchen, activity space); existing case management and administrative offices **\$ 1,222,843**

### ADDITIONAL OFFICES

Increase space for private meetings with clients, group counseling, exercise classes, trainings and social activities to support Seniors **\$ 250,000**

### PRESCHOOL

Roof replacement, electrical, plumbing and accessibility upgrades **\$ 413,211**

Portable classroom for expanded Early Head Start Services to Toddler care (18 months – 3 years) **\$ 300,000**

Equipment for Toddler program **\$ 50,000**

**Facilities Total \$ 2,236,054**

## PROGAM EXPANSION (THREE YEAR PLAN)

### PRESCHOOL

Teacher recruitment, training and credentialing for Toddler program, increasing educational requirements **\$ 75,000**

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Pilot and implement effective training for Seniors with lived experience to secure employment and a career in helping others **\$ 950,920**

### DIGITAL DIVIDE / WECONNECT

Expand access to technology and services, help Seniors to engage with peers and community and social services **\$ 522,296**

### ADVOCACY

Support social justice organizing, prioritizing the voices of people with lived experience in seeking change and impacting policy and programs, through Senior Advocates for Hope and Justice, Leadership Academy, Community Collaborative **\$ 1,232,310**

**Program Expansion Total \$ 2,780,526**

**TOTAL NEEDS \$ 20,743,956**

# VISION 2025

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023

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50 YEARS OF SERVICE

# St. Mary's Center

*A Community of Hope,  
Healing & Justice*

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