

My Oakland

Erika J. Sawyer, AICP, interviews Rosie Dudley

Rosie Dudley has lived in various cities in the Bay Area for 20 years and has called Oakland home for the past 10. She is an urban design associate at PlaceWorks in Berkeley (formerly The Planning Center/DC&E) and is active in Oakland's artist community. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from UC Berkeley and a Master in City Planning from MIT. When she is not working on urban design and planning projects, Rosie explores Oakland's trails, serves on the Board of the Arts and Craft Cooperative in Berkeley, and works on her own jewelry designs.



What's your favorite neighborhood? I love my neighborhood, Outer Rockridge, and I enjoy checking out others. One of my current favorites is KONO — Korea Town/Northgate, where my jewelry studio is located. It's the neighborhood between Telegraph and Uptown.

As KONO makes a comeback, how does it keep its identity intact? Oakland's eclectic mix provides an opportunity to celebrate each neighborhood's culture. In this case, the Uptown/KONO area is home to Auto Row; and instead of being displaced by the thriving arts scene, it is merging with artists' studios and galleries. Auto body shops are turning into galleries for First Friday; my studio is in a shop that sells vintage cars and has studio space for artists.

What is it about Oakland that encourages this connection? Affordability has a lot to do with it. However, if Oakland's cost of living continues to rise, these areas probably won't be accessible to artists or industrial uses.

What surprises you most about Oakland? Its negative reputation. It has so many wonderful neighborhoods with unique features, including natural and cultural amenities, beautiful architecture, and built form. It still surprises me that so many people don't take advantage of it. But with costs rising everywhere in the Bay Area, people are moving here and are excited about what Oakland has to offer.

Where do you take out-of-town visitors? Mountain View Cemetery is one of my favorites. It has beautiful mausoleums and views of the entire bay that provide a great sense of the relationship between the bay's cities. Lake Merritt is also a favorite: it's close to downtown, it's an active space, and always has so many types of people using it at all hours of the day.

How has Oakland changed since you moved here 10 years ago? It still feels like I recently moved here, because

Oakland is continuously changing. Things that started small, like the 'buy local' movement, are now really vibrant and providing a boost for Oakland. Companies like Oaklandish are now major employers who are committed to finding ways to give back to the community and to keep Oakland unique.

What will Oakland look like in another five years? There are many plans underway—including the Broadway Valdez Plan and the West Oakland Specific Plan — that will bring a mixture of housing and retail spaces to accommodate various community needs. There are plans being implemented to provide bike lanes to link neighborhoods and create greater connectivity and safety for bicyclists. There is real momentum to make Oakland a better place to walk and bike, thanks to the work by Bike East Bay and Walk Oakland Bike Oakland, among others.

It'll be exciting to see if businesses and new development along connector streets will take up vacant storefronts and parking lots, and provide the links between established neighborhoods like Broadway and Telegraph. Filling in the missing pieces will make it easier and more enjoyable to walk, bike, or take transit throughout the city.

Interviewer Erika J. Sawyer, AICP, is a senior planner at Marstel-Day, Oakland. As the firm's Western Regional Manager, she oversees the Oakland and Oceanside offices and Marstel-Day's client work in Twentynine Palms. ■