# 2022 Annual Report HISTORIC OAKLAND FOUNDATION



### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & BOARD CHAIR

### While 2022 was full of successes, we have just as much to look forward to in 2023.

2022 marked a year of tremendous growth at Oakland Cemetery and for Historic Oakland Foundation as we expand our ability to deliver on our mission to preserve, restore, enhance, and share historic Oakland Cemetery in partnership with the City of Atlanta.

Notably, 2022 marked the completion of two landmark projects: the \$600,000 restoration of Oakland's historic African American Burial Grounds (completed in June 2022) and the nearly \$2 million rehabilitation of Oakland's 1899 Bell Tower building (completed in November 2022). We also spent over \$1 million in 2022 on the hardscape and landscape restoration of the Cemetery's East Hill. The pace of this work, which we intend to continue, reflects HOF's increasing capacity to successfully navigate complex, sensitive restoration projects.

Alongside the physical and capital improvements of 2022, we found new ways to share Oakland with our visitors and communities. In addition to special events such as Illumine, Sunday in the Park featuring Tunes from the Tombs, and Capturing the Spirit of Oakland, we celebrated Day of the Dead with a new community partner, the Mexican Consulate in

Yours in service to Oakland,

RwHask er,

Richard I. W. Harker Executive Director



Steve Paro Board Chair

Atlanta. We also introduced new programming to serve families living close to Oakland. As a result of these programs, HOF saw more visitors than ever before (125,000 visitors in 2022), found new supporters for our important preservation work, and generated significant revenue to be reinvested into HOF's mission to care for and share this sacred place.

While 2022 was full of successes, we have just as much to look forward to in 2023. This year, we will launch even more new programming, break ground on our new Visitor Center (the final project of the Living History Capital Campaign), and repave Oakland's roads through funding from the recently approved City of Atlanta infrastructure bond.

All of our accomplishments in 2022 were the result of thousands of supporters and their time, talent, and treasure. We are especially grateful for the work of HOF's dedicated staff; our passionate volunteers; and our tireless partners in the City of Atlanta, especially Sexton Sam Reed, Councilmember Liliana Bakhtiari, and Mayor Andre Dickens. Thank you all for your continued support.

## ABOUT Historic Oakland Foundation

### **OUR MISSION**

Founded in 1976, Historic Oakland Foundation (HOF) partners with the City of Atlanta to preserve, restore, enhance, and share Oakland Cemetery with the public as an important island of tranquility in the heart of the city.

## **OUR VISION OUR CORE VALUES**

A revered cemetery and vibrant park honoring Atlanta's past and celebrating its future.

#### INTEGRITY

We maintain the highest professional standards and strive to push the boundaries of excellence.

#### INSPIRATION

We seek to change perceptions of cemeteries, enrich our communities, and encourage a sense of curiosity about Oakland Cemetery and Atlanta's history.

#### INNOVATION

We strive to be creative, sustainable, and adaptable in all of our work.

#### INCLUSION

We value the spirit of "sharing" historic Oakland Cemetery as a resource that belongs to everyone.

### **OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH** THE CITY OF ATLANTA

Historic Oakland Cemetery is a City of Atlanta park managed in partnership with the Department of Parks. Sexton Sam Reed manages a crew of city employees who are responsible for the publicly maintained areas and buildings. HOF works closely with Sexton Reed and the Department of Parks through a Memorandum of Understanding to care for and share historic Oakland Cemetery.



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Historic Oakland Foundation would like to thank Doug Aldridge, Norman Asher, May B. Hollis, Stuart Jackson, Ruth Middleton, Kay Wallace, and S. Zachry Young for their service to Oakland, as their term on the Historic Oakland Foundation Board of Trustees ends.

Ribbon Cutting for the Oakland Bell Tower, November 2022. L to R: Deputy Parks Commissioner Alvin Dodson, Councilmember Liliana Bakhtiari, Mary Ellen Imlay of The Imlay Foundation, Mayor Andre Dickens, Eloisa Klementich of Invest Atlanta, and

### FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS: Restoration

### RESTORATION SUCCESS: OAKLAND BELL TOWER

In November 2022, Mayor Andre Dickens and other dignitaries marked the completion of a nearly \$2 million rehabilitation of Oakland's 1899 Bell Tower building. The Romanesque Revival building at the heart of the Cemetery has served many functions since its construction (including housing Foundation offices and the Cemetery gift shop) and was suffering from significant overuse. HOF raised funds to rehabilitate the building, adding an elevator and ADA ramp to improve accessibility. The building is now a flexible programmatic space available to rent for meetings, luncheons, and private events. This milestone project is one of three in HOF's firstever capital campaign, *Living History*, and was made possible through the generosity of The Imlay Foundation, Invest Atlanta, Dr. Gerald and Mrs. Vivian Gowitt, and the Bruce Barfield Family.





*The Oakland Bell Tower, October 2022* 



Oakland Bell Tower, Upstairs



Oakland Bell Tower, Downstairs

## FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS: Restoration



Oakland Cemetery's East Hill, Summer 2022



### **RESTORATION SUCCESS: THE EAST HILL**

The 7.5-acre East Hill restoration project, HOF's largest-ever, entered its third year in 2022. With over \$1 million in funding for this year alone, the preservation team completed the hardscape work on the southern half of the Hill. Nearly half of the hardscape work had been completed on the northern half of the Hill in 2021. HOF's gardens team also landscaped 32 more blocks (128 individual lots) on the Hill, representing the largestever single-year improvement to Oakland's gardens. We are on pace to complete the East Hill project in 2024. The restoration of the East Hill is one of three projects in HOF's first ever capital campaign, *Living History*.

### "The restoration of the grounds has just been fantastic the last four or five years. They have done a wonderful job."

— Earnest Tate, HOF member

### RESTORATION SUCCESS: HISTORIC AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUNDS

Visitors to Oakland's 3.2-acre historic African American Burial Grounds section in the last five years have noticed significant improvements to its hardscape and landscape. HOF's preservation and horticulture teams have worked to restore the section since 2016, when Ground Penetrating Radar revealed 800 previously unidentified graves there. After five years and \$600,000, we were thrilled to complete the restoration and give this section of Oakland the investment it deserves. We marked the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens. Support for this restoration was made possible by the generous support of thousands of donors since 2016.

June 10, 2022 ribbon cutting celebrating the completion of the African American Burial Grounds restoration project. L to R: Richard Harker, Councilmember Liliana Bakhtiari, Mayor Andre Dickens, former first lady of Atlanta Valerie Jackson, and Sexton Sam Reed

### FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS: **Programming**

#### **PROGRAMMING SUCCESS: DAY OF THE DEAD**

On November 6, 2022, HOF partnered with the Consulate General of Mexico in Atlanta and the Institute of Mexican Culture to bring Atlanta's Day of the Dead festival to Oakland Cemetery for the first time. 9,000 visitors celebrated Día de Muertos and communed with the dead while enjoying music, dancing, crafts, authentic Mexican food, and entertainment. Catrinas and Catrines welcomed visitors to the free festival as the Cemetery continued its long history of providing visitors with a chance to celebrate life and remember the dead.

"Oakland was transformed into the most magical place for #illumine2022. Not a detailed was missed in sharing the history of ATL through incredible art!"

— Kristen, Instagram User



Dancers perform the Pineapple Dance at the Day of the Dead celebration at Oakland Cemetery on November 6, 2022



#### **PROGRAMMING SUCCESS: ILLUMINE 2022**

7,200 visitors explored Oakland Cemetery after dark last April as a diverse group of artists and creatives shined a light on Oakland's untold stories at Illumine. Visitors explored light installations throughout the Cemetery's original six acres, Bell Tower Ridge, and historic African American Burial Grounds by artists Valerie Crisostomo, Quiana Upton, Sherida Heath, Jasmine Nicole, Ellex Swavoni, and others. During the eight evenings of Illumine, visitors were entertained and enthralled by performances by Okorie "OKCELLO" Johnson, and encountered installations by partner organizations including Sweet Auburn Works and the Cherokee Garden Library. The unique after-dark experience welcomed a diverse new audience to Oakland, raised over \$110,000, and was significantly supported by the Fulton County Arts Council.

### FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS: Innovation

#### **INNOVATION: COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS**

Oakland Cemetery is a vital part of the communities that surround it and has, for a long time, served as a year-round place of respite, recreation, and remembrance. HOF takes seriously its role as a community convenor and in 2022 began a new initiative to host regular community listening sessions in order to better understand our community's needs for Oakland and in order for HOF to be able to make strategic decisions in line with those needs. Led by Senior Director of Experiences and Engagement Jessica VanLanduyt, these g sessions reaffirmed HOF's commitment to community service.

*Lit pathways at Illumine 2022* 

#### **INNOVATION: GIS DATABASE**

Since 2016, HOF has worked to digitize its burial, historical, and horticultural records and build a GIS (geographic information system) database to store and map this vital information. In 2022, we received a \$75,000 grant from the Sara Giles Moore Foundation to complete this project and make this information accessible to the public. When the project is complete later this year, the database and maps will be available through a webbased portal that will allow visitors to search Oakland's burial records and geo-locate burials. This map and database, together with the installation of new wayfinding signage across the Cemetery in early 2023, will provide a significant upgrade to the visitor experience at Oakland.

### 2022 AT A GLANCE



\$1,700,000 rehabilitation of Oakland's 1899 Bell Tower building



32 blocks completely landscaped on the Cemetery's East Hill



acre of the historic African American Burial Grounds landscaped, completing the 3.2-acre project in 2022



2,000 linear feet of retaining walls restored on the East Hill



7,200 visitors at Illumine 2022, which highlighted Black stories and preservation successes



\$2,400,000 allotted in a City of Atlanta May 2022 infrastructure bond referendum for repaving Oakland's roads



9,000 visitors at Oakland's first-ever

Day of the Dead festival in partnership with the Consulate General of Mexico in Atlanta



125,000 visitors to Oakland in 2022

# **REVENUE & EXPENSES**



\$5,231,901\*



### **2022 REVENUE** \$4,786,498\*



# 2022 EXPENSES



\*Includes Bell Tower rehabilitation as part of multi-year capital campaign

## **2022 DONORS**

*Historic Oakland Foundation wishes* to thank its many donors without whose generosity Oakland Cemetery would cease to serve as the region's premier historic site.

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Anonymous

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*Every attempt has been made to ensure* the accuracy of this list. If we have omitted anyone or made any errors, please accept our sincere apologies.

