



Just Outside Of San Francisco, Berkeley And Oakland Are Blooming Right Now

Rich in American history and now neighbors to a booming tech space, the area is currently in its Golden Age.

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San Francisco has recently become a popping hub of booming technology companies. Meanwhile, on the east side of California's San Francisco Bay, Berkeley and Oakland are the historic birthplaces of regional punk bands, California cuisine and revolutionary civil rights movements. ESTATENVY caught up with award-winning real estate agent Herman Chan to find out why this marriage of culture and tech has led some to call Berkeley and Oakland the hottest areas for real estate right now. A lifelong resident of the Bay Area, Chan has seen major changes to the area over the decades. "My grandmother lived in Chinatown way back in the day," he said. "It was very dilapidated and forgotten—but now, the average one-bedroom apartment rents for \$3,000." Chan said that real estate prices in San Fran have gotten so high that only people with old money or companies with impressive initial public offerings can buy there now. As the market began to shift, Berkeley and Oakland became the only affordable

place to live. “The youthful vibe has moved to the East Bay,” said Chan, adding that Oakland and Berkeley’s diversity also sets it apart. “Oakland and Berkeley have soul. There’s a gritty authenticity that has captured people’s imaginations,” he said, adding that the two areas are often likened to Brooklyn, New York City’s well-known young, cultural epicenter. Oakland and Berkeley’s infrastructures were able to support the spillover. Chan said that because Oakland is an older city with over a hundred-year legacy, it fits within the trend of celebrating the vintage as contemporary. And while Chan said San Francisco has become a bit “techwashed,” Oakland and Berkeley’s historical significance has not been erased. Many of the groundbreaking civil rights movements of the 1960s were born in Oakland and Berkeley. The [Free Speech Movement](#) was led by UC Berkeley students. The [Black Panther Party](#) was founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland in 1966. The Anti-War and Women’s Rights movements also gained major traction in these cities and continue to spark conversation and push for change today. Legendary chef Alice Waters opened the restaurant [Chez Panisse](#) in 1971 in Berkeley, pioneering the California cuisine movement. “It was a male-dominated industry, and she was the founding mother of California fusion, as well as the farm-to-table movement,” said Chan. “She still has a little garden outside where she grows everything. It’s all very local, and she was doing that before anyone else, 30 to 40 years ago.” Chan said this rich history and current cutting-edge reputation have also captured Hollywood’s attention. One of his listings, a \$7 million home, was used as Armie Hammer’s mansion in the 2018 film [Sorry To Bother You](#). The dark comedy took place in Oakland and tackled labor organizing and activism in a surreal version of modern life. When asked what potential residents should know about buying a home in the region, Chan said that while crossing the bridge into San Francisco at night with no traffic could only take ten minutes, rush hour could slow your roll as much as an hour. That being said, many tech companies have free shuttles into their campuses. Chan mentioned that Berkeley and San Francisco run on a lottery system when it comes to schools, with Oakland soon will too. Because many locals are able to afford private education, some public schools leave many residents underwhelmed. Another critical, crucial, above-all-important point to keep in mind if [considering a move](#) to the Bay Area? The weather is fantastic all year round. “You’re close to tons of things to do,” said Chan. “You’re an hour from the mountains, the sea, climbing and skiing at Lake Tahoe. There are world-class universities and museums nearby, and it’s all very international.” Chan also laid out his predictions for the near-future of the Bay Area. “There are five to six unicorn IPOs happening this year, and overnight there will be tons of newly-minted millionaires, and they’re going to want to buy homes,” he said. “While many parts of the country are cooling down, this area will get even hotter.” But after that boom occurs, Chan isn’t sure what the more-distant future holds for Oakland and Berkeley. The artists are already moving to neighboring places like Richmond, he said. “There’s no guarantee the Oakland of today will be the same in five years,” said Chan. “But right now, you can see remnants of the past, and your own heritage. This is the golden age; it’s blooming right now.”