

**Mayor Ronald V. Dellums
Community Task Force on Sports & Entertainment**



**Entertainment Subcommittee
Report and Recommendations**



**Submitted to Mayor Ronald V. Dellums and
the City of Oakland Mayor's Office by the
Community Task Force on Sports & Entertainment**

June 3, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Entertainment Subcommittee of the Mayor's Community Task Force for Sports and Entertainment has been meeting since March to determine how entertainment in Oakland can most benefit its residents.

Oakland's entertainment entrepreneurs – from nightclub and restaurant owners to art gallery impresarios to festival organizers – optimistically see the economic and cultural possibilities in the city's growing entertainment industry.

This task force respectfully requests that the Mayor's Office and other city officials share that optimism. With that positive tone in mind, we recommend that entertainment in Oakland stop being viewed as a problem to be controlled and stifled, and rather, that it start to be seen as a potentially thriving economic engine that could yield much needed tax revenue and create jobs for the city, as well as provide cultural enrichment for its residents.

Oakland's rich history of performing artists and entertainment venues is impressive. The city's present and future hold equally exciting possibilities. The recent restoration of the Fox Theater and the opening of nearly 25 new restaurants since 2007 bode well for the city's growing entertainment industry.

Yet, some nagging longstanding community complaints remain.

Some perceive that the city still lacks a unified, long-term vision on these matters. Many entertainment business owners add that Oakland's bureaucracy is confusing and inefficient. Still others complain that the permit-approval process, currently under the responsibility of the Oakland Police Department, is arbitrarily enforced and prevents more entertainment events than it assists, thus costing the city revenue and missing opportunities to enhance its prestige and quality of life.

Task Force members recommend the formation of an Entertainment Commission to help solve this and other challenges tied to the city's entertainment scene. To that end, the Subcommittee has crafted six general recommendations, including several other specific sub-recommendations. Please find them listed below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1

Forge a citywide vision for Oakland's entertainment industry so that it thrives and grows, increasing the number of jobs and economic benefits that entertainment venues provide.

We respectfully recommend that the Mayor's Office set the tone for change on entertainment issues for residents *and* city officials by:

- Promoting the economic and social benefits that a thriving Oakland entertainment scene brings to the city, including 1) tax revenue; 2) economic development; 3) job creation and work force increases; 4) regional and national

prestige; and 5) the creation and/or use of venues and events that would highlight Oakland's growing reputation as being a "green" city.

- Educating city officials, police and the public that a decline in entertainment events is a lost opportunity to capture tax and tourist revenue for Oakland and a missed chance to promote business growth.
- Identifying and promoting under-utilized venues in order to assist the city's growing entertainment scene.
- Recognizing that the city's current permit-approval process is a key barrier that prevents Oakland's entertainment scene from fully thriving, resulting in less events and wasting chances for the city to capture tax revenue.



RECOMMENDATION NO. 2

Establish an Entertainment Commission to grow the city's entertainment industry and solve any issues tied to entertainment venues.

Modeled after San Francisco's successful efforts, Oakland's Entertainment Commission would:

- **Promote the development of a thriving entertainment industry.**
- **Assist organizers and operators of entertainment events.**
- **Promote the use of city facilities for events that bring revenue to Oakland.**
- **Streamline the bureaucracy and decision-making process by coordinating with city departments in advance of events in Oakland.**
- **Inform the Mayor and City Council with annual reports that review its performance.**

Ideally, the Entertainment Commission also would be:

- **Functioning at first as a part of the city government's already established Cultural Affairs Commission; this merger of commissions would expand the purpose of**

the Cultural Affairs Commission and would not cost the city any money. When economic and city budget conditions are improved, the Entertainment Commission's long-term goal is to stand alone as a separate entity. (Note: Entertainment Subcommittee members have already met with Cultural Affairs Commission members and established a positive relationship and line of communication with them.)

- Recommending that the Mayor fill currently empty seats of the Cultural Affairs Commission with people who have an eye for improving entertainment in Oakland.
- Working with San Francisco's Entertainment Commission leaders, such as executive director Robert Davis, who has offered to mentor Oakland's commission through its early stages.
- Potentially forming a political action committee (PAC) to give entertainment entrepreneurs a stronger political voice.
- Acting as a communication highway between residents, entertainment business owners and city officials so that residents have a better say in how entertainment events affect their daily lives.
- Acting as a liaison between entertainment entrepreneurs and patrons, city officials, police and fire departments and community ambassadors and security foster community unity on entertainment issues.
- Working with the Oakland Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce to help bring more conventions to the city.
- Using entertainment venues and partnering with groups such as Green 4 All and the Ella Baker Center to highlight green issues and green-collar jobs.

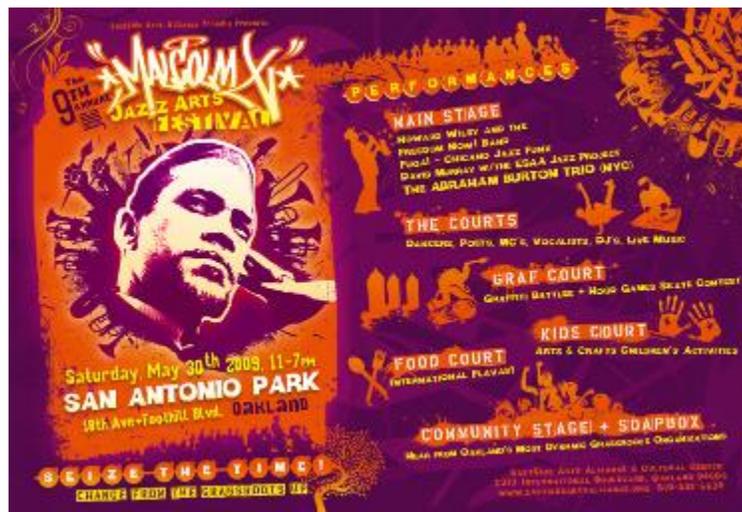
RECOMMENDATION NO. 3

Require the new Entertainment Commission to assume responsibility of approving entertainment-related permits, alleviating the Oakland Police Department of that time-consuming burden.

Oakland residents would benefit from:

- Allowing the police to focus its limited resources on very important public safety efforts, rather than the time-consuming permitting process.
- Asking the Entertainment Commission to hold hearings on permit applications and alleged violations, giving applicants a public forum to state their case.

- Having Oakland's Entertainment Commission follow San Francisco's model by:
 - *Working with the Mayor and the City Council to craft legislation that would set fees tied to entertainment-related permits and annual licenses which would pay for the commission's operating expenses. This is covered under the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(8)(A).
 - *Setting the entertainment fee schedule to generate revenue to cover all commission operating expenses, such as legal costs, staffing, employee wages and overhead costs tied to regulatory responsibilities, as stated in the S.F. Controller's Office audit report.
- In the future, the goal is to operate with a cost-neutral structure; that is, the commission would pay for itself through the permit-fee revenue generated by the commission.
- Asking that, as an immediate step, the city implement the Mayor's previous request that a person in CEDA be designated to oversee the permit process for the time-being, so that the police department does not have sole decision-making authority.



- Allowing the Entertainment Commission to fully focus on increasing events that generate revenue and culturally enrich the city.
- Allowing the Entertainment Commission to work with entertainment entrepreneurs to find solutions to events' problems without resulting in those events being canceled. (Example: The now-defunct Festival at the Lake.)
- Fostering unity between the police and fire departments and entertainment business owners, with the proposed Entertainment Commission acting as a liaison between those groups.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 4

Allocate resources for educating Oakland’s entertainment patrons and business owners on the importance of acting responsibly at events and venues by:

- Doing a PR campaign with a multi-platform effort to educate the community about making entertainment events a safe, positive environment.
- Implementing a youth-education campaign led by media consultant Charles Johnson titled, “Don’t Tear Up Your Own S***,” with the goal of teaching kids about proper behavior in entertainment venues.
- Partnering with the Responsible Hospitality Institute (www.RHIweb.org) to develop a culture of the “Sociable City Network,” which seeks to maximize benefits and minimize negatives from a city’s entertainment/nighttime economy.
- Partnering with already established entities, such as Community Benefits Districts and the Business Improvement Districts on education campaigns.



- Partnering with organizations such as Youth UpRising, Youth Radio and Oakland Leaf to educate youth on how to behave properly at events and to appreciate and show respect to the city of Oakland.
- Holding “stakeholder meetings” with community organizations and citizen groups to garner community feedback.
- Holding seminars periodically with business owners, Entertainment Commission members and police and fire department officials to discuss potential problems and strategies.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 5

Celebrate Oakland's entertainment history.

Instill pride in Oakland residents and educate newcomers, visitors and the media about Oakland's rich artistic history by:

- Placing plaques on historical entertainment sites, such as:
 - Oakland House of Music*, a West Oakland recording studio where owner D'Wayne Wiggins has produced songs with superstars like Alicia Keys, Beyoncé, Destiny's Child and Keyshia Cole.
 - Sweet's Ballroom*, in downtown Oakland where Frank Sinatra made his West Coast debut in the 1940s.
 - Esther's Orbit Room*, the last remnant of West Oakland's once-thriving jazz-and-blues nightclub district along 7th Street.
 - The Burma Lounge*, a now-defunct Lakeshore Avenue club where Oakland resident and jazz legend Dave Brubeck got his start.
 - The Fox and The Paramount theaters*, decades-old Art Deco gems that are leading the Uptown District's renaissance.
- Naming streets – or sections of streets – after local celebrities, as New York City does. The list could include actors Delroy Lindo, Tom Hanks and Clint Eastwood, singers Goapele, Keyshia Cole and the Pointer Sisters, members of En Vogue and Toni! Tony! Tone!, hip-hop artists Boots Riley, Todd "Too Short" Shaw, MC Hammer and many others.
- Crafting a media outreach strategy to publicize this history.
- Partnering with the Oakland Heritage Alliance on all these efforts.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 6

Direct city government departments to improve areas around entertainment venues by:

- Allocating resources to the Department of Public Works' Graffiti Abatement Unit to improve its efforts near entertainment venues. Why? It has been well-chronicled that high levels of graffiti lead to higher crime rates (Source: "The Tipping Point" by Malcom Gladwell). Removing graffiti and litter is one of a number of important, pre-emptive strategies to prevent negative incidents from plaguing venues, and the bad publicity that follows such incidents.
- Directing Oakland's Finance and Management Agency, which oversees the city's parking enforcement, to ensure that street-cleaning hours do not conflict with these entertainment venues' prime hours of operation, finding a way for the city

to collect its requisite parking meter revenue without angering Oakland club owners and patrons. (We have found that this is a frequent complaint.)



**Community Task Force on Sports & Entertainment
Entertainment Subcommittee**

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