



City of
OAKLAND
California

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**Public Art Markers Highlight Downtown Oakland's
Historic Treasures, Build Community**

Oakland, CA – Installation of Oakland's latest public art *10,000 Steps: Walking the Invisible City* has begun and will continue into July 2011. The installation includes 36 permanent conversational sidewalk markers that encourage residents and visitors to explore downtown Oakland and its five original parks. While preserving the past, the public art project also encourages long-time residents of and new arrivals to the culturally diverse downtown to interact.

The markers are being etched and stained in sidewalks at 36 locations stretching from Oak to Castro streets and from 5th to 12th streets. The two-foot-square markers contain poetic text identifying a nearby point of interest. In addition to English, six of the markers will also include Chinese characters and four will also include Spanish text.

The five original parks – Jefferson, Harrison, Lafayette, Lincoln and Madison squares – are focal points for *10,000 Steps* and provide a healthy place to exercise and experience nature while acting as a catalyst to build community cohesion and pride. The five parks were among seven original squares plotted in downtown Oakland when the city was first laid out in the 1850s.

Companion pieces to the markers will include a guide map, audio tour for mobile phones and a website repository of text, photos, maps, audio and video that explore hidden local stories, points of urban transformation and architectural and cultural history. The map will be available as a printed piece at community-based organizations in downtown and online at 10ksteps.org. The audio tour is being finalized and will be accessible via cell phone for three months beginning in early August. The audio will later be available on the 10,000 Steps website. This exciting audio component is being underwritten by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In crafting this multi-year project, the artist team of marksearch (Sue Mark and Bruce Douglas) actively engaged local residents to create a community narrative. marksearch attended downtown events to collect stories from passersby attracted by their whimsical workcart made from reused materials. Community stakeholders have partnered with marksearch to review the marker text and locations.

Funding for *10,000 Steps* has come from a variety of sources over the years. marksearch received an individual artist grant in 2009 from the City of Oakland's Cultural Funding program to create "A Profile of Four Squares," a multi-media installation documenting the histories of four of the five parks and the neighborhoods bordering them. They also received a City of Oakland Public Art
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Open Proposals grant, funded by a contribution from the Open Circle Foundation, that covers the costs of producing and installing the majority of the 36 markers. A National Trust for Historic Preservation grant has underwritten the cell phone audio tour, printed guide maps and interactive enhancements to the website. Initially funded by The Creative Work Fund, marksearch partnered with Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation and worked with neighborhood and community organizations to develop relevant temporary green art projects in and around the parks.

marksearch began *10,000 Steps: Walking the Invisible City* in 2006. Nearly five years later, marksearch is delighted to have begun installing the 36 markers and will officially launch the self-guided tour component on Sunday, August 7 at the Oakland Museum of California. The team creates interactive projects that invite people to reflect upon their local communities and increase their awareness of the natural environment within the urban fabric. Their site-specific projects emerge from a comprehensive process that weaves the needs and views of local agencies and the general public with the unique qualities of local history, the built environment and the ecosystem. In their various projects, marksearch has collaborated with sociologists, media artists, students, urban planners and various municipalities to create projects that move beyond art. To learn more about their work, visit marksearch.org.

About the Public Art Program

Oakland's Public Art Program commissions original works of art for public spaces throughout Oakland. The program enriches the city's visual environment, integrates the creative thinking of artists into public construction projects and provides a means for citizens and visitors to enjoy and experience cultural diversity. Public Art funding comes from the City of Oakland's Public Art Ordinance (Percent for Art Ordinance), which requires a 1.5% allocation from all eligible City and Redevelopment Agency capital improvement projects and eligible grant revenue for public art. For more information about the Public Art Program, visit oaklandculturalarts.org.

About the Cultural Funding Program

The City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program funds Oakland-based art and cultural activities that reflect the diversity of the city for the citizens of and visitors to Oakland. Grants are awarded in four categories: Organization Project Support, Individual Artist Project Support, Art in the Schools and Organizational Assistance. The Funding Advisory Committee, a volunteer advisory body, reviews applications and makes recommendations to the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC). CAC's recommendations are advanced to and ratified by the Oakland City Council. For more information about the Cultural Funding Program, visit oaklandculturalarts.org.

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Editor's Note: High resolution images of a sidewalk marker in English, Chinese and Spanish are available to accompany your article. Download at <http://bit.ly/iGCBT7>.