



# Cultural Arts Programs

## Cultural Arts & Marketing Division

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### PUBLIC ART ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM V.

**Item:** NEA Our Town 2014 Partner Proposals  
**Submitted by:** Steven Huss, Cultural Arts Manager  
**Committee Date:** December 2, 2013

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#### SUMMARY

Staff requests that the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) review proposals and take action on staff's recommendation of a ranked list of the six proposals submitted to partner with the City of Oakland on an application to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) 2014 *Our Town* grant program. The recommendation will be forwarded to Mayor Jean Quan for her formal endorsement of one application to be submitted on behalf of the City.

#### BACKGROUND

The NEA's *Our Town* grants support creative placemaking projects in communities throughout the United States. "In creative placemaking," as defined by the NEA, "partners from public, private, nonprofit and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired."

Under *Our Town* guidelines, only one application per city, per year, will be accepted, and grantees may hold only one grant at a time. City of Oakland Cultural Arts & Marketing received a grant in 2010 through MICD-25 (the NEA's pilot for *Our Town*) and thus was ineligible to apply in 2011, 2012 and 2013. We became eligible again after completing the term of our MICD-25 grant on October 31, 2013. All *Our Town* applications must involve a nonprofit organization and a local government entity as primary partners. The highest ranking official of local government is required to submit a letter formally endorsing the single project submitted on behalf of local government.

Due to workload, Cultural Arts staff elected not to initiate a proposal in support of our department's programs for *Our Town* 2014, while reserving the right to do so in future cycles. Instead, we addressed the anticipated interest in the 2014 *Our Town* grants by soliciting proposals from the community through a competitive process. It will be the selected partner organization's responsibility to prepare the grant application, with Public Art staff oversight.

#### *Applications and Review Criteria*

Six proposals to partner with the City were received by the November 21<sup>st</sup> deadline. Five other organizations/individuals expressed interest, but did not submit proposals. Criteria used to review the proposals were drawn from the *Our Town* guidelines, posted at <http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town>. Additional considerations for the City were established in our invitation for proposals: the applicant's ability to provide a funding match for the grant, the quality of the proposed project, its eligibility and competitiveness per NEA guidelines, and a preference for projects that will



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## *Cultural Arts & Marketing Division*

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be located in Oakland's underserved communities. It is important to note that, while all the submitted proposals have merit and may be worthy of support, not all are ready for the *Our Town* application opportunity.

### *Next Steps*

Staff will present a recommended ranked list of proposals at the PAAC meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Some additional clarifying information has been requested of applicants, and any new information will be shared with the PAAC and factored into staff recommendations.

If supported by PAAC recommendation, staff will advance the recommended list to the Mayor, who as the highest elected official of the City has the ultimate authority to support the proposal going forward. The selected applicant will develop the application with staff review and approval in time to submit by the *Our Town* deadline of January 13, 2014.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

A requirement of this process is that no new City costs, other than limited staff time, would be incurred; otherwise the proposal would have to go through a full-scale City Council approval process.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) approve the list (to be presented) of *Our Town* 2014 Oakland proposals in ranked order of support, for action by Mayor Quan.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Huss, Cultural Arts Manager

## PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

### PROPOSALS SOUGHT FOR CITY OF OAKLAND'S 2014 OUR TOWN GRANT APPLICATION

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) offers grants for creative placemaking through its Our Town grant program. **Only one Oakland application per year is eligible** and it must be supported by the City of Oakland. Based on past interest, the City anticipates several proposals for Our Town grants this year. Therefore, we invite interested arts organizations, community and neighborhood organizations, and individual artists to submit brief proposals for consideration. The City will select one proposal to support and to go forward as an application to the NEA. Deadline for submittal of proposals to the City is November 21, 2013. The NEA Our Town application deadline is January 13, 2014.

The NEA's intentions for Our Town grants align with the City of Oakland's goals for projects funded through the program. We seek competitive proposals for creative and innovative arts and cultural projects which will:

- Improve quality of life;
- Encourage greater creative activity;
- Foster stronger community identity and sense of place; and
- Promote economic revitalization.

Please note that Our Town is a matching grant program. The applicant (not the City) must provide a match of at least 1:1 for NEA grant funds if awarded. These matching funds may be all cash or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions.

To be considered, please submit a brief project proposal (not longer than 2 pages) via email to the City of Oakland Cultural Arts Manager, Steven Huss, at [shuss@oaklandnet.com](mailto:shuss@oaklandnet.com). The City's deadline for receipt of emailed proposals is 5:00 p.m., November 21, 2013.

Cultural Arts & Marketing staff will review all proposals and will consult with the Public Art Advisory Committee, the mayoral-appointed body charged with oversight of artwork placed in public spaces, to determine and to recommend to the Mayor's Office the proposed project that is most competitive and most aligned with the City's goals. Key considerations for the City of Oakland will be the proposal's viability in terms of the proposing organization's ability to raise/provide a funding match for the NEA grant; the quality of the proposed project; and its eligibility and competitiveness per the NEA guidelines\*. Preference will be given to proposals for locations in Oakland's underserved communities. It will be the selected partnering organization's responsibility to prepare all grant application materials, which will be reviewed and approved by City staff before submittal to the NEA.

\* Please thoroughly review the Our Town grant guidelines and application materials before submitting an Oakland proposal to the Cultural Arts Manager. They are posted at <http://nea.gov/grants/apply/OurTown/index.html>. For more information, there is an archived online workshop at <http://arts.gov/video/fy-2014-our-town-grant-guidelines-workshop-0>.

Sincerely,

Steven Huss  
Cultural Arts Manager  
City of Oakland Cultural Arts & Marketing Department  
<http://oaklandculturalarts.org> / [shuss@oaklandnet.com](mailto:shuss@oaklandnet.com)

OUR TOWN 2014  
Oakland Proposals

Organization	Proposal Title	Place	Partners	Grant Request/ Match	Summary
Attitudinal Healing Connection, Inc.	Oakland Super Heroes Mural Project	Hoover Corridor, West Oakland	Not specified	Not specified	Complete OSH mural project
Community Rejuvenation Project	Downtown Oakland Murals	West Oakland	Council office	Not clear	A series of mural in Downtown Oakland locations
Creative Development Partners	Lake Merritt Arts, Culture and Entertainment District (ACE District)	Lake Merritt / Environs	OMCA, Laney College	\$50,000	Develop cultural venues and open spaces surrounding Lake Merritt as sites for arts & cultural activities
EastSide Arts Alliance	Oakland Is Proud	International Blvd, East Oak. - 5 cultural plazas	Multiple	\$100,000	Develop five cultural plazas along International Blvd.
FLUX Foundation	TweetHaus Project	Mosswood Park, other parks and schools	Park Day School, OPR	Not specified	Extend TweetHaus project to additional parks, and schools
Youth Speaks	Life Is Living	DeFremery Park, West Oakland	Multiple	\$150,000	Expand annual Life Is Living festival

## OAKLAND SUPER HEROES MURAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Attitudinal Healing Connection, Inc (AHC) proposes to the City of Oakland the Oakland Super Heroes Mural Project, to be considered as a partner and project for the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant. The project will work with 105 youth during and after-school and cultivate them to be change agents in their community, engage them in resolving key issues that plague our city, and enhance our neighborhoods. The project will create 20 jobs for local artists and give voice to the change that's coming by installing seven murals in the Hoover Corridor section in West Oakland.

The project will be completed in four phases: the first phase has been successfully completed.

### AHC:

For more than 24 years AHC has, with great success, provided access to the arts for schools that lack the resources and provided healing and creative programs to at-risk communities in Oakland through creative expression. AHC has reached 30,000+ youth and adults through leadership trainings and after-school programs offered in over 57 Oakland schools.

### MISSION

Our mission with the Oakland Super Heroes Mural project is to cultivate, educate and engage youth in community issues and solutions through the power of public art.

### Oakland Super Heroes Mural Project: Goals & Objectives

Our goal with the mural project is to empower and train youth in artistically solving three of the most pervasive issues plaguing Oakland: violence, blight and graffiti.

Our aim is to restore hope and positively transform Oakland from the inside out.

### IMPACT

**Youth empowerment:** Murals are a form of art that play a vital role in ideological, economic, social and racial struggle and change. The social nature of the process allows our participating youth to grow, to be valued and to define him- or herself as a member of the larger community. They also gain self-respect by learning to respect public space, the art-making process, and each other.

**Youth Training / local job creation:** Approximately 20 jobs will be created to complete this project; that is, 20 local artists will be contracted and approximately 105 youth will be trained to design and help complete the six murals.

**Community empowerment:** The project will lift community morale. It will involve viewers in a visual dialogue to raise community consciousness and build pride.

**Community enhancement:** Beautification of these neglected streets will reduce blight, increase safety and improve the public environment. Ultimately, it will help increase property value and commercial opportunity as well as improve the city brand / image. Already, since the installation of the first mural, dumping and graffiti have nearly stopped on the San Pablo thruway.

**Increased security /réduce crime:** Blight indirectly adds to crime in Oakland. It adds to the stress and low morale in our neighborhoods, which is a major contributing factor in the cycle of crime. The murals will address blight and effect community empowerment by brightening up neglected neighborhoods with healing images that incorporate culturally diverse community aspirations and themes.

Join us in our dream to transform Oakland and regain its history, beauty and vitality!

For more information please visit our website, or contact us at:  
[muralproject@ahc-oakland.org](mailto:muralproject@ahc-oakland.org) • 510-652-5530

*Amana Harris*

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## PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Community Rejuvenation Project (CRP) is seeking to partner with the City of Oakland on a series of murals to be installed at locations in Downtown Oakland which have been consistently blighted with graffiti. This project will be done in collaboration and partnership with Councilmember Lynette Gibson McElhaney and her District Three Council Office. Each mural will depict stories of Oakland's diversity selected from a series of video interviews with local "culture keepers": community members whose stories reflect a broader history of Oakland. CRP artists will incorporate these images into an artistic representation of the cultural icons and themes of the broader community. The designs will be reviewed at a series of community meetings to integrate feedback in order to ensure that the neighborhoods are properly represented. Once a final design is approved, the artists and a small team of youth apprentices will paint the design at each location. A community mural dedication will be held at each location upon completion. The completed projects will be accompanied by video documentaries and permanent websites memorializing the design and community input process.

## ALIGNMENT WITH NEA GUIDELINES

- *A systemic approach to civic development and a persuasive vision for enhanced community livability.*
  - CRP's Our Town proposal will transform repeatedly-blighted properties into reflective visions of the diverse community of Oakland.
  - The murals support the economic revitalization of the local neighborhood by improving the visual landscape while mitigating urban blight.
  - This work acknowledges the past residents and current communities within the neighborhood, celebrating cultural and ethnic diversity, while giving viewers a sense of living history and deeper understanding of the area.
  - In addition to the murals, documentaries and websites tied to each location support education about Oakland's neighborhoods through interactive multimedia, promote community engagement, and help create a sense of neighborhood identity.
  - This model preserves neighborhood identity and promotes economic development without supporting gentrification.
- *Clearly defined civic development goals and objectives that recognize and enhance the role that the arts and design play at the center of community life.*
  - Identify and interview Culture Keepers at each location.
  - Encourage local residents to tell their own stories.
  - Promote Oakland community organizations which have been pivotal in defining Oakland's arts community, such as Samba Funk, Diamano Coura, Dimensions Dance Theater, and AXIS dance, by giving them increased visibility and documenting their cultural contributions.
- *An action plan aligned with the project vision and civic development goals.*
  - Our action plan is based on the Alice Street Model:
  - **ALICE STREET MODEL**
  - Twenty "culture keepers" from the historic Hotel Oakland and Malonga Casquelord Center will be interviewed on the history of the neighborhood, the communities that thrive there, and their cultural practices. Translators will be used to conduct interviews with native Chinese speakers.
  - The interviews will be used to guide a mural design process by CRP. The mural portion includes painting approximately 10,000-sq. ft of surfaces on three different properties facing a parking lot in a prominent downtown location, which will be completed by a team including CRP artists and youth interns. Upon completion, CRP will hold a community mural dedication featuring cultural performances by local artists housed at the Malonga Casquelord Center, including live music and

dance.

- o A permanent website including the documentary, as well as extended interviews, photographic stills, and additional educational material, will be created to extend the reach and scope of this project.

#### **ALICE STREET TIMELINE**

- o November 1 - Begin In-Depth Interviews
  - o March 2014 – Present Initial Community Mural Design and Video Draft from Interviews
  - o May 2014 – Present Mural Design Final
  - o July 2014 – Mural Execution
  - o First Friday - August 2014 – Complete Mural, Hold Mural Dedication Event
  - o October 2014 – Present draft of final video
  - o December 2014 – Release Final Video, Launch Website with extended interviews, photos and documentation
- 
- o The Alice Street Project's process and timeline, as described above, reflects sufficient capacity for gathering information, creating and presenting the design, and implementing the project.
  - o This model prioritizes community engagement while simultaneously effecting long-term blight reduction and neighborhood beautification.
  - o Each project aligns with the city's goals for long-term graffiti abatement, community engagement, increased public artwork, and celebration of Oakland's history and diverse cultures, promoting economic development while celebrating the cultural contributions of current and past residents.
  - o The projects to follow will follow a similar process for implementation and timeline.

Each additional project in this series will be adapted to fit specific needs and requirements of each neighborhood i.e translators, historical research, and cultural identity.

- *A funding plan that is appropriate, feasible, indicates strong and wide community support, and includes a well-conceived strategy for maintaining the work of the project.*
  - o CRP's Alice Street Mural Project initiative is already supported by a broad set of funders from Oakland Cultural Funding Program, East Bay Fund for Artists, [Indiegogo](#) crowdfunding, and additional private donations and grants. To date, \$37,000 of the project's \$56,000 budget has been raised.
  - o Additional projects are projected at \$25 - 50,000 each; additional locations will be selected in conjunction with D3 Councilperson Gibson-McElhaneys staff.
  - o A portion of funding will be set aside for mural maintenance up to 5 years.
  - o NEA funding would allow for the Alice Street model to be replicated in additional areas, creating artistic rejuvenation and enhancing the economic revitalization of Oakland's downtown, which has been described as a "cultural renaissance."
- *Artistic excellence of the design and/or arts organizations, designers, or artists involved with the project.*
  - o The Community Rejuvenation Project (CRP) has dedicated itself to cultivating healthy communities through beautification, education & celebration, using public art as a foundation for holistic, positive community engagement. Partnering with local government, community-based organizations, business owners and business organizations since 2008, CRP has created more than 100 murals painted in Oakland, Richmond, and Hayward. CRP's community partners past and present include People's Grocery, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, United Roots, Phat Beets, and many others. Since the mid 2000s, CRP has promoted public art and education with regard to

youth development, teaching classes and workshops at numerous schools and youth-centric programs.



## **The Lake Merritt Arts, Culture and Environment District (The ACE District)**

### **What does a Liveable Oakland look like? What would it take to get there?**

A liveable Oakland is one where all residents, community members and visitors can participate in building and enjoying the city through productive and progressive engagement in the arts, diverse cultural vitality, the economy, and the environment. Oakland has a central and growing role, geographically and socially, in the rich and diverse arts community of the Bay Area. Like the changes throughout the City, the arts and cultural community must work to balance and embrace change, while moving steadily forward in a city long-heralded as one of the most diverse in the country.

Unlike other change in Oakland, the arts and cultural communities are uniquely equipped to forge a pathway that: engages all communities through culturally-resonant design of programs and participation; creates accessible and high quality jobs; and increases revenue for the City, private cultural institutions, individual artists, and small cultural businesses. Place matters as changes happen. At the heart of Oakland lies one of the most unique urban environmental features in the Bay Area --Lake Merritt--an urban lake surrounded by a resurgent downtown, condo towers, ethnic and older residential neighborhoods, public sector institutions, parks and recreational opportunities. And while the Lake has recently benefitted from over \$100M worth of renovations and improvements, it has not yet been promoted or positioned to be the civic, cultural and economic development driver it deserves to be for the city and communities the Oakland East Bay Area. This is why we are proposing an arts-integrated planning process with Oakland stakeholders to create The Lake Merritt Arts, Culture and Environment District.

### **What is the Lake Merritt Arts, Culture and Environment District (The ACE District)?**

The ACE District will be a circuit of public cultural venues and open spaces in and surrounding Lake Merritt that serve as sites for spontaneous, semi-programmed and programmed arts and cultural activities. The ACE District will shape sustainable development in Oakland by creating economic value and place-dependent vibrancy, while maintaining community-based values, as necessary preconditions for growth. It provides the perfect opportunity to further ignite the artistic, economic and community development potential of Oakland, by stitching together numerous vibrant and diverse independent entities in a complementary manner, to create one cohesive and powerful initiative. Each entity's mission can contribute to the larger effort, representing a range of constituencies and cultural assets, within a compact and defined geography.

The ACE District will be anchored on the South side of the Lake by the cluster of institutions, which include the Oakland Museum of California, Laney College and the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center. The three anchor institutions create a cultural complex with a range of sizes of venues for intimate stage plays and small arts gatherings; mid-size theaters and ballrooms for art exhibitions and special events; and large acoustically engineered spaces for concerts and arts fairs. In addition to the indoor facilities, the District anchor institutions also boast wonderful and flexible outdoor settings for festivals and street fairs at Laney College and the magnificently tiered gardens and covered courtyards of the Oakland Museum of California- all facilities available for ACE District use.

In addition to the anchor institutions on the South side of the Lake, the ACE District also activates over 10 public venues around the Lake including the Lake Merritt Amphitheater, Snow Park, Veterans Memorial Building, Children's Fairyland, Edoff Memorial Bandstand, Lakeside Park Garden Center, Rotary Nature Center, Lake Merritt Boathouse, Lake Merritt Bird Sanctuary, Lake Merritt Arches, Splashpad Park, Cleveland Cascades, East 18<sup>th</sup> Street Pier and Lakeshore Drive. There are also private venues, which can be activated as cultural venues and incorporated into the circuit.

The ACE District is situated at a most vibrant crossroad of the San Francisco Bay Area. Lake Merritt is the nation's first National Wildlife Refuge designated in 1870; the Oakland Estuary connects Lake Merritt to the San Francisco Bay, an active wetland which transects two of the facilities; the bustling business, residential and cultural life of Chinatown and the Eastlake neighborhood; and, the renown arts scenes of Uptown and Mid-town.

### **How does the ACE District enhance and increase the liveability of Oakland?**

The ACE District will foster strong community identity and a sense of place for all of Oakland's communities and enable visitors to experience a range of arts offerings along the 3.5-mile perimeter of the Lake. The ACE District will also promote increased economic vitality for the businesses in the Lake Merritt area. The existing and planned design elements throughout the ACE District will facilitate increased foot traffic, spur economic growth and support the development of surrounding proposed developments including the Lake Merritt BART Transit Oriented Development, the Oakland Unified School District site, and others.

This proposal builds upon existing cultural activities at the anchor institutions. The area has witnessed the \$64 million renovation of the Oakland of California and over \$100 million, which has enabled the renovation of Lake Merritt and the surrounding infrastructure. Supporting our plans, Mayor Quan has stated that she would encourage the development of a new cultural district on 10th Street encompassing these anchor institutions.

The ACE District will preserve and present traditional arts and artists, as well as showcase emerging art and cultural innovation; it will be an incubator/accelerator for artists as environmental and community change agents. By stitching together a dozen venues around the Lake, we can imagine the ACE District facilitating innovative and engaging arts installations on Lake Merritt like the floating markets of Bangkok and the floating restaurants of Xochimilco in Mexico City. We also envision artist-designed way-finding systems that highlight the rich history of Oakland's cultural community and architectural heritage.

### **What are we proposing?**

The ACE District is the natural evolution of a downtown Oakland neighborhood rich with resources and potential, yet lacking a cohesive sense of place. The lead partners in The ACE District planning process will include the Oakland Museum of California, Laney College and Creative Development Partners. Additional planning partners will include the many stakeholder organizations around Lake Merritt and in the City that comprise the vibrant cultural landscape of Oakland.

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) will serve as the host for The ACE District planning process. Randolph Belle and Jeremy Liu will be the facilitators of the process to bring together all stakeholders in developing the goals, strategies and operating plans for The ACE District. Each of the partners has ongoing programs, which will be leveraged and expanded to further catalyze art-making in the District. Ultimately, the weaving together of strategies and existing assets by artists will unlock the opportunities for equitable and sustainable transit oriented redevelopment of the Lake Merritt BART station and future Bus Rapid Transit stops in a manner that advances community, retail/business, and culture forward growth.

Facilitators Randolph Belle and Jeremy Liu have decades of arts and cultural planning and neighborhood economic development experience in Oakland and around the U.S. Randolph Belle has founded several commercial and community arts facilities and a nonprofit organization called Support Oakland Artists, focusing on community development and the creative economy. Jeremy Liu is an award-winning artist and community development innovation practitioner with nearly two decades of experience in community planning, creative placemaking, and real estate development for housing and economic development.

OMCA is actively engaged in multiple community outreach projects that will contribute to the planning process. Friday Nights@OMCA features outdoor activities and a family-friendly neighborhood street market. The free weekly event, attracting a growing average of 2,000 diverse families and neighbors, offers live music, participatory art activities, food, culture and artist demonstrations, as well as discounted Museum admission. This highly successful platform will have even greater impact in this new collaboration. In 2014, OMCA will engage a local professional artist, community organizations and traditionally underserved individuals in a large-scale participatory arts project on the 12th Street wall facing Lake Merritt. Laney College has, as one of its strategic initiatives, Art and Design, broadly defined to include all aspects of its offerings to the student body. The Laney College Theater at the Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center hosts student-based and all manner of private cultural productions on an ongoing basis.

OMCA is willing to provide partial matching funds in the form of cash and in-kind contributions, we expect that the other institutions around the Lake will be able to provide the balance to more than cover the 1:1 match requirement. A preliminary budget for the ACE District planning process is \$100,000 where we anticipate a more than 1:1 match in the form of institutional partner cash, in-kind contributions and other philanthropic gifts.

Submitted by Randolph Belle, Creative Development Partners  
(510) 333-9175, rbelle@creativedevelopmentpartners.com

## **EastSide Arts Alliance – Oakland is Proud (working title)**

*Just as the Wall of Respect mural project inspired the African American community of Chicago so now does the legendary (now missing) Oakland is Proud mural inspire the Black, Brown, Native, and Asian communities of East Oakland. This project uses art to inspire and strengthen the long neglected neighborhoods along International Blvd.*

The *Oakland is Proud* project supports key cultural hubs along International Blvd. Supporting existing hubs such as EastSide Cultural Center, Intertribal Friendship House and the Fruitvale BART Plaza and also working to develop five "Cultural Plazas" along International Blvd. These five sites correspond with the City of Oakland Catalyst Sites as outlined in the recently completed Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan for the new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line. We want to use the NEA Our Town grant to support the development of the five "cultural plazas".

The Cultural Plazas are designed as staging areas for a variety of community projects – festivals, celebrations, outdoor mini-concerts, public art, theater, video screenings, and art and produce markets. The project focuses on the area between 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave and the San Leandro border. This is a community desperately underserved. Following the model of the development of the EastSide Cultural Center, culture will be utilized as a tool to bring people together – in a celebration and recognition of their own cultural traditions and innovations, and also as a way to build a base of community power that is able then to affect change and bring the needed resources to their neighborhood.

We will continue our focus on presenting jazz as a uniquely American music that speaks to all people. Much the same way we built support for the Malcolm X Jazz Festival by presenting musicians in a variety of community settings (cafes, schools, etc), we will use the cultural plazas to create a neighborhood cultural circuit. Oakland has a very strong roster of jazz artists that ESAA has been supporting for many years. This is the opportunity to put Oakland back on a national/international map as a key site for blues and jazz.

With the support of The California Endowment, EastSide Arts Alliance (ESAA) has been asked to help create and implement a strategy that uses culture as a way to help the existing residents of deep East Oakland remain and thrive in their neighborhoods; recognizing that displacement is often a part of any large redevelopment plan. Cal Endowment has offered ESAA \$100,000 towards these goals which can serve as a match for the NEA. ESAA will provide overall coordination; share learnings from the development of the EastSide Cultural Center; assist with selections of participating artists; provide staging, sound support, and security (through our People's Festivals training program); documentation; and continue to seek ongoing funding support for the project.

Resident leadership for the design, implementation, and continued coordination of the cultural plazas will be developed through California Endowment's East Oakland Building Healthy Communities (EOBHC) Resident Engagement Team.

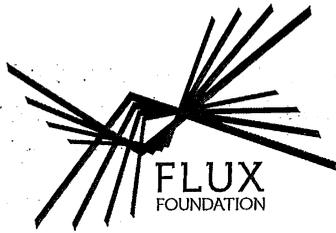
**CULTURAL PLAZAS** – locations and plans. Each site has an identified open space that is available for this project.

1. **23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue – EastSide Cultural Center** – ESAA has already received funds from the James Irvine Foundation to create a mural art park at this site. We will kick-off the season of celebrating Oakland's new cultural plazas with a block party celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Black & Chicano Arts Movement. **(September 2014 – Black & Chicano Arts Anniversary)**
2. **High Street – Black History Month Exhibition & Festival** - Casa Jimenez hosts an annual Black History Month celebration. This is an excellent way to deepen bonds between Black and Chicano neighbors. We will expand their programming by creating permanent murals to surround their very large parking lot – creating a defined space for an outside festival component to their Black History Month programming and serve as a site for ongoing events. **(February 2015)**
3. **57<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Deep East Oakland Cultural Center** – staging area. A cultural strategies committee has identified the old Safeway headquarters as an excellent site for a future cultural center. Affordable housing developers have also identified the site as one for potential affordable rental housing. Again, using the model of the EastSide Cultural Center as an example of a successful multi-use development we will continue to work toward the goal of a cultural center serving deep East Oakland. Until then – the cultural plaza allows the community to come together and continue to build support for the project. We will work with the East Oakland Teen Center to create an outside mosaic celebrating East Oakland and an outside staging area adjacent to the Teen Center for ongoing programming. A summer dance festival will open this plaza. **(Outside Dance Party – July 2015)**
4. **EOYDC/Allen Temple Arms – Intergenerational Harvest Fair** working with seniors from Allen Temple Arms, youth from EOYDC, and food justice groups we will celebrate the harvest with healthy produce, jazz, dance, and community information. A vacant lot belonging to Allen Temple Church is available for this work. **(October 2015)**
5. **95<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Holiday Art Fair** - One of the founding member groups of ESAA has already created storefront murals along a blighted stretch of abandoned properties. We will use the sidewalk and the empty backlot to set up a weekend "business district" for small businesses. We will focus on existing connections with community vendors, local street wear lines, and craftspeople. **(December 2014)**

**Partnering organizations/funders/artists:**

- California Endowment's East Oakland Building Healthy Communities
- AC Transit / City of Oakland / OSNI/Transform

- Allen Temple Baptist Church
- East Oakland Youth Development Center
- Mujeres Unidas y Activas; Black Organizing Project; Youth Together; CURYG; Bantaey Serai; MISSSIE; Graduating Champions
- Town Artists / Artists-in-Residence:
  - Daniel Buford - sculpture
  - Kufu - murals
  - Githinji Wa Mbiri- sculpture
  - Jose Navarette - theater
  - Susanne Takehara/Xochitl Guerrero – Mosaics
  - Kamau Amen-Ra – photography
  - Tureeda Mikell – storytelling
  - Traci Bartlow – dance
  - **Jazz Artists:**
    - Howard Wiley – tenor      • Faye Carol – vocals
    - Muziki Roberson – piano      • Kiti Gamble – piano      • Marshall Trammell - percussion
    - John Santos – percussionist      • Ranzel Merritt - percussion



*"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." – Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Jessica Hobbs  
Peter Kimelman  
Colinne Hemrich  
Catie Magee  
Thwen Chaloehtiarana

Dear Steven,

The City of Oakland's Our Town call for proposals was sent to me by Karin Betts, Public Information Officer, Metropolitan Transportation Commission. I know Karin through my involvement in the Gateway Park project. She thought this opportunity would be ideal for my non-profit, FLUX Foundation ([fluxfoundation.org](http://fluxfoundation.org)). We are an Oakland-based arts non-profit located in the American Steel Studios building. Our primary focus is using collaborative art as a platform for education, exploration and empowerment.

In considering the Our Town grant, Karin thought our TweetHaus program ([fluxfoundation.org/community-education/tweethaus](http://fluxfoundation.org/community-education/tweethaus)) would be a great fit for this proposal. Created in 2012, TweetHaus is a collaboration between the FLUX Foundation and community partners. It is a public art + ecology project focused on citizen science, interactive learning and collaboration. It fosters community through the design, construction and installation of bird habitats and public pathways in urban environments. Our current local partners are Park Day School and the Oakland Parks & Recreation Department. The birdhouses created through TweetHaus can be found in Mosswood Park, Frog Park, Emerson Elementary School and Park Day School.

Since we have only recently been made aware of this opportunity, we would like to submit a version of a TweetHaus proposal developed last year for a collaboration with Mosswood Park and the development of the TweetHaus toolkit, an open source curriculum that can be shared and replicated. For the scope of Our Town we would focus the program beyond Mosswood, including additional Oakland parks and schools. With our established relationship with Oakland Parks & Recreation, our strong connection to a variety of local elementary schools and our focus on surfacing local ecology in the urban environment, we believe this program is an excellent candidate for the Our Town program.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me anytime 415-971-2139 or [jess@fluxfoundation.org](mailto:jess@fluxfoundation.org).

Sincerely,

Jessica Hobbs  
Director & Founder  
415-971-2139  
[jess@fluxfoundation.org](mailto:jess@fluxfoundation.org)

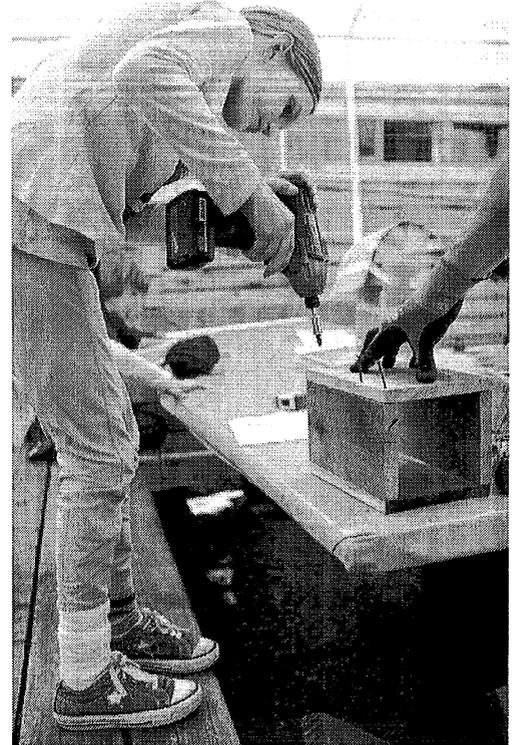
# TweetHaus

**TweetHaus** is a collaborative public art + ecology program that cultivates avian habitat, citizen scientists and community artists. Exploring an innovative curriculum that integrates maker culture, contemporary educational philosophy and urban environmentalism, the project creates dialogue about how we can work together to make our cities more habitable and more beautiful. TweetHaus is an open source, ongoing, multi-locational, multimedia project, designed to be replicated in different neighborhoods and cities across the country with varying local species of birds and other animals that may be threatened in a given area. Our focus in the Oakland is on the Western bluebird, a species that is no longer thriving in the urban Bay Area. Collaboration is fundamental to our process: through partnership with schools and local organizations, **TweetHaus** builds community by building public art.

## TweetHausOAK

**TweetHausOAK** is the first iteration of the TweetHaus program. It is a project-based learning experience with three main components: 1) urban bird ecology; 2) creative collaboration; and 3) making. The project blends classroom education, collaborative activities, hands-on design and real-world exploration. Kids learn about the Western bluebird and Oakland ecology in class. Then, they put that knowledge into practice by venturing into the neighborhood to find appropriate birdhouse locations. With a location in mind, participants return to the classroom to design and construct a unique birdhouse. Finally, the kids install the birdhouses and monitor the progress of nesting birds. In this process, kids gain experience with math, science and art while learning what it means to work together as a team and getting the chance to use tools and raw materials to create their vision. To see illustrations of the program plan and materials, please visit <http://bit.ly/tweethausproposal>.

The birdhouses created through **TweetHaus** are a unique expression of creativity with a utilitarian purpose. The bluebird's nesting requirements keep the dimensions of each birdhouse consistent (approx. 6" x 6" x 12") and the materials uniform (untreated wood like redwood or cedar and other organic materials), but the physical manifestation of each birdhouse varies depending upon the creative ideas of the team. Some examples of the birdhouses created in the last few years can be seen here: <http://bit.ly/tweehauspics>. Wherever possible, the project uses community-sourced and recycled materials. The birdhouses are both a singular project of each team as well as a holistic expression of TweetHaus' overall vision: to engage people in the discovery of the



hidden nature in their urban environment through public art and collaboration.

### **TweetHausOAK: Mosswood**

**TweetHausOAK: Mosswood** builds on the success of the **TweetHausOAK: Park Day School**, piloted in 2012 and now in its third year. A partnership between the FLUX Foundation and Oakland's Mosswood Park, the goal of **TweetHausOAK: Mosswood** is to teach local kids about creative collaboration, public art and citizen science while they explore Oakland's urban ecology. Over the course of 6 workshops this project will guide participants and FLUX artist mentors in the design, construction and installation of urban Western Bluebird habitats.

**TweetHaus: Mosswood** project has four valuable outcomes. First, through implementation of a 6 workshop program, FLUX will create a modular version of the TweetHaus curriculum that can be shared and replicated in a range of educational environments. Second, students will create and install 5-6 birdhouses in Oakland, adding to the 11 birdhouses already installed in spring 2012 and 2013. Third, the project establishes new connections for FLUX and Mosswood Park, expanding reach into the community and creating a foundation for future partnerships with schools in Temescal and other Oakland neighborhoods.



Finally, the proliferation of birdhouses supports the growth of the overall **TweetHausOAK** program. With more birdhouses, the program can build its citizen science and community interaction components using a social media-focused website and the creation of a TweetHaus map to encourage neighborhood exploration using the birdhouses as points of interest.

### **TweetHaus Toolkit**

In addition to the program at Mosswood, we would like to take the opportunity to build the TweetHaus Toolkit. This is a sharable, replicable curriculum based on the experience of implementing TweetHaus over the past two years. The curriculum will provide a complete set of instructions and materials for an 8-week classroom-based program that guides teams of 3-4 students in the design, construction, installation and monitoring of birdhouses for the urban Western Bluebird - or any other threatened species in a given area. With this toolkit, students and teachers can work together to create habitats in their own neighborhoods, exercising skills in math, geometry, science, research, design and collaboration.

The TweetHaus Toolkit will be comprised of the interactive TweetHaus curriculum, a basic website with teaching resources and social media integration, and an evaluation plan to support the program's successful implementation. Grounded in a model of design thinking, the curriculum will focus on the integration of collaborative learning, placemaking and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) skills as it explores public art and ecology through the lens of making. The curriculum will be modular and replicable in any urban environment, and the toolkit website will act as a hub that connects diverse communities who implement the project. Through the TweetHaus website, people will be able to share their experiences, learn from each other and use the space as an archive for TweetHaus' impact in their own cities. It is FLUX's hope to use this toolkit to bring **TweetHaus** to cities across the US.

## About the FLUX Foundation

FLUX Foundation exists as a new model for the exploration of large-scale art. We seek to engage people in designing and building large-scale public art as a catalyst for education, collaboration and empowerment. At our core, we are collaborators. We believe that every step in the art-making process is an opportunity for sharing ideas, knowledge and skills to create something monumental.

FLUX not only creates public art; it creates public artists. Inherent to our work underlying artistic principles allow individual contributions to be made by a large number of project participants without sacrificing the integrity of the piece. Each project is seen as a vehicle to train members from the community in the technical skills used in art fabrication. The group also focuses on arts education, using each project to imbue upon its member a critical approach to art practice. The work of FLUX is highly collaborative and challenges the singular notion of the Artist or Designer. The group leverages its status as a 501(c)3 non-profit and volunteer workforce to produce projects that would not otherwise be feasible.

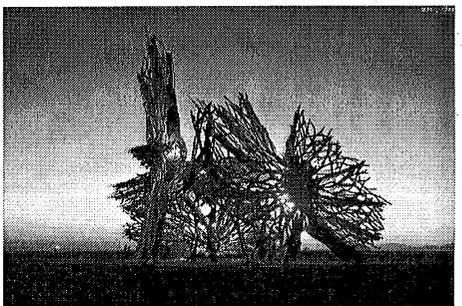
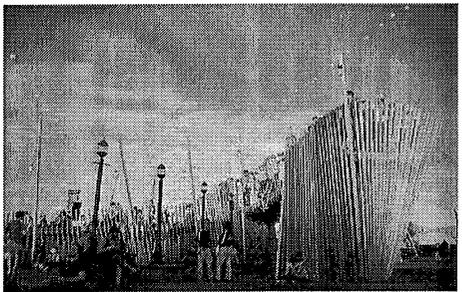
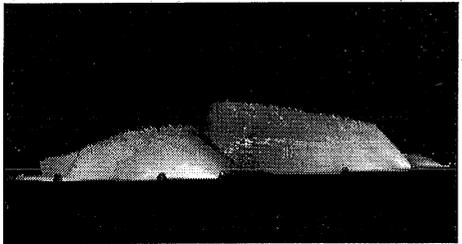
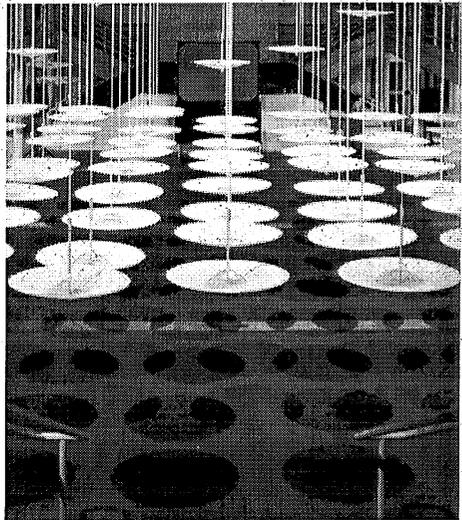
Since FLUX's inception in 2010, we have created seven collaborative large-scale interactive installations and cultivated a community of over 200 volunteers; these works include:

- Temple of Flux, 2010 (incinerated in performance)
- Spire of Wishes, 2010 (in a private collection)
- Fishbug 2.0, 2011
- BrollyFlock!, 2011
- Colony, 2012 (on going)
- TweetHaus, 2012 (on going)
- Zoa, 2012
- Sidewalk's End 2013
- Canopy 2013

Zoa, Fishbug, BrollyFlock!, and Canopy continue to be developed as platforms for new formal explorations and interactive effects. As such each time they are shown they are different than the time before and instill wonder anew.

for more information on the FLUX Foundation, please visit:

[www.fluxfoundation.org](http://www.fluxfoundation.org)



## **FLUX Contact Info:**

EMAIL: [jess@fluxfoundaiton.org](mailto:jess@fluxfoundaiton.org)

MAIN CONTACT: Jess Hobbs

PHONE: 415-971-2139

FURTHER INFORMATION:

WEB: [www.fluxfoundation.org](http://www.fluxfoundation.org)

FB: [facebook.com/fluxfoundation](https://facebook.com/fluxfoundation)

TWITTER: [twitter.com/fluxfoundation](https://twitter.com/fluxfoundation)



November 21, 2013

Steven Huss  
Cultural Arts Manager, City of Oakland

Dear Steven,

On behalf of Youth Speaks, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to be considered as the City of Oakland's partner in pursuit of support from the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town grant. We are proposing to dedicate this support, in the amount of \$150,000, to expand the scope of *Life is Living*, a collaborative effort amongst local organizations that produces a day-long Festival each fall in West Oakland's DeFremery Park.

### **Organization History and Purpose**

Founded in 1996 in San Francisco, Youth Speaks is a multi-faceted organization that understands and believes that the power, insight, creativity, and passion of young people can change the world. Our mission is to empower the next generation of leaders, self-defined artists, and visionary activists through written and oral literacies. We challenge youth to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of societal change.

Through a wide variety of integrated arts education, youth development, and presentation programs, we directly impact almost 35,000 youth each year in the Bay Area alone; our national programs serve an additional 250,000 youth, and we reach some 750,000 more through our robust digital platforms. We house a repertory theater company (*The Living Word Project*) that commissions, produces and tours internationally-recognized new work in new aesthetics and is the driver behind an annual arts and culture Festival (*Life is Living*) produced in Oakland and cities nationwide; we also host an annual gathering of young poets and poetry organizations from throughout the world (*Brave New Voices*), connected through a national network of close to 70 like-minded organizations.

### **Program Strategy and Impact**

As one of Youth Speaks' primary program areas, *Life is Living* (LIL) models **pivotal partnerships between diverse and underserved communities, local community groups, urban environmental agencies and activists, socially responsible businesses, and the contemporary arts world**. Through Youth Speaks' unique brand of audience development, LIL exercises the radically democratic position that demands that communities plagued by institutional, economic, and environmental crises are connected to resources and platforms promoting community health, vibrancy, and sustainability. Centered upon the cultivation of a broad coalition of Oakland-based partners, LIL is a collaborative effort geared towards presenting an inter-disciplinary, intergenerational, eco-equity event each year, driven by and for the existing local community.

The non-traditional event, held in DeFremery Park in West Oakland, is a laboratory of crossover experiences wherein Hip Hop generation audiences are exposed to multiple creative platforms fostering a stronger sense of place along with lasting relationships, leading to an improved quality of life for local residents. The Festival integrates local food purveyors and artisans, and activities have included an invitational graffiti battle, a food justice STEMposium, live spoken word, hip-hop, and jazz music performances, and a girls' softball tournament. Since its inception in 2007, and through the creation of sustainable partnerships, LIL has drawn large, diverse audiences, initiated innovative conversations, and highlighted the vitality and energy of the community as well as urban arts within a local environmental context.

### **Program Goals and Objectives**

Through LIL, our goal is to work with our partners to reposition arts organizations into communities of color by positioning life – with healthy living and arts at its center – as a necessary element of community identity, responsibility and interaction. Crucial to this idea, and to enhancing livability for the West Oakland community, is

the restoration of DeFremery Park; we are thrilled to now have the support and advocacy of members of the Oakland City Council deeply engaged in helping us realize this objective.

In an effort to align more closely with Youth Speaks' core principle of "life as primary text", the Festival's objectives have evolved over time, from event or outcome-based to relationship or process-based, with no agenda of generating revenue. This collaborative process encourages artists and arts organizations to work across broad networks and focus areas to find community solutions to community problems, while stimulating audience investment and engagement, reciprocal growth, and sustainable practices that extend beyond a culminating event, continuously nurturing our symbiotic relationships.

The continued cultivation of these partnerships allows for creative placemaking to succeed on a wide-ranging scale by drawing upon the diverse array of our partners' strengths and visions. We are committed to providing a platform for the artistic and civic development work exemplified by our partner organizations, which include The Crucible, People's Grocery, City Slicker Farms, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Oaklandish, Reflections of Healing, Oakland Bandits, The Estria Foundation, The Hub Oakland, West Oakland Senior Center, City of Oakland Parks and Rec, and 100 Black Men, among others. Youth Speaks' partnerships with the Center for Investigative Reporting and UCSF through two new pilot programs are also pivotal to this project's success.

Moving forward, our priority is to advance the interdependence of our local network of partners, while boosting their financial independence and stability through this unique platform. We will achieve this by providing increased opportunities for our partner organizations to share resources, intellectual property, and audience exposure; the network's sustained growth means, in turn, that the LIL Festival can continue to provide a safe space for the community at large to engage, create, interact, and ultimately thrive.

Concurrently, we are working to further develop our online capacity around the Festival and refine our inclusive marketing design that places our partners at the center, promoting the imagery and language from their own local movements. We plan to include documentation of the planning process leading up to the Festival on our online platform, as an integral part of the culminating event. This will include interviews with key coordinators, service learning at Town Park, and the installation of murals painted in the park during previous Festivals, which will also serve to shape the creative character of the community.

### **Financial Support and Sustainability**

Youth Speaks' implementation of a new dynamic fundraising plan supports our efforts to sustain and develop this project. We have invested in key new staff, a reconstructed board and a solid organizational strategy, and continue to maintain healthy relationships with all of our funders. Support for LIL is manifest in the East Bay Community Foundation's investment as dedicated partners in the continuation of the project, as well as from Michael Orlove, the Director of Artist Communities and Presenting & Multidisciplinary Works for the National Endowment for the Arts, who encouraged us to pursue funding from the Our Town grant specifically to support this work.

We would be honored to partner with the City of Oakland, and grateful for the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, in our continued efforts to foster great art, community pride, and quality of life in one of Oakland's most underserved communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information. I'd like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



James Kass  
Founder and Executive Director, Youth Speaks