



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Community & Economic
Development Agency**

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**Public Art Installation Invites the Public to Discover
Oakland's Hidden Watershed and Creeks**

Oakland, CA – Pedestrians in five Oakland neighborhoods may have noticed a series of bronze markers embedded in city sidewalks during April 2011. These **new Watershed Markers** identify the location of a buried creek or underground culvert that is part of Oakland's extensive watershed system. Designed by Wowhaus, each installation is a series of five markers arranged like stepping stones to encourage the public to step across the creek while also highlighting the native fauna that inhabits streambeds. The name of the creek associated with each site is stamped in the sidewalk's concrete. The five Watershed Markers locations are: **Arroyo Viejo** on MacArthur Boulevard at 84th Avenue, **Sausal** on La Salle Avenue at Mountain Boulevard, **Lake Merritt** on Lakeshore Avenue between Grand Avenue and Trestle Glen Road, **Glen Echo** on Bay Place/27th Street at Harrison Street and **Temescal** on Shafter Avenue at College Avenue.

"The Watershed Markers are an important reminder of Oakland's ecological resources that are hidden from view," said Mayor Jean Quan. "Our creeks and waterways are vital to a healthy urban environment, and this is an innovative way to use public art as a means to help people connect to our natural world. I really appreciate the interagency collaboration within the City of Oakland that led to the success of this project."

Funded through Measure DD--Oakland Trust for Clean Water & Safe Parks--the installations are a collaboration between the Public Works Agency's Watershed Program and the Community & Economic Development Agency's Public Art Program. By drawing attention to Oakland's underground creeks, the artwork encourages discovery and sensitizes residents to the ongoing need to protect the city's watershed ecology.

Through community dialogue, Oakland-based Wowhaus identified a series of universal symbols that evoke a healthy watershed in local residents' minds. Native fauna highlighted on the markers include Rainbow Trout, Pacific Chorus frogs, California newts and dragonflies. In fact, the life cycle of a frog – from frog eggs to tadpole to mature frog – is portrayed. These animals are cast into the bronze markers among stones surrounded by dynamic undulating lines that evoke water in motion. The imagery is rendered in highly detailed form that references the City's rich legacy of art deco and Craftsman architecture.

Historically all of Oakland's creeks flowed in open channels from the hills to the San Francisco Bay. Over the years as Oakland developed, properties and roadways were built very close to or on top of creeks resulting in sections of creeks being

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buried in underground culverts to reduce flooding and protect properties. The Watershed Markers commemorate the creeks and tributaries that once flowed freely above ground. **For more information on the project and Oakland's creeks and watersheds, visit oaklandcreeks.org.**

Wowhaus is the husband and wife artist team of Scott Constable and Ene Osteraas-Constable. Following an extensive Request for Qualifications process which generated 59 submissions, five finalists were interviewed by a nine member panel which recommended Wowhaus. This recommendation was supported by the Public Art Advisory Committee and ratified by the Oakland City Council.

About the Watershed Program

Healthy watersheds are a vital component of a healthy urban environment. Oakland is home to more than 15 main creeks and 30 tributaries, Lake Merritt and the Oakland Estuary. Underground culverts, along with the City's storm drain system, connect to open portions of creeks and are an integral part of the creek and watershed system. The Watershed Markers Project draws attention to stretches of creek that have been buried throughout the city. Today, with new environmental regulations safeguarding these precious resources, Oakland's 100 miles of open waterways are being protected and preserved. For more information on the Watershed Program, visit oaklandcreeks.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 Measure DD

In November 2002, more than 80 percent of Oakland voters approved Measure DD, a \$198 million bond measure. Funded projects include park renovation, trails, a new recreation center, historic building renovations, open space acquisition and creek restoration. For more information about Measure DD projects, visit oaklandnet.com/measuredd.

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Editor's Note: High resolution images and a locator map are available to accompany your article. Download at <http://bit.ly/iieYPS>.