

# The Telegraph District Public Art Plan

*Opportunities for Community, Connection and Creativity*



**Final Submitted Version**  
**November 12, 2015**  
**Matthew Passmore**  
**Morelab, LLC**  
**Public Art Consultant**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. VISION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>IV. PROCESS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>V. FINDINGS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>VI. STRATEGIES</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A. Short Term/Immediate Strategies</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Temporary interventions and street activations.	10
2. Temporary sculpture installations	12
3. Art in empty storefronts, either on display or interactive projects	14
4. Built Environment	15
5. Blank Walls	15
<b>B. Medium/Long Term Strategies</b>	<b>16</b>
1. Temporary	16
i. Events	16
ii. Public performances	16
iii. Temporary sculpture installations	16
2. Artist in Residency Programs	17
3. Built Environment	18
4. Blank Walls	18
<b>C. Durable and “Built Environment” Strategies</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Permanent/Signature Sculpture	19
i. Monumental Sculpture	19

ii. Smaller scale distributed sculpture series	20
2. Functional Art	22
3. Blank Walls	23
<b>VII. FUNDING SOURCES</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>VIII. PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>IX. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>X. ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>26</b>

## I. Executive Summary

The Telegraph District<sup>1</sup> has long occupied a central position within the greater cultural and historical context of Berkeley, California. Distinct from downtown Berkeley and the flats to the west, Telegraph is home to the birth of the free speech movement and numerous social justice protests that brought the name of this avenue to prominence within American popular consciousness. Today, the Telegraph District is a popular commercial corridor, catering to both the student population of U.C. Berkeley and local community. Yet the District is also beset by seemingly intractable social issues: drug peddling and addiction, mental illness, service-resistant homelessness and aggressive panhandling. Within this rich social and historical ecosystem are many opportunities to elevate and enliven the Telegraph District through a range of public art projects that vary in scale and duration, from public performances to social practice projects, from temporary exhibitions to permanent signature sculptures, from the miniature to the monumental. Through a series of meetings, presentations and conversations with a wide range of community stakeholders, including merchants, public agencies and university officials, we have gathered, analyzed and synthesized a significant volume of data and organized it in the form of this Art Plan. A number of broad art themes emerged from within the community, which are further detailed in Section V – Findings. Broadly speaking, the stakeholders were interested in artworks that explored or engaged the following themes:

**Art that is playful, interactive, refined but possibly funky**

**The Arts: Music, poetry, literature, film**

**Cultural Movements**

**Infrastructure**

**The University of California**

**The Future**

---

<sup>1</sup> The territory contemplated by this Art Plan is broader than Telegraph Avenue proper, extending for one block east and west of the Avenue. Thus this Art Plan refers to the “Telegraph District” or “Telegraph” instead of “Telegraph Avenue.”

In addition to these themes, this Plan articulates a three-part strategy for implementation, organized by the amount of time, financing and other resources required for execution: “short term/immediate” strategies are projects that could be implemented immediately with minimal funding; “medium/long term” projects require significant planning as well as funding; and “durable/built environment” projects, which will be part of the street ecology of the Telegraph District for many years or decades to come and therefore will require the most resources and extensive planning.

Taken together, we are confident that the themes in this Plan and the Strategies for execution in a variety of media, scale and modes of practice, will ultimately strengthen the sense of community (and connections between various communities), enliven the streetscape and improve the character and quality of the public realm along this unique and important cultural corridor.

## II. Introduction

The Telegraph District, particularly the section from Bancroft Avenue, at the edge of the UC Berkeley campus, extending south past the triangular mini-plaza at Dwight to Parker Street, is a corridor steeped in social, political and cultural history of the San Francisco Bay Area. From its early years as a technological corridor with telegraph lines and later with streetcars, to the birth of the modern free speech movement and the cultural movements of the Sixties, through the current blossoming of technological innovation and the intellectual heft of the University of California, the Telegraph District occupies a central social, political, historical and economic position in the continuing development of Berkeley and the East Bay. Telegraph is a teeming marketplace, catering to the large student population and local residents alike.

Yet, despite its storied history and economic vibrancy, the contemporary Telegraph District can often appear to lack a discernable cohesive community identity, and is beset by some of our most intractable contemporary social issues including drug peddling and addiction, mental illness, service-resistant homelessness and aggressive panhandling, all of which contribute to complicated and dysfunctional streetscape experience. While

many of these issues fall well outside the purview of an art plan, this Plan nevertheless seeks to enhance a sense of community identity by improving the aesthetic quality of the Telegraph District, providing meaningful connections between arts practitioners and the local communities, and celebrating the unique cultural crucible that has resonated in the American consciousness for generations.

### III. Vision

The vision guiding this Plan positions art as a central force for enhancing a sense of place, and as a driver for strengthening the diverse Telegraph communities' sense of themselves and the connections between them. This Plan envisions art as a powerful force for enhancing the aesthetic quality of the streetscape, and activating the streetscape through contemporary modes of artistic and cultural practice that fall under the broad banner of “creative placemaking” (artist led enhancement of the character and quality of a place. As it pertains to the Telegraph District, a more accurate term might be “creative placekeeping.”)<sup>2</sup> and “tactical urbanism” (short-term or temporary urban interventions that can lead to long-term structural change).<sup>3</sup> In this regard, and based upon the official definition of “Art” in Berkeley Municipal Code Section 6.14.010.B, this Plan defines “art” broadly, to include traditional art media, as well as social practice projects, urban interventions, performance, artist residencies, and other time-based projects. The Plan envisions a diverse constellation of artwork and art projects that vary in terms of scale, duration and interactivity, from temporary interventions and street festivals to signature permanent public artworks.

**Public Art will make the Telegraph District a cultural destination that celebrates the extraordinary diversity and historical significance of this unique cultural corridor, while highlighting Berkeley’s aspirations for the future as a site for technological and social innovation. Along Telegraph, Public Art will be a catalyst for engaging and celebrating**

---

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.artscapediy.org/Creative-Placemaking/Approaches-to-Creative-Placemaking.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tactical\\_urbanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tactical_urbanism)

**diverse communities and strengthening the connections between them, an instrument for social engagement that can drive social change, and a force for activating the streetscape by enhancing the aesthetic character and quality of the public realm.**

## **IV. Process**

The Vision, Themes, Strategies, physical sites and types of artwork detailed in this Plan were developed through a series of meetings and conversations with stakeholders from the local community, UC Berkeley, the Telegraph Business Improvement District (TBID), the City of Berkeley, the Berkeley Civic Art Commission (CAC), the Berkeley Police and Fire Departments, AC Transit and others.

Notably, this Plan was created in parallel with the 2015 Telegraph Avenue Public Realm Plan developed by Matt Taecker of Taecker Planning and Design, and Alex Bergtraun of Studio Bergtraun. The Public Realm Plan focuses more specifically on urban design issues and solutions for the Telegraph corridor, but because both this Art Plan and the Public Realm Plan propose themes, strategies and approaches that potentially both overlap conceptually and also occupy the same physical spaces along the street, the advantage of developing both Plans in conversation with each other, and presenting them simultaneously to community stakeholders, was readily apparent. I am indebted to Matt Taecker and Alex Bergtraun for their skill, generosity and good nature throughout the process of developing the Public Realm Plan alongside this Art Plan.

In addition to stakeholder meetings, I consulted a number of previously developed plans for the Telegraph District. These include the report from the Telegraph Avenue Placemaking Workshop conducted by the Project for Public Spaces. Though created in 2004, this report identified several core issues, such as celebration of the arts and the desire for more connection between the University of California and local residents, still resonate today.

The Telegraph Avenue CPTED Plan, created by the Berkeley Police Department, was of particular interest. CPTED, or “**Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design**” (as the name suggests) explores the role of urban and spatial design in reducing crime along public streets. In addition to specific streetscape improvement recommendations, the CPTED Plan also included a number of recommendations for art themes, with the goal of increasing a sense of community cohesion and pride as a tactic for reducing or preventing crime.

## V. Findings

Throughout the course of meeting with the stakeholders, a number of desired themes for public art emerged. These themes are outlined below. In general, while the artwork should be of the highest aesthetic quality, a sense of playfulness and funkiness is also highly desirable (though not required). Interactive artwork is also desirable. The broad themes developed with the stakeholders are below.

### 1. Playful, interactive, refined but possibly funky

Playful interactive works suitable for the whole family, which may also potentially convey the essential funkiness the Telegraph District.

### 2. The Arts: Music, poetry, literature, film

The rich history of literature, poetry, bookstores, music and music stores, live performance.

### 3. Cultural Movements

The Free Speech movement, empowerment, social justice and the history of protest.

### 4. Infrastructure

Earlier eras in the Telegraph District’s history include the famous telegraph line (1895, for which the Avenue is named) and an active streetcar system. What future systems of infrastructure could continue this historical through-line?





Telegraph & Bancroft, circa 1926.



Oakland-Berkeley Streetcar, circa 1892.  
Photo by Ray Raineri.

## 5. The University of California

The impact the University of California has had on the development of the Telegraph District. Potential for collaborations between selected artists and academic departments/disciplines at the University, and for artists, art classes and students to participate in artist residency programs described below.

## 6. The Future

What is the contemporary or futuristic vision of the Telegraph District? As a street known for producing social movements and new forms of culture in the past, how would the social movements or cultural forms of the future manifest along Telegraph?

# VI. Strategies

This Section details a range of strategies, media and modes of practice that form the essential core of this Art Plan. The strategies are divided into three distinct categories based upon the time and resources required for implementation. The categories are:

**“Short Term/Immediate”** – projects that require very low financial investment, for which funding has already been identified and/or projects that already exist and can be adapted or modified to be suitable for

implementation within the Telegraph District. Given the desire articulated by the stakeholders to see some public art projects implemented immediately, such projects will come from this category.

**“Medium/Long-Term”** – projects that require some financial investment and planning. These include newly conceived or commissioned projects. While the majority of the projects in this category are not permanent, such as events, performances or temporary sculpture, there are some smaller “built environment” projects that could conceivably fall within this category.

**“Durable”/“Built Environment”** – projects that require significant funding and time for implementation. This category includes permanent, signature sculptural works, smaller series of sculptures or wayfinding systems, as well as functional artworks (e.g., bike racks, benches, pedestrian scale lighting and the like).

It is important to note that some types of media and modes of practice are suitable for, and thus included in, more than one category of strategy. For example, “temporary sculpture” installations can be implemented immediately, but they are also a good medium/long term strategy. Accordingly, temporary sculpture siting is included as an element of both strategies. Thus, while these three categories of strategy articulate “best practices” for implementation of the Plan, they should not be considered proscriptive.

## **A. Short Term/Immediate Strategies**

Projects in this category can be implemented with minimal investment of time, money and other resources. These include pre-existing projects or projects that require a relatively small amount of fabrication and installation.

### **1. Temporary interventions and street activations.**

Temporary interventions and street activations include projects that enliven the shared experience of public space. With the advent of urban intervention festivals around the globe over the past several years, including the

2012 Urban Prototyping Festival<sup>4</sup> and the 2015 Market Street Prototyping Festival,<sup>5</sup> both in San Francisco, many temporary art interventions already exist and could be implemented along Telegraph Avenue with relatively minimal financial investment, though it is strongly recommended that artists who create such interventions be compensated with an honorarium. These types of project seek to activate the streetscape by broadening the range of experiences in the public realm, to include play, joy, conviviality, informal social interactions and other similar “interventions” in the ordinary experience of the city. These projects also offer opportunities for people from all different backgrounds to connect through a shared, common experience.

Below are three examples of temporary interventions (L to R): *PPlanter*, a public urinal and waste filtration system; *Arena*, a public ping-pong table, and *Before I Die*, a wall for the public expression of private desires.



*PPlanter* by Hyphae Labs



*Arena* | Play by Gensler



*Before I Die ...* by Candy Chang

<sup>4</sup> <http://grayarea.org/initiative/urban-prototyping-san-francisco-3/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://marketstreetprototyping.org/>

## 2. Temporary sculpture installations

Temporary sculptures may be sited in vacant lots, on street corners, or other suitable locations that do not obstruct the pedestrian right of way. A few promising opportunities are mentioned here.

**The Berkeley Inn site** - At the northeast corner of Haste and Telegraph stands a vacant lot, which is a suitable place for a large-scale rotating sculpture garden, similar to the Uptown Sculpture Garden on Telegraph Avenue in downtown Oakland.<sup>6</sup> Because this site is privately owned, the City would have to undertake negotiations with the landowner to allow sculpture to be installed on the site. Importantly, the site would NOT be open to the public, but the sculpture(s) visible from the street.



*Dandelion* by Karen Cusolito



**Durant Plaza** – the Northeast corner of Durant and Telegraph includes a widened sidewalk, and the porticos of the Bank of America building offer natural display sites for sculpture.



<sup>6</sup> [http://www.sfbg.com/pixel\\_vision/2013/04/05/oaklands-first-outdoor-sculpture-park-opens-tonight](http://www.sfbg.com/pixel_vision/2013/04/05/oaklands-first-outdoor-sculpture-park-opens-tonight)

**Bancroft Plaza** - The northeast corner of Bancroft contains City of Berkeley right of way and is suitable for a temporary sculpture. Working in collaboration with the University, this site could house a series of student works or works with themes related to the student experience.



### 3. Art in empty storefronts, either on display or interactive projects

Art in vacant storefronts can include simple displays of artwork in the windows, but creative use of the storefront to create interactive projects, is preferable to simple displays. As an example, the *Señorita Teresita* project in a vacant San Francisco storefront was a clever and innovative take on the subject of fortune telling. Passersby were invited to submit questions for a fictional fortune-teller “Señorita Teresita” by submitting them through the mail slot in the door. The fortune-teller would then answer the questions in a creative tongue-in-cheek manner, and post both the questions and her answers on the windows of the storefront.

If issues of liability and insurance can be successfully negotiated with landlords to allow occupancy, then storefronts become an excellent site for a range of creative interventions, such as a pop-up art gallery or a site for an artist residency.

A good precedent, including the legal framework for art in storefronts, is available from the San Francisco Arts Commission “Art in Storefronts” program.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> The art in storefronts “toolkit” published by the San Francisco Arts Commission is available at: <http://www.sartscommission.org/CAE/art-in-storefronts/2010/02/06/toolkit-2/>



#### 4. Built Environment

Certain types of functional art or street infrastructure may be suitable for immediate execution, such as adding mosaics to the fascia of trash/recycling receptacles.

The **Telegraph Public Realm Plan**, a comprehensive design plan developed by Matt Taecker and Alex Bergtraun concurrently and for the same section of the Telegraph District as this Art Plan, includes the creation of public “stations” with enclosures around trash receptacles and tree grates, which are suitable opportunities for public art in the immediate term.



#### 5. Blank Walls

Large blank walls (on private property) are excellent opportunities for temporary light art, projection mapping and public slideshows. An interesting interactive precedent for projection is *L.A.S.E.R. Tag* by Graffiti Research Lab,<sup>8</sup> which allows users to write in light on the side of a building with a laser pointer.



<sup>8</sup> <http://www.graffitiresearchlab.com/blog/projects/laser-tag/>

## **B. Medium/Long Term Strategies**

Projects in this strategic category require some financial investment and planning. These include newly conceived or commissioned projects. While the majority of the projects in this category are not permanent, such as events, performances or temporary sculpture, there are some smaller “built environment” projects that could conceivably fall within this category.

### **1. Temporary**

#### ***i. Events***

Temporary art events, including art fairs, street fairs, open air galleries or other public events.

#### ***ii. Public performances***

Dramatic performances, performance installations, music performances, dance performances and public rehearsals. Local talent and existing performance capacity can be leveraged by collaborating with local theaters, theater groups, UC Berkeley or local schools, bands, dance troupes and other performing arts groups.

#### ***iii. Temporary sculpture installations***

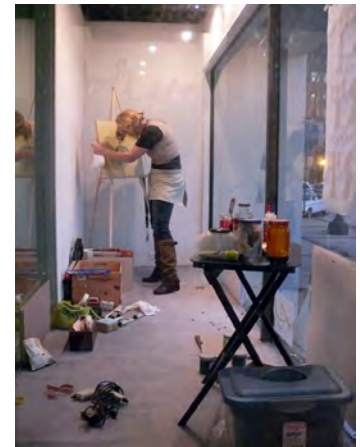
The temporary siting of sculptures is outlined in section VI.A.2 above. Please refer to that section for details on temporary sculpture installations.





## 2. Artist in Residency Programs

As a strategy for connecting local artists, arts groups or art classes at UC Berkeley or other local colleges and schools, an artist residency program will embed an artist in the culture of the Telegraph District for an extended period of time. Sites for a residency program include embedding with a local merchant (such as Moe's Books), residencies in storefronts, imbedded with street vendors or in street vendor stalls, parking spaces, and collaborating with the local homeless population to explore and articulate some of their stories that are rarely given a voice. A good precedent for a collaborative photography project and gallery exhibition with artists who are homeless is the Sixth Street Photography Workshop in San Francisco.<sup>9</sup> By creating substantive creative working relationships between local artists and students, we hope to engender productive and durable connections between local merchants, citizens, students and artists.



An artist in residence could conceivably live in a small studio on Telegraph Avenue. Above: Studio 1 by David Szlasa

Artist in Storefront

---

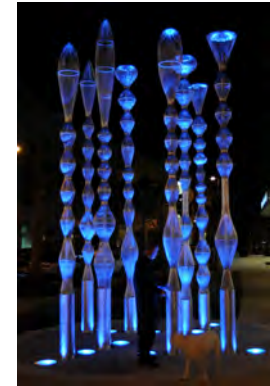
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sixthstreetphoto.net/>

### 3. Built Environment

Functional art that can be executed on a medium to long-term basis, including implements such as benches, planters, bike racks, garbage/recycling, tree grates, and pedestrian lighting.

### 4. Blank Walls

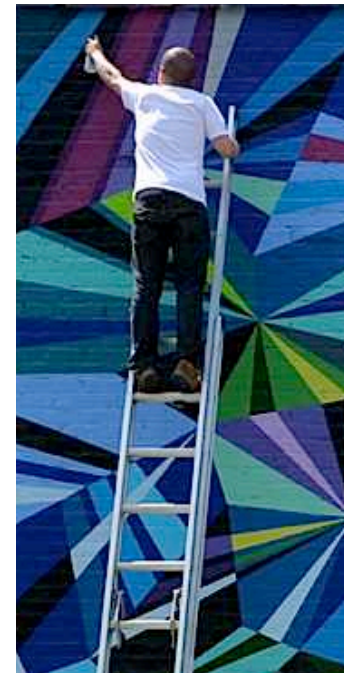
Please see Section VI.A.5 above for discussion of temporary or event-based wall projects. Long-term planning for art on large blank walls may also include permanent murals. Because all the blank walls within the Telegraph District are on private property, funding for murals would need to come from a 1% for the arts project, the Telegraph BID or another private funding source.



Light art by Cliff Garten



Wildflower by Mona Caron



Mural detail by Matt W. Moore

## C. Durable and “Built Environment” Strategies

Projects in this category require significant funding and time for implementation. This category includes permanent, signature sculptural works, smaller series of sculptures or wayfinding systems, as well as functional artworks (e.g., bike racks, benches, pedestrian scale lighting and the like).

### 1. Permanent/Signature Sculpture

#### *i. Monumental Sculpture*

The streetscape of Telegraph Avenue is already well occupied with a significant amount of material things. As such there are only a few sites that are appropriate for a large-scale signature sculpture.

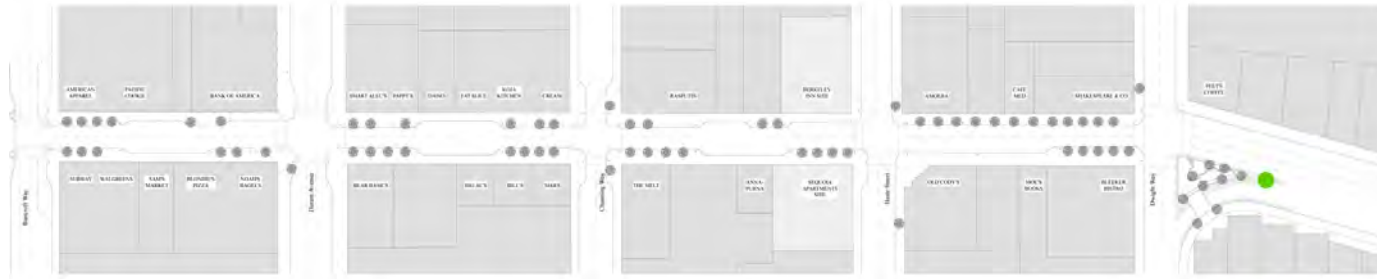
The southernmost tip of the triangle plaza at the intersection of Dwight and Telegraph is the most suitable site for a signature permanent artwork, announcing that the traveler (by car, bus or bike) is now entering the main Telegraph business district. This artwork would need to be tall, visible (but not too distracting) durable and able to withstand impact from a vehicle. It would also be advisable to buffer the artwork with traffic-calming devices in keeping with the traffic code. Approximate budget: \$150,000-\$300,000.

In addition, a site within the accessible plaza is a suitable location for a small-scale pedestal to hold a rotating or temporarily sited artwork.



*Street Life by Rebar*

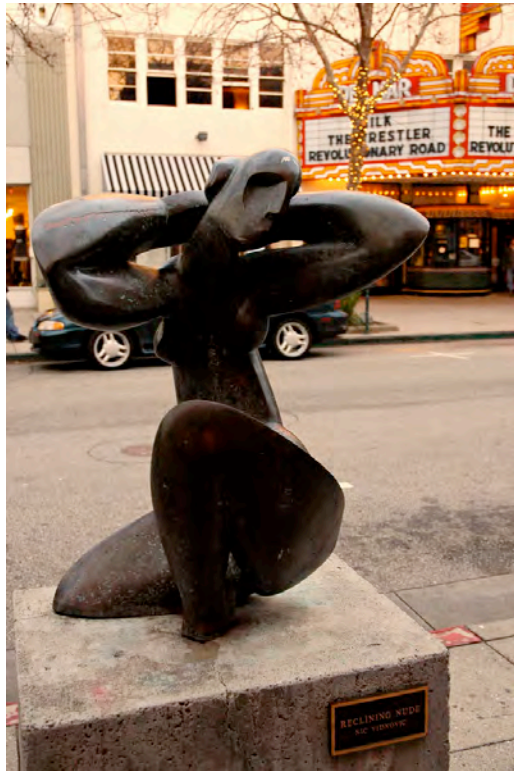




Tip of the triangle plaza – suitable for signature artwork

**ii. Smaller scale distributed sculpture series**

A series of smaller sculptures could be integrated into the streetscape/sidewalks to give Telegraph a visual, material and conceptual coherence. This sculptural series could also include wayfinding, historical information about the Telegraph District, an interactive game, or some combination of these or other additional features.



An example of an (unrelated) sculpture series. (L-R) *Reclining Nude* by Nic Vidnovic, *Pendulum* by Aaron Van De Kerckhove, *Tom Scribner* by Marghe McMahon. All sited along Pacific Avenue in downtown Santa Cruz, CA.



## 2. Functional Art

For long-term built environment strategies, the widest range of functional art objects is available, including benches, planters, bike racks, garbage/recycling, tree grates, wayfinding, posts for public announcements, sidewalk treatments, soap boxes for free speech pontificating.



### 3. Blank Walls

Please see Section VI.A.5 above for discussion of temporary or event-based wall projects. Built environment planning for art on large blank walls includes permanent murals. As noted above, because all the blank walls within the Telegraph District are on private property, funding for murals would need to come from a 1% for the arts project, the Telegraph BID or another private funding source.





## VII. Funding Sources

This Art Plan contemplates the creation of art projects implemented on both public and private land, and therefore artworks that will be both publicly and privately funded. Public funding will come in several forms. One key source is grants from the City, which may not be funds traditionally earmarked for public art. Because this Plan instrumentalizes public art as a force for community revitalization and development, funding may be sought from non-traditional public sources, such as funds earmarked for streetscape improvements, urban livability and other forms of economic development or renewal.

The Civic Arts Commission will administer both public funding for art (from the public 1.5% for the arts program), as well as private developers who, in partnership with the City of Berkeley, fund the new 1% for the arts program that applies to private development within the city core.

Numerous public grants, from private foundations such as the Knight Foundation, and public funding from the NEA's "Our Town" and "Art Works" programs, support "creative placemaking" (or "creative placekeeping") projects, that put artists at the center of imagining and expanding the "vibrancy" of a community or neighborhood.

Additional, non-traditional grants may be sought to explore the concept of "Community Policing through Environmental Design" as articulated in the Berkeley Police Departments Telegraph Avenue CPTED Plan. Exploring the relationship between art, design and community policing is both conceptually rich, and could make available both federal and state grants that provide funding for community safety initiatives.

The University of California will continue to play a crucial role in the support of public art in the City of Berkeley. UC has already played a significant role in the creation of this Art Plan and the concomitant Public Realm Plan. The "Chancellor's Community Partnership Fund" provides financial support for collaborations between the University and the City of Berkeley.



Finally, as a critical partner with regard to public art on private property, the Telegraph Business Improvement District (TBID), as the representative of the local merchants, will be instrumental in developing political and financial support for public art projects on walls, in storefronts, in vacant lots, and on functional objects such as trash cans and other public amenities that would benefit from aesthetic improvements.

## **VIII. Partnerships**

Given the diverse range of funding opportunities available to the City, the TBID, private developers and artists/arts organizations, this Plan promotes the creation of dynamic, innovative public-private partnerships that have the potential to maximize the aesthetic and conceptual quality of the Telegraph District, while creating opportunities for the efficient use of available resources, both cultural and financial.

In particular, the City should seek out collaborative funding opportunities with the TBID and the University of California, both of which are powerful allies in the effort to improve the quality of the urban realm within the Telegraph District.

## **IX. Conclusion**

The Telegraph District is a unique and historical district, distinct from the other commercial centers around Berkeley. More than any other corridor in the city, Telegraph is a storied and famous district in the American and global consciousness, yet it continues to be hampered by difficult social and economic issues that lie outside the purview of this Public Art Plan. Nevertheless, the Findings and Strategies in this Plan seek to improve the quality of the physical infrastructure of Telegraph by focusing on its social infrastructure as well. Artistic improvements to the physical and social aspects of Telegraph will, taken together, improve the social and cultural ecology of this important civic corridor, thereby creating a richer, more inclusive, more successful and more artistic Telegraph District for the next generation and beyond.

## X. About the Author

### **Matthew Passmore**

Matthew Passmore is an artist, curator, teacher and public space advocate. He is widely recognized as a global authority on participatory urbanism, creative placemaking and the role of art in improving the character and quality of public space. Best known as the original founder of the **Rebar Art & Design Studio**, Matthew has generated the creative concepts for many popular Rebar projects, including *PARK(ing) Day*, an annual worldwide art event he has led since its inception in 2006. *PARK(ing) Day* inspired the San Francisco Department of City Planning (SFDCP) to create the world's first "parklet" program in 2010, and in 2011 Matthew was instrumental in drafting the official Parklet Manual with the SFDCP. In 2014, Matthew formed **Morelab**, a new creative endeavor focused specifically on public art projects, museum exhibitions and innovative public spaces. He regularly speaks nationally and internationally on topics related to contemporary art and design, and has taught a variety of courses at the San Francisco Art Institute and the California College of the Arts (CCA).

### **Morelab, LLC**

Based in Oakland, California, Morelab creates innovative artworks, installations and experiences that examine our understanding of the social, political and ecological dynamics of public space. Morelab works with cultural institutions, government agencies and private entities to enhance the quality, character and understanding of the public realm.