

ART WIRE

Oakland City Council Moves Forward With Uptown Arts District Resolution



Fantastic Negrito performing at First Fridays Oakland

A resolution to establish an Uptown Arts District in Oakland goes before the city's Life Enrichment Committee meeting next month after a year-long campaign by local community members.

The proposed resolution, which was first drafted by the [Uptown Arts Community](#) last October, would designate the area bounded by Broadway, Telegraph, Grand avenues and 27th Street as the Uptown Arts District, making it the second cultural district in the city, after the Black Arts Movement Business District downtown.

“It’s been a long hard year of volunteer work, and we’re down to the final resolution,” said Lonnie Lee, owner of uptown Oakland’s [Vessel Gallery](#) and one of the main advocates of the resolution. “This is a tremendous amount of heart and soul and attention to keep Oakland and its artistic community alive.”

The resolution seeks to not only designate a name to the specific area (which was first recognized in a survey by the [California Arts Council](#)), but also include the district into the city’s [Downtown Specific Area Plan](#) and ensure that new development in the area would not only respect the area's specific light industrial-commercial zoning, but also engage with all community members about new developments in the area.

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“With all this development on the horizon, we wanted to make sure there’s placemaking for art to continue,” Lee said.

The Uptown Arts Community hopes to push [suggested measures and policies](#) to the forefront during discussion of the resolution, such as reinstating Oakland's arts commission -- a proposal which has already been brought to the desk of Roberto Bedoya, Oakland's [newly-appointed Cultural Affairs Manager](#).

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McElhaney believes the creation of the Uptown Arts District can be a first step to inviting municipal and state funding to the area, and as a means to inspire similar movements in other neighborhoods.

"I hope it inspires other communities to organize, that our efforts in District 3 establishes a blueprint for protecting art spaces that includes safety and economic development and view art not as esoteric but as core to our culture," McElhaney said.

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