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Bringing the Black Arts Movement and Business District (BAMBD) to Life

The History of the BAMBD

The Oakland City Council formally created the Black Arts Movement and Business District (BAMBD) by resolution in 2016 after a campaign by elders in the African American community to publicly recognize the importance of Black artists and entrepreneurs in creating the cultural identity of Oakland's 14th St corridor. The District stretches from Lake Merritt to frontage row with 14th street as its spine and is anchored by a number of iconic cultural centers, including but not limited to: the African American Museum and Library of Oakland, the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, the Oak Center Cultural Center, the Oakland Museum of California, the Joyce Gordon Gallery, Geoffrey's Inner Circle Club, Uncle Willie's BBQ, and many more.

In addition to championing the history of Black excellence in arts and culture in Oakland, Oakland's first official cultural district is charged with creative placemaking around the arts and fostering the next generation of culture makers.

Current Efforts

During the BAMBD's infancy the Office of Councilmember McElhaney, who sponsored the enabling legislation, is organizing efforts to:

1. Become one of the first state designated cultural districts through the CA Arts Council.
2. Launch a fundraising campaign to restore and improve the Malonga Center.
3. Form a non-profit organization to run the BAMDB and apply for resources for a strategic plan to bring more resources and employment opportunities to the district.

Next Steps and Getting Involved

The BAMBD's next deadline is March 29th to submit an application to the CA Arts Council to be designated as a State cultural district. For more information on how to support that initiative or to be part of creating the BAMBD, please contact Alex Marqusee at amarqusee@oaklandnet.com.

