

Applicant (GMS): East Bay Center for the Performing Arts

Project: Iron Triangle Interactive Art/Downtown Rejuvenation Project

East Bay Center for the Performing Arts – Attachment 2 – Project Narrative

A. Budget: Located in Richmond, California (San Francisco Bay Area), East Bay Center for the Performing Arts requests \$150,000 for the *Iron Triangle Interactive Art/Downtown Rejuvenation Project*. The \$300,000 budget covers all stages of the project, from community engagement and design through installation and public celebration. The City of Richmond has committed to supplying or raising the remaining \$150,000.

B. Project Activities: The proposed *Iron Triangle Interactive Art/Downtown Rejuvenation Project* is an exciting on-the-street interactive digital art experience designed to strengthen the Richmond community through an increase in economic development, community engagement and civic pride. The lead agency, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, is a 43-year-old nationally recognized community arts and development organization focused on place-based action and collaboration. We enable 2,000 young people each year to discover their creative gifts through a rigorous artistic curriculum that is culturally relevant, supports the creation of original performance works, and fosters engagement with social justice and civic participation.

The City of Richmond, particularly the Iron Triangle neighborhood, has suffered from harsh poverty, violence and class/race divisions since its heyday during WWII. While considered one of the most dangerous cities in the country, it is also a city on the cusp of rebirth. In the Iron Triangle, which includes the once vibrant historic downtown, hope and change are tangibly evident for the first time in decades as several multi-year, multi-million dollar initiatives (several led by our agency) come to fruition. These include an extensive neighborhood storytelling project, a California Endowment health/safety resident organizing initiative, and the City's \$43 million investment in downtown's 10-block long main street (Macdonald Avenue) and surrounding area. Such investments include extensive streetscape improvements, a new park, multi-modal transit facility, parking garage and pedestrian *paseo* offering a lovely 10-minute walk from the transit facility to downtown. Topping it off is the public private partnership that has resulted in the \$16 million transformation of East Bay Center's historic

building, located in the heart of downtown, into a state-of-the-art performance/training facility. Slated to re-open this October, our newly renovated building will be a key anchor for downtown's renaissance. One of the key challenges facing downtown Richmond is the circuitous link between the lack of street activation and safety issues, both real and imagined. This challenges our agency as well as local businesses as we reposition ourselves as a regional resource for events and performances. To break this cycle, the *Iron Triangle Interactive Art/Downtown Rejuvenation Project* will activate the high profile plaza surrounding our building and provide an experience of joyful social interaction, community pride and multicultural celebration. The work will be a collaboration between the local community, East Bay Center and internationally acclaimed digital artist Scott Snibbe, whose installations have been experienced by 20 million people at sites including Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, San Francisco's Exploratorium, the London Science Museum, Cite de Science in Paris and the Los Angeles International Airport.

The proposed artwork involves the installation of two 8' x 10' interactive walls of LCD screens in the corner storefront windows of our renovated building. This corner (Macdonald and 11th) is one of downtown's most visible intersections. People on the street, both day and night, will be drawn to the lit screens showing lively whole-body silhouette images of youth engaged in play and dance motions from around the world. As viewers approach, depth-sensing cameras will incorporate their motions into the screens. When they realize they are seeing their *own* motions, they will move and play and mimic the moving silhouettes, creating a constantly changing art/street experience. As with other Snibbe installations, visitors will return again and again to see what new experiences they can create. Reflecting the high artistic standards of the East Bay Center, the embedded silhouette images will provide a sophisticated and artful performance piece. The images will be drawn from the professionally choreographed and video-recorded motions of Richmond youth selected for this project. Shaped by community workshops, the choreography will draw inspiration from the everyday play of children worldwide (clapping, jump rope, stick-in-a-hoop, Ampe (a Ghanaian jumping game), soccer, skateboard jumps, etc.) as well as the multicultural dance, rhythm and performance taught and performed at the East Bay Center (Mexican Zapateado (a percussive footwork dance), Mien ceremonial and Laotian traditional dances, West African Adzohu (a highly physical acrobatic dance), hip hop, urban ballet, etc.). The project will conclude with a high profile public celebration that attracts regional attention. This hi-tech/hi-touch project will address NEA's *Livability: Strengthening Communities through the Arts* objective through the direct activation of Richmond's main street and increased profile for the East Bay Center. As nothing like it exists in the San Francisco Bay Area, its "wow factor" will catch the

attention of the media, dramatically challenge public perception of Richmond and draw people into the area, thus increasing safety and economic vitality. It will also introduce new audiences, donors, volunteers and youth to East Bay Center's programs and performances and generate interest in Richmond and the East Bay Center long after the grant period ends. A reproducible model, the *Iron Triangle Interactive Art/Downtown Rejuvenation Project* will show how a bold outdoor art experience can leverage community momentum and serve as a critical tipping point for developing neighborhoods.

C. Outcomes/Measurements: The project will track several Livability/Engagement objectives through pre-and post- assessments: (1) increase in foot traffic within several blocks of the artwork, to be measured through surveys employing local young people and conducted by the City's Redevelopment Agency and the Richmond Main Street Initiative, (2) increase in downtown visits by the 3,000 employees of Social Security and Kaiser (two of the largest employers in Richmond, both housed downtown, but whose employees rarely venture onto Macdonald Avenue) to be measured through surveys by 7Story, (3) increase in business generated within several blocks of the artwork to be tabulated by Richmond Main Street Initiative, (4) resident response to be assessed through focus groups by LISC, and (5) increase in visits to the East Bay Center website.

D. Schedule: The project will follow this schedule: workshops and conversations with artist, partners and community (July/August 2011), complete design (September), community charette as part of East Bay Center's grand re-opening festivities (October), creative concept/storyboard (October/November), casting of youth performers (November/December), rehearsal with youth (January/February 2012), video shoot (March), in-studio production and prototype (April), installation (May), and public celebration (May/June). Pre-installation assessments will occur August/September 2011; postinstallation assessments will occur June 2012. Outreach and communications will occur throughout.

E. Partners/Roles: East Bay Center for the Performing Arts will serve as project lead managing all activities of the grant, interacting with the City, integrating partners, directing the choreography/performance of youth and ensuring artistic excellence. We will also ensure long-term stewardship of the artwork. The following organizations, most of whom we have collaborated with for years if not decades, have enthusiastically committed their support. City of Richmond: Will secure \$150,000 match, integrate project with downtown revitalization efforts, assist with evaluation. Scott Snibbe: Internationally-acclaimed interactive artist, provided consultation to proposal, will design, build and

implement artwork in collaboration with East Bay Center and will assist with outreach and media. Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization. A multi-ethnic, multi-generational community organizing organization, will help leverage ongoing resident engagement. LISC: A national non-profit that helps residents transform neighborhoods, will leverage ongoing resident organizing and provide resident evaluation. Richmond Main Street Initiative: Partners with the City, merchants and residents to develop downtown, will support resident/business engagement and evaluation. Iron Triangle Neighborhood Council: A resident group representing neighborhood issues to the City, will support resident engagement. 7Story: A placemaking consulting firm that helped develop project concept, will coordinate artwork development and installation and handle marketing/communications. KQED: NPR affiliate/media sponsor, will create documentary-style pieces and publicize project regionally. All partners will contribute to outreach/communications as appropriate to the project.

F. Target Community: This project has four target communities. The first is the residents of the Iron Triangle, who suffer high rates of poverty, violence and unemployment. We expect to engage 200 residents (youth and adults) in project development activities and hundreds more in the project's celebration. Our second target is the 3,000 employees of Social Security and Kaiser, who stay on their office campuses and do not spend time on Macdonald Avenue. Our third target is the residents of Richmond who live/work outside of the Iron Triangle and also shy away from this area. Our fourth target is the residents of the larger San Francisco Bay Area, especially artists, staff and supporters of the arts across the East Bay region, most of whom have little experience with Richmond. With the latter three audiences, our goal is to entice them to experience the artwork, spend time/money downtown and engage with the East Bay Center. Overall, we expect over 3,000 individuals to interact with the project during the grant year and thousands more during the life of the artwork.

G. National Environmental Policy Act and/or National Historic Preservation Act: While considered a "historic resource" under the California Environmental Quality Act, two separate reviews have concluded that our 1923 building meets the Secretary's *Standards for Rehabilitation*. As both reviews included designs with some form of dynamic displays in the new storefronts, the City of Richmond's Planning Department has concluded that the proposed artwork does not modify any aspect of the approved project and requires no further review. (See Attachment 10: Special Items.)

H. Promoting, Publicizing and/or Disseminating Project: In addition to providing continually updated information on our own website and soon-to-be launched Facebook page, we will engage our

four target audiences through the following activities. (1) Iron Triangle residents will be informed/engaged via community meetings, flyers, neighborhood media and on-the-street engagement. (2) Employees of Social Security and Kaiser will be engaged through a targeted campaign that builds interest in the project and culminates in a promotion linking a visit to the artwork with lunch discounts at nearby restaurants. (3) Richmond residents outside of the Iron Triangle will be informed/engaged through local media and distribution of flyers by community-based organizations. (4) San Francisco Bay Area audiences, specifically artists, staff and supporters of the arts across the East Bay region, will be reached through two main strategies (with a focus on the celebratory event). We will partner with peer arts organizations to engage their constituents through co-produced e-newsletters, blogs and social media. We will also obtain local/regional media coverage from KQED and other outlets. All partners have agreed to help with communications. The NEA will be acknowledged in all communications.

I. Documenting, Evaluating, Disseminating Project Results: Project outcomes will be documented in written reports by the evaluating parties. We are happy to share data as requested.

J. Evidence of Impacts Achieved: Momentum for the *Iron Triangle Interactive Art/Downtown Rejuvenation Project* is already outstanding. Over 2,000 traditionally disenfranchised community members have been involved with recent community organizing efforts; over \$43 million has been invested in the downtown area; and we will be opening the doors of our newly renovated state-of-the-art facility this October. This project will serve as the culmination of these initiatives, ushering in a new era of civic pride and economic vitality for the Iron Triangle and Richmond as a whole.