



Igor Tregub
Councilmember District 4

CONSENT CALENDAR

June 30, 2026

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Igor Tregub (Author), Mayor Adena Ishii (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Zero Empty Spaces in Downtown Berkeley: Relinquishment of Council Office Budget Funds to General Fund and Grant of Such Funds

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution approving the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$2500 per Councilmember including \$300 from Councilmember Tregub and \$2500 from Mayor Ishii to the Downtown Berkeley Association, the facilitator for the Zero Empty Spaces activation, with funds relinquished to the City's general fund for the purpose of supporting the temporary affordable working artist studio activation in Downtown Berkeley in the former Half Price Books location (on Shattuck Avenue & Addison Street), from the discretionary Council Office Budgets of Mayor Ishii & Councilmember Tregub and any other Councilmembers who would like to contribute.

BACKGROUND

Zero Empty Spaces is an organization that specializes in transforming vacant commercial real estate (including street-level/in-mall storefronts, and office spaces) into temporary, short-term working artist studios that serve as vibrant hubs for creativity and community engagement. Their model provides affordable studio space for artists to create, collaborate, and sell their work, while also offering property owners a dynamic daily activation in otherwise unused spaces until a permanent tenant is secured.

By occupying these spaces on a temporary basis, Zero Empty Spaces addresses the challenges of urban blight and retail and vacancies. This approach not only revitalizes neighborhoods but also expands the appreciation of visual art and supports the growth of thriving cultural communities in cities worldwide. Zero Empty Spaces has successfully activated 34 formerly vacant spaces across 5 states, with over 900 artists participating in the program in many cities including Boston, Chicago, and multiple locations in Florida.

The Downtown Berkeley Association, in partnership with Visit Berkeley, will facilitate the Zero Empty Spaces activation. This will be Zero Empty Spaces' first deployment in California, where interest is growing from other downtown & commercial districts across the state.

The total rollout expense is currently estimated at approximately \$35,000. Visit Berkeley is contributing \$10,000 towards the rollout expense, plus another \$5,000 contingent on additional funding from the City, grants, and private sector. The Downtown Berkeley Association is expected to contribute an additional \$2500. Gordon Commercial is providing the former Half Price Books space, rent-free, for a minimum initial six-month period beginning in August 2026. Visit Berkeley is also providing the \$7500 rental deposit and covering the cost of removing the current plywood facade at the former Half Price Books location.

Historically, Zero Empty Spaces, the City in which it is activating in, and/or the business district have covered the entire rollout expense. However, because of key strategic location and interest in Berkeley, Zero Empty Spaces is willing to incur the majority of the rollout expense.

Studio pricing will be finalized based on the final layout and studio sizes. Studios are expected to start at approximately \$400 per month, providing a comparatively affordable and highly visible working studio opportunity for local artists in a prominent Downtown Berkeley location.

After six months, the Zero Empty Spaces lease with Gordon Commercial will become a month-to-month lease. The goal of this activation is to make the property attractive for long-time tenants.

This item will contribute to the execution of the activation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No General Fund impact; \$300 is available from Councilmember Tregub's budget discretionary account and \$2500 is available from Mayor Ishii's budget discretionary account.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no environmental impacts associated with the recommendations in this report.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments: Resolution for Council Expenditures

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE OF DISCRETIONARY FUNDS FROM THE OFFICE EXPENSE ACCOUNTS OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS FOR FUNDING TOWARDS THE DOWNTOWN BERKELEY ASSOCIATION'S ZERO EMPTY SPACES ACTIVATION

WHEREAS, Councilmember Igor Tregub and Mayor Adena Ishii have funds in their office discretionary accounts; and

WHEREAS, a California non-profit organization, the Downtown Berkeley Association, seeks funds from the City of Berkeley not to exceed \$2500 per Councilmember, including the amount of \$300 from Councilmember Igor Tregub and \$2500 from Mayor Adena Ishii, to support the execution of the Zero Empty Spaces activation to revitalize the former Half Price Books location, that is currently vacant, with temporary working artist studios; and

WHEREAS, Zero Empty Spaces is an organization that specializes in transforming vacant commercial real estate (including street-level/in-mall storefronts, and office spaces) into temporary, short-term working artist studios that serve as vibrant hubs for creativity and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, This approach not only revitalizes neighborhoods but also expands the appreciation of visual art and supports the growth of thriving cultural communities in cities worldwide; and

WHEREAS, Zero Empty Spaces has successfully activated 34 formerly vacant spaces across 5 states, with over 900 artists participating in the program in many cities including Boston, Chicago, and multiple locations in Florida; and

WHEREAS, The Downtown Berkeley Association, in partnership with Visit Berkeley, will facilitate the Zero Empty Spaces activation.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that funds relinquished by the Mayor and Councilmembers from their Council Office Budget up to \$2500 per office shall be granted to the Downtown Berkeley Association to support the execution of the Zero Empty Spaces activation for following services to provide short-term, affordable studio space for artists to create, collaborate, and sell their work, while also offering a dynamic daily activation in otherwise an unused space until a permanent tenant is secured in the former Half Price Books location on Shattuck Avenue & Addison Street.

