

The background features a stylized, textured map of a city area in shades of blue and green, overlaid on a dark, atmospheric scene of a staircase leading upwards. The map shows various streets and landmarks, with some text like 'UNIVERSITY' and 'SUSAN' visible. The staircase is on the right side, with a silhouette of a person at the top. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

CITY OF BERKELEY

CREATIVE ECONOMY ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | DECEMBER 2025



1 Defining the Creative Economy

2 Berkeley's Creative Economy: Economic Landscape

- Businesses
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DEFINING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY



The creative economy refers to the industries whose primary purpose is to produce or enable cultural expression, artistic content, design, and other creative goods and services.



Visual & Performing Arts

Dance and theater companies, art dealers, museums, and activities involving independent artists, writers, and performers.



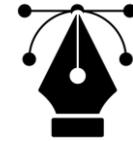
Architecture & Design

Architectural, drafting, interior design, industrial design, and landscape design services.



Entertainment & Digital Media

Motion picture and video production, post-production services, sound recording studios, radio broadcasting, and digital streaming platforms.



Communication Design

Graphic design, advertising agencies, photography studios, and commercial photography services.



Printing & Publishing

Commercial printing and publishing of periodicals, newspapers, books, directories, and mailing lists.



Creative Goods & Decorative Arts

Ceramics, household furniture, rugs, decorative objects, toys, and games.



Post-Secondary Arts Education

Instruction in dance, drama, music, and visual arts (excluding institutions that grant diplomas or degrees).



Fashion

Textile and apparel manufacturing, jewelry and silverware production, and related fashion goods and services.



**BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY:
ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE**

BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

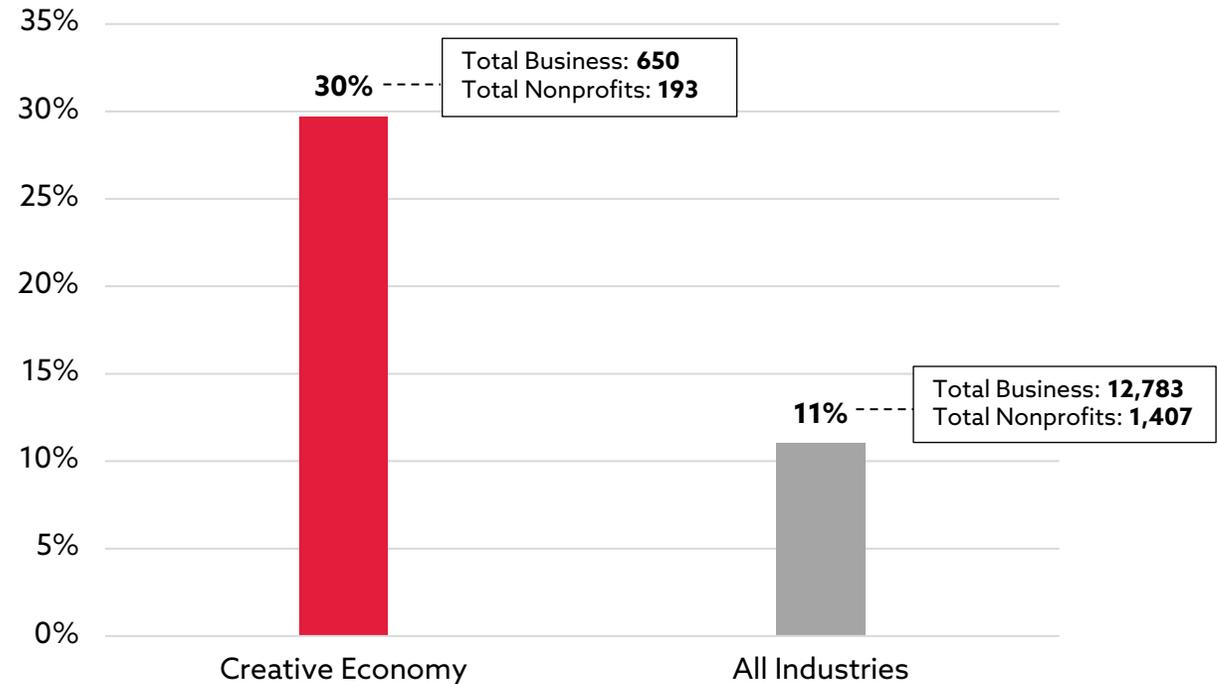
CREATIVE ECONOMY BUSINESSES



As of 2025, there are approximately 650 creative economy businesses in Berkeley (out of 12,800 total businesses), about 30% of which are nonprofit organizations.

There are 193 creative economy nonprofit organizations in the City of Berkeley. This share is notably high compared to the share of nonprofits across all industries (11%) in the city.

SHARE OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY VS. ALL INDUSTRIES | 2025



Source: City of Berkeley Active Business License Data, Internal Revenue Service, CVL Economics.

BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

CREATIVE ECONOMY EMPLOYMENT

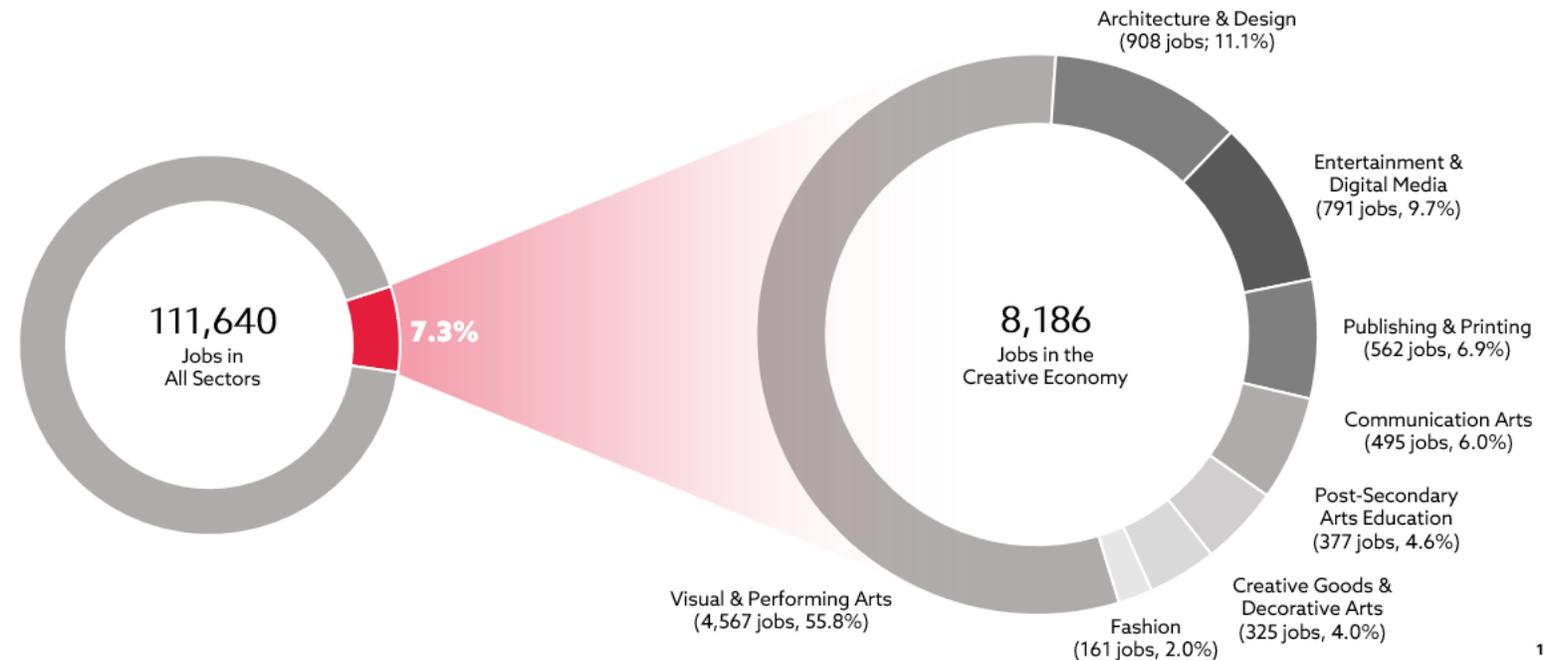


In 2024, Berkeley's creative economy directly employed 8,186 workers, accounting for 7.3% of its total workforce of 111,640 jobs.

Visual & Performing Arts dominates Berkeley's creative economy with 4,567 jobs (55.8%). Other key subsectors are Architecture & Design (908; 11.1%), Entertainment & Digital Media (791; 9.7%), and Publishing & Printing (562; 6.9%).

Job count includes salaried (full- and part-time), self-employed, and gig workers. Within this, Berkeley's salaried workforce accounted for 2,574 jobs in the creative economy and 68,126 across the overall economy in 2024.

COMPOSITION OF CREATIVE ECONOMY WORKFORCE IN BERKELEY | 2024



Note: Includes salaried, self-employed, and gig jobs in the creative economy and across all sectors. Employment counts reflect the number of unique jobs and not individuals. In that sense, one individual can hold multiple jobs and therefore be counted more than once.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

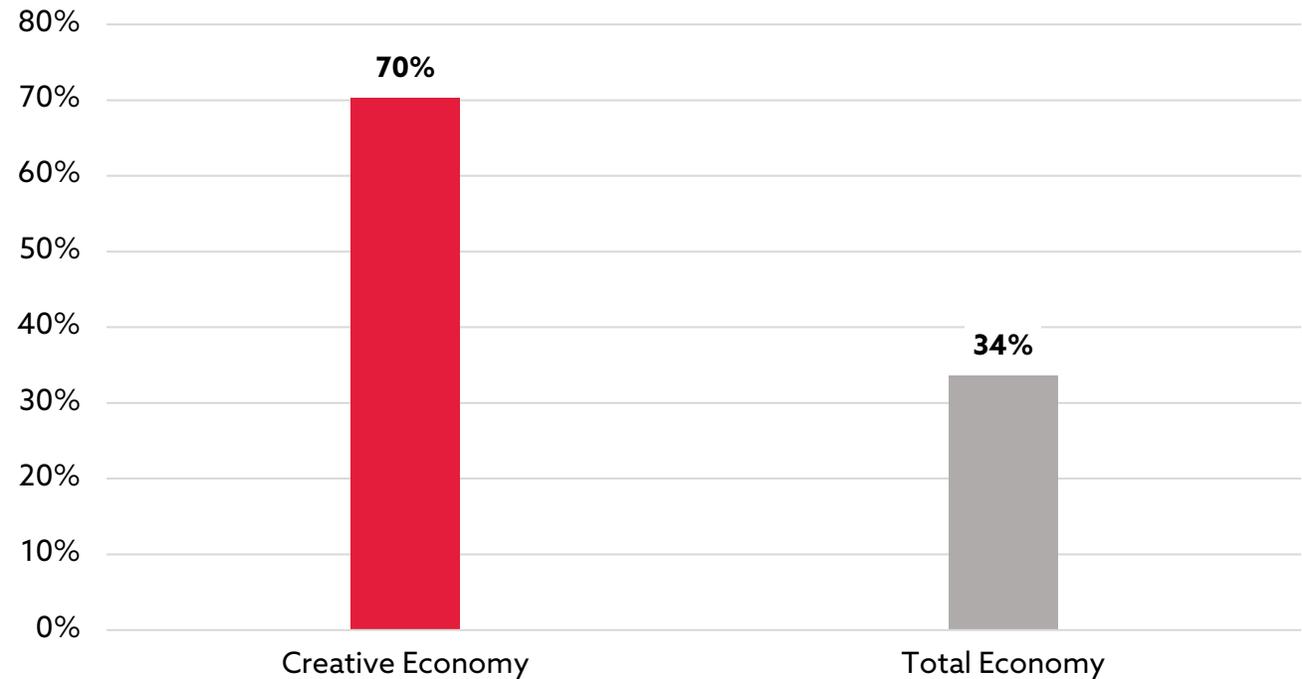
FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT



Nearly 70% of Berkeley's 8,186 creative economy workforce is self-employed or gig-based, underscoring the sector's reliance on non-traditional work arrangements.

While project-based work fosters innovation and independence, it also often comes with irregular income and limited protections. This pattern is most pronounced in the Visual & Performing Arts subsector, where 84% of jobs are self-employed or gig-based, while fields like Architecture & Design and Entertainment & Digital Media lean more on salaried roles with more dependable hours and predictable schedules.

SHARE OF SELF-EMPLOYED AND GIG EMPLOYMENT FOR CREATIVE ECONOMY AND ALL INDUSTRIES IN BERKELEY | 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

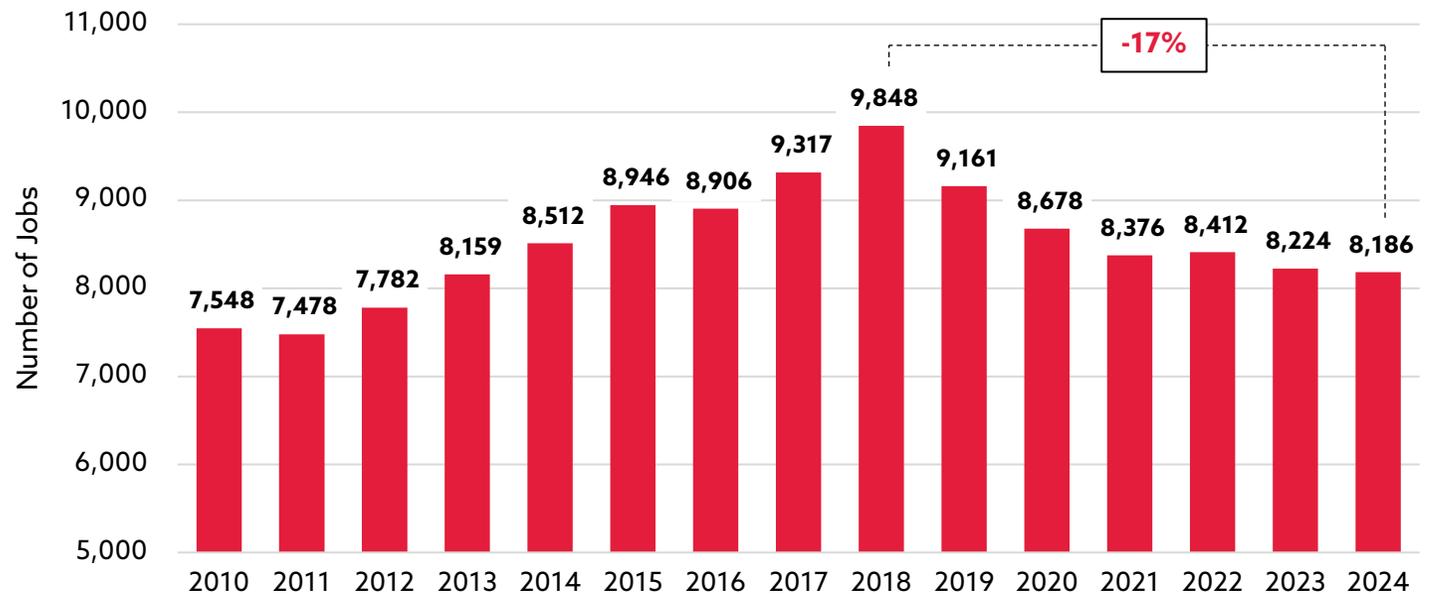
HISTORICAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH



Berkeley creative economy employment surged in the years before the pandemic, but current levels remain 17% below the 2018 peak.

After peaking with 9,850 creative economy jobs in 2018, Berkeley's 2024 total of 8,186 jobs has fallen back to roughly its 2013 level (8,160).

HISTORICAL CREATIVE ECONOMY EMPLOYMENT IN BERKELEY | 2010-2024



Note: Includes salaried, self-employed, and gig jobs in the creative economy and across all sectors. Employment counts reflect the number of unique jobs and not individuals. In that sense, one individual can hold multiple jobs and therefore be counted more than once.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

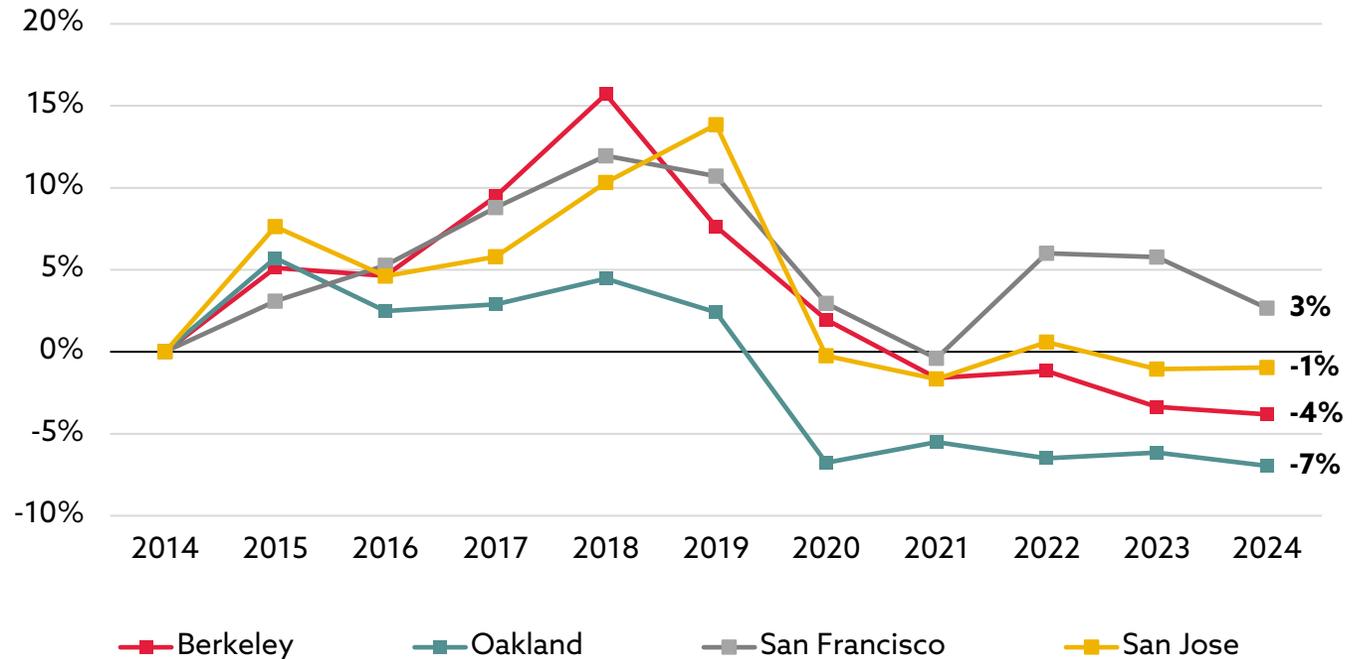
REGIONAL COMPARISONS



Before the pandemic, Berkeley's creative economy's upward trajectory outpaced growth in neighboring cities. However, since 2020, Berkeley's creative economy employment has declined year after year, while other neighboring cities have regained some ground.

Between 2014 and 2018, Berkeley creative employment grew 16%, outpacing industry growth in San Francisco (12%), San Jose (10%), and Oakland (4%). While all Bay Area creative economies contracted with the onset of the pandemic, Berkeley's downturn has proven far more persistent, sitting 4% below 2014 levels in 2024. San Francisco and San Jose have since regained some of their losses; San Francisco's creative economy employment sits 3% above 2014 levels.

COMPARATIVE CREATIVE ECONOMY REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATE | 2014-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

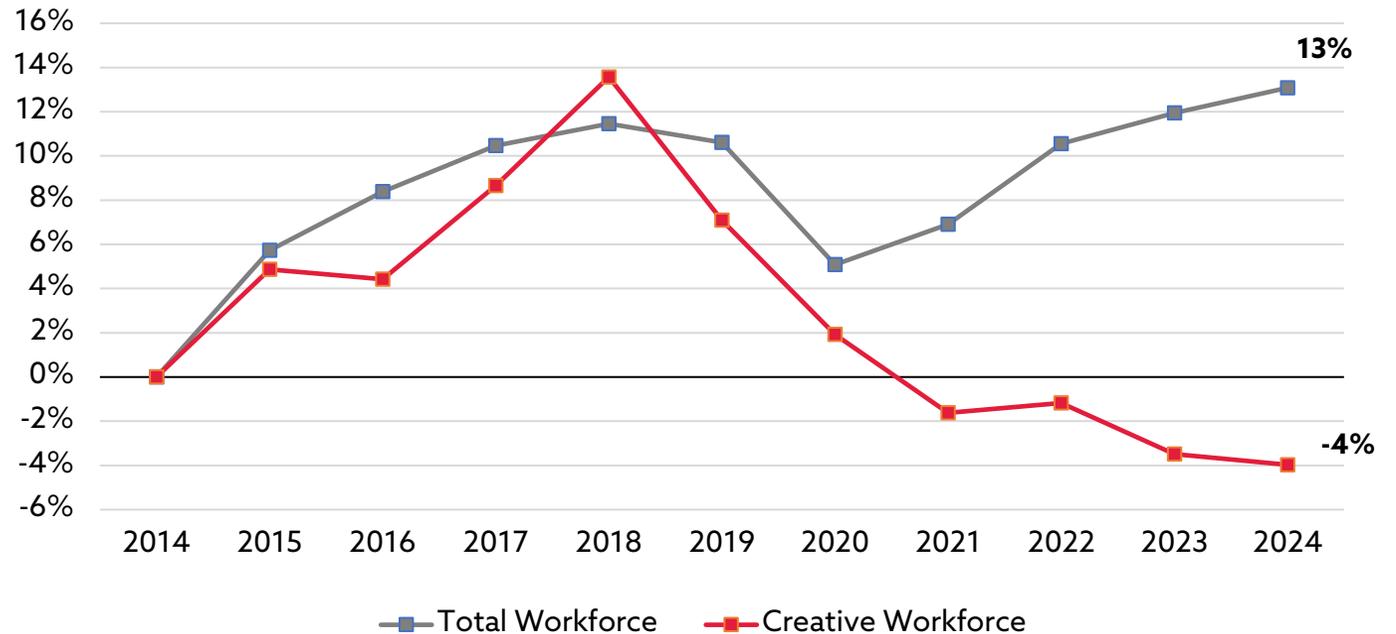
ECONOMYWIDE COMPARISON



Berkeley's creative economy decline also sits in contrast to the city's overall economy, which, on average, has mostly recovered from the pandemic.

The city's overall economy sits about 3% above its 2019 employment level and **13%** above the 2014 level. By contrast, the city's creative economy remains 13% below its pre-pandemic baseline and **4%** below its 2014 level.

CREATIVE ECONOMY EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATE VS. GROWTH RATE FOR ALL SECTORS IN BERKELEY | 2014-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast, CVL Economics.

THE VULNERABILITY OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

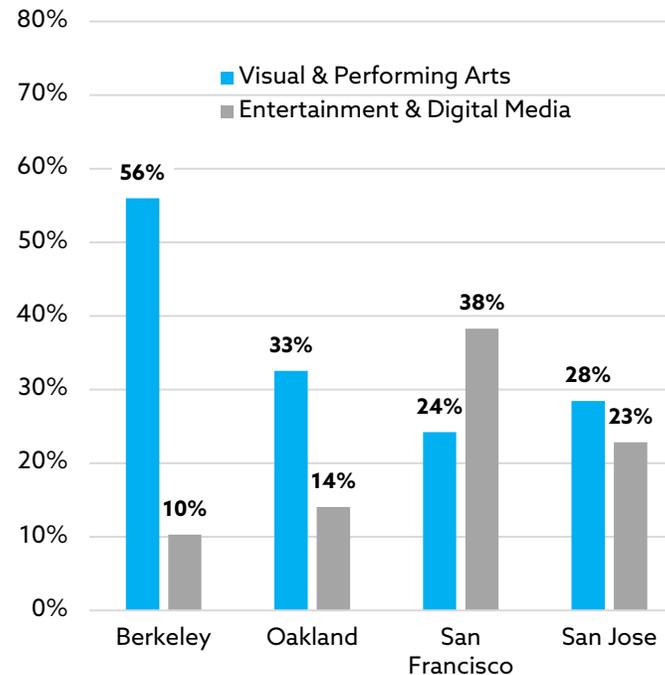


This divergence stems from Berkeley's high concentration of Visual & Performing Arts jobs, a sector reliant on in-person activity, gig work, and nonprofits—making it especially vulnerable to disruption.

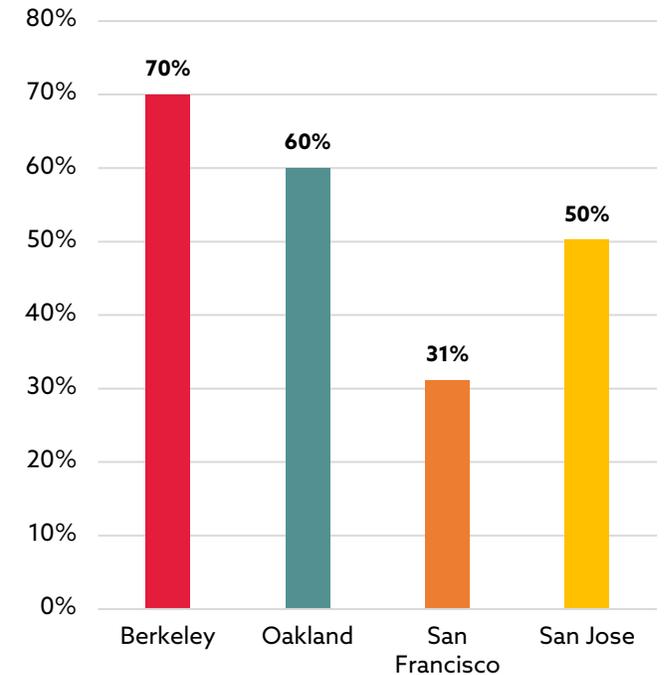
Berkeley's creative sector is dominated by Visual & Performing Arts (56%), reflecting a reliance on live, in-person activity, gig work, and nonprofit structures. San Francisco, by contrast, leans toward Entertainment & Digital Media (38%), driven by streaming, software publishing, and broadcasting.

In Berkeley, an estimated 70% of the creative workforce is self-employed or gig-based—largely within Visual & Performing Arts, which alone accounts for 3,850 workers. By comparison, only 31% of San Francisco's creative workforce falls into these categories. Oakland (60%) and San Jose (50%) also have high shares of self-employed and gig workers, though not as high as Berkeley.

REGIONAL CREATIVE ECONOMY COMPOSITION: VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS VS. ENTERTAINMENT & DIGITAL MEDIA | 2024



REGIONAL SHARE OF CREATIVE ECONOMY SELF-EMPLOYED AND GIG-BASED WORKFORCE BY CITY | 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast, CVL Economics.



BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

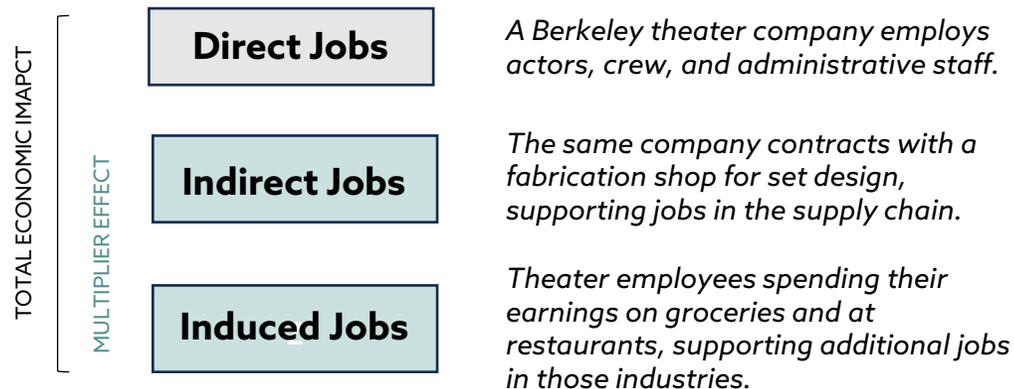
BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC IMPACT
A SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC DRIVER



Despite the sector's slower recovery compared to the broader economy, Berkeley's creative sectors remain an essential part of the city's economy.

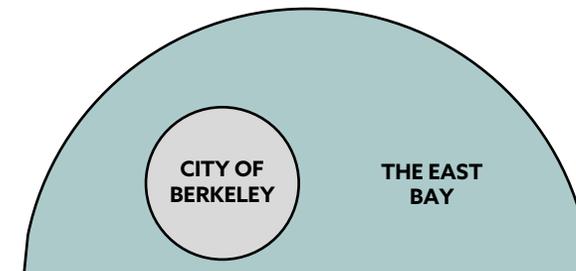
Even in a weakened state, Berkeley's creative economy remains a critical driver of the City's economic activity. Its impact ripples throughout the economy as organizations purchase goods and services and workers spend their earnings locally, sustaining activity across many industries. Some of this spending "leaks" beyond city borders to suppliers and markets in other parts of the East Bay (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties), where the total impact grows even larger. Together, these ripple (or multiplier) and leakage effects underscore the creative sector's role as both a local driver and a regional economic force.

MULTIPLIER EFFECT



REGIONAL SPILLOVERS

A Berkeley theater company contracts with a fabrication shop in Oakland, supporting additional jobs and income beyond the city's borders.



ECONOMIC IMPACT: BASELINE BERKELEY IMPACT



Citywide, in 2024, Berkeley's creative economy generated a total impact of:

8,437 Jobs **\$537.5M** Labor Income

\$1.0B

Value Added GRP Contribution

In other words, each creative job in Berkeley generated about \$66,000 in labor income, and \$125,000 in value added (contributions to Berkeley gross regional product) citywide.

CITYWIDE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY | 2024

	EMPLOYMENT	LABOR INCOME	VALUE ADDED
Direct Effect	8,186	\$519.6M	\$979.7M
Indirect Effect	213	\$15.3M	\$22.6M
Induced Effect	38	\$2.5M	\$19.2M
Total Economic Impact	8,437	\$537.5M	\$1,021.4M
Share of Berkeley Total	7.6%	5.7%	7.9%

Note: Totals may not be exact due to rounding. Includes salaried, self-employed and gig jobs. Includes impacts associated with private and non-profit entities in Berkeley's creative economy.

Source: IMPLAN, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, CVL Economics.

ECONOMIC IMPACT: REGIONAL SPILLOVER



An additional 5,605 jobs and \$624 million in value added were supported by Berkeley's creative economy in other parts of the East Bay, beyond city limits.

This represents the spillover effect of Berkeley's creative economy—spending that originates in Berkeley but flows outward to suppliers, contractors, and consumer markets elsewhere in the region.

SPILLOVER ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY INTO OTHER PARTS OF THE EAST BAY | 2024

	EMPLOYMENT	LABOR INCOME	VALUE ADDED
Direct Effect	-	-	-
Indirect Effect	3,784	\$307.9 Million	\$426.4 Million
Induced Effect	1,821	\$138.6 Million	\$254.7 Million
Total Economic Impact	5,605	\$420.8 Million	\$624.0 Million

Note: There are no direct effects in other parts of the East Bay, as this analysis measures only creative economy activity originating within the City of Berkeley. Direct effects occur only within the City of Berkeley. Totals may not be exact due to rounding. Includes impacts associated with private and non-profit entities in Berkeley's creative economy. Please see Appendix for definitions of the economic indicators.

Source: IMPLAN, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, CVL Economics.

THE CITY OF BERKELEY'S RETURN ON INVESTMENT



Every \$1 of Civic Arts Grant funding catalyzed \$197 in total economic activity across the City of Berkeley.

In FY2024, the City of Berkeley awarded 97 grants totaling \$698,782 to arts and culture organizations, festivals, and individuals. This support underpinned the operations of 66 unique organizations and festivals (collectively generating over \$130 million in operating revenue in 2024), as well as 11 artists through arts works projects.

Overall, the City's investments helped drive about **7.5%** of the total economic activity generated by Berkeley's creative economy.

CITY OF BERKELEY CIVIC ARTS GRANTS ALLOCATIONS | FY2016 – FY2024

FISCAL YEAR	TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT AWARDED	NUMBER OF GRANTS	AVERAGE GRANT SIZE
FY2016	\$229,100	53	\$4,323
FY2017	\$378,848	56	\$6,765
FY2018	\$497,510	61	\$8,156
FY2019	\$500,000	63	\$7,937
FY2020	\$650,199	90	\$7,224
FY2021	\$579,493	94	\$6,165
FY2022	\$714,470	104	\$6,870
FY2023	\$696,996	114	\$6,114
FY2024	\$698,782	97	\$7,204

Source: City of Berkeley, CVL Economics.

SNAPSHOT: ARTS & CULTURE ATTENDEE SPENDING



\$56 million in additional local spending is generated annually by 1.4 million visitors to a sample of 37 Berkeley arts and culture organizations.

This includes nearly \$30 million at food and drink establishments, \$7.6 million at retail stores, \$7.2 million on local transportation, and \$3.5 million on lodging.

ANNUAL ARTS AND CULTURE ATTENDEE SPENDING BY CATEGORY FOR 37 ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS IN BERKELEY | 2024

SPENDING CATEGORY	LOCAL ATTENDEES	NONLOCAL ATTENDEES	TOTAL ATTENDEES
Food and Drink	\$17.6M	\$11.8M	\$29.2M
Retail Shopping	\$4.5M	\$3.1M	\$7.6M
Overnight Lodging	\$0.6M	\$3.0M	\$3.5M
Local Transportation	\$3.5M	\$3.7M	\$7.2M
Clothing and Accessories	\$2.5M	\$1.4M	\$3.8M
Groceries and Supplies	\$1.8M	\$0.8M	\$2.6M
Childcare	\$0.5M	\$0.4M	\$0.9M
Other/Miscellaneous	\$0.6M	\$0.5M	\$1.2M
Total Spend	\$31.3M	\$24.6M	\$56.0M

Source: SMU DataArts, Americans for the Arts, CVL Economics.

A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF PUBLIC REVENUE



Creative economy activity within the City of Berkeley generates meaningful public revenues that flow across multiple levels of government.

While creative activity occurs locally, California's layered tax system distributes the resulting revenues among the City of Berkeley, Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and the State of California—meaning each dollar of local creative activity supports multiple jurisdictions simultaneously.

Creative activity contributes to several types of taxes that fund distinct public services. The following are major sources of creative economy tax revenue: property tax, sales tax, personal income tax, and corporate income tax.

SCENARIOS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY'S TAX REVENUE GENERATION

TAX TYPE & COLLECTOR	SCENARIO 1: NONPROFIT THEATER COMPANY	SCENARIO 2: PRIVATE DESIGN FIRM
PROPERTY TAX (City, County)	Theater company leases its space; tax is assessed on the property owner but is effectively built into rent.	Firm leases its space; tax is assessed on the property owner but is effectively built into rent.
SALES TAX (City, County, State)	Sales tax collected on concessions (food, drink), merchandise, and taxable rentals. Ticket sales exempt.	Core design services exempt. Sales tax applies to tangible goods (printed collateral, models, branded merchandise) and on taxable inputs purchased by the firm.
PERSONAL INCOME TAX (State)	Actors, stage crew, and set designers pay income tax on wages or self-employment income.	Designers, administrative staff, and contractors pay state income tax on wages or self-employment income.
CORPORATE INCOME TAX (State)	Exempt as a nonprofit.	Corporate profits taxed at the state level.

Source: CVL Economics.

BERKELEY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY: ECONOMIC IMPACT

FISCAL IMPACT



CITY OF BERKELEY DIRECT TAX BENEFITS

In 2024, Berkeley's creative economy helped generate \$10.7 million in tax revenues, representing 3.9% of the City's tax base.

In fiscal year 2024, the creative economy contributed \$4.6 million in property taxes, \$2.9 million in sales taxes, and \$3.2 million in various other taxes to the City. This reflects the impact of all creative economy activity, including through the multiplier effects.



SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL SYSTEMS THAT RETURN VALUE LOCALLY

In addition, Berkeley's creative economy contributed \$14.3 million in County and \$74.6 million in State tax revenue.

County revenues fund critical services the City doesn't operate—such as public health, social services, elections, courts, and jails. State revenues come from income, sales, and corporate taxes, flowing into California's General Fund, which supports K-12 and higher education (including UC Berkeley) as well as Medi-Cal and other health programs.

CVL Economics is an economic consulting firm that takes a data-driven, human-centric approach to equitable development and sustainable growth, with a focus on the creative economy. Founded in 2021, CVL Economics partners with communities, municipalities, organizations, and institutions to address today's most complex challenges and foster bold action. Coupling our robust economic models with innovative research methodologies, we provide decisionmakers with the actionable insights needed to effect change, expand opportunity, and improve economic well-being.

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