

**Final Report: UC Chancellor's Grant, Mobile Mural Project (2009 to 2010)
November 30, 2010**

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The Berkeley Ecology Center received \$11,375 on behalf of Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative (BCGC) and the Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF) for implementing the South Berkeley Santa Fe Right of Way (SF ROW) "Mobile Mural" project. What we intended to accomplish with this mural was two-fold: 1.) drawing together the SF ROW neighborhood for mural brainstorming/visualizing as a community building exercise; and 2.) the participatory painting of the mural to both enlighten and beautify this South Berkeley neighborhood and provide a vivid and durable expression of the community's vision for the ROW. The 8 panel mural was to be produced by community members and Cal art students; it would be accompanied by a bulletin board. We believe that we have largely accomplished these two goals with the completion and recent installation of the Mobile Mural (on the cyclone fence at the Santa Fe ROW crossing of Ward Street west of Sacramento).



We acknowledge that the longer term goal of the SF ROW Mobile Mural serving to inspire and mobilize the greater community toward planning and creating a fruitful future for a multi-purpose greenway and linear urban farm/community gardens through their

neighborhood will likely take years to fully realize given the ambition of the larger project. South Berkeley has the fewest parks or green spaces of all the areas of the city, and is in need of places to play, to walk and bike, to community garden, or just to sit and enjoy more natural surroundings. This project has been a creative and compelling way to visualize this green and positive future for the SF ROW as a vibrant and community-serving open space, as the figure of the completed mural below attests.



The SF ROW "Mobile Mural," painted by residents of many ages in the surrounding neighborhood; installed and dedicated on November 6, 2010 on Ward Street at the crossing of the Santa Fe ROW

The Mobile Mural planning process began on Oct. 3, 2009, when representatives of the project's core partners -- UC Berkeley, City of Berkeley Parks Department and City Council,

BFPF and BCGC, -- met and planned how to accomplish our goals -- i.e., John Steere, Alan Leon, and Jack Appleyard for BFPF, Beebo Turman for BCGC, Julia Hamilton and Hertha Sweet Wong (for UC Berkeley), and Sue Ferrera (for City of Berkeley). We created a schedule, communication channels, and set of roles for which each party was responsible. These guidelines helped us over the next year in developing, tracking, and implementing the project in collaboration with one another.

UC students in a community art class led by Julia Hamilton, a lecturer in the Art Practices Department, began meeting regularly in January 2010 with their contribution to an edition of the SF ROW Mobile Mural as their primary project. There were 12 students in the community art course. John Steere and Beebo Turman went to 8 of the Friday afternoon art classes to observe and comment on their understanding of the project and their unfolding creative process in implementing their version of it.

From January to October 2010, John and Beebo met 14 times to review and coordinate regarding project progress and to plan next steps, with a few meetings being attended by Julia Hamilton, and Hertha Sweet Wong, the Chair of the Art Practice Department at UC Berkeley. In addition, there were 4 workshops with community members, which were composed of two evening brainstorming sessions for developing the themes of the mural and two day-long, mural painting days. The brainstorming sessions occurred on November 17, 2009 and February 3, 2010. Both were participatory workshops, led by Alan Leon, a community-based muralist, and took place at the Community Center in San Pablo Park. They both had comparable agendas, to depict the present status of and show possibilities for the SF ROW in a PowerPoint show, describe the goals of the project, and to solicit themes and drawings of elements in the mural from the participants. The first workshop on November 17 was attended by 32 neighbors and high school youth. On Feb. 3, 2010 we met again at San Pablo Park with about half as many participants. Participants at the two meetings discussed visual themes of the panels and between them came up with the following sets of ideas: A) the mural should speak to the history of the evolution of the SF ROW from wilderness, to farming, to trains, future parks, greenway, and community gardens; B) Celebrating the presence of water and gardens, along with music, which are all elements that bring peace and unity to the community; and C) a sense of stewardship of the land -- restoring the earth and cultivating community through planting; healing nature in the City.



Alan Leon facilitating the 11/17/09 mural workshop

Our muralist, Alan Leon, attended some of Julia's art classes in February, March, and April, in which he talked about the mural tradition in the Bay Area, and how he had led many groups to come together to paint a combined vision. He also talked about the boards, the paint, the gesso, and the finished protective coating, and how Jack Appleyard would install the mural panels along the chain-link fence. The students seemed excited and had a number of ideas.

On March 29 we met with Hertha Sweet Wong to resolve issues that had arisen with respect to how the students regarded their role in the project. It became apparent that the students thought their ideas and sketches for the mural should prevail over the ideas expressed by community members or be expressed independently from them. We stressed that this was a community-based project in terms of the themes presented and that the role of Alan Leon and the students were to interpret and translate these themes into sketches that would be put on the mural, and that each would get four 4'x4' panels to transfer drawings to for the community to paint. During the month of April, John and Beebo and Alan attended four Friday art classes in an effort to listen to student ideas and to provide constructive feedback. As it appeared that the students couldn't collaborate with the community members on the design and painting of the mural, so we decided that the students would paint their four panels independently. However, we agreed that the two sets of murals (four panels each) would work together as a single installation.



Alan Leon prepared a base sketch on the four gesso-prepared plywood panels depicting a composite of community gardens, a greenway, people playing, planting, and talking, a “ghost train” in one corner, a large hand offering fruit in the other. John and Beebo conducted a participatory painting workshop in San Pablo Park on April 24, 2010; here community members who were either invited or serendipitously got involved in its painting, as we had placed the 4 panels along the fence adjacent the

entrance to the playground. A total of 24 people participated in the painting of the mural, including about 10 children; several of the UC Berkeley arts students participated as well. The mural was about 80 percent complete by the end of the day; it was vividly painted by neighbors and others.



Unfortunately, the student contribution was incomplete. During April, they indicated that they were planning and painting their own 4 panels. After many attempts to collaborate, it was evident that the student panels would remain unfinished. Thus, when Beebo picked up the 4 student panels in July, only one of the four mural panels was sufficiently complete to be hung alongside the other four painted by neighbors.

The 4 panels painted by community members were completed by John, Beebo, Alan, and two other artists over the course of four sessions and were completed by July 1, 2010.

All 5 panels were installed in mid September and the bulletin board was built and installed in October 2010. We planned a dedication and celebration of the Mobile Mural Project to transpire on November 6, 2010. On that sunny Saturday we had 25 neighbors, painters, and community members as well as Hertha Sweet Wong and 3 Berkeley City Council members (Linda Maio, Darryl Moore, and Kris Worthington) – who came to dedicate and to celebrate a mural that depicted a vision for the Santa Fe Right Of Way – namely a pathway with community gardens, children playing, the old train off to one side, fruit and vegetables

growing and being eaten, trees, houses, and a title that says “the earth flourishes.....” Short speeches were given by the council members, Beebo, and John.



Council member, Darryl Moore, speaking at the dedication.

The SF ROW Vision Document originally prepared by Rails to Trail, was renamed “The SF ROW, A History and Overview” and was revised by John Steere; additional edits were provided by Deborah Chernin of the City of Berkeley Parks Department; 200 copies of this document have been published and distributed to City staff, council members, neighbors, project partners, Berkeley Food Policy Council members, and to potential funders.

Our funds were all spent as designated in our original grant.

Please see enclosed photos and a copy of the “The SF ROW, A History and Overview.”

Thank you for the opportunity to enable the community to conceive and paint a Mobile Mural as a significant step toward realizing the future of the Santa Fe ROW as a linear commons.