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Bank of America grant provides platform for expansion of ambassador program and further job creation in Oakland's central business districts

Oakland, CA – June 17, 2010 – A highly successful “clean and safe” program funded by private businesses and employing local “ambassadors” in two of Oakland’s Community Benefit Districts is to be expanded this summer thanks in part to a \$20,000 grant bestowed by Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

The Lake Merritt/Uptown District Association and Downtown Oakland Association launched the ambassador program in March 2009, initially employing 20 maintenance and safety ambassadors. Since then the program has grown to 25 full-time positions. Last year, 20 young people were employed as maintenance ambassador interns by the Districts for a total of 2,400 hours of employment. The program resulted in several interns being hired as part of the full time maintenance ambassador team. Maintenance ambassadors are tasked with keeping clean from the curb to the property line of buildings within each District.

The \$20,000 Bank of America grant will be matched by the Districts to fund a safety/hospitality ambassador program projected to employ at least nine employees in two ten-week programs for a total of 2,000 hours. The Districts are also looking to supplement the program with additional funds from other local programs to potentially create more jobs. Safety ambassadors are tasked with patrolling the Districts, assisting citizens in need of help or directions and

reporting suspicious activities to law enforcement. The program funded by Bank of America will emphasize citizen assistance.

“The ambassador program is an integral part of the Districts’ goal of improving downtown Oakland, by creating and maintaining a clean and safe environment in which workers, visitors and residents can live, work and play,” said J.C. Wallace, president of the Downtown Oakland Association. “We want to thank Bank of America for its generous support to help create jobs at a critical time in the city’s economic life.”

Deborah Boyer, president of the Lake Merritt/Uptown District Association, said: “We have seen dramatic results in the past year since the adoption of the ambassador program, and the Districts are committed to growing the program over the next few years to provide employment for local residents and to sustain the positive environment in Oakland’s main business Districts. We are very excited to have Bank of America as our first partner in this effort.”

Each year the Bank of America Charitable Foundation provides grants totaling more than \$200 million to local communities nationwide through a variety of programs including its Neighborhood Excellence Initiative. In 2009, Bank of America embarked on a new 10-year, \$2 billion charitable giving goal to address critical needs in communities throughout the country.

“Bank of America is happy to support strong local initiatives such as the Districts’ ambassador program, especially if they achieve two goals simultaneously: improving the business climate and creating employment opportunities,” said Drew Lisac of Bank of America. “We hope others see the tremendous success of this program and also support it, for it really changes people’s lives.”

The hospitality ambassador program will begin in July. Anyone interested in the program should contact Steve Snider, District Manager at (510) 238-1122.

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The Downtown Oakland and Lake Merritt/Uptown District Associations were formed in February, 2009. Property owners in both Downtown Oakland and the Lake Merritt/Uptown Districts voted by a margin of almost 8 to 1 to support a voluntary property tax to fund services that would improve the quality of life in their respective communities. The associations meet and function jointly. Services funded by these Districts include maintaining cleanliness and order in the public rights of way, improving district identity and advocating on behalf of the area's property owners, business owners and residents.



PHOTO CAPTION: A \$20,000 grant check is presented by Drew Lisac and Milton Speid of the Bank of America Foundation to the Downtown Oakland and Lake Merritt Uptown District Associations. From left to right: (holding check): Deborah Boyer, President Lake Merritt Uptown District Association, Drew Lisac, Bank of America Foundation, JC Wallace, President, Downtown Oakland Association and Milton Speid, Bank of America Foundation.

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