



**THE BERKELEY REP MAGAZINE**

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# CHINGLISH



# It starts here

## Downtown Berkeley unveils a new image

BY KYLE SIRCUS

WHILE ON YOUR WAY to this performance of *Chinglish*, you may have noticed how spiffy downtown Berkeley looks nowadays. Perhaps you saw the cleaner sidewalks and the weed-free tree wells. Or maybe you've met one of the friendly ambassadors in brightly colored jackets as you walked into Berkeley Rep's lobby. It's all part of a strategic plan spearheaded by the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA), a 22-year-old organization that presides over the 30 square blocks surrounding Berkeley Rep.

John Caner, CEO of the DBA, says, "Berkeleyans understand that a city center can be a much more exciting, vibrant place for community gatherings, culture, and shopping." So what began as a main-street historic-preservation project has grown to encompass projects to improve the quality of life, urban beautification, and hospitality.

Earlier this year, the association's cleaning ambassadors took on the Herculean task of removing 8,500 pounds of trash; painting poles, boxes, and bins; power-washing city sidewalks; and — get this — removing 25,000 gum stains. They've also installed 10 planters in BART Plaza, hung 180 flower baskets, and installed 88 color banners. The DBA's hospitality ambassadors help citizens and visitors by providing directions, information, and even public-safety services.

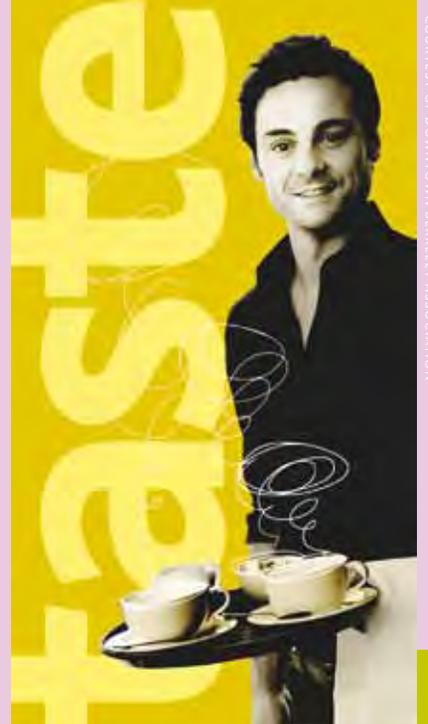
Berkeley Rep's managing director, Susan Medak also serves as president of the DBA's board. She says, "The Theatre is proud to be part of the growth of downtown Berkeley, along with other organizations like Aurora Theatre, the Jazz School, and a number of restaurants. With the DBA's energized focus on hospitality and renewal, we were able to make it a more welcoming neighborhood that really connects with the ethos and history of the city."

With a new image comes a new brand, generated by Radiant Brands. Along with his board members, John thought of some ideas for a new image that would reflect all of the great aspects of Berkeley's city center and its character. Ditching the old image, which John called "very 'ye olde lamp post,'" the DBA adopted a new tagline: It Starts Here. Paired with it is another branded mantra: Taste. Create. Experience.

Downtown certainly boasts plenty of homegrown institutions for these three options. A plethora of restaurants dot Berkeley Rep's neighborhood (for a list of them, visit [berkeleyrep.org/planyourvisit](http://berkeleyrep.org/planyourvisit)). You can create and experience many genres of art and music at places like the the Jazz School, the Magnes Collection, Freight & Salvage, and more.

"People have responded well to our efforts," says John. "Especially after some time away, visitors come back and notice the changes. We want to encourage everyone to come and enjoy downtown with all of its richness."

So hang around downtown after the show. Have a nightcap and discuss the play. Visit the other companies that make the Downtown Arts District such a vibrant and exciting neighborhood. And before your next play at Berkeley Rep, enjoy the area's restaurants and bistros.



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