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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Zero Empty Spaces to Launch New Retail Arts Marketplace Model in Downtown Berkeley**

First California activation will transform the former Half Price Books storefront into a community-focused destination for local art, creative merchandise, and retail entrepreneurship

Berkeley, California, July 28, 2026 — Zero Empty Spaces is preparing to launch its first California activation at 2036 Shattuck Avenue, introducing a new Berkeley-specific model designed to connect local creativity, retail entrepreneurship, and downtown revitalization.

Located in the former Half Price Books storefront at Shattuck Avenue and Addison Street, the activation is being developed through a collaboration among Zero Empty Spaces, the Downtown Berkeley Association, Visit Berkeley, the City of Berkeley, Gordon Commercial Real Estate Services, and Berkeley's creative community.

Unlike Zero Empty Spaces' traditional working artist studio model, the Berkeley location will operate as a community-focused retail arts marketplace and gallery dedicated to displaying, promoting, and selling artwork, handcrafted goods, design products, apparel, books, home goods, prints, and other merchandise created by local artists, makers, designers, and small businesses.

The space will feature merchandise displayed and sold directly to the public through individual vendor spaces and curated retail installations. The activation is intended to provide accessible retail opportunities for independent creative entrepreneurs while bringing productive activity and new public engagement to a currently underutilized commercial storefront.

Supportive programming may include artist meet-and-greets, live creative displays, and merchandise launches directly related to products offered for sale, while enhancing the customer experience and supporting the visibility and sale of locally produced goods.

Zero Empty Spaces will host an Open House Preview and Information Session on Saturday, August 8, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Local artists, makers, designers, creative entrepreneurs, and community members will be invited to tour the space, meet the Zero Empty Spaces team, learn more about the retail marketplace model, and receive information about participation and the anticipated opening timeline.

Event registration is available at: <http://zes-berkeley-openhouse.eventbrite.com/>

The activation will bring a new mix of locally created products and independent businesses into one of Downtown Berkeley's most visible vacant storefronts. By creating another reason for residents and visitors to explore Shattuck Avenue and the Downtown Addison Arts District, the project is intended to generate activity, support neighboring businesses, encourage longer visits downtown, and expand opportunities for local creative entrepreneurs to reach the public.

"This is an opportunity to create something that is uniquely Berkeley while building on the broader work Zero Empty Spaces has done across the country," said Evan Snow, Co-Founder of Zero Empty Spaces. "We are taking an underutilized storefront and turning it into a platform where local artists, makers, designers, and small businesses can gain visibility, connect directly with customers, and participate in Downtown Berkeley's economic and cultural life. At its core, we are in the business of unlocking closed doors to create new opportunities, and this collaboration demonstrates what is possible when property owners, civic leaders, downtown organizations, tourism partners, and the creative community work together."

The Downtown Berkeley Association, the City of Berkeley's Office of Economic Development and Visit Berkeley have helped facilitate the activation as part of their broader efforts to strengthen downtown vitality, support local businesses and cultural activity, and encourage productive new uses within prominent commercial spaces.

"Downtown Berkeley has always been a place where creativity, culture, and commerce intersect. We're proud to partner with Zero Empty Spaces, Visit Berkeley, the City of Berkeley, Gordon Commercial, and our local arts community to transform one of Downtown's most visible vacant storefronts into a space that supports artists, encourages exploration, and brings new energy to the Addison Arts District. It's a great example of what can happen when organizations come together around a shared vision for downtown vitality," said John Caner, CEO of the Downtown Berkeley Association.

"Creativity, culture, and innovation are Berkeley hallmarks," said Jeffrey Church, President and CEO of Visit Berkeley. "The addition of Zero Empty Spaces to our electric Arts District adds to the glow. We're a proud partner of this progressive, first-in-California artist collaboration that will create new opportunities for artists and attract even more visitors to Berkeley, one of the most dynamic destinations across the Bay Area and beyond."

Gordon Commercial Real Estate Services is providing the former Half Price Books at a discounted rate during an initial six-month period beginning in August 2026 before going month-to-month, allowing the new concept to be introduced and evaluated as an interim activation while the property remains positioned for its longer-term future.

Zero Empty Spaces has activated 34 formerly vacant commercial spaces across five states and supported more than 900 artists since launching in 2019. The Berkeley project expands that work through a retail-centered model that creates opportunities not only for artists, but also for makers, designers, independent brands, and other local creative entrepreneurs.

Event Details

What: Zero Empty Spaces Berkeley Open House Preview and Information Session

When: Saturday, August 8, 2026, 11:00 AM–12:00 PM

Where: Former Half Price Books, 2036 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704

RSVP: <http://zes-berkeley-openhouse.eventbrite.com/>

About the Downtown Berkeley Association

The Downtown Berkeley Association is a 501(c)(6) membership nonprofit representing hundreds of property owners, merchants, nonprofits, and other businesses in Downtown Berkeley. Its mission is to provide leadership and enhanced services that create and sustain a clean, safe, welcoming, and prosperous Downtown.

About Visit Berkeley

Visit Berkeley is the destination marketing organization for Berkeley, California. Its mission is to cultivate and promote Berkeley as a desirable destination for meetings, conventions, tour groups, leisure travelers, and film production while enhancing Berkeley's economy.

About Zero Empty Spaces

Zero Empty Spaces (ZES) is a national vacancy-activation company that transforms underutilized commercial properties into affordable studios and workspaces for artists, makers, chefs, mixologists, and small businesses. By temporarily subleasing vacant storefronts, offices, restaurants, and other commercial spaces, ZES helps property owners reduce carrying costs while driving foot traffic, improving safety, and supporting local economic development. With a scalable model and locations across the country, Zero Empty Spaces delivers practical, turnkey solutions that revitalize communities and create productive use out of otherwise idle real estate. Current locations include Hallandale Beach (FL), Dania Beach (FL), Boca Raton (FL), Jensen Beach (FL), and St. Petersburg (FL). Out-of-state locations include Minneapolis (MN), and Richmond (VA). Learn more at www.zeroemptyspaces.com.

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