

News Service

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FLAMES & SPARKS FOR OAKLAND FLAX ART & DESIGN GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION TOMORROW

**Mayor Schaaf Will Arrive in Flaming Snail Car to Torch a Titanium Rod
Marking This Major New Addition To Oakland's Thriving Art Scene**

WHAT: ICONIC FLAX ART & DESIGN *Grand Opening in Oakland*

Two Fire Breathing Art Cars, Flashing Titanium Ribbon Cutting by The Crucible & Live Painting exhibition

WHO: Mayor Libby Schaaf, Flax owner Howard Flax, 12 Flax employees, members of the Chamber of Commerce and Oakland Art community including David C. Miller Executive Director THE CRUCIBLE, Snail Car co-creator Jon Sarriguarte of Form & Reform, Chester The Art Car creator Jason Alderholm, Live Artist Justin DeRego, Amana Harris of AHC and students from the Peralta School Art program

WHERE: FLAX ART & DESIGN 1501 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland CA 94612

Oakland CA---After 78 years San Francisco's iconic Flax Art & Design store will unveil its new 14,500 square feet home at [1501 Martin Luther King Way](#), a former automotive repair shop and indoor soccer facility on the outskirts of downtown.

Tomorrow morning's Grand Opening will reflect Oakland's unique and robust artist spirit. After Mayor Schaff's 11:00 am art car motorcade arrives at FLAX led by her flame throwing Snail Car her honor will be assisted by the fiery Crucible artists in cutting a flashing Titanium ribbon that will spark scores of artists gathered to welcome this important addition to the tight knit Oakland art community.

"Oakland has always been a welcoming home to artists and entrepreneurs," said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. "So it's incredibly fitting that a family owned business that serves artists of every ilk is coming to Oakland. Not only will Flax's presence bring added vitality to this community, it will offer jobs and another strong anchor that understands the needs and challenges of the Oakland art and business scenes."

Howard Flax said he was drawn to the 1922 Oakland building's architectural features — soaring ceilings and an exposed truss system — and its location in an up-and-coming neighborhood.

"There is drama in the interior space that spoke to us" he said. "The Martin Luther King building had more of a wow factor than our old building on Market Street in San Francisco."

The Oakland building is a block or two from the cafes and restaurants popping up in the neighborhood. "In some respects, it's not unlike when we moved to Market Street 37 years ago," he said. "It's a little pioneering."

Downtown 'anchor'

"What is great about this is that it's a couple of blocks off the main drag. It will be a great anchor for that area, which doesn't have a lot of retail," said Brian Kendall, who works on downtown development for the city of Oakland.

Much-needed retail

For Oakland the arrival of Flax could be a watershed event. While 300 restaurants, bars and cafes have opened in greater downtown Oakland since 2004, very little of the new business has been retail, Kendall added.

“Flax is a perfect use for downtown,” he said. “And art supplies is a niche that has not been met at all.”

Flax will help attract shoppers back to downtown Oakland, said Keira Williams, a retail specialist for the city.

“For many years, Oakland has not been the retail powerhouse it should be for a city its size,” she said. “Flax is a destination that will add a lot of strength. ... It’s a name with great brand recognition. It will bring people to Oakland, and hopefully they will stay awhile and discover the other things that are here.”