

April 18, 2024

Dear Mr. Morris:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Draft Placerville Public Art Master Plan (Plan). The consultant, ABC, did a great job soliciting and compiling citizen input. I am confident that ABC will be able to incorporate the comments received from both the Council and the public to deliver a Final Plan that serves the community well. My comments are below, grouped by topic.

I wish to extend my thanks to you, to the members of the steering committee and to the other participants who took time to contribute to the development of the Plan. This took time and effort and our community will benefit tremendously.

Kris Kiehne
Placerville Resident

Comments on the Intent of the Council

1. Is it the City's intent to only fund art that is "free to the public" through the Plan? This is a noble intent, and if it is truly the wish of the Council, this should be clearly stated, both in the Executive Summary and in the introduction to the Plan. Specifically, the first line in the "Existing Art" section reads: "Public art takes a variety of forms, and, for Placerville's plan, it **includes** any art that is publicly available and **free**" (emphasis added). Next, the "Save the Graves" event is listed in the bullet list of community art programs. Save the Graves is a terrific, but not free, event. Based on this text, when I read the Plan, it seemed to indicate that the Plan *included* support for art both free or requiring some admission fee. For either case, the intent of the Plan should be clear from the outset.

2. How the City would evaluate and fund performance art could be described more clearly in the Plan. Several performance art events are listed in the Existing Art section, which speaks to their importance in the community, however most of the recommendations in the Plan and the Policies section are a good fit for static installations, but not necessarily for performance art.

Comments on Funding

Art installations require funding. Grants are available for the arts, however, the City should not rely strictly on grant funding for these projects, and furthermore, the City can leverage outside funds by providing supplemental funding. The reality is that the City's monetary resources are constrained. I am in support of both of the potential funding sources described in the Plan. The current Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) is likely designated for other necessary programs or projects which should not be put at risk. The analysis may find that a slight increase in TOT is in line with that levied by other municipalities. In turn, the analysis of the valuation option on new development, which needs better explanation, may not pose an insurmountable burden on developers. The City will of course do an analysis of the opportunities and constraints of each method when choosing the best option(s).

Lastly, in regard to my comment above, some funding could come from nominal entrance fees to events. Also, some funding could come from auctions, like that held for the Banners on Parade (an event listed in the Existing Art section).

Comments on Policies and Procedures (Appendix 3)

1. In addition to my comment above regarding funding and evaluating performance art, the actual application procedure for any project could be much clearer.
2. The Acquisition Procedure expressly states “new” works of art would be acquired. The Council should consider how this could restrict funding for existing art, for example providing funding to restore an existing mural.

Comment on Background and Introduction

The Council noted that the hanging noose was wrongly identified as the symbol of the City. In addition to correcting this error, discussion of the symbol should be in conformance with the historical report commissioned by the City, which is summarized on the City’s website.

Errata

- Page 10, 9.e.
 - The correct name is “El Dorado Irrigation District” (omit “County” from agency name)
 - Both fire safe councils listed are non-profit organizations, not agencies, and are a better fit in 9.c.
- A more comprehensive list of definitions should be appended to the final document for the benefit of lay person.

May 1st, 2024

To Mayor Neau and the City Council,

I want to start by saying thank you to the Mayor and City Council for the opportunity to make comments on the Placerville Public Art Master Plan. I was unable to participate in the public meetings due to scheduling issues, but I am thrilled with the outcome of the process. Overall, this document is aspirational and inclusive of the many groups and people that make up our wonderful city. I congratulate Arts and Culture El Dorado and Art Builds Community for dedication and hard work.

Attached are my comments. I copied the full document and made my comments directly in the sections that they apply to. You will find them highlighted and in bold type. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document.

Ryan Carter

Placerville Planning Commission

Executive Summary

In 2022, Arts and Culture El Dorado (ACED) and Placerville City leaders agreed to commission a public art plan to establish a vision, standards, and funding strategies for art on public property that may come before the City Council. The plan would build upon elements of the City's planning documents, including 1990 community design standards and public art guidelines, and help fulfill an element of the City of Placerville's 2022 Strategic Plan -- to provide and maintain vibrant public spaces, events, and programs, ensure a well-designed and protected City infrastructure, and encourage and provide space for public art.

Based upon the City's interest in a public art plan, ACED applied for and received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to hire Art Builds Community (ABC), a California-based public art planning firm, to develop the plan. The City of Placerville also contributed financial support for the planning process.

ABC consulted with a wide cross-section of individuals and organizational representatives to develop a plan and a process to acquire and install public art at parks and other City sites. ABC's methods focused on broad community engagement and included historical research, site visits, interviews, focus groups, community meetings, and a popup event at the farmers' market. The ideas incorporated in this plan originated directly from the people who contributed to the conversation. The plan also includes detailed policies and protocols for review and adoption by the Recreation and Parks Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council.

ABC discovered that people have many things in common despite differing opinions about Placerville's character. The key takeaways were that community members love Placerville because of its hometown feel, its many fascinating stories, its beautiful natural landscape, its architecture, its artists, and its neighborhoods. Community members want local artists to create public art, and they want that art to reflect the things they love about Placerville.

The following vision and recommendations resulted from the planning process:

Mission: The City of Placerville supports public art that celebrates its unique small-town character, its natural environment, and its historical role in the evolution of the region and the state.

I believe we should expand this to include the nation. The events that transpired in Placerville and the surrounding communities in the mid 1800's had a huge impact on the nation. We helped inspire westward migration and the Gold Rush, our City predates California statehood and we were one of the largest cities in California when it did become a state. I would suggest we edit this to read " Mission: The City of Placerville supports public art that celebrates its unique small-town character, its natural environment, and its historical role in the evolution of the region, state, and nation."

Guiding Principles

- Tell all the stories.
- Respect the past, honor the present, and embrace the future.

- Celebrate the natural environment.

Goals:

Support local artists.

- Create places for celebrations and performances.
- Enliven retail districts.
- Employ art as a navigation tool.

Recommendations

1. Support local artists to create work in the public realm.
2. Commission art that illuminates Placerville's many histories, told and untold.
3. Integrate art with the natural environment.
4. Celebrate Placerville's historic architecture.
5. Commission art that enhances place and enlivens retail areas.
6. Build partnerships between ACED and other community-based organizations to expand engagement with public art.
7. Include art in the design of all public construction projects where feasible.
8. Adopt clear guidelines, policies, and procedures for developing art on public property.
9. Seek new funding sources to support public art.

Background

Placerville, California, is a city formed by its geology, its natural environment, and its people. Popularly known as "Old Hangtown" and, even earlier, as "Dry Diggins", the city's identity is defined by its Gold Rush history and culture. Like the mountains surrounding it, Placerville has a rugged past; and this is evident in its independent spirit, its history and its symbol, the hangman's noose, a prominent feature on historic Main Street and in much of its retail marketing. The noose is a reminder of a historic event when "frontier justice" was the town's only form of governance. However, Placerville's history is far richer and more nuanced than a single event. Placerville has a remarkable geologic history – its mountains and rivers led to the discovery and mining of gold. It also has a legacy of mechanical innovation, Indigenous people, environmental beauty, Victorian architecture, and long traditions of agriculture from apple orchards to wineries. Today Placerville is home to long-time residents whose families have lived in the area since the 19th Century, and newer and returning residents including a substantial artist community. It is the El Dorado County Seat, and it draws tourists who enjoy its charming Main Street, its natural beauty, history, arts, and

wine culture. Community events, restaurants, and music are also an important feature of the town's identity and economy.

Placerville residents are motivated to become involved in its cultural life. Many participate as active volunteers in community organizations. Celebrations at the historic Bell Tower, seasonal events and festivals create a lively place for visitors and residents alike. Its community spirit is evident in the enthusiastic and respectful way the town celebrates its many stories.

Existing Art

Public art takes a variety of forms, and, for Placerville's plan, it includes any art that is publicly available and free. As such, Placerville already hosts many public art projects and activities that serve its residents, workers, and visitors. Community organizations and individuals organize and fund these artworks, which explore a variety of themes. These programs include:

- **Community Pride:** This volunteer-led City committee has enriched Placerville for more than 30 years, through landscaping in public spaces throughout the City, promotion and support of volunteer public art efforts, and the recent completion of Monument Park honoring war veterans.
- **Save the Graves/Buried History:** This annual theatrical event portrays the stories of prominent, but often little known, people who shaped Placerville. Actors perform at or near the graves of the dead, reflecting on the events that shaped their lives and the times.
- **Barn Quilts of El Dorado County:** These painted portrayals of quilts adorn old barns, historic buildings, gardens, and other locations in El Dorado County. They draw people along the Farm Trails and tell a story at each location.
- **Banners on Parade:** Banners on Parade is a collaborative effort of artists, businesses, non-profit organizations, and city government that promotes the arts on Historic Main Street. It has produced 556 pieces of community art since 2005.
- **Sugar Skull Art Walk** is a growing program that engages people of all ages in the creation of ofrendas recognizing family members and other important people who have passed away.
- **Art on Broadway:** The Broadway Village Association enlivened businesses with paintings and poems about birds, acting as a scavenger hunt that drew people through this retail area.
- **Main Street murals:** There are a variety of privately funded murals on commercial buildings on Main Street and off Main Street, some exploring historical themes. 5
- **Third Saturday Art Walk** brings people downtown to experience gallery exhibits, food and wine. Placerville's commercial and nonprofit art galleries feature work by local and Indigenous artists, including photography, paintings, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, mixed media, and digital art.
- The Historic Bell Tower has been an ongoing framework for seasonal art and decoration.

ACED has also launched several innovative public programs including:

- Laureate Trail poetry reading series, featuring the El Dorado County Poet Laureate.

- Curated gallery exhibitions that celebrate regional heritage.
- Switchboard Connections, a series of workshops and poetry readings inspired by the artwork displayed in Switchboard Gallery.
- The NEA Big Read, a literary festival featuring events and workshops at El Dorado County libraries.

There are opportunities to build upon Placerville's rich cultural life, by including art in new and existing development, and creating beautiful new public spaces. Building stronger partnerships between the City, artists, and community organizations can stimulate development of permanent civic artworks in parks, on trails, and at public buildings. This requires political will, community support, partnerships, and funding.

Challenges

The last five years have been a challenge for everyone. The impact of fires, the Covid-19 pandemic, protest movements, and political divisions have taken their toll. In that respect, Placerville is no different from many other places. While people may differ on what they value, Placerville residents have more in common than what separates them. People love the town for its natural beauty, its architecture, its history, and its small-town atmosphere. Shared artistic activities can illuminate these small-town qualities and bring people together to share their love of the place.

Methodology

During the planning process ABC reviewed City documents establishing goals for public art, development, parks, and design. The team visited and toured Gold Bug Park and Mine, the El Dorado County Historical Museum, and all Placerville's parks and trails. They visited neighborhoods and retail areas. In addition, ABC conducted interviews with groups of individuals on June 8 and 9, 2023 including:

- City Staff • Elected Officials
- Historians
- Arts Organization Representatives
- Businesspeople
- Multicultural Leadership
- City Leaders
- Community Members

ABC also led a community meeting attended by over 60 individuals on July 31, 2023, and an arts-based popup event at the Farmers Market on August 2. A second community meeting was held on

December 11, 2023. Appendix 2 includes complete notes from the popup event and community meetings.

Findings: Emerging Themes

There is significant agreement about the value of art among participants in meetings and public events. The following is a summary of emerging themes.

What people love about Placerville:

- History
- Small town feel
- Nature
- Music, art, poetry, and craft
- Unique businesses
- Historic architecture

Locations for Art:

- Downtown
- Placerville Drive and Broadway
- Utility boxes and billboards
- Parks and trails
- Waterways
- Town entrances/gateways
- Neighborhoods

Art should represent:

- All aspects of local history and diverse stories
- Past, present, and future
- Poetry
- Rivers and waterways
- Natural beauty
- Agriculture
- Indigenous culture
- Local artists

Vision of Placerville in Ten Years:

- Welcoming place, family-friendly **Remove “family-friendly” from this line, already included below**
- More diverse **I believe this should read “More diverse forms of public art”.**
- Variety of arts experiences
- Family friendly

Mission, Guiding Principles and Recommendations

The following mission, guiding principles and recommendations are based on community engagement, site visits and an understanding of City priorities and plans. These build upon Placerville’s historical role in California’s history and its residents’ love of that history, the talents and enthusiasm of its artists and volunteers, and the beauty of its natural environment. They establish how community members value the arts, and the role they see publicly available art playing in Placerville’s evolution.

Mission: The City of Placerville supports public art that celebrates its unique small-town character, its natural environment, and its historical role in the evolution of the region and the state.

As stated earlier: I believe we should expand this to include the nation. The events that transpired in Placerville and the surrounding communities in the mid 1800’s had a hung impact on the nation. We helped inspire westward migration and the Gold Rush, our City predates California statehood and we were one of the largest cities in California when it did become a state. I would suggest we edit this to read “ Mission: The City of Placerville supports public art that celebrates its unique small-town character, its natural environment, and its historical role in the evolution of the region, state, and nation.”

Guiding Principles

- Tell all the stories.
- Respect the past, honor the present, and embrace the future.
- Celebrate the natural environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from research and community input. Accomplishing these recommendations will require a coordinated effort. First, it is critical to build upon and honor existing volunteer arts and beautification accomplishments. Second, it is important that the City of Placerville engage ACED to support existing arts activities, build and broaden partnerships, raise funds, and market the arts. Third, the City itself can support the arts through the advocacy of the

City Council and the Mayor, funding for the arts, and the provision of City services for publicly available arts activities and amenities.

1. Support local artists to create work in the public realm.

a. Promote partnerships between local galleries, restaurants, businesses, and wineries to display the work of local artists.

b. Create a public art map that includes information about where to find art and credits the artists who created the work.

c. Encourage artists who work with local nonprofit agencies such as MORE, to create artwork in public places.

d. Advocate for creation of a public stage.

e. Provide spaces for artists to create, exhibit, and teach.

f. Support performance art including the wagon train and newly created works.

2. Commission art to illuminate Placerville's many histories, told and untold.

a. Build partnerships between ACED, El Dorado History Museum, the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, the Native American Center for Arts and Culture (Center Street Gallery), El Dorado Historical Society, El Dorado Gold 1848, and other local groups to commission interpretive artworks that bring little-known histories to life.

b. Commission an artist team to create a map-based audio tour that re-enacts Placerville's many stories.

c. Encourage interpretive art projects to use history as a springboard to explore contemporary stories.

d. Commission functional and sculptural art that illustrate these stories.

e. Expand frequency of Save the Graves/Buried History vignette performances and engage local high school students in creating and performing them.

3. Integrate art with the natural environment.

a. Seek funding for a program that pairs local artists, poets, musicians, and landscape artists with environmental professionals and organizations to create educational markers and selfguided tours that encourage people to value and explore the natural environment.

b. Promote environmental art as an element of tourism.

c. Commission environmental art and earthworks.

d. Develop a native plant walk that includes artist-designed places for people to rest and contemplate nature.

e. Work with the City and County to commission gateway art at trailheads.

4. Celebrate Placerville's historic architecture.

a. Create artist-designed neighborhood tour maps that illustrate unique architecture and the history of the people who lived there.

b. Acknowledge, promote, and value Placerville's historic architecture in downloadable audio tours.

c. Promote inter-Neighborhood food, drink, and culture tours.

As an outspoken advocate for the history of our City, I am overjoyed to see these 3 recommendations. This would be a huge addition to the tourism draw of our historic neighborhoods and would further advance the cause of historic restoration in our designated historic districts.

d. Continue to explore future use of County Courthouse as a performance space. **This item should be removed. This idea has been roundly rejected by the residents of Placerville.**

5. Commission art that enhances place and enlivens retail areas.

a. Seek funding for a gateway sculpture at the Highway 50 eastbound exit onto Forni Road to welcome people to Placerville. **Seems excessive and unnecessary, welcome to Placerville sign already exists.**

b. Work with building owners to commission a continuous mural wall facing Highway 50 between Spring Street and Bedford Avenue. **Should we be further distracting drivers on Hwy 50? Seems dangerous.**

c. Build partnerships with retailers on Broadway and Placerville Drive to encourage arts improvements such as utility boxes, crosswalk art, permanent artwork banners, and artist designed street furniture.

d. Encourage property owners to commission art installations in empty storefronts. **This is a wonderful idea, but I'm not sure how practical it is without having volunteers willing to do the work. It would be a double whammy for property owners to lose a tenant and then be "Encouraged" to spend more money to beautify their empty retail space.**

e. Commission new murals:

i. Encourage business owners to nominate walls for murals.

ii. Commission murals that invite selfies.

iii. Commission murals for Placerville's downtown alleys.

f. Promote culinary arts as an element of Placerville's culture.

g. Create busking spots for street musicians. **This is quite frankly a terrible idea. Many businesses in Placerville already have designated areas for live music, this could draw musicians and customers away from our businesses. There is also no mechanism to**

vet prospective musicians or to remove offensive or untalented ones. Please remove this item.

h. Encourage performances at the Bell Tower. **This is problematic considering recent Council decisions regarding the Bell Tower. This item should be removed.**

6. Build partnerships between ACED and other community-based organizations to expand engagement with public art.

a. Build partnerships between artists and local hunting, fishing, and environmental groups to create artworks that encourage people to explore and preserve the natural environment.

b. Partner with community organizations to promote inter-generational arts and cultural experiences.

c. Support Community Pride's work employing art and landscape to reinforce Placerville's character and promote walkability.

d. Seek funding for an ongoing artist residency program with the El Dorado County Historical Museum.

e. Partner with the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce and Visit El Dorado County to promote Placerville as a place where public art thrives.

f. Partner with the school district to create opportunities to engage high school students in performing arts, visual arts, and manual arts in the development of public art in all its many forms.

g. Exhibit videos of Placerville's arts and culture on Placerville's YouTube and local cable access.

h. Encourage El Dorado High School and the owners of IOOF building to increase access for performances in their buildings. **This is a bit troubling. I'm not sure why the city would ever be in the position of "Encouraging" owners of private property to "increase access for performances in their buildings". This is inappropriate and should be removed.**

7. Include art in the design of all public construction projects where feasible.

a. Commission interpretive art as an element of Placerville creek trail improvements, including maps and signage.

b. Include a Creekside performance and gathering area. **The creekside park at the Ivy House Lot would be the perfect location for this.**

c. Consider a gazebo for performances in Benham Park. **This should only be considered after addressing the terrible disrepair of the Scout Building in Benham**

Park. Other than that, a great idea for event space separate from but close to Main Street.

d. Integrate art into all streetscape improvements including crosswalks, roundabouts, and wayfinding.

e. Include art in the future renovation of the historic courthouse. **This item should be removed. This idea has been roundly rejected by the residents of Placerville.**

f. Collaborate with El Dorado Transit to create artwork elements in the transit station parking lot.

8. Adopt clear guidelines, policies, and procedures for developing art on public property:

In 1990, a Chamber of Commerce leadership group developed draft public art policies and procedures that were subsequently presented, but never adopted, by the City. Appendix 3 is an updated version of these guidelines. The proposed document includes the following elements:

a. Community engagement policy for all City and other government-funded public art projects.

b. A framework to keep the public informed and engaged with public art as it develops.

c. Expanded role for City of Placerville Community Pride Committee as a formal review body for art in public spaces. **City staff resources are already pushed to the max, I don't believe that adding another formal committee is appropriate at this time. Recreation and Parks seems the appropriate place to fulfill this role.**

d. Composition of Community Pride as a cross-disciplinary public art committee including artists, arts professionals, environmental educators, landscape designers, historians, and community members in decision-making.

e. Clear guidelines for approval of art on or over City property.

a. Policy for acceptance or rejection of proposed gifts of artworks to the City.

b. Artist and artwork selection criteria.

c. A policy for removal of public art from City property.

d. A policy for maintenance of artwork on City property.

9. Seek new funding sources to support public art:

a. Initiate a percentage of the valuation of new private developments for art in Placerville (for example: 0.6% of valuation up to \$100K; 0.3% of valuation over \$100K to \$500K; and 0.1% of

valuation over \$500K) **If the City does establish a funding mechanism for public art, I believe that this is the most appropriate way to move forward.**

- b. Increase the City's Transient Occupancy Tax from 10% to 12% to support public art.
- c. Pursue grants built on partnerships with other community and environmental organizations such as MORE, Save the Graves, American River Conservancy, etc.
- d. Seek funding from state and national agencies including National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, National Endowment for the Humanities, Cal Humanities as well as environmental and forestry programs.
- e. Build partnerships with government agencies including El Dorado County Irrigation District, El Dorado Fire Safe Council, Placerville Fire Safe Council, El Dorado County Health & Human Services, and El Dorado Transit to use art to enhance their missions.

Appendix 3:

City of Placerville Draft Public Art Policies and Procedures

A. PURPOSE:

The Public Art Policy is intended to ensure the development of a high-quality permanent art collection for the community and to establish guidelines for changing artworks. Art in public places is hereby defined as:

- i. Any work of art displayed for two weeks or more in an open City-controlled area, on the exterior of any City-maintained facility, within any City-owned facility, and/or in areas designated as public areas, lobbies, and public assembly areas.
- ii. Works of art may include, but not be limited to, murals, sculptures, monuments, lighting, frescoes, fountains, paintings, stained glass, and ceramic.
- iii. Artistic performances that take place at City-owned facilities and properties.

B. POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Placerville desires to enhance its identity as an artistic community. The City of Placerville, through its Public Arts Program, will celebrate its artistic heritage and vital arts community, embrace cultural responsibilities, and guarantee future generations a rich artistic legacy through the acquisition and exhibition of quality works of art.

C. POLICY GOALS The principal goals for acquiring and displaying works of art on public property are:

- i. To enrich the public environment for both residents and visitors through the incorporation of the arts.
- ii. To nurture, enhance, and encourage the community's awareness and value of art.
- iii. To enhance the City of Placerville's recognition as a center for the arts.
- iv. To increase public access to works of art.
- v. To promote an understanding and awareness of the arts in the public environment.
- vi. To promote diversity through a variety of expressions, styles, designs, and media. **I believe that this should read: "To promote diverse public art forms through a variety of expressions, styles, designs, and media."**
- vii. To create an environment that encourages and supports funding and partnerships for public art.

D. PROCEDURES

i. The City of Placerville has engaged Arts and Culture El Dorado (ACED) to staff the Community Pride Committee. **I don't believe that it is appropriate to engage a non profit to staff a formal committee. It is appropriate for them to SUPPORT a committee appointed by city council if it is decided to expand the role of the Community Pride Committee. This should definitely be modified and clarified to clearly explain the role that ACED will play and to limit their involvement to a supportive role only.**

ii. Public Arts Advisory –Community Pride Committee. The City of Placerville Community Pride Committee shall be responsible for the review, selection, and recommendation for the acquisition of all public art to the City Council for approval. The composition of the Community Pride Committee shall be formalized to include the following seven members:

As stated earlier: City staff resources are already pushed to the max, I don't believe that adding another formal committee is appropriate at this time. Recreation and Parks seems the appropriate place to fulfill this role.

- a. Three community member volunteers
- b. Administrator or designee, El Dorado County Historical Museum
- c. One Design Professional (architect, landscape architect)
- d. One Arts Professional (art historian, curator, conservator)
- e. One Visual Artist

If the city does decide to go this route, consider substituting a member of a local historic non-profit organization (e.g. El Dorado County Historical Society) instead of a Visual Artist.

iii. Appointment to Committee: The City shall issue a call for applications to the Community Pride Committee and members shall be appointed by City Council .

a. The Community Pride Committee shall operate under the authority of the elected City Council, and shall make every effort to recommend a broad variety of artistic disciplines and acknowledge the wealth of artists within the local community.

b. The Community Pride Committee may from time to time be asked to participate with other appointed commission or committee in matters related to art and community aesthetics.

iv. Public Review Period. There shall be a review period of 30 to 45 days after which the Community Pride Committee recommends approval of a work of art to City Council for acquisition by purchase, loan, or donation. **This is of utmost importance. A robust Public Review Period is necessary to ensure the public has a chance to view and comment on any public art that is being considered. Every effort should be made to publicize this opportunity, so nobody feels they are left out of the process.**

a. During the public review period the work itself, a copy of the work, or photograph video, slide, drawing, model, or other representation of the artwork shall be made available for

inspection by the public during regular hours at Town Hall, or a place close to Town Hall, and online.

b. Notice of the public review period shall be published in the local newspaper.

c. Public comments shall be forwarded to the City Manager for consideration by the Community Pride Committee.