



Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy

Creative Placemaking Strategy Summary

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BACKGROUND

In partnership with the Mariposa County Arts Council, the Mariposa County Planning Department applied for and received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts’ Our Town program to support the development of a countywide Creative Placemaking Strategy. This project used interactive and collaborative stakeholder engagement to develop a planning document that leverages art and design to promote a rich and compelling rural economy.

On August 17, 2021 the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors voted to adopt the Creative Placemaking Strategy and authorized county departments and agencies to pursue implementing its recommendations.

Front cover: Dia de los Muertos in Horinitos, Mariposa County by Charles Phillips



DEFINING CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Creative placemaking is when artists, arts organizations, and community development practitioners deliberately integrate arts and culture into community revitalization work – placing arts at the table with land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies.

Creative placemaking supports local efforts to enhance quality of life and opportunity for existing residents, increases creative activity, and creates a distinct sense of place.

THE PLAN

Creative placemaking offers a framework for promoting both a more resilient rural economy, and a more inclusive, representative, and diverse set of stories about our community.

The Creative Placemaking Strategy seeks to support Mariposa’s unique cultural identity and facilitate creative placemaking projects that represent our region.

STRATEGY GOALS

Promote a portfolio of authentic, engaging experiences that encourage tourists to stay in—rather than simply pass through—Mariposa en route to Yosemite. In turn, this will have a profound impact on local businesses and artists;

Increase community attachment and civic engagement by promoting

equitable placemaking investments and production of placemaking deliverables that are more representative of Mariposa’s diverse and rich identity;

Establish cross-sector partnerships between the arts community, government agencies, conservation and agricultural interests, tribal populations, human services

organizations, and businesses to increase our community’s capacity to apply creative placemaking in support of our economy; and

Integrate creative placemaking efforts into existing and future infrastructure and other community assets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The actions recommended were either explicitly suggested by respondents, or identified by CPSAC members, Arts Council, or Mariposa County staff as supporting these core goals, and therefore aligning with the adopted vision statement. Broadly, recommendations are categorized as either:

- Projects, which respond to community input through discrete, lasting physical changes.
- Programs, which are ongoing, often recurring actions that align with the community’s creative placemaking objectives and do not require lasting or permanent physical changes.
- Policies, which define requirements and processes that influence future changes related to public art, design, and creative placemaking initiatives that support the community’s vision.



PROJECTS

1. County-wide Mural Project
2. Sculpture Park
3. Frost Shop Site Activation
4. Mariposa Creek Parkway
5. Midpines County Park
6. Coulterville Pedestrian
7. Enhancements & Walking Tours



PROGRAMS

1. Curated, Site-Specific Temporary Art
2. Land Preservation & Interpretive Art
3. Artist in Residency Program
4. Art & Agriculture Programming
5. Outdoor Film Program & Community Conversation
6. Art & Environment Lecture Series
7. Permenant Parklet Program
8. Public Arts/Creative Placemaking Database



POLICIES

1. Establish Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee as a Review Body for Public Art & Creative Placemaking Projects/Programs
2. Connect Creative Placemaking Projects & Programs with Arts Education Programs & Curricula
3. Establish Funding to Support Public Art Created by Local Artist
4. Mobility and Accessibility

Creative Placemaking Strategy Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS: PROJECTS



5 MIDPINES COUNTY PARK

In 2013, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors authorized purchase of nearly eight acres to expand the existing four-acre county park in Midpines. Then as now, Midpines County park included a fire station, community hall, park-and-ride facility for regional transportation, a small restroom and children's play area, and .2 miles of Bear Creek, a north-flowing tributary of the Merced River which empties into the river at Briceburg.

In response to this park expansion, a citizens group called the Friends of Bear Creek Midpines (FBCM) organized to identify and advocate for community-driven programs and amenities, including a par course "with sturdy outdoor exercise equipment, consisting of a path or course equipped with obstacles or stations... for exercising the human body to promote good health... with features that would best serve both young and elderly residents..."

As FBCM notes in their vision statement, the Midpines County Park site is "the only possible space in the entire Midpines community both set aside for these purposes, and that is easily accessed by its citizens," making it a potentially prime location for a new neighborhood park. Additionally, the expanded site also has significant and nuanced

historical interests, including indigenous and settler colonial histories dating back several centuries. Finally, in recent years the site has borne substantial impacts from drought, climate change, and the tree mortality pandemic, which have, as FBCM notes "killed off most of the larger trees (located on site) for which the Midpines community is named."

This combination of factors—**resident-driven programming, proximity to regional transit, rich cultural history, and visible climate-related changes to the landscape**—make Midpines County Park a unique creative placemaking opportunity in Mariposa County. In addition to providing the community's preferred recreational programming, renovations to this county-owned property could engage both with site's dual Southern Sierra Miwuk and

gold mining heritage, and its role as a crucible for the impacts of climate change in the region and county. This approach aligns closely with the findings from the community survey, which revealed that respondents see "the natural environment" (78.9%, first highest scoring) and "history" (54.2%, third highest scoring) as priority themes to be explored through art and cultural events. As an outdoor environment, the park could also support the community's preference for increased outdoor art exhibits and programs. And while the site's proximity to Midpines makes it an ideal location for park uses geared towards residents, its transit connections, easy access from Highway 140, and existing parking lot could also support some level of visitation from tourists.

Right: East Point Park Bird Sanctuary Scarborough, Ontario
With creative use of materials and elements, intentional site design, informational kiosks and trailhead structures can be both informative and educational, while supporting park activities like wildlife viewing.

Next for First Steps & Potential Funding Sources

This project requires significant strategic planning action, and likely a full-fledged park master plan (and, if the Bear Creek Trail is to be pursued, trail master plan as well) which would emphasize storytelling, interpretation, and creative placemaking interventions as well as site design considerations for implementing the community's preferred recreational programs. Potential external funding sources include grants from the California State Parks program, Rural Recreation grant program, or other grant programs funded through Proposition 68. Additionally, the project's climate change adaptation and wildfire risk reduction components could make it attractive to other funding streams, such as those from the California Office of



Emergency Services associated with hazard mitigation, especially through vegetation management and hazardous fuels treatments. Grants could be targeted just to support planning work, or to support both planning and implementation actions. Finally, it's worth noting that the Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan recommended increasing the county's Transient Occupancy Tax to levels in line with other Sierra communities, and using the increased revenue to support multi-beneficial recreation projects like this one.

Still another route would be to apply for further assistance from the RTCA program to refine and build on the earlier feasibility assessment work. New tasks could include development of a

landowner engagement strategy, production of typical trail sections and other illustrative graphics, and identification of trail a governance and management structure.

Roles

Though Friends of Bear Creek Midpines no longer exists, many of its former members are involved in the Upper Merced River Watershed Council or the Midpines Planning Advisory Committee. One or both of these stakeholder groups could partner with the Mariposa County Planning and/or Public Works Departments and the Arts Council to pursue funding to implement this recommendation.

PROJECT 5: MIDPINES COUNTY PARK

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Read more: Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy, "Recommendations, Projects" (p. 97-100).

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RECOMMENDATIONS: PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATIONS 4

RECOMMENDATIONS 4



1 CURATED, SITE-SPECIFIC TEMPORARY ART

Site-specific art is artwork created for a specific location. The artist(s)'s conceptual, material and technical choices are responsive to identified environmental, social, cultural or economic dynamics relevant to a particular place, the **Ah-Lo-Mah'** piece created for this planning process is a good example of this. The contextualized nature of site-specific art projects invites: participatory experiences designed to inspire curiosity; a call to action; civic engagement and/or social bonding all while building greater public investment for priority locations.

107 // Programs: Temporary Art

"I think Mariposa is on the edge of really evolving to be a more inclusive, proactive, welcoming & thoughtful community. I would love to be involved in art & cultural activities that bring folks of different backgrounds together in dialogue in some way."

As evidenced by both *This Must be the Place* and the online survey, the community of Mariposa feels very connected to outdoor locations and has identified a clear preference for artistic and cultural projects and programs that explore the environment/environmental conservation and the community's cultural and social dynamics through representative, diverse forms of art - themes and methods which temporary site specific artwork are well-suited.

Since Mariposa is only just developing a formal public art program and policies and the community is just starting to unwrap what a robust creative placemaking portfolio in Mariposa

might look like, the temporary nature of this program creates space for experimentation and the conditions under which:

- Artists can leverage and utilize innovative and experimental techniques, processes and aesthetics
- Multiple voices and perspectives on a particular subject matter can be artistically expressed over time
- The community can experience and enjoy a rich and dynamic variety of diverse public artwork.

It is important to note, site-specific artwork encompasses

all art practices including dance, media arts, music, theatre, and the visual arts and this program encourages the inclusion of all artistic fields and practices. Additionally, multiple site-specific pieces can be curated and presented as an exhibition or public pop-up event designed to promote social, recreational, economic, and civic engagement opportunities.

LEFT: **George Ai Weiwei at Alcatraz, 2014 - 2018**, For-rite Foundation

As a part of *Be-origo*, three containers of a fleet of natural images laid out across the floor and made of digital portraits of the people from around the world who have been imprisoned or exiled because of their beliefs, or affiliation, most of whom were still incarcerated as the site the artwork was made.

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Roles

Ideally, this program will allow for a wide variety of individual artists, organization and community coalitions to contribute and share artistic content and work across Mariposa. The Arts Council, Planning Department and CPAC are well poised and prepared to develop the approval and procedural framework, working with other County Departments and organizations, such as Public Works, to ensure a smooth experience for anyone wanting to conceptualize and implement a

site-specific temporary project. The Arts Council and CPAC will also, on an ongoing basis, develop and deliver demonstration projects responding to issues and needs identified by community stakeholders.

Mobility Davis, 2019
Current Projects for High Line, New York

Mobility Davis is an innovative, collaborative performance in which a marching band (during March Band stops) is a site-specific score is guidance for negotiating one's surroundings. The work transforms the white cube—a symbol of someone with visual impairment—into a collective, social experience that opens up ways of thinking about one's surroundings, very a normative hierarchy of the senses.

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Right: Detail of basketry in the *Ah-Lo-Mah'* installation.

PROGRAM 1: CURATED/SITE SPECIFIC TEMPORARY ART

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priority locations. As evidenced by both ***This Must be the Place*** and the online survey, the community of Mariposa feels very connected to outdoor locations and has identified a clear preference for artistic and cultural projects and programs that explore the environment/environmental conservation, and the community's cultural and social dynamics through representative, diverse forms of art - themes and methods which temporary site specific artwork are well-suited.

Read more: Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy, "Recommendations, Programs" (p. 107-110).

Creative Placemaking Strategy Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS: PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATIONS 4

RECOMMENDATIONS 4



2 LAND PRESERVATION & INTERPRETIVE ART

The natural environment and the county's undeveloped landscapes are Mariposa's most universally valued asset. As overwhelmingly evidenced in every aspect of the stakeholder engagement process for this planning process, Mariposa residents feel a deep and profound connection to and appreciation for the region's wide variety of natural landscapes and vast swaths of uninterpreted vistas. In addition to scenic viewsheds and ample recreational space, Mariposa's open land provides important habitat and migratory corridors for a sizable number of threatened species; is home to many indigenous plant species providing unique ecosystems and landscapes that are important to the first people of this region; and support much of California's watershed.



LEFT: Nancy Cahill, "Margin of Error" 2019

Augmented reality creates the glass ceiling, revealing fragile environmental issues, land art and technology, and a woman's place in these worlds.

LOWER: Wax & Tree

Daniel Microminis & Mary O'Brien. This watershed sculpture and wildlife restoration habitat is designed to give advantage to local nature systems.

ABOVE: California Cathedral, 2021

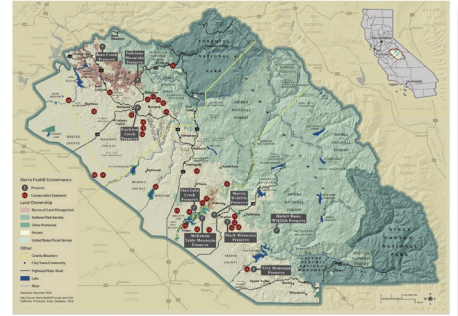
Alan Loh. Connectivity climate change and California's tree mortality issue, this sculpture is composed of many planks from tree species lost due to climate change held in a gallop. Above that echoes the subject form of California's Great Redwood and Monterey Pines.

The large majority of land in Mariposa is undeveloped and managed/protected by the National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Sierra Foothill Conservancy (regional non-profit land trust). Public investment, community engagement and environmental education are essential components of environmental conservation perfectly positioned to be supported by a wide breadth of public art interventions and creative placemaking projects.

This recommendation proposes utilizing visual and media art projects and, when appropriate,

music, dance and theatre performances in concert with or lieu of traditional interpretive signage, brochures and environmental education/community programming. For example: an interpretive sign about tree mortality might be replaced with an interactive artistic intervention, made from fallen trees, inviting people to learn about the issue by engaging with the artwork; an augmented reality experience exploring issues pertaining to regional watersheds could support more traditional educational collateral; or a watershed sculpture, built with the help of community members, designed to physically

support the restoration of indigenous plants critical to wildfire prevention could be folded in with more traditional interpretive walks/talks and public restoration efforts. Public art and creative placemaking's ability to generate high visibility projects, support different learning modalities, invite deep participation and create punchy public awareness campaigns all in service to environmental conservation make this program highly responsive to both the values of Mariposa residents and the needs of the natural environment.



Conservation Area Map, Mariposa and Adjacent Counties Sierra Foothill Conservancy

The majority of land in Mariposa County and the larger surrounding region is undeveloped. This map, created by Sierra Foothill Conservancy, indicates how much of this undeveloped land is preserved and what organizations or agency are serving as a land steward.

Co-lead
w/ Sierra
with support
Planning

111 | Programs: Preservation + Interpretive Art

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PROGRAM 2: LAND PRESERVATION & INTERPRETIVE ART

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Public investment, community engagement and environmental education are essential components of environmental conservation perfectly positioned to be supported by a wide breadth of public art interventions and creative placemaking projects.

Read more: Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy, "Recommendations, Programs" (p. 111-114).

Creative Placemaking Strategy Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS: PROGRAMS



WORKING LANDS, WORKING ARTISTS

Call to Artists: Request for Letters of Intent

Leveraging Art and Design to Support Sustainable Agriculture Planning in Mariposa County

RECOMMENDATIONS | 4



4 ART & AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMING

As evidenced in the data collected by both *This Must Be the Place* and the online survey, connection to the land and the lifestyles that depend on the land, particularly agriculture, is deeply important to many Mariposans. Rightly so, agriculture is a historic and contemporary artery running throughout the county. Historic ranches, still in operation, heavily pepper the county; small, organic farms, no-till farms provide produce, fresh eggs and poultry for the regional community; orchards planted generations ago provide fruit for a local cidery; local grass fed beef, raised on conserved land supports the local land trust; vineyards and wineries dot the landscape; and niche farms are on the rise.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Considering the depth and breadth of agriculture's historic and present significance and the number of partners, resources and organizational effort this program would require, identifying partnership capacities, developing a strategic plan that outlines clear goals, roles, and a budget/funding sources would be a necessary first step. CPSSAC can initiate and apply for funding for this planning process while simultaneously beginning to draw together the diverse group of partners needed to make this program successful. Potential funding sources for the planning process include the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, California Arts Council and Cal Humanities. These state and federal funders will also be a potential source for implementation funding along with the Central Valley Community Foundation and regional/local sponsorship and partnership resources.

Roles

Given Mariposa's agriculture history, scale and diversity, this program's design and organization should be guided by a wide variety of agricultural stakeholders: including ranchers, farmers, agricultural-related business owners, the Mariposa Farm Bureau, Future Farmers of America, artistic/cultural practitioners, community historians, County's economic development professionals, CPSSAC and the Arts Council.

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Left: *Working Lands, Working Artists*, a program of Mariposa County and the Arts Council, will leverage art and design to support the County's Agricultural and Working Lands Conservation Plan (2023).

PROGRAM 4: ART & AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMING

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raised on conserved land supports the local land trust; vineyards and wineries dot the landscape; and niche farms are on the rise. Ranching, farming and the many businesses supporting these industries are critical features of Mariposa's history, current economy and cultural identity and are ripe for a creative placemaking program that leverages design and visual/ media/performing arts to explore the many historic and contemporary stories related to agriculture in Mariposa.

Read more: Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy, "Recommendations, Programs" (p. 119-120).

Creative Placemaking Strategy Summary

M Mariposa
Arts Council

