 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in this document are from Mariposa County residents and were collected through the community engagement and planning process that guided the Creative Placemaking Strategy. Respondent’s names have been withheld to preserve anonymity.

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Mariposa County Planning Department’s Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee

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In spring 2019, the Mariposa County Planning Department and Mariposa County Arts Council were jointly awarded support from the National Endowment for the Arts’ Our Town program to develop a countywide Creative Placemaking Strategy.

This effort was recommended in several community planning and direction-setting initiatives, especially the Mariposa County General Plan (2006), including the Economic Development, Arts and Culture, and Regional Tourism Elements, each of which contain goals, policies, and programs that weave together economic development objectives with efforts to enhance and celebrate Mariposa County’s cultural identity and sense of place. In addition to the General Plan, the Mariposa County Economic Vitality Strategy (2017) also recommends development of a coordinated and strategic approach to conceptualizing, investing in, and managing creative placemaking projects in the county.

Sandra Chapman
Ah-Lo-Meh’ Installation

Sandra Chapman, Southern Sierra Miwuk Elder and Tribal Council Chairperson, puts the finishing touches on traditional cradleboard style basket for Ah-Lo-Meh, a demonstration creative placemaking and public art project developed in concert with this Creative Placemaking Strategy (see Chapter 3).
From the outset, the project was devised to achieve three key tasks:

- **Lead** an innovative and stimulating community planning process engaging a diverse cross-section of the county to develop a vision for countywide creative placemaking;

- **Identify** creative placemaking priorities, and tangible policies, programs, and projects to achieve those priorities;

- **Organize** these planning and engagement outcomes in an accessible, user-friendly format that empowers the responsible parties to achieve the county’s creative placemaking vision.

The planning process began in fall 2019, and was completed in spring 2021. This Creative Placemaking Strategy documents and summarizes all of the work — the process, its recommendations, and the decisions made along the way — over nearly 18 months of art-driven community engagement and planning. Dialogue took place among Mariposans from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, amidst two devastating wildfires and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and required creative, adaptable community engagement techniques both to navigate hurdles like hazardous air quality and CDC guidance for safe social distance, and to solicit meaningful input from a variety of folks spread out in a geographically dispersed county.

These techniques and their outcomes — including both goals and aspirations for the county’s creative placemaking profile, and specific strategies for realizing it — are described in the INVESTIGATION chapter, preceded by this PREMISE chapter, which describes the planning context, defines key terms, and establishes the project’s assumptions, and the CURRENT CONDITIONS chapter, which relies on input from local practitioners to define the existing strengths and weaknesses in the community’s creative placemaking profile.

Finally, the RECOMMENDATIONS chapter identifies discrete programs, policies, and projects that the County, Arts Council, and practitioners throughout Mariposa County can implement to achieve our creative placemaking objectives.
The county’s proximity to Yosemite National Park and Gold Rush history have made these two institutions the primary focal points of local storytelling, placemaking, and marketing initiatives. And for good reason—these two narratives are major components contributing to Mariposa’s sense of place, and many current county residents can trace their histories back to the Gold Rush or Yosemite’s early days. Indeed, many of today’s county residents see the park and the region’s mining history as wellsprings of local identity and heritage. Additionally, gold mining and park tourism have historically been among the most potent economic drivers for the region. Today, while commercial and tourism-driven gold mining account for a small percentage of the county’s economic productivity, Yosemite continues to function as the economic engine on which much of Mariposa County’s prosperity rests. For example, Mariposa sees some one million annual visitors who are en route to or from Yosemite National Park. In general, tourism and visitation play essential roles in the county’s economic activity. In 2019, travel-related spending in Mariposa County totaled $467.2 million, and accounted for 4,100 jobs in the county, primarily in the accommodations and food service industries.

Much of this is revenue is generated through the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), which is levied on users of lodging accommodations, including hotels, motels, and short-term rentals in private homes such as those facilitated through third parties like Airbnb and VRBO. In a typical year, revenue from the TOT typically accounts for about 50% of Mariposa County’s anticipated general purpose revenue. After implementation of Measure M, a voter-supported 2% increase in the TOT to fund a range of community functions, the TOT was anticipated to generate $15.6M in general revenue for Mariposa County. However, the community’s heavy reliance on Yosemite to meet economic and cultural objectives is not without its limitations or risks. Recent developments, including reductions in federal funding and instability around public lands policy, have challenged the viability of the park as a tool for economic development. Even more pressing than uncertainty at the federal level are the impacts of climate change, which threaten park operations. While natural disasters like fire, flooding, drought, and rockslides are not new, recent increases in both frequency and severity have taken major tolls on the park and on our community.

Context & Settings

Rural Mariposa County occupies 1,463 square miles of the Sierra Nevada foothills, sitting at the western gateway to Yosemite National Park. The county also occupies the southern tip of the Mother Lode, and the Town of Mariposa was founded along Mariposa Creek in 1850 as a mining town.
For example, after burning nearly 100,000 acres and closing Yosemite National Park for over a month, the Ferguson Fire (2018) resulted in estimated $52.7M in overall economic losses. That year, Mariposa County only collected 43% of the anticipated TOT revenue that was anticipated in the annual budget. This is the lowest proportion of collected TOT since at least 2013. And, it is unlikely that this decrease is linked exclusively to the fire.

For example, though there were major fires in 2017 (Detwiler) and 2019 (Briceburg), these fires did not significantly impact park operations, and certainly did not close the park for as long as the Ferguson Fire. The proportion of TOT collected in these years was substantially higher in those years than in 2018, indicating that it was the closure of the park—not simply the occurrence of a wildfire—that caused the shortfall in TOT.

However economically prudent, the emphasis of Yosemite and the Gold Rush as icons of local sense of place excludes other complex, dynamic, and place-specific qualities that define our community.

It also obscures what some in Mariposa County view as the ecologically and culturally destructive legacies of this heritage, which entail wholesale changes to Sierra Foothills landscapes and ecosystems, and significant trauma for indigenous peoples who were displaced to accommodate the Gold Rush and the establishment of the park.

Furthermore, though history and heritage are important components of a community’s identity, over-reliance on historic narratives can at times crowd out narratives that capture contemporary or even future-facing experiences and perspectives in Mariposa County. Determining and then establishing an appropriate balance between historic and contemporary stories is an important component of promoting equity and inclusion throughout Mariposa County.

And though difficult to quantify, there can be little doubt that a community that strives to articulate rich, diverse, and compelling stories about its spirit and identity will be attractive to tourists and visitors. As will be described in more detail in the Investigation chapter, current Mariposa County residents see more inclusive storytelling initiatives as essential for promoting the county as a destination in its own right. Rather than “just a stop on the way to Yosemite,” representative and vital creative placemaking initiatives can advance Mariposa County as a place to visit, explore, connect with, linger in, and come back to—with the potential for widespread benefits to the local tourism economy as well as Mariposans’ quality of life.
Defining Creative Placemaking

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.

The intentions are to:

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

- **Increase** Mariposas connection to their home, neighbors, landscape, and to the civic life of their county of residence, while producing placemaking projects that reflect the full diversity of Mariposa’s rich identity.

- **Increase** our county’s capacity to leverage creative placemaking as a framework to stimulate our economy, support the health of regional landscapes, and promote social equity in our rural community.

"Creative placemaking" is a famously nebulous and difficult to define concept. And while this flexibility allows it to encompass a range of practices, principles, and approaches, it can present challenges when recommending specific strategies or modifications to the way communities support and apply art and design. Many credible organizations offer their own perspective on creative placemaking, and there is no shortage of viable, compelling definitions.

For the purposes of the Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy, the National Endowment for the Arts offers the most appropriate and effective understanding, quoted above.
This framework provides practitioners with a seemingly limitless variety of tools and disciplines to apply art and design for improving their communities. Common project types under the creative placemaking umbrella are often temporary or permanent public art, like sculptures, but can also include public spaces, like parklets, plazas and trails. Creative placemaking practices might also refer to processes of making, like a collaborative mural project, or to programs, like an ongoing initiative to fund many murals (rather than a specific one). Finally, in the context of a community like Mariposa County, specific policies might support or hinder creative placemaking practices. Creating a regulatory environment that is conducive to practices like these is an important component of facilitating creative placemaking initiatives.

To be sure, these kinds of activities currently take place in Mariposa County, and have taken place for generations. However, in the absence of a plan informed by community input, creative placemaking initiatives have lacked a coherent vision or coordinated approach. This document is the first attempt at establishing direction and intention for creative placemaking practices in Mariposa County, and identifying steps that the county, Arts Council, and practitioners from inside and outside of the Mariposa County can take to ensure that those practices have the highest benefit for our community.
Intention & Purpose

The Creative Placemaking Strategy has multiple audiences, and is intended to be valuable for a wide range of stakeholders and implementers.

First, many (if not most) of the recommendations are relevant for key Mariposa County agencies. These include the Planning, Public Works, and Administration (including economic development and housing staff) departments. The Mariposa County Arts Council will also play a key role in implementing the recommendations that follow, especially the programs and policies.

However, it is critical to note that in order for the plan to be effective, support for and stewardship of its recommendations must be spread throughout the community. This includes key stakeholders like the Alliance for Community Transformations, Sierra Foothills Conservancy, Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau, American Indian Council of Mariposa County, and Mariposa Unified School District. Additionally, it is important for other community organizations to identify and set to work on the recommended actions that resonate with their respective missions and interest areas.

Finally, all manner of creative placemaking practitioners in Mariposa County have a role to play in ensuring this plan’s success. The plan’s recommendations—including programs, policies, and specific projects—are the community’s ideas, and stem from the vision and direction provided by the community throughout this process. While the plan and its key implementers can provide resources and technical support for artists, designers, and those seeking to leverage art and design to engage with critical community issues, ultimately it’s up to Mariposans to test, explore, and apply creative placemaking practices in Mariposa County.
While the specific lens of creative placemaking may be relatively new to Mariposa, arts, culture and creativity have always been tightly woven into Mariposa’s social fabric and deeply appreciated by the community at large. Inspired to interpret the region’s natural grandeur, cultural history and the unique facets of rural life, many artists and performers have made Mariposa, and the surrounding region, their home. The community has also demonstrated a solid commitment to raising the visibility of Mariposa through cultural events that gather residents and visitors and support local, national and international artists. This chapter details the who, what, where, why, when and how of the County’s current creative community and economy, in order to provide a baseline understanding of Mariposa’s current creative capacity, latent potential and challenges, while also beginning to identify how the application of creative placemaking policies, projects and programs can significantly expand the impact of existing and future artistic endeavors in Mariposa.

Brent Deshazer
This Must Be the Place submission, Merced River, YNP

Mariposa County’s dramatic landscapes and deep photographic history have long attracted photographers. That heritage is also an important part of contemporary artistic practice among Mariposa County residents and visitors.
Mariposa's Creative Community

Currently, the creative community in Mariposa consists of individual artists/artisans and performers, the Mariposa County Arts Council, the county’s Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee (CPSAC), a handful of local non-profit arts organizations, commercial businesses, and community-driven volunteer organizations, all of which are detailed below.

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS/PERFORMERS

Mariposa is gifted with a sizable population of artists and performers working in the visual arts, media arts, music, theatre and the literary arts, and a smaller group of individuals who practice dance.

The majority of artists and performers living in Mariposa split their energy and time between their art and their “day job,” or are retired and able to fully devote themselves to their artistic practice. The few working artists who are making their living solely through their art, also regularly work as teaching artists inside and/or outside the county. Local artists and performers often work together on grassroots initiatives and projects that bring more attention to their work and serve as community building efforts, such as Art on the River and the Mariposa/Yosemite Artists Group. Ultimately, while the county contains both a large number and wide diversity of talented creative placemaking practitioners, Mariposa is not currently home to a critical mass of individuals whose work is informed by social practice, situated within larger cultural, social, and/or environmental dialogues, formally exhibiting their work in professionally sanctioned institutions and fully committed to marketing and promoting their work per industry standards.

THE MARIPOSA COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

The county’s largest arts non-profit organization has a mission to support all forms of the cultural arts, for all ages, throughout Mariposa County.

The Arts Council is supported by three full-time staff (Executive Director, Operations Manager, and Programs/Communications Coordinator) and receives a small allocation from the County of Mariposa to serve as the county’s primary cultural provider and state-local partner to the California Arts Council. The Arts Council’s work focuses on the development and implementation of artistic programming and creative placemaking, cultural and education policy designed to support the economic, social, ecological and cultural vitality of Mariposa. Arts Council programs include:

- Mariposa Symphony Orchestra (MSO) consists of 50-75 regional classical musicians and performs 7-8 concerts per year.
- Music on the Green Summer Concert Series is a live music program in downtown Mariposa’s outdoor Art Park every Friday and Saturday night in the summer months.
- Mariposa Theater Alliance is an association of producing theatre artists who foster and promote theatre through Mariposa County and stage multiple productions annually.
- Treetop Gallery is a studio and gallery space used for curated exhibitions and public programming.

Cultural Events & Programs for General Audiences:

- Designed in partnership with county government departments and other community benefit organizations focused on topics like human services and environmental conservation, these programs are dynamic and designed to provide rigorous, sequential arts learning experiences to specific populations, including school-aged students in Mariposa County, justice system-engaged adults and youth, at-risk youth, indigenous communities, elderly residents, geographically isolated populations, veterans, and the community at large.

Arts Education and Lifespan Learning Programs:

- Residents of Sierra Quest Academy Group Home work with artist-in-residence Dave Kim – a LA/Bay Area artist to design and execute a mural outside their home in Mariposa.
MARIPOSA COUNTY CREATIVE PLACEMAKING STRATEGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CPSAC)

Established in 2018 and administered by the county’s Planning Department, the Mariposa County Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee provides guidance and support to the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors on issues related to creative placemaking and planning for creative placemaking investments.

This committee was created to support both the county’s General Plan and Economic Vitality Strategy by building capacity and developing creative placemaking goals, policies, projects and programs designed to encourage economic development and enhance Mariposa’s sense of place and cultural identity.

As a formal planning advisory committee, the group was authorized by a resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors, which states that members “should be selected from or represent the following groups in Mariposa County:”

- Mariposa County Arts Council
- Mariposa Chamber of Commerce
- Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau
- Mariposa County Economic Development Corporation
- American Indian Council of Mariposa County
- Yosemite National Park
- Transportation Center Citizens Advisory Committee
- Historic Sites and Records Preservation Commission
- Local Business Owners
- Practicing Artists and Creators

Additionally, the committee may call upon representatives of other organizations and the general public as resources on certain topics related to creative placemaking, including musicians, foodmakers, and individuals involved in resource conservation; and Two (2) Ex-Officio (non-voting) members from the Board of Supervisors.

The group has monthly public meetings, which are governed by the Brown and Maddy Acts. Historically, the committee has provided guidance and leadership for various relevant community initiatives, such as the Creek Week event for the Mariposa Creek Parkway planning effort, and as will be described in further detail in the following chapter, the development of this strategic plan. Additionally, the committee plays an important role in acquiring funding to support creative placemaking planning initiatives. To date, CPSAC has helped secure a Smart Growth America/Transportation for American capacity building grant (2018), organized creative programming in support of stakeholder engagement for the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan, and been awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant to develop this Creative Placemaking Strategy.

Creek Week, 2019
The Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee was instrumental in planning and implementing Creek Week, the key community engagement milestone in the development of the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan.

Creek Week, 2019
Creek Week applied creative placemaking practices, including temporary pop-up installations, interactive engagement exercises, and place-based art making to both support a community planning effort, and activate a strategic area in Mariposa’s built environment.

"Arts play a key role in reflecting and experiencing the community. It breaks through what's necessary to live and express what is possible in our imagination . . . communities that are invested in art feel more inclusive and provide a higher quality of living."
COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT ARTS & CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Beyond the Arts Council, there are a handful of non-profit arts or cultural organizations who organize and produce creative events and cultural programming for the community.

These organizations typically are run by volunteers, volunteer boards, or a single part-time employee and have a focused mission or area of interest. While not an exhaustive list, the following is a representative sampling of these organizations:

**Butterfly Festival**
An annual, multi-day festival event celebrating the Spanish name of the historic Gold Rush town of Mariposa, which means butterfly. The event includes a parade, food, vendors and artists, music and entertainment, family games and activities, bounce houses, pony rides, parachuters, movies, and butterfly releases in the historic corridor of the town of Mariposa and the Mariposa County Fairgrounds.

**American Indian Council of Mariposa County (AICMC)**
Each Mother’s Day weekend, the AICMC – aka the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation – organizes a traditional Native American celebration. To most people this celebration is known as the Mariposa Pow Wow but, to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation it is known as Chi-Tock-Non Kote-U-Pu. The event is important, not only as a celebration of Native American culture, song and dance but also as a fundraiser for scholarships to support the Native students pursuing higher education.

**Yosemite Songwriters Retreat**
An annual songwriting retreat celebrating the craft of songwriting and the art of performing original songs. The event supports songwriters of all skill levels and genres, creates an inspiring and supportive community, and provides a safe space where individuals can express themselves through music. The retreat includes classes, workshops, mentoring, performance and recording opportunities. Open to individuals over the age of 18.

**Mariposa County Fair**
Mariposa’s largest community gathering, “The Fair,” features juried exhibitions of arts and crafts submitted by community members of all ages. The event also includes live music and square and line dancing performances.

**Sierra Art Trails**
Based in neighboring Madera County but serving Mariposa County, this organization organizes a large scale, annual open studio tour featuring approximately 100 regional visual artists and artisans. Sierra Art Trails also organizes workshops, demonstrations, lectures, and special exhibits for artists and the general public and raises funds for student sponsorships, school art programs, public art, and other art related projects and organizations.

**Yosemite Renaissance**
Annual juried art exhibition located on multiple sites and consisting of contemporary visual artwork depicting Yosemite and the surrounding Sierra Nevada mountains submitted by artists from around the world. Yosemite Renaissance also manages an Artist-in-Residency program formerly administered by the National Park Service.

**Sierra Artists Gallery**
Cooperative gallery featuring unique art and gifts from artisans of Mariposa County, the surrounding Sierra foothill area and Yosemite National Park.

**Yosemite Conservancy’s Happy Isle Art & Nature Center**
Located in Yosemite National Park’s Happy Isles and offering a variety of art classes and art supplies for purchase.
LOCAL BUSINESSES

Several businesses in Mariposa either focus specifically on the arts or integrate art into their business model, thus supporting artists and performers. These businesses vary greatly in terms of how they include artistic endeavors into their commercial ventures but the abbreviated list below illustrates several examples of how commercial efforts in Mariposa are leveraging the arts.

Commercial galleries in the area feature regional artists and artisans or art that is representative of the region (Ridgeline Gallery, Castro’s Fine Art and Wine, Faith Rumms Studios and Gallery, Ansel Adams Gallery).

Bars and restaurants often serve as a venue for performing and visual artists (the Alley, the Grove House, the Yosemite Bug Rustic Resort and Spa, Coulter Cafe, Big Table Ranch, etc.). In addition to working with local artists and performers directly, these businesses often also serve as a venue for events organized by other organizations.

A number of artists, musicians and dancers provide art/music/dance lessons full time to people of all ages and incorporate performances for the community into their participants’ instruction. Some of these teaching artists also provide scholarship opportunities for individuals who cannot afford private lessons. For example, Pathos, a screen printing shop, integrates art production apprenticeships and mentorship into their business model.

GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

Across the county, many local service, community and volunteer groups build artistic and creative initiatives into their local fundraising and community building events. These events are often dynamic and evolving, however the following are examples of longstanding programs of this nature:

- **CoyoteFest**
  Community festival in Coulterville featuring vendors, a parade, car show and music. Held as a fundraiser for the Northern Mariposa County History Center.

- **Mariposa County’s Rotary Art & Wine Festival**
  Held yearly on Memorial Day weekend on the Mariposa County historic Courthouse lawn, this event is a Rotary fundraiser featuring the work of local artists and artisans and wines from local vineyards and wineries.

- **Oktoberfest, Winter Festival, St. Patrick’s Day Party & Spring Fling**
  Yosemite Employee Association’s (YEA) quarterly community events feature live music and are fundraising and community building events.

- **Pathos Screenprinting**
  Funds from Pathos supplement their sister non profit organization, Ethos, a Help Center for youth in Mariposa.
These are all valuable attributes that should be celebrated, bolstered and leveraged by the strategies and recommendations explored in this document. Additionally, the Creative Placemaking Strategy can support Mariposa’s creative community in a variety of ways.

First, in addition to growing local capacity for creative expression, the plan can identify opportunities to deepen the impact of existing local creative placemaking initiatives by integrating them into strategic sites and projects, such as public spaces and new infrastructure. The creative placemaking framework can also provide local practitioners the freedom to address topics that ask questions, stimulate curiosity and deepen our collective understanding about what makes Mariposa special and unique. Finally, by positioning Mariposa County as a regional and statewide leader in vibrant creative placemaking practice and authentic local storytelling, the plan will contribute to making Mariposa County an attractive standalone destination for a range of audiences, including artists of renown working in relevant fields and on relevant projects.

By raising the county’s profile for and ability to support non-local artists, the plan and its recommendations will generate opportunities to develop local talent through mentorship, collaborations, and larger professional networks. Not only will this facilitate larger audiences and greater financial compensation for local artists and practitioners, but it will also help situate and connect the community of Mariposa to issues, movements and opportunities beyond its boundaries.

Both the depth and breadth of the creative community in Mariposa reflect the high level of community buy-in the arts enjoy, the partnerships and civic engagement it supports, and the authentic spirit and grassroots energy it’s powered by.
While cultural events and galleries abound in Mariposa, public art and creative placemaking projects are limited to a handful of aging murals depicting select elements of the county’s history, flora and fauna and memorials/art pieces honoring the county’s veterans or the 9/11 attacks, nearly all of which are concentrated in the Town of Mariposa.

To varying degrees, these pieces are embraced by some Mariposans, and certainly many of their themes resonate with residents and visitors. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, many county residents critique these works as straightforward in nature, not contextualized within the landscape and offer little in terms of civic engagement, community dialogue or nuanced narratives. Still others feel like the themes and experiences depicted in the county’s existing public art portfolio are not representative of the county’s many cultures, histories, and narratives. In a community full of artists, cultural events and arts education initiatives, the thin collection of public art and creative placemaking projects indicates something is amiss, and signals an opportunity to refine the community’s desires and goals in this area. The aim is to develop policies and resources that encourage and support the creation of engaging, integrated public art and creative placemaking assets representative of the community as a whole and designed to create a distinct and rich sense of place.

"Let’s embed quality, thought provoking, representative art all over the place!"

9/11 Memorial Installation, 2011
Ziv Schlickoren Russell
This piece is prominently located near the 4th Street entrance to the Mariposa Art Park.

Mariposa Mural, 2018
Located on the Pizza Factory building at the Southern entrance to downtown Mariposa.
This mural was destroyed by a fire in 2012 and recreated by Sal Maccarone in 2013.
While there is no performing arts center or large exhibition space in Mariposa, there are several traditional and non-traditional venues and event sites scattered throughout the county. These provide a variety of indoor and outdoor options in terms of size, cost, acoustic and equipment quality, and accessibility.

Available venues are generally well-suited for small events and performances, creating an intimate, unique and affordable experience for producers, performers and the audience. Larger festivals and events needing a public venue are limited to the Mariposa County High School Fiester Auditorium, the Mariposa County Fairgrounds, or the Mariposa County Park Amphitheater, all of which have sizable stages or stage extensions and can seat between 250 - 500 people, but have challenging acoustical qualities.

The Mariposa County Art Park is an outdoor venue with a smaller stage but can accommodate 600+ audience members. The limited larger venue options and the costs associated with renting them do create problematic issues of scale for events and organizations which can dictate and limit the design and scope of a program. While beyond the scope of this project, a contemporary performing arts center would be a significant asset for the community and open up a world of possibilities for existing and future programs.

The Mariposa County Art Park is an outdoor venue with a smaller stage but can accommodate 600+ audience members. The limited larger venue options and the costs associated with renting them do create problematic issues of scale for events and organizations which can dictate and limit the design and scope of a program. While beyond the scope of this project, a contemporary performing arts center would be a significant asset for the community and open up a world of possibilities for existing and future programs. An important aspect of the creative placemaking framework is its emphasis on common spaces, infrastructure, and the built and natural environment as opportunities for engagement and expression. By moving art experiences out of the realm of traditional venues and ticketed seats and into the public realm, this approach helps integrate art and culture into our daily lives. Through the lens of creative placemaking, then, stages and exhibition spaces can be found everywhere. This approach expands the reach of artists, activates locations that need attention, uplifts individuals, and broadens opportunities for organic civic engagement and community building. Given the limited nature of venues and the vast expanses of public space in Mariposa, the potential for shifting programming and projects into the public realm is significant and exciting. Furthermore, events like the Butterfly Festival, CoyoteFest, Creek Week, and Music on the Green demonstrate the allure of cultural events and programs offered in easily accessible public spaces. The success of these events suggest a significant opportunity to develop and expand artistically innovative programming and projects in public spaces.

LEFT Mariposa County Park Amphitheater Mariposa Arts Council
Mariposa County Park Amphitheater serves as both an outdoor venue and a blackbox theater. Mariposa Symphony Orchestra performs their Independence Day Spectacular, 2018.

RIGHT Rue Mapp for TEDxYosemite
Fiester Auditorium Mariposa County High School
The Fiester Auditorium was constructed as a part of the New Deal-era Works Progress Administration program and is a well-used venue. Rue Mapp, Founder of Outdoor Afro speaks at TEDxYosemite - held at the auditorium in 2015.
Current Creative Placemaking Themes

Though there are certainly exceptions, the components of Mariposa County’s existing creative placemaking portfolio are linked by several themes that are reflected both in projects’ aesthetic qualities and functional intent. These are worth exploring as they illuminate both the inspirations and innovations that define much of the county’s creative community, and the opportunities to expand the role of the arts and culture in Mariposa.

Following in the footsteps of renowned painters like Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Hill and famous photographers such as Carleton Watkins, Eadweard Muybridge, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, the natural landscape, specifically Yosemite National Park, the Merced River Canyon and the Sierra Nevada foothills are heavily represented and celebrated by the majority of the region’s visual artists. Though their mediums and techniques may vary from traditional plein air painting to composite digital photography, the majority of work by Mariposa’s visual artists provides a rich exploration of the many facets of the County’s natural history - from the delicate details of native flora to the sweeping grand vistas of the county’s dramatic topography - in a representative style favoring traditional aesthetics over conceptualism.
Also leaning into the natural history of the region, Mariposa’s public art and community imagery often centers around butterflies. The county is situated along the migratory path of many species of butterflies, an aspect of the county’s heritage and sense of place significant enough to be its namesake. Upon reaching the area what would become Mariposa County, Spanish colonists were so struck by the abundance of butterflies in the area that they named the municipality after them.

Additionally, specific components of Mariposa’s cultural history, specifically, the California Gold Rush, the region’s ranching and agricultural communities, and the unique qualities of rural life, are common sources of inspiration frequently represented by regional artists. These themes are heavily featured in public art, leveraged by cultural community events, and utilized as popular design motifs for local businesses and wayfinding assets.

For example, the County has adopted Gold Rush Design Review Guidelines developed by the Historic Sites, Records and Preservation Commission which provides detailed information and a rich design history of the “Gold Rush” style. The guidelines state that within the County’s historic districts (downtown Mariposa and Coulterville) buildings and structures will be built, remodeled and/or restored to conform to the “Gold Rush” style. “Gold Rush” style is introduced by stating, “...the Mother Lode Region was settled by individualists... a personality trait that is expressed in the architectural style that can generally be termed “Gold Rush.” Specifically, “Gold Rush” style is defined in the guidelines as an amalgam of different Victorian styles that reflect the background of the early day settlers.

Finally, while not particularly visible in public art, galleries or cultural events intended for a general audience, there are many creative programs, art education and lifespan learning initiatives, and grassroots efforts that are participatory in design. These are focused on creating art that amplifies the voices, perspectives, new ideas, stories and narratives of individuals, communities and issues in Mariposa who/that are underrepresented and often marginalized, under-served and in need. Frequently offered in partnership with the county agencies and departments such as Health and Human Services, Probation, Public Works, the Sheriff’s Office and the Mariposa County Office of Education, these programs address community goals and provide opportunities for art learning and making while also providing a platform to use art as an impactful communication channel and awareness building tool. Significantly, the majority of creative projects addressing current issues in Mariposa are arts education/art instruction programs designed for people new to the field. Projects by professional artists considering current issues and offering nuanced and delicate stories celebrating our county’s diversity are scarce.

These three key themes—the region’s natural landscape, it’s cultural history, and contemporary narrative—offer an impressive wealth of distinct and connected stories and issues ripe for artistic exploration and interpretation.

The impact of climate change on local ecosystems, the increasingly vulnerable status of the Monarch butterfly and the historic and current issues affecting the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation are just a few examples of the many topics that could be explored through creative placemaking projects in an effort to disrupt aesthetic silos, illuminate interesting themes and stories embedded in our natural and social ecosystems, and feed discussions about Mariposa County’s sense of place.
Funding & Sustainability

Broadly speaking, the primary narrative surrounding arts, culture and creative placemaking priorities in Mariposa focuses on leveraging the arts to support the local economy and increase the positive visibility of Mariposa to visitors. As such, the creative community receives a great deal of formal and informal pressure from within the county as a whole to design programming and projects to attract tourists.

For example, cultural events targeting out-of-town travelers are held during Yosemite’s “shoulder season” before Memorial Day and after Labor Day, when visitation is typically low - are more likely to receive sponsorship from local businesses and the Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau. While extremely modest (typically between $1,000 - $15,000 in total), this sponsorship, and a massive army of volunteer support, is critical to the success of any creative endeavor as ticketed and admissions-based programming have, historically, not generated even a fraction of the needed income to sustain programs and events. This being the case, careful consideration of the practical nuances of sustainability and funding for creative projects and programs in Mariposa is necessary.

Eager to support the County’s economy, over the years, local individuals, grassroots groups, and organizations have generated a lot of good ideas for cultural projects and programs which have quickly translated into real events and tangible projects thanks to the enthusiastic participation of volunteers.

These efforts typically follow one of the three following trajectories:

For large scale, admission-based festivals and programs generally geared to visitors, which sadly, despite robust ticket sales, significant sponsorship, powerful volunteer support, and substantial in-kind donations have all gone dark. Case in point, in the past ten years, beloved events and organizations such as the Mariposa Storytelling Festival, the Carter Ranch/Yosemite Music Festival, the Untz Festival, and the 6th Street Cinema have all run their course or closed their doors. While each had unique challenges that contributed to their demise, a common thread appears to be an issue of scale. For many years, these events, programs and organizations experienced success while operating at a small or modest scale which responded to the capacity of volunteers to run the event/program and the local population to support it. However, as the programs or events grew, they also buckled under their own weight as the financial outlay became more substantial and the demands on an exhausted and shrinking volunteer core became unsustainable. At the end of the day, venue and equipment costs, artists fees, insurance, other necessary production expenses, and most significantly the need for professional staff far outweighed earned and donated revenue.
Programs and events that maintain a conservative scale and have been shrewdly designed to require minimal expenses to produce, such as the Mariposa Symphony Orchestra and the Mariposa Theatre Alliance remain relatively stable and enjoy modest and sustained success, always staying in the black thanks to a combination of admissions, sponsorships, minimal staff and immense volunteer time. However, the challenging dynamics with which these programs grapple should be noted. Again, these programs rely heavily on volunteers, specifically a founder/creative director who works nearly full time to ensure both the artistic quality and practical needs are covered and without whom the program would cease to exist. Additionally, under the guidance of these talented volunteer leaders and the volunteer artists and performers involved, these programs demonstrate great potential for growth and expansion. Yet, knowing full well the structural funding constraints that come with scaling up, these programs remain innovative, performing in unexpected locations and foster traditional and non-traditional partnerships that bring their work to new audiences - often free of charge.

While this flexibility is deeply commendable and aligned with creative placemaking goals, the situations necessitating this agility can, at times, be frustrating and demoralizing for those involved.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it's worth noting two special dynamics embedded in these programs - in addition to attracting visitors, these programs invest a great deal of time and attention developing beautiful communities of artistic practice for regional residents and sensitively respond to the unique nuances of Mariposa. These events are lovingly embraced by both the local community and tourists and offer valuable lessons for future creative placemaking programs. Additionally, there is potential for future creative placemaking policy to ease the organizational process of producing these events for the many individuals (often volunteers) and organizations who work so hard to pull off these successful community events.

Ambitious creative placemaking events and experiences offered free of charge such as the Butterfly Festival, Music on the Green Summer Concert Series, Rotary’s Arts and Wine Festival and CoyoteFest enjoy thundering success, drawing large crowds of both visitors and locals. While each event is designed differently, all are still largely powered by volunteer organizers and artists/performers and, with the exception of Music on the Green, include features and activities that extend beyond the arts. These events also successfully leverage Mariposa County’s intrinsic rural vibe and gently highlight something special about the community (local fauna, agriculture/viticulture, Bluegrass/ Americana/Folk music, etc.). These events are lovingly embraced by both the local community and tourists and offer valuable lessons for future creative placemaking programs.

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However, it’s also the canary in the coal mine and, moving forward, the prevailing narrative connecting the arts to visitation and economic development needs to be balanced with serious consideration of sustainability, the real cost of events and programming, the capacity of volunteers and the importance of the arts in our community beyond economic development.

Furthermore, while our region lacks a significant corporate philanthropic presence and it is nearly impossible to secure grants to support “art for art’s sake” in the true spirit of creative placemaking, connecting art to unique community stories and goals addressing equity, public health, public safety, infrastructure, climate change, robust civic dialogue and community development, the representation of marginalized individuals and populations, equitable access to rigorous arts education, etc. opens up a world of sustainable state and federal funding opportunities.

Funding of this nature often requires demonstrable evidence of the community’s needs and desires and codified cultural strategy and policy found in this document, individuals and organizations throughout Mariposa seeking to apply for significant grant funding are encouraged to use the plan as supportive documentation.

Clearly, Mariposa is fortunate to be populated with so many people willing and able to volunteer generously of their time to creative endeavors designed to support the local economy through visitation. This is an amazing community dynamic that future creative placemaking projects and programs can both support and leverage.

That said, it has significant downsides, namely:

- Because the process is informal, moving a project forward can be confusing or daunting. This creates barriers to access and has led to inequitable processes. Producers must muddle their way through informal approval pathways and the community’s “unwritten rules”, which makes it challenging for novice, and even established, individuals and organizations to engage.

- The absence of a thoughtful vetting process compromises diversity of content, leaders/creators/artists, and quality. This is particularly significant in terms of demographic representation and aesthetics. As explored in the following chapter, many Mariposans believe that not all cultures, histories and populations are well-represented through both the artists presented and messages conveyed in public spaces. Additionally, there is not much variety in content and aesthetics, with most public artworks and discussion of artistic assets focusing on a romantic or caricature version of a small slice of the region’s history.

- The lack of cultural or creative placemaking policy makes it difficult to demonstrate the cohesive government/non-profit partnerships and community goals needed to be competitive for federal and state funding. Therefore, having one’s own funding has historically allowed one to pursue a public art or creative placemaking project and closed the process off to individuals and organizations unable to independently fund a project.

Given these challenges, this document and the surrounding burgeoning creative placemaking culture and resources being developed offer an opportunity to open access to and strengthen Mariposa’s public art and creative placemaking portfolio by crafting policy and procedures that consider and support community placemaking goals.
Existing creative placemaking efforts serve as a solid foundation and baseline for supporting and expanding Mariposa’s current and future artistic placemaking portfolio in a manner that reflects and contributes to the unique qualities that make Mariposa special. The next chapter looks beyond Mariposa’s creative community and investigates how the community at large envisions the potential future of arts, culture and creative placemaking in Mariposa.

"Art should be leverage to support larger social, economic, & environmental issues. It could expand our imagination as a community."

Current conditions in Mariposa illuminate a rich community-driven artistic ecosystem, built authentically and organically over the years.

Music on the Green
Cottonwood Creek, photo by Sierra Portraits, 2018

Country singer/songwriter Maggie Lane welcomes young concert-goers on stage during the Music on the Green summer concert series. These performances take place weekly throughout the summer and are extremely popular with both residents and visitors.
"I'm excited about work that connects settlers with their own histories and to indigenous stewardship of the land, via land based engagement and artistic response. I am excited about programming for youth that offers them a chance to artistically process and respond to the conditions they are living in... I am excited about programming that helps people connect with each other and co-create."

Ah-Lo’-Meh’ weaving
Mariposa Arts Council

Members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk gather to weave various components of Ah-Lo’-Meh’
Creative Placemaking Strategy Process

From the outset, the planning effort approached creative placemaking as both an end result (this is, after all, a Creative Placemaking Strategy driven by community input on that theme), but also as a means to getting there. Through creative placemaking practice, then, the planning team sought to drive a planning process to influence future investments in additional creative placemaking projects, programs, and policies.

**This strategy has several benefits:**

- Art-driven, innovative, and perhaps even unconventional outreach techniques are more likely to support a successful community engagement. Applying the tools and outlooks of creative placemaking to the stakeholder outreach program enabled the planning team to devise a strategy that is more inclusive, accessible, and attractive to a wide variety of participants, especially those who may not be able to attend or even feel comfortable attending more traditional public meetings.

- By asking questions about topics like art, design, and community creativity through tools that are themselves expressions of those themes, this art-driven approach can stimulate more creative and insightful feedback from project participants.

- Entirely separate from the planning process, this approach results in new works of art that contribute to the public realm and serve as demonstrative prototypes for future, more permanent creative placemaking interventions.

The strategy process initially focused on demonstration projects to bring people together, providing tactile opportunities to shape the final plan while also addressing other issues or opportunities in the public realm. The partnership prioritized a pop-up installation, such as a parklet or a similarly flexible, temporary, and easily maintained public space, as a model to explore for meeting these objectives. Led by Atlas Lab, a Sacramento-based landscape architecture, urban design, and public art practice, the consultant team prepared five preliminary parklet concepts for the Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee (CPSAC) to review and provide feedback on.

Co-created by the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, Mariposa County, the Mariposa County Arts Council, and local craftspeople like Jon Paul Solonen (left), the Ah-Lo'-Mah' installation both demonstrated sound creative placemaking principles, and helped drive the planning effort that guides the Creative Placemaking Strategy.
As both a means (to facilitating the planning effort’s engagement process) and an ends (for contributing to the public realm and demonstrating sound creative placemaking practices), these preliminary concepts responded to several key criteria.

First, they had to be located in a strategic location that was visible, easily accessible by a variety of stakeholder groups and constituencies, and capable of complementing existing or catalyzing new efforts to enhance the built environment. As the most populated and central community in the county, the project team determined to locate the installations in the Town of Mariposa, and provided the consultant team with eight potential sites to evaluate.

The partnership unanimously agreed that the Mariposa Creek corridor offered the ideal combination of location, accessibility, and potential for transformative impact. In addition to its historical significance for both Mariposa’s precolonial peoples and its settlers, Mariposa Creek (and its iconic riparian ecosystem) is also a site of significant current and future civic activity due to the Mariposa Creek Parkway project. In early 2020, the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan had recently been adopted, and the County and its partners had begun implementing the plan’s key recommendations. The project team saw an opportunity to both leverage the growing interest in and attention to the Parkway project, and to support its ongoing implementation efforts through the Creative Placemaking Strategy and its demonstration projects.

The installations would also need to be large enough to accommodate groups of people coming together to participate in a planning activity or exercise, while also small enough to be easily assembled in small areas, like existing parking spaces. They had to be affordable and straightforward to assemble, while also professional and with a high level of craftsmanship. They had to be flexible enough to function in both the county’s more densely developed areas, like downtown Mariposa, and the more dispersed communities elsewhere within the county. Perhaps most importantly, they had to explore some culturally resonant, place-specific aspect of Mariposa County’s identity. Accordingly, the preliminary concepts sought to achieve these objectives through distinct themes—wildflowers, Southern Sierra Miwuk basketry, gold, timber, and obsidian (see next page).
Atlas Lab presented these concepts to the CPSAC in January and February 2020, and refined them according to guidance and direction from the committee. Consensus among the CPSAC members quickly developed for the basket concept, which references the Southern Sierra Miwuk artistic tradition of creating baskets out of native plant materials to create a flexible installation that can serve as a backdrop for a range of activities, including workshops for the Creative Placemaking Strategy and other arts and cultural programs, like performances. At the end of February, plans were made to complete the design for the installation in partnership with the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation and its tribal council throughout the spring, for the piece to debut in June 2020, and for the plan’s community engagement efforts to begin in earnest in summer 2020.

However, in March 2020, these plans were scuttled by the coronavirus pandemic. As guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Mariposa County Public Health Office became increasingly clear in precluding the interactive, in-person community engagement efforts originally envisioned to occur at the installation, it became necessary to modify the project’s methods for information gathering to a changed world. Rather than abandon the premise of leveraging creative placemaking approaches to drive a creative placemaking planning project, the partners embraced the pandemic as an opportunity to adapt the engagement approach to use pandemic-appropriate techniques, while still integrating CPSAC input to guide work that demonstrates sound creative placemaking principles to collect feedback for the strategic plan. This adapted approach resulted in three projects which will be detailed in the following section.
First, in spring 2020, the partnership implemented *This Must be the Place*, a participatory photography project that prompted residents to share photos of the places and events that make the community special.

Community members were prompted to select one photo of a cherished place, favorite event, or other personal and intimate depiction of Mariposa County’s sense of place, and to include a caption explaining the importance of the image, as well as some basic demographic information such as age and length of residency in the county. Though participants could mail or email their submissions to the project team, the bulk of submissions came from a webform hosted on the Mariposa County Arts Council website. Several participants also posted their images on social media (Facebook or Instagram), and used the #ThisMustBeThePlaceMariposa. Submissions were accepted through the end of summer 2020, and 74 total submissions were received.

*This Must Be the Place*
Submission from Jeannine Andre

“I’m sharing this image because the Ponoho Trail is one of my favorite places in Yosemite to pack. On this trip, we met people from all over the world - the group shown was having so much fun and their joy made the stunning views even more precious.”

Creative Placemaking Strategy #1

**This Must Be the Place**
The Mariposa County Arts Council was then able to transform these materials into compelling content for a social media campaign that provided intermediate analysis of the submissions, and stimulated awareness of and increased participation in the project. These posts also provided uplifting and positive materials for the Facebook and Instagram feeds of Mariposans who were grappling with the social and psychological effects of the pandemic’s stay at home orders.

**Above**

*This Must Be the Place*

Submission from Irene Vasquez

“We grew up in Mariposa. My dad Paul ‘Bear’ Double Rainbow Vasquez took us on many adventures documenting our life along the way. Swimming in the river with him and friends are some of our favorite memories.”

**Left**

Social media posts

Mariposa Arts Council Instagram
In addition to providing an outlet for civic engagement throughout the stay-at-home orders, this project elicited compelling primary source information to inform the master plan.

Upon receipt, submissions were coded to determine the kinds of local assets and experiences Mariposans truly embraced. The project team categorized each photo to identify the kinds of places, events, and themes that participants celebrate.

Key categories were:

- Large gatherings
- Small gatherings
- Intimate gatherings
- Annual events
- Indoor events/activities
- Outdoor events/activities
- Recreation-based events/activities
- Businesses, such as bars or restaurants
- Historical events/activities
- Fee-based events/activities
- Free events/activities

The results of this analysis provided a visually rich and well-articulated picture of the places, events, and experiences that many Mariposans believe make their community special. Perhaps least surprisingly, over 40% of respondents indicated that their favorite places in Mariposa County are trails, and over 95% of responses are of Mariposans being outside.

As has been expressed through countless community planning and visioning efforts, from the General Plan (2006) to the development of the county’s place brand (2020), Mariposans generally feel a deep connection to the landscape, especially the animals, plants, and ecosystems that make up the Sierra foothills and the high country. While this relationship is well documented, many of the responses to “This Must Be the Place” provided nuance and detail to how the landscape contributes to—and indeed, serves as the foundation for—Mariposa County’s sense of place.

“This footbridge that crosses Mariposa Creek is for me the connection between the wildness of life under the bridge and the community and culture that exists above it. To be a participant in both is what I cherish.”

Phyllis Becker
This Must Be the Place submission
Pedestrian bridge across Mariposa Creek
downstream of 6th Street in downtown Mariposa
Interestingly, though 39% of these photos are among public land resources, only 20% of responses are of Mariposans in Yosemite. Indeed, many submissions celebrate the stretches of the Merced River downstream of El Portal as pillars of the local experience in Mariposa County. Many respondents identified the river corridor’s landscape characteristics, especially the seasonal wildflower bloom, as a source of awe and stimulation. Others provided images or narratives that describe recreational activities, including swimming, paddling, hiking, and biking. In general, the river and its canyon (nearly the bulk of which is designated Wild and Scenic in Mariposa County) seem to provide a deep and multi-faceted connection for these respondents not only to Mariposa County of California, but also to the wider world.

"The Merced River has been a pivotal part of my childhood growing up in Mariposa and continues to be the crowning jewel of my summers as an adult." — Kelly Harrison

Noelle Morrison
This Must Be the Place submission
Briceburg, Merced River

"I’ve lived most of my life in Mariposa County and while there are many beautiful places here, none takes my breath away quite like the high country. Surrounded by granite domes and gliding over impossibly clear water, I find a sense of peace and belonging. A saying from John Muir always comes to mind, 'going to the mountains is going home.' Though his words continue resonate with people all over the world, we know why this was the place that inspired them." — Noelle Morrison

This Must Be the Place submission
Kayaking in Tenaya Lake, Yosemite National Park

Though Yosemite-focused submissions only make up 20% of the submissions, it’s clear from “This Must be the Place” responses that the landscapes in Yosemite and the High Sierra have a strong pull for Mariposas. As with the Merced River and its canyon, respondents seem to value Yosemite both for the kinds of recreational activities that it supports, including plein air painting and more active outdoor pursuits, and the psychological or even spiritual benefits of living in close proximity to one of the nation and world’s most iconic and breathtaking public land resources.
While only a handful of submissions (8%) identify Mariposa’s local businesses as special places in and of themselves, some of them did so with clarity and vigor. For example, in referencing a specific new business, one response celebrated the mutual benefits of creative, locally oriented businesses in the region:

"They aren't a big corporately backed company coming in trying to pretend that they are hip and get it just to funnel money back out of the community...they aren't the ‘same old shop’ opening up next to another ‘same old shop.’ This is a local family making their lives and our lives better by actually providing a better product than what is available for miles!"

Still other responses situate local businesses as a component of experiences and activities that add to Mariposa’s sense of place:

"Grab some brie and a crusty loaf from the Pioneer Market and head out along Ben Hur road for a picnic among oak trees and rolling hills. Sprint for the town sign on the way back and celebrate a glorious victory with a glass of Pinot Noir at the Alley."
It is important to note that none of the responses to *This Must be the Place* relate to gold mining, or other similar histories like timber production.

However, several responses celebrate both Mariposa County’s ranching tradition and its current role in supporting the local economy, and contributing to landscapes and lifestyles that deeply resonate with many Mariposans. For many respondents, privately owned working landscapes provide unique and captivating opportunities for intimate gatherings with family and friends, or to maintain a sense of privacy and introspection while participating in (or observing) the natural transitions, cycles, and beauty that are captured in other responses. These responses often reflected some of the ruggedness and difficulties of life in the county, and implicitly or explicitly celebrated them as part of the county’s sense of place.

"One thing I love about living where I do is the absolute quiet, solitude and ability to get “lost” and disappear. I’m super fortunate to live on an eight-mile dirt road. I’m able to hang out with the dogs, off leash and walk, ride for miles without seeing someone.

What I view as pros some view as cons. It takes 45 minutes to get to town, for food or to mail things. Social distancing? Got that down. Power goes out for days at a time. It’s all good. Wouldn’t trade any of the other experiences I have gone through living out here. The understanding brutality of prey and predator. It’s just a part of it. Moments like these when the light and the smell making everything fade away."

Generally, the findings from *This Must be the Place* were instrumental in describing thematic placemaking preferences, and sketching some of the key threads running through the community’s picture of itself. This project helped provide an overview for what many Mariposans think their most important places are. It was not, however, intended to identify strategies for telling those stories. To do this, and add more detail and specificity to the themes identified through the *This Must be the Place* project, the project team developed an online survey where community members could (safely) respond to prompts about the aspirational creative placemaking investments. In addition to broadcasting it through social media and email, the team promoted the survey, encouraged pandemic-friendly outdoor activities, and prototyped sound creative placemaking practices through two place-based outdoor art pieces—each of which explores some of the themes and threads identified through *This Must be the Place*. These two pieces, and the results of the survey they facilitated, will be described in the following section.
Creative Placemaking Strategy #2

Online Survey

While This Must be the Place provided compelling and useful input to inform the project’s recommendations, that project was not intended to collect feedback to identify specific creative placemaking programs, policies, and projects for Mariposa County, the Mariposa County Arts Council, and others to implement. With the pandemic showing no signs of relenting throughout summer 2020, it was clear that additional community engagement would have take place through methods that aligned with public health protocols.

Building on the model established by This Must be the Place, the project team developed an online engagement tool that would allow participants to provide the desired feedback while complying with Centers for Disease Control and State of California guidelines. The survey includes a mix of structured, open-ended questions capturing a range of feedback and input. Respondents also asked open-ended demographic question about their age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and place of residence. Results of the survey will be discussed later on in the section.

Structured questions, which also included an “Other” option with an opportunity to enter text, included:

- A question asking respondents to rate their level of connection to Mariposa County
- A question prompting respondents to select from a list of responses to the question, “What do you like most about living in Mariposa? What keeps you here?”
- A question prompting respondents to select from a list of responses to the question, “What would you like art and cultural events in Mariposa to explore and focus on?”
- A question prompting respondents to select from a list of responses to the question, “What’s your favorite form of art to participate in/attend?”

Open-ended questions, provided respondents with unlimited space to react to and reflect on the following prompts:

- What are your ideas about how art could contribute to your experience living in Mariposa County?
- What’s missing in Mariposa’s artistic and cultural offerings?
- What is something you wish you could find in Mariposa, but can’t currently?
- Is there anything we didn’t ask you that you’d like to share with us about Mariposa’s future, its culture, and place?

The survey launched in September 2020, and remained open through March 2021. 83 people from throughout Mariposa County (and some from outside of Mariposa County) submitted responses. Respondents represented a wide range of age, race and ethnicity demographics, though it must be noted that the respondent pool tilted more heavily towards females than the county overall. The survey was advertised promoted through email, social platforms (Facebook and Instagram), and traditional local media. Critically, these digital means were supplemented by physical projects which, among other components, included a QR code that linked to the online survey. Like with This Must be the Place, the parameters established by the pandemic provided an opportunity to both harness the potential for creative placemaking approaches to stimulate participation in the planning process, and help mitigate the physical and psychological impacts of the stay-at-home orders that added richness and excitement to the built environment, and helped incentivize Mariposans to safely spend time outside. It also enabled Mariposans to complete the survey in an outdoor location in the presence of two demonstrative and thought-provoking creative placemaking installations—Ah-Lo’-Mah’ and Seed Share, which will be described further in the next section.

Demographics

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Respondents to the Creative Placemaking Community Survey represent a wide range of age, race and ethnicity demographics, and come from communities throughout Mariposa County.
The Southern Sierra Miwuk people are indigenous to the areas now known as Yosemite National Park and its immediate vicinity in Mariposa County. Despite a long history of violence, brutality, and erasure by non-Indians, including the state and federal governments, the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN) still exists in Mariposa County (though without federal recognition).

However, their history, contemporary experiences, and many futures are generally left unexplored by the county’s creative placemaking portfolio. The few depictions of Southern Sierra Miwuk, and their collective and individual stories, are often produced by non-Indians, with little or no consultation or input from the SSMN, and tend to apply the past tense, as though the SSMN experience in Mariposa County ended with the Gold Rush or the establishment of Yosemite National Park.

Early in the community planning and design process, both the development of the Creative Placemaking Strategy and the plan itself were identified as powerful opportunities to address these injustices. In the pre-pandemic engagement with the CPSAC described earlier in the chapter, the committee expressed a clear and unanimous preference for the parklet concept that referenced from Southern Sierra Miwuk lifeways. And though the pandemic made the parklet an untenable project type as originally imagined, the concept of a public art installation, located in a strategic location, that engages with Southern Sierra Miwuk culture, demonstrates sound creative placemaking practices, and drives the planning process remained as relevant of an outcome as it was before the pandemic. Working with both a local contractor and members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, the project team adapted the pre-pandemic approach to create Ah-Lo’-Mah, exploring themes of collaborative fabrication, environmental stewardship, and artistic expression through the perspectives of both SSMN community members and non-Indian Mariposans.

Like many indigenous cultures, the Southern Sierra Miwuk traditionally relied on native landscapes (especially the Mariposa Creek corridor, where the project is located) to provide materials to meet everyday needs and support critical cultural practices. Indeed, many of those critical cultural practices evolved over time to manage landscapes in ways that optimize the availability of key native plant species for their culinary, medicinal, and other functional utility. Over generations, the tribe has mastered the use of native plants for countless applications, including a rich tradition of basketmaking as an artistic practice that:

- Was born in what would become Mariposa County
- Relies on the native landscape
- Implies an ethic of stewardship and connection to its bounty, this tradition is a critical (though often marginalized and overlooked) example of a creative placemaking practice that supports Mariposa County’s sense of place.
However, as the tribe was dispossessed of their lands, they began losing access to the plant materials that were nurtured there, and to the lifeways with which these materials were linked.

Today, only a relative handful of SSMN members practice the basketmaking tradition. Additionally, the marginalization and erasure of tribal communities lessened the impact of traditional ecological practices like cultural burning on native landscapes. Coupled with the introduction of non-native species and disturbances caused by industrial activity and development, this has contributed to the proliferation of invasive plant species that crowd out the native species the tribe has traditionally relied on. The impacts of climate change, including altered weather patterns and more frequent and severe flood events, further destabilize native ecologies and create conditions that are conducive for invasive species to thrive where native species should be.

Comprised of traditional baskets made by contemporary SSMN weavers using native riparian materials, the Ah-Lo'-Mah installations reference the tribe’s traditional ecological knowledge and showcase Miwuk artistry along Mariposa Creek—a landscape where the materials used by Miwuk artisans are rapidly disappearing. The piece seeks to elevate the perception of these practices, centering SSMN culture as an expression of local place and identity to be celebrated and promoted. The structure for the piece, which includes bilingual (English and the Southern Sierra Miwuk language) interpretive signage that describe the traditional uses of key native riparian plant species, is composed of reclaimed cedar and rough steel that can withstand prolonged outdoor exposure, while weathering into an attractive rustic condition. In the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan, the community identified these materials and aesthetic as the preference for the Parkway’s furnishings.

While Ah-Lo'-Mah’s thematic and aesthetic characteristics are important to the project’s performance as an effective creative placemaking demonstration, it is important to note that the process involved in its creation is likewise significant to the project’s success and precedent.

The SSMN was intimately involved throughout every phase of the project, including its design, execution, and installation. This process of co-creation is an important consideration in creative placemaking practice, frequently resulting in better outcomes and lasting partnerships that outlast even the most successful projects. The co-creation of Ah-Lo'-Mah which entailed intergenerational work sessions among tribal members led by culture keepers—facilitated preservation of the vanishing basketmaking tradition, and provided an intimate opportunity for the skills and approach to be passed on to future local weavers. Finally, the project included a QR code that linked to the online survey, with instructions on how to use the link and complete the survey.

"By the end of it we were all much more connected to each other. It’s something we shared together, particularly amidst these trying times when it’s so easy to feel isolated and lost. I’m excited to include my own daughters so we can learn the ways of our ancestors together. That legacy depends on the involvement of many generations, after all. The Southern Sierra Miwuk have always been here. It’s a good time to make ourselves more seen and heard - Creative Placemaking helped provide an outlet to share our story."

- Tara Fouch-Moore
Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation member

Exene Moore
Daughter of Tara Fouch-Moore and great-great niece to elder Sandra Chapman

Material rounds
Ah-Lo'-Mah weaving process

Baskets in Ah-Lo'-Mah were comprised of materials derived from native riparian vegetation, including redbud. These materials were harvested and prepared by members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation for use in the project.
The project team sought an installation that responded to some of the key prevailing themes and threads captured through *This Must Be the Place*, especially the notion that the landscapes, native species, and natural processes that occur throughout the Sierra foothills and high country are fundamental components to Mariposa County’s sense of place.

In the context of climate change, which alters and destabilizes native ecosystems, it becomes increasingly vital for Mariposans who feel attached to the local landscape to act as stewards for it. This narrative takes on a new level of meaning and resonance along the Mariposa Creek Parkway, on which *Seed Share* is located, where restoring the native plant communities and hydrologic regimes is a key component of the community’s vision for the site. This vision is captured in the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan, implementation efforts for which had recently commenced at the time of *Seed Share*’s construction.

The installation employs the same material language as *Ah-Lo’-Mah*, and incorporates a custom feature that dispenses curated packets of seeds for native riparian plants, which visitors can take home with them for free.

Signage, also consistent with the aesthetic language established by *Ah-Lo’-Mah*, describes the ecosystem services of healthy riparian landscapes, interprets the benefits of several key riparian species, and serves as a monument to Mariposans’ belief that the county’s varied landscapes and their natural beauty genuinely matter to the people who live in the county and love it. By offering packets of native seeds, the project equips visitors to play a role in serving and enhancing those landscapes and encourages them to participate in larger restoration efforts in the county. And like *Ah-Lo’-Mah*, the project’s location and narrative serve to promote and build momentum for the Mariposa Creek Parkway project. The project offers a commentary on native landscapes like the Mariposa Creek corridor as essential to local sense of place, complements *Ah-Lo’-Mah* by offering an inclusive vision of worthwhile placemaking themes, and empowers community members to act as agents of resiliency—and to view those actions as creative placemaking work. Like *Ah-Lo’-Mah*, *Seed Share* supported the online survey, the insights of which became the backbone for the Creative Placemaking Strategy’s recommendations.

"We saw so many birds and a little deer in the creek when we walked to get our seeds. It was fun to go there. I’m going to plant these at home (because we have a little creek too) for our butterflies and bees."

- Kaiya Wellcome
  Mariposan, 10-years-old

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*Creative Placemaking Strategy #4*

**Seed Share**

*Seed Share* provides free seed packets that empower residents like the one shown here to plant native riparian species at their homes, businesses, and elsewhere in the county.
Input collected through the online survey provided both more nuance and subtlety to the thematic findings from This Must Be the Place, and pointed to specific programs, policies, and projects that can achieve the community’s creative placemaking vision.

In general, the responses revealed a widespread desire for projects that critically examine and define Mariposa County as a place of rich, textured, and diverse narratives, including some that depart from stories about the Gold Rush and Yosemite National Park. For example, the survey revealed that nearly 79.5% of respondents want art and cultural events in Mariposa to explore themes related to “natural environment and conservation.” The second highest scoring response to this question (63.9%) was “Social and Cultural Dynamics.” And while “History” (54.2%) was the third highest scoring response to this question, it was followed closely by “The Future of Mariposa” (51.8%, a difference of two responses).

At the very least, these responses indicate that respondents believe historical narratives should play some role in Mariposa County’s creative placemaking profile, but that other themes are at least as important, and should be explored in greater detail through future creative placemaking projects, programs, and policies.

This finding is further emphasized in many of the responses to the survey’s open-ended prompts. Respondents frequently expressed a vision for a new paradigm of storytelling and placemaking projects in Mariposa County—one that prioritizes the experiences and perspectives of local Mariposans. Some responses (above) express confidence in local capacity to use creative placemaking strategies to build and deepen community. Other response (above) suggest that some Mariposans feel like current creative placemaking profile places too much emphasis on creating an environment for visitors.

"I see mostly pretty pictures for the tourists and not much thought-provoking art in any form. We are too concerned with the creation of the idyllic small town and not the realness of life here. These expressions would spark and foster conversation and communication and begin the healing process, which is hardly ever pretty.”
Responses also identified key aspirations and goals that creative placemaking approaches can better contribute to livability in Mariposa. Generally, responses embraced the potential for art, design, and creative placemaking to support the economy (both in terms of stimulating visitor spending, but also in promoting local businesses in shoulder seasons) and to embed beauty into everyday life in the county.

As one response succinctly put it, future creative placemaking initiatives should:

"... give us more of a sense of place and making daily life here more diverse and enriching—as well as drawing more tourists."

In addition to these natural side effects of a healthy and vibrant creative placemaking portfolio, respondents provided insightful recommendations to guide the outcomes of future creative placemaking investments.

First, many respondents aspire for future creative placemaking programs, policies, and projects to promote community and solidarity, bridging the things that isolate Mariposans from one another and fostering a better sense of collectivism in the county.

While Mariposans frequently put aside their differences to rally around shared issues, such as wildfire, many participants lamented what they see as growing divides in the county that detract from its quality of life and sense of place. Some specifically cited the pandemic as a factor, but other responses, like the one below, point to wider cultural and social forces that pre-date the pandemic—and will presumably linger after it.

"Mariposa has so much potential, and on the surface, folks seem to get along, but there is a huge political divide here. I think that the arts can help us reframe controversial issues in a new way that allows people with opposing views to enter a more civil and thoughtful discussion space, which is more important now than ever."

Responses like these indicate that many Mariposans aspire for creative placemaking initiatives to bring people together, stimulating conversations, inspiring curiosity, and articulating new ideas and perspectives. Relatedly, other responses (above) aspire for creative placemaking initiatives to intentionally and consciously engage with critical community issues. Finally, survey respondents suggested specific creative placemaking projects to explore these themes and align with the vision of a dynamic, inclusive, and complex community. In addition to specific programs and policies, respondents recommended:

- Enhanced walkability & mobility, especially for seniors
- A centralized hub for art-making, marketing and education
- New or enhanced parks & green spaces in strategic locations, with a variety of programmatic and design consideration
- Temporary activation of vacant storefronts & parcels
- Participatory art projects throughout the county
- Artists in residence programs that reflect or help resolve longstanding social and/or ecological issues
- Various arts education programs, including programs for adults, youth, and intergenerational programs

Some respondents also identified potential new programs to explore to achieve their creative placemaking aspirations:

- Movie theater
- Independent bookstore
- Art supply store
- Music venues, including those that with a variety of seating options (flexible seating).

These and other suggestions are analyzed and organized in the next chapter, which synthesizes all of the feedback received throughout the planning process into specific recommendations for project partners to implement.
"A hometown is what the locals make of it. We have the ability to create progressive conversation, rooted solidarity, and distilled passion. These elements lead to collaboration, and collaboration in a small town like this can lead to truly life-altering projects within the community."

Music on the Green, 2018
The Big Ideas

The input collected throughout the investigation phase described in the previous chapter hints at the community’s overall aspirations for the county’s creative placemaking profile, and suggests specific interventions that can achieve these big ideas. To organize the key themes that emerged from the engagement effort, the Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee (CPSAC) evaluated and synthesized input provided through *This Must Be the Place* and the online survey.

This process allowed the CPSAC to first draft and adopt a statement that outlines the overall vision for the Creative Placemaking Strategy and its results:

**Mariposa County’s Creative Placemaking Strategy will promote the county’s economic, ecological, social, and cultural vitality, balancing historic narratives with contemporary ones and reflecting the community’s richness and diversity. By engaging artists and embedding artistic practice into the community experience, the Strategy will support a culture of creativity that contributes to livability in Mariposa County.**

This will be expressed through artistic interventions that adhere to and honor creative placemaking and placekeeping values and, specifically:

- Articulate and deepen the connections that Mariposa County residents feel to each other and their community;
- Reflect the county’s diverse range of perspectives and experiences;
- Inspire interaction, curiosity and inquiry;
- Expand our community’s comfort with and capacity for creativity and expression.

The actions recommended in this chapter 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.

For each recommendation type, the CPSAC has identified guidelines to further specify the qualities, impacts, and intentions of recommended projects, programs, and policies. The guidelines, which directly respond to community input, provide parameters with which to evaluate the effectiveness of individual recommendations, help identify parties equipped to advance them, and suggest next steps (and, where needed, potential funding sources) to facilitate speedy implementation.
Participants in the planning process identified a wide range of priority projects that correspond to the vision statement and address the core creative placemaking goals. Some projects involve public art approaches that are frequently represented in similar creative placemaking planning efforts, while others closely align with community/urban design techniques for promoting livable and dynamic places.

While some recommendations in this category are specific to a place or site, others take place on multiple sites throughout the county. The resulting portfolio of recommended projects encompasses a variety of interventions and locations throughout the county, each explicitly meant to:

- **Foster** vibrant, walkable, and accessible communities for all Mariposans.
- **Contribute** to a healthy and resilient natural environment.
- **Create** opportunities for local creative placemakers, including artists and businesses.
- **Respond** to the surrounding physical, cultural, and ecological context.

### Projects Overview

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

**Monarch in Moda, Migrating Mural**  
Ink Dwell Studios  
Located in Ogden, Utah, this mural spans more than 3000 square feet in 6-installments and follows the migratory path of threatened monarch butterflies.
Murals are a classic creative placemaking intervention, and can offer effective, economical, and low-barrier opportunities to achieve a range of community building objectives. Many places in the region and throughout California, including Bishop, Stockton, and Modesto, have significant mural programs with some recognizable works, and indeed, the Town of Mariposa has several highly visible murals that are well-known in the community.

Respondents also embrace murals as a way to animate the public realm and address the issue of “too many blank walls” in certain parts of the county. This approach could be highly effective in the Town of Mariposa, where the relatively developed built environment is most appropriate for a high density of murals.

Beyond town, though, a coordinated countywide mural project could be extremely effective at satisfying the community’s core creative placemaking goals. In addition to democratizing access to art and enlivening key areas of the county, a cohesive countywide mural project could also help capture the richness and diversity of communities, landscapes, and lifestyles throughout the county. Coordinating murals in places like Mariposa, Coulterville, Cathays Valley, Hornitos, Midpines, Fish Camp and elsewhere would allow for artists (or perhaps a single artist) to produce works that resonate with those communities’ unique, individual senses of place, while applying a consistent aesthetic or thematic style that links them together as places within the larger county. This approach could also encourage visitors and residents to visit murals in communities where they might not typically travel to, promoting a broader knowledge about Mariposa County, and helping to distribute spending to places that currently see little visitation.

Due to their high visibility and scale, individual murals can become controversial, and in some cases, even be construed as antithetical to the community’s overall creative placemaking vision. Additionally, since consistency is so critical to the success of a countywide mural project, it will be paramount for murals to be subject to review from a qualified authorized body. Consideration must also be made for the maintenance and replacement of murals that are defaced or ready to be transitioned out.

For these reasons, it is perhaps not surprising that murals were the most frequently referenced and recommended project type among survey respondents, who see murals as a way to provide...
RECOMMENDATIONS 4

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

While it may be beneficial to conduct a dedicated planning effort to organize implementation of this recommendation, it may not be necessary for a successful project. Many project components, including establishing aesthetic or thematic guidelines for contributing murals and determining a maintenance program could be supported by targeted planning work, but these tasks could also be achieved by Planning Department, or Arts Council staff, or even by the CPSAC. Additionally, many sites for potential mural locations have already been identified through the development of the Creative Placemaking Strategy (Appendix C), and though others may be added later on in the implementation process, the current roster of sites provide ample opportunities throughout the county to at least initiate the mural project in the short-term. Immediate next steps could be to engage with public or private property owners of sites that have been identified as potential mural locations to determine their interest in participation, and secure necessary agreements with property owners for mural implementation.

Funding will then be necessary to compensate artists for individual murals, and to support their maintenance. Potential funding sources for these activities include local funding sources, such as the Mariposa County Probation Department’s Local Innovation Grant, the Mariposa Community Foundation, and local fundraising and sponsorship activities. Additionally, if this project were connected to arts learning, funding could be available through various state arts education grants. Larger funders, such as the California Arts Council or National Endowment for the Arts, could also be tapped to fund larger countywide mural projects that explore deep social justice themes and center artists that represent marginalized or disadvantaged groups, including artists who are black, indigenous, and/or people of color. It’s noteworthy that the Arts Council’s 2020 grant from the California Arts Council’s Innovations and Intersections grant program could be used to fund one or several murals related to this recommendation that could catalyze or prototype future pieces in the series.

Roles

If project partners decide to pursue a strategic plan for this recommendation, then the Planning Department will likely have a sizable role to play at the outset. If not, or once the strategic planning effort is complete, the primary leaders for implementing this recommendation will likely be the Arts Council and CPSAC. Potential supporters include the Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau and, depending on specific mural locations, affected Mariposa County agencies, such as Parks and Recreation.
SCULPTURE PARK

For communities blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and landscapes that are themselves works of art, outdoor sculpture parks offer unique settings to display a wide variety of art. Parks like these, such as the Storm King Art Center in Cornwall, NY and the Tippet Rise Art Center just north of Yellowstone National Park, are standalone destinations that draw visitors to rural areas with fine art experiences that reflect and even enhance the conditions specific to their geographic and cultural environments.

Generally, the Creative Placemaking Strategy engagement effort identified widespread support for outdoor public art exhibits. Indeed, many respondents indicated that they "(w)ould love to see more outdoor exhibits," or a similar comment. Specifically, one respondent suggested the notion of a "Stockton Creek sculpture garden," referring to the preserved area in the Town of Mariposa which includes the Stockton Creek reservoir and is jointly managed by the Mariposa Public Utility District (MPUD) and Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC).

With its ecological diversity, easy access from local population and visitation centers, abundance of existing and planned trails, this site seems like a prime location for a concentrated outdoor sculpture park in the model of the two previously identified precedents. In spring 2021, the Arts Council and SFC debuted "Stockton Creek Hide and Seek," which locates life-size sculptures of wildlife native to the Stockton Creek ecosystem throughout the preserve, which serves as a smaller demonstration of the larger destination sculpture park concept. Identifying optimal locations for a destination outdoor sculpture park would be the critical first step in implementing this key recommendation.

This recommendation also suggests another, potentially complementary approach: instead of (or perhaps in addition to) focusing outdoor sculptures and installations in a single prime location, the sculpture park could be located at several locations throughout Mariposa County. SFC manages several compelling landscapes throughout the county that would be ideal for hosting outdoor art that supports land conservation, interpretation, and even green infrastructure functions that improve the ecological and agricultural productivity of managed preserves. Many of these preserves provide opportunities to interpret and explore Mariposa County’s working landscapes, conserving and encouraging access to the stunning environments in the county’s lower and western elevations while stimulating an appreciation for the past, present, and future of ranching and other agricultural lifestyles. It’s important to note that while SFC could be a key figure in implementing this recommendation, there are other public and private landowners whose values also align with this project and also offer similar access to Mariposa County’s stunning outdoor landscapes.
RECOMMENDATIONS

These include:

- Site locations and circulation patterns
- Art procurement strategies and priorities
- Programming considerations and responsibilities,
- Operations and maintenance imperatives.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

This effort requires strategic planning activities to address a host of implementation issues that have yet to be explored.

These include:

- Site locations and circulation patterns
- Art procurement strategies and priorities
- Programming considerations and responsibilities,
- Operations and maintenance imperatives.

The need for a strategic plan that synthesizes art, design, and public access makes the National Endowment for the Arts’ Our Town program, which also provided funding for the development of the Creative Placemaking Strategy, an ideal source of funding to pursue in the short term.

Roles

Initially, the primary partners for the development of the strategic plan figure to be the Mariposa County Planning Department, Mariposa County Arts Council, and Sierra Foothill Conservancy. Once the plan has been developed, the County will likely step aside and enable the Arts Council and SFC to take charge over the project, which may require the creation of its own management entity to ensure long-term sustainability and success.

Daydreams, 2015

Patrick Dougherty, Tippet Rise Art Center

The Tippet Rise Art Center hosts a range of outdoor art and art programming, including classical chamber music and world-class large-scale outdoor sculptures. Located on a working sheep and cattle ranch and at the northern doorstep of Yellowstone National Park, the Center’s agriculture and public land context resonate with many areas of Mariposa County.
Located along Highway 140/49 between 9th and 10th street and bounded by Jessie Street to the southwest, the site formerly known as the Frost Shop occupies a strategic location near the center of the Town of Mariposa. Due to its highway frontage, proximity to Mariposa’s historic downtown, ample existing utilities (including sidewalks), and General Commercial zoning designation, the site is a unique opportunity in Mariposa to use creative infill development to extend the commercial main street and provide connections to a network of experiences for both locals and visitors.

The site is nearly adjacent to the future trailhead for the Mariposa Creek Parkway—indeed, it offers views of the creek corridor—and upon completion of the Phase III segment of the Parkway (funded in March 2021 through a grant in Cycle V of the Caltrans Active Transportation Program), will be safely and directly connected through both bicycle and pedestrian modes to the trail and riparian landscape. It is also across the highway from the future transportation center site, priming it to function as a “front door” to Mariposa for visitors arriving via transit.

Given these many assets, the Frost Shop site is a potentially transformative creative placemaking opportunity, one that was explicitly recognized in the creative placemaking survey. For one respondent suggested implementing “...a central downtown park where the old Frost Shop used to be!” The Town of Mariposa Active Transportation and Transportation Center Feasibility Study (2018) also explores some of the site's significant community building and activation potential. That planning effort identified two conceptual site plans—a cottage retail alternative that combine retail and live/work spaces, and a live/work promenade with an outdoor market or small-business incubator space—that could be supported by the site's current zoning standards. Both alternatives propose establishing a connection between indoor and outdoor environments (such as through large garage-style doors and formal connections to the sidewalk), so that the building can flexibly contribute to the surrounding community fabric.

And despite perceived challenges to redeveloping this site, some key concerns could have creative solutions to facilitate reinventing the former Frost Shop as a community asset. For example, though the site is not in the parking district, it’s possible that it could be served by shared parking or on-street parking or even off-site parking such as parking located at the future transportation center site. This would eliminate the need to dedicate valuable real estate on the site to parking, and maximize the amount of square footage available for creative placemaking and community building functions.
Instead of or perhaps even in addition to the programs identified in the feasibility study, both alternatives could accommodate specific uses recommended by respondents to the Creative Placemaking Strategy’s community engagement program.

While market forces will ultimately decide the best mix of businesses that can thrive in this setting, the Frost Shop could potentially support community-endorsed uses, such as:

- Movie theater
- Music venue or performance space
- Bookstore
- Art supply store
- Creative restaurants
- Studio space with kiln and other equipment available to local artists

Pursuit of this priority project could follow several routes. One could begin with the County acquiring (or facilitating the acquisition of) the parcel for the purposes of redevelopment, then pursuing funding for additional planning and design work to better articulate the building program. These activities might include a market study to help determine uses likely to succeed at the site, and more detailed site design and architectural studies to ensure context sensitivity. Another route could begin with these studies, and then pivot to acquisition efforts once a more specific building program has been established.

Ultimately, the Board of Supervisors should be consulted to provide input on the preferred implementation route.

In summer 2021, the Mariposa County Administration Department received funding from the US Department of Agriculture to support a countywide market study, which could potentially be used to advance a site-specific study of this site. Development of that study is anticipated to start in late 2021 or early 2022.

Regardless of the sequence, there are several strategic grants available to support the planning and acquisition tasks for this project. In particular, the USDA Rural Business Development program offers Enterprise Grants which would support either “training and technical assistance, such as project planning...market research, feasibility studies, (and) professional or/technical reports,” or “acquisition or development of land, easements, or rights of way; (and) construction, conversion, renovation of buildings.” Note that enterprise grants must be used on projects to benefit small and emerging businesses in rural areas. The program also offers Opportunity Grants for activities like community economic development, feasibility studies, and rural business incubators. Other grants to consider include funding from the US Economic Development Administration for planning or acquisition activities.

**Roles**

This effort will likely be collaboratively led by the Mariposa County Planning Department and Economic Development staff, with assistance from core stakeholders like the Mariposa Economic Development Corporation, Chamber of Commerce, and Main Street Mariposa.
4 MARIPOSA CREEK PARKWAY

Long a priority project for its mobility and recreation benefits, the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan (2019) identified the project as powerful and multi-dimensional creative placemaking opportunity. Through extensive engagement, highlighted by the Creek Week event, the community voiced a clear vision for the project, which when completed will follow Mariposa Creek between the Mariposa County Fairgrounds and the creek’s intersection with Highway 49 near the county jail.

In addition to its importance as an easily accessible trail that connects destinations that are important for both residents and visitors, the community also sees the Parkway as an opportunity to both restore and celebrate the creek’s riparian ecology, and to support a range of creative placemaking projects and programs. Specifically, the plan calls out locations for art installations, interpretive exhibits, and a performance space in the Phase II and Phase III segment of the project area.

During the engagement efforts for the Creative Placemaking Strategy, this view was confirmed and expanded. Specifically, respondents see the Parkway as “a defining element of place,” and advocate for “more outdoor art along the creek.” More generally, Mariposas are looking for space for activities like “nature drawing” and plein air painting, both of which could be (or recently have been) hosted in the Mariposa Creek corridor. In spring 2021, the County secured approximately $4.75M in combined grant funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board’s Riparian Restoration grant program and Caltrans’ Active Transportation Program in grant funding to implement the environmental restoration work in the Phase II and Phase III segments of the Parkway, and to build the primary trail through the Phase III segment (as well as to construct other pedestrian amenities that establish a connection between town and the Phase III segment).

To be sure, additional funding will be needed to extend this work to the Parkway’s planned upstream and downstream terminuses, but with this significant funding in hand to address the project’s mobility and restoration objectives, the project’s partnership seems poised to turn its focus to the creative placemaking components of the project. In fact, some of these efforts are currently underway. In December 2020, the Mariposa County Arts Council received a $140K grant from the California Arts Council to address wildfire prevention strategies and representation of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation along the Parkway. This project, which blends art installations, indigenous culture, and environmental restoration, serves as both a model and leverage point for expanded creative placemaking projects in the creek corridor that align with the adopted Parkway master plan and the Creative Placemaking Strategy. In addition to installations and interpretive exhibits, pursuing the performance space/pavilion imagined at the Phase III trailhead site stands out as a logical and significant next step for achieving the community’s creative placemaking vision for this site. Such a space could be even more transformative if activated in conjunction with an outdoor public art festival along the creek.
Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

For the Phase I, II, and III areas of the Parkway, the critical planning work has largely occurred, so the next steps (and supporting funding sources) should be targeted towards actually implementing the public art and creative placemaking components identified in the Parkway master plan in these areas.

These projects could be funded in piecemeal fashion through several smaller, project-specific grants from appropriate state agencies or even local organizations and foundations. An example of this implementation approach is the current Phase II and Phase III restoration project, through which funding is provided for both environmental restoration activities and interpretive features, which will include artful placemaking projects. Or, funding could be pursued from sources like the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, or other prominent granting agencies to implement several non-trail projects in the creek corridor at once. This funding could potentially also support art-centered programming in the Mariposa Creek Parkway area, as discussed elsewhere in the chapter.

For the Phase IV segment, as well as the future areas downstream of town, more planning work is needed to better describe the appropriate creative placemaking interventions in these areas. In June 2021, the County was notified that it received a grant from the Caltrans Sustainable Communities planning grant program to develop a Special Plan for the Phase IV segment, which includes the area of the Parkway between Antone Road and Highway 49N. Among other important planning outcomes, this effort will support site-specific creative placemaking planning in this portion of the project area. Of course, most of the creative placemaking interventions in these segments of the project likely won’t be viable until the Parkway itself reaches these areas. However, the environmental restoration work currently underway in the Phase II and Phase III segments—combining traditional and conventional methods of removing invasive species and revegetating the riparian corridor with native plants in advance of the Parkway’s installation—provides a model for ecological placemaking that could be extended to the Phase IV or downstream portions of the project area.

Roles

The Mariposa County Planning Department has led the County’s recent efforts to plan for and implement the Mariposa Creek Parkway, in close collaboration with project partners whose expertise and interests align with specific project themes. This is likely to remain the case regarding the actions described above, with the Public Works Department supporting active transportation design and construction, the Arts Council and Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee providing leadership on public art installations and programs, and the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, and Mariposa Master Gardeners facilitating the restoration work.
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” (79.5%; 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.
By itself, a renovated Midpines County Park that combines locally supported recreational programming with features and exhibits that engage with the site’s complex history and climate change impacts would be a successful creative placemaking project that aligns with the input collected through the planning effort. However, the project takes on even more value in the context of the Bear Creek Trail, a project that has been identified as a priority in various planning initiatives including the Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan. The trail, which would connect to Mariposa and the Stockton Creek Preserve to the south and to Briceburg and the existing segment of the Merced River Trail to the north, was studied by planners from the National Park Services’ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program (2013), and offers a promising opportunity to establish trail a transformative trail connection passing through (or terminating at) Midpines County Park. As This Must Be the Place demonstrated, Mariposans feel a deep connection to the Merced River, priming the Midpines County Park and Bear Creek Trail to serve as physical, conceptual, and artistic gateways to that locally cherished ecological and recreational asset.

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, its 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.

### Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

- **Savanna Field Station**
  - Houston Arboretum & Nature Center
  - Outdoor gathering spaces can take advantage of particularly compelling vistas to connect visitors to the landscape.

- **BatNBee House**
  - Art pieces that harmonize with the site’s natural assets can also provide important ecosystem services, like providing habitat for native pollinators.

- **Right Point Park Bird Sanctuary**
  - Scarborough, Ontario
  - With creative use of materials and delicate, intentional site design, informational kiosks and trailhead features can be both informative and sculptural, while supporting park activities like wildlife viewing.

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- **BatNBee House**
  - Art pieces that harmonize with the site’s natural assets can also provide important ecosystem services, like providing habitat for native pollinators.

- **East Point Park Bird Sanctuary**
  - Scarborough, Ontario
  - With creative use of materials and delicate, intentional site design, informational kiosks and trailhead features can be both informative and sculptural, while supporting park activities like wildlife viewing.

### 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.
The town of Coulterville in the northern portion of Mariposa County features a range of creative placemaking assets. The community has a dedicated town plan, which contributes to adequate infrastructure for power, sewer, and other utilities. It’s also located at the intersection of two major state highways (SR 49 and SR 132), and is en route between the Yosemite high country and many Central Valley and Bay Area communities. Coulterville also boasts a rich history, much of which is made visible through its unique community fabric and striking historic architecture along its compact main street corridor.

Indeed, these resources have been well leveraged both by longstanding and venerable programs like the CoyoteFest, institutions like the Northern Mariposa County History Center (Coulterville Museum) and newly revitalized local businesses like the Coulter Café and General Store, all compelling examples of creative placemaking practices that support the local economy and build community through creativity, storytelling, and context-sensitivity.

However, there is currently no bicycle and limited pedestrian infrastructure in Coulterville, limiting its walkability and vibrancy, and contributing to missed opportunities for visitation—including from passersby en route to Yosemite and those traveling to Coulterville for its historic main street—and for entrepreneurial residents keen on new local businesses. The 2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan recommends a Class II bike lane (generally between 4’-5’ft in width) in and around downtown Coulterville on both SRs 132 and 49. Additionally, the plan recommends adding sidewalks on Broadway between SR 49 and Cemetery Road (both sides), Main Street between SR 49 and Broadway (both sides), Cemetery Road between Mainstreet and the former Coulterville High School site (west side only), and on SR 49 between Broadway and SR 132 (both sides). In total, these pedestrian enhancements would add approximately 3800’ linear feet of sidewalks, at a cost of nearly $660,000, creating a loop around downtown Coulterville with spurs that connect to historic sites and residential areas. These are excellent, context-sensitive recommendations that would have tangible benefits for Coulterville’s livability, vibrancy, and as a result, viability as a destination for visitors.

These enhancements also provide several opportunities to apply creative placemaking practices to foster deeper, more fulfilling connections with the community’s sense of place in both residents and tourists. Walkability enhancements could be combined with a consistent signage package, including both wayfinding and interpretive signage, to create a walking tour of key areas along the pedestrian network, such as striking historic architecture and present-day community destinations like downtown businesses and the History Museum. Of note, since this site is located across SR 49 from the downtown area, traffic calming measures like a crosswalk will likely be necessary, providing an opportunity to apply appropriate crosswalk art that references local identity while alerting motorists to the potential presence of pedestrians—and even encouraging drivers to take the turn into Coulterville and take note.

Establishing these pedestrian enhancements could catalyze further investment in Coulterville’s active transportation, mobility, and recreation system. In particular, using the Mariposa Creek Parkway as a model, the community and County could explore the potential for a similar Class I trail along Maxwell Creek in and around downtown Coulterville. Though still very much in its infancy, this project could contribute to the livability outcomes described above, while also connecting residents and visitors to north county’s natural resources and even supporting conservation objectives like removing invasive species in the riparian corridor.
RECOMMENDATIONS

"I feel that Mariposa’s attempt to create a stronger artistic presence will only be successful if there is better infrastructure (sidewalks, bike paths, open spaces dedicated to art/culture/expression) . . ."

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, which has significant content to support the creation of identified bicycle and pedestrian enhancements, equips the County to pursue funding from major state mobility programs, such as the Caltrans Surface Transportation Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and Active Transportation Program. Meanwhile, groups like the Northern Mariposa County History Center, local business owners, and potentially the John Muir Geotourism Center could plan for the walking tour concept, an effort which will likely require little to no external funding. Additional strategic planning is needed to develop and advance the Maxwell Creek Parkway concept.

Roles

The Mariposa County Public Works or Planning Departments are both well-suited to apply for funding to support implementation of the mobility enhancements detailed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. If funded, the County should collaborate with the History Center, local business owners, and the Arts Council in producing content to support the walking tour and align it with downtown economic development priorities opportunities.

ABOVE
Coulterville, Mariposa
Photo courtesy of the Coulterville Visitor Center

RIGHT
Coulterville Museum & History Center
Photo by Kimberley Lawson

Locally curated and financially supported by the community, the Northern Mariposa County History Center shows what it was like to live in Coulterville during the gold-mining boom of the late 19th century through the lives of the pioneer families who still call it home today. The town and museum are well worth the drive up either Highway 49 (the north-south “Golden Chain” highway) or Highway 132 from the Central Valley.
The dynamic, agile and responsive nature of creative placemaking programming make them an exciting space to stretch the community’s imagination while leveraging a wide variety of artistic mediums, aesthetics and modalities to achieve community goals.

The programs suggested here are either directly informed or inspired by public input from this plan’s stakeholder engagement process. The resulting recommended programs are varied, diverse, and accomplish a number of significant creative placemaking aspirations that serve the county at large and:

- **Utilize** unexpected and non-traditional locations and community assets
- **Situare** Mariposa within larger regional, state–wide, national, and international conversations and movement
- **Balance** experiences from both grassroots community efforts and established artists
- **Embed** social practice and participatory art/methodology into program design in order to capture and share Mariposa’s authentic narratives and stories.

### Programs Overview

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

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*Floating in the Waller, 2015  
Ten Eyck Landscape Architects*

The Waller Creek Show is an annual temporary lighted art installation that features work from local artists and designers. The program helps activate this strategic but long overlooked community asset.
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.

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-Loh’-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.

"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."
This plan identifies many priority locations across Mariposa which would benefit from curated, temporary, site-specific artwork(s) (Appendix C) and with these locations in mind, the CPSAC and the Arts Council will develop and make available approval criteria and an accessible process by which interested artists, individuals, organizations and funders can propose, create and install site-specific projects. Simultaneously, CPSAC and the Arts Council will conceptualize and map out a number of projects directly responding to priority locations and stakeholder engagement data, at varying scales, to be developed and implemented in between 2022-2025. These potential projects will also identify possible community partners who might leverage these creative placemaking opportunities (eg. County Housing efforts, Sheriff's Office, Probation Department, Health and Human Services Agency, Sierra Foothill Conservancy, Habitat for Humanity, Alliance for Community Transformation, American Indian Council of Mariposa County, etc). Potential funding sources for this program include: California Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Smart Growth America, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Rose Foundation, Alliance for California Traditional Arts, Central Valley Community Foundation, Mariposa Community Foundation, partnership support and local fundraising and sponsorship.

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 CPSAC 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 CPSAC will also, on an ongoing basis, develop and deliver demonstration projects responding to issues and needs identified by community stakeholders.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

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Mobility Device, 2019
Carmen Papalia for High Line, New York

Mobility Device is an innovative, collaborative performance in which a marching band (Hungry March Band) plays a site-reactive score as guidance for navigating one's surroundings. The work transforms the white cane—a symbol of someone with visual impairment—into a collective, sonic experience that opens up ways of thinking about care, collaboration, and a normative hierarchy of the senses.
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.

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 educational/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.
As this will be a multi-agency program, to ensure clarity and effectiveness, the Arts Council and Sierra Foothill Conservancy with guidance from CPSAC and the Planning Department will develop a pilot program focused first on developing project criteria and procedural guidelines, defining the roles and responsibilities for all organizations involved, and identifying a few simple demonstration projects that can be easily implemented and installed on easily accessible public land in the town of Mariposa - specifically the Stockton Creek Preserve and the Mariposa Creek Parkway. Potential funding sources for this program include: Cal Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and local sponsorships and donations.

Roles
This program will be co-lead by the Arts Council and Sierra Foothill Conservancy with support from CPSAC and the Planning Department

"Mariposa is a rich community, we are fortunate to be surrounded by so much natural beauty. I love the idea of utilizing our natural resources to inform our youth as well as provide community members with opportunities to see how capturing this beauty can enrich our experience as community members."
Creative placemaking requires reciprocal support between artists and communities. While many of the recommendations in this plan focus on artists supporting community goals, there is also an opportunity for the community to support artists through a residency program. Generally speaking, artist-in-residence programs give artists the opportunity to live and work outside of their usual environments, providing them with time to reflect, research, or produce work.

Residency programs:
- **Invest** in artists at the cutting edge of their fields whose work will impact the cultural landscape at large and give them the opportunity to explore, experiment and take their work to the next level
- **Bring** artists and thinkers into a dynamic community of local, national and international artists creating a professional network of creative practitioners
- **Encourage** artists to contextualize and explore their ideas within the context of a specific place
- **Invite** an outside community of artists into the local community to foster opportunities for engagement and cross-cultural exchange with regional artists and general population.

A sizable number of survey participants voiced a preference for art and creative placemaking programming that prioritizes centering contemporary artists who are using their art to explore new ideas, ask probing questions and facilitate meaningful conversation.

"Art would help bring Mariposa into modern times. Art presented in a contemporary format would add aesthetic value to our town. Art could educate, broaden perspectives, and help unite us."

"I'd also love to see an influx of art from outside of Mariposa - to let the circle widen to a larger contemporary canon that addresses broader social issues and decompresses Mariposa’s isolated mentality."

"I look to art to show me a new way of looking at an issue, or my community, or the world around me. I like art that challenges me, makes me think, and pushes my boundaries. We need more of that in Mariposa."

An artists-in-residency program in Mariposa would create a mechanism that would invite a broad spectrum of practicing artists, from all fields, to create in Mariposa - establishing Mariposa as a place that both values and supports working contemporary artists and reflective community conversations and civic discourse utilizing the innovative prism of creativity, culture and art.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Understanding there are many ways to structure an artists-in-residency program, it will be critical that Mariposa’s residency is designed in a way that feels authentic to the community and is structured to be sustainable. With this in mind, the Arts Council and CPSAC will begin conversations with potential commercial and individual sponsors, other nonprofit organizations and municipal departments, and local artists who have expressed an interest in establishing an artist-in-residency to develop an agile and scalable pilot program that is responsive to the community, and most importantly, attractive to a diverse cross-section of artists. Two questions these initial conversations should address are:

- Will this program be set up to directly address community goals (housing, transportation, etc.) or will it provide space and resources for artists to work and experiment without community expectations, or will it be a hybrid

- How and/or will local/regional artists be included in this program?

Bearing in mind support and funding for this program will likely need to be secured through in-kind donations and local sponsorship - at least initially - it is recommended this program start small and grow organically, perhaps coordinated by the Arts Council who has the organizational structure to see this program through its infancy.

Roles

The Arts Council and CPSAC are positioned to initiate a discovery dialogue and planning process to identify community resources that would support a residency program (e.g., in-kind housing donation from community members with vacation homes); best practices from residency programs across the country; conversations with potential resident artists and local artists working on similar efforts; and thematic threads, if any, that would define the program. Using the information collected during this discovery process CPSAC and the Arts Council will develop a small pilot program overseen by the Arts Council.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Programs: Artist in Residency

The Garment Worker
Betty Yu, The Laundromat Project

The Garment Worker was a social practice artist-in-residency designed by Betty Yu for the Laundromat Project that sparked a dialog between immigrant and American-born Chinese community members regarding working conditions, life, family, and community. Yu set up an audio podcasting station to record members oral history about their neighborhood, work and life. In addition, participants used video cameras to interview one another or shoot footage in their neighborhood.

The Garment Worker, photo by Andria Lo

AMBLE Sabbatical / Residency in Glacier National Park
Headland Artist in Residence program, photo by Andria Lo

AMBLE provides one month destination sabbaticals in beautiful places for creative professionals. They partner with non-profits and nature conservancy to provide unique experiences for top-notch creative professionals in exchange for their skills and expertise.
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.

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. These could include historic ranchers adopting indigenous land management practices, the impact of climate change and drought on ranching and farming, sustainable cattle ranching as a means to support native plant species, the impact of state and federal environmental legislation on the local agricultural communities like the 30x30 Land and Water Conservation plan. Whether structured as an ongoing, low-key self-guided tour or an annually multi-sited event with a variety of curated programming, pairing narrative and interactive art with agriculture would strengthen Mariposa’s social fabric through innovative partnerships and raise the visibility of often overlooked aspects of this economic engine and cultural touchstone. At the heart of this program would be artistic, culinary, intellectual, recreational and community oriented experiences that connect people with the land and share nuanced stories related to the field. Additionally, and just as importantly, this program would invite and encourage, local residents and visitors, to support the wide variety of local agricultural businesses and agricultural-related businesses operating in Mariposa County.

### Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Considering the depth and breadth of agricultural'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. CPSAC 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, CPSAC and the Arts Council.

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Pasture Performance
Sauk County, Wisconsin - Farm/Art DTour

*The Farm/Art DTour is a free, self-guided 50+ mile agri/cultural excursion through the scenic working farmlands of rural Sauk County.*
OUTDOOR FILM PROGRAM & COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Art House, Foreign Films, Independent Movies, Film Program were all popular answers to the online’s survey’s questions, “What’s missing in Mariposa’s artistic and cultural offerings? What is something you wish you could find in Mariposa, but can’t currently?”

Clearly people in Mariposa long for film programming. Film, as a medium, has significant special qualities:

• A shared experience for those viewing the movie together
• The ability to convey deep and nuanced stories; and
• It’s a familiar and accessible form of entertainment

These features of film satisfy many of the additional suggestions requested in the survey regarding connection and social bonding, for these reasons, it’s an ideal candidate for a creative placemaking program. Additionally, because the medium of film has thoroughly explored the entirety of the human experience, depending on how the movies are curated, film programming can create a safe environment that invites a community to engage in discussions focused on salient and relevant issues at play in Mariposa County. In addition to the many survey requests specifically asking for film programming, a film + community discussion program speaks to many other desires articulated by stakeholders, specifically programming that nurtures civic engagement and dialogue, introduces new ideas and ways of thinking, and builds community bridges through empathy and understanding.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Mariposa County Parks and Recreation has long offered free family film nights during the summer - that include the screening of family focused films at the Mariposa County Parks. Additionally, in 2020, at the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic, Mariposa County Arts Council created a Virtual Film Club program as a means to provide curated artistic content coupled with community conversation to the organization’s constituents who were isolated at home. As the pandemic subsides and we are able to gather again, there is an opportunity to marry elements of both Parks and Recreation’s Family Film Program and the Arts Council’s Virtual Film Club into a program offering outdoor public screenings of curated movies of all kinds, paired with facilitated discussion at accessible sites across the county. This project could be easily implemented by any number of organizations or grassroots efforts, but given their previous experience with such programming, Parks and Recreation or the Arts Council, or a partnership between Parks and Recreation and the Arts Council, make them an obvious choice as a program lead. Once the lead organization is established, that organization(s) will, in addition to organizing necessary event and marketing logistics: identify a number of publicly, ADA accessible and interesting locations suitable for film projection across the county, taking into special consideration sites identified in this document as ideal locations for creative placemaking programming; work with county departments and other community benefit organization to develop thematic threads relevant to Mariposa and organize facilitated discussions to follow the film screening; employ film scholars/professional cinephiles to curate film selections based on previously determined thematic topics. Potential sources of funding for this program include: Cal Humanities, local sponsorship, contracts with County Departments, and event donations.

Roles

The Arts Council can initiate a conversation with Public Works/Parks and Recreation about collaborating on this program or designing it to complement their existing family film programming.

Docutah screening of “Pancho Barnes, 2012 John Scarafiotti, Kanab, Utah

Docutah, the southern Utah International Documentary Film Festival, also offers master class seminars and filmmaker panels where students and amateur documentarians can learn the art of filmmaking.
ART + ENVIRONMENT LECTURE SERIES

Artists’ lectures invite the public to learn about an artist’s inspirations, practice, process and messaging which in turn expands the community’s understanding and appreciation of an artist, their work, and how their work is situated in the larger canon.

For audience participants, hearing directly from an artist can be a profound experience and can radically shift opinions of an artist’s work, inspire creativity and instill a deep respect for the power of art in society.

Artists and designers have always been inspired to respond to and interact with nature through their art, thus the canon of environmental art is vast and varied. Considering the importance of the community of Mariposa places on the region’s natural landscape and the clear desire to leverage art to explore new ideas, increase exposure to a wide spectrum of artistic expression, and utilize art for community engagement voiced in the online survey, an Art + Environment Lecture series aligns well with community feedback. Additionally, it would also expand the public’s imagination regarding the potential for future creative placemaking projects connected to the natural environment.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Guided by input from Sierra Foothill Conservancy (local land trust) and other regional environmental organizations, the Arts Council and CPSAC will pair relevant themes and issues with art and design practitioners and invite those creative practitioners to share their work with Mariposa’s public. Funding can potentially be secured from Cal Humanities, regional sponsorship and contributions.

Roles

The Arts Council and CPSAC are well positioned to partner in co-leading the development and implementation of this program.
On August 4th 2020, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed Resolution 2020-480, which establishes a process and provides mechanisms “for businesses to temporarily increase the area available for legal business activities, and help facilitate outdoor-only requirements.”

This action essentially established a temporary parklet program during the COVID-19 pandemic to support local businesses during the lockdown. And since the resolution only allows for temporary parklets, these facilities were exempt from design review in the Downtown and Historic Downtown Review Overlay areas. The resolution makes clear that businesses seeking a permit under this program would require an encroachment permit for any proposal in the Caltrans or County right-of-way, and though it does not list any specific insurance requirements, it does require that applicants sign an Indemnification Agreement as a prerequisite to receiving their operating permit.

In addition to providing an avenue for much needed income for local businesses whose operations were hamstrung and whose customer base was reduced due to the pandemic, the parklet program also offered entrepreneurs a new avenue in which to be innovative, creative, and articulate about their brand. Some parklets, like the 7th Street Pavilion, offered a non-business-specific venue that enabled people to come together in new and different ways, providing an antidote to the social isolation that many felt as the public health situation required physical distance, quarantining, and staying at home.

While these benefits were hugely valuable in the particular cultural and economic contexts of the pandemic, they are also hallmarks of sound creative placemaking principles and vibrant communities. By making permanent the temporary parklet program established during the pandemic, Mariposa County can formalize this creative placemaking tool, and provide business owners with an additional avenue to express the identity of their business and the community, while contributing to a vibrant and dynamic public realm. Critically, an expanded parklet program would align with calls in the survey for “more outdoor exhibits” and “places for people to come together,” while also creating a new market for local artists and artisans to contribute their creativity and skills.

The temporary program offers a strong foundation from which to build a permanent parklet program. In particular, just as its temporary predecessor emphasized public safety, a permanent program would need to ensure that parklets do not have a negative impact on the flow of traffic along state or county-maintained roads. It would also have to ensure that additional parklets do not cause an untenable drop in the availability of parking, especially in the Town of Mariposa. Finally, it would also have to establish a public process through which the public and other business owners can express concerns about (or support for) individual parklet proposals, and where necessary, be subject to the relevant design review authority.

Initially, a permanent parklet program would be restricted to the Mariposa Town Planning Area, but could be easily expanded to include other communities, including downtown Coulterville, if advisable.
Effectively implementing this program requires an amendment to the Mariposa Town Plan, which can explicitly codify the parameters and intent of the parklet program. A corresponding code amendment to Section 17.300 in the Mariposa County Code would add additional specificity and substance to the program. Planning Department staff, the CPSAC, or both could identify or even develop tools, technical assistance, and other resources to provide guidance to business owners interested in installing a permanent parklet.

Roles

The Planning Department would have primary responsibility for implementing the program, including the steps identified above, and ongoing management of the permit application and review process. The Public Works Department and County Engineer would play a key role in providing technical guidance and review to applications, especially with regard to potential parking, circulation, and public right of way encroachment issues. The Economic Development Department, in conjunction with Main Street Mariposa and the Chamber of Commerce, could play key roles in promoting the program to interested businesses, and providing resources to support business owners in the design and construction of successful parklets.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

Strategically located parklets and sidewalk patios can expand, or where not already available, provide outdoor seating for local businesses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 7th Street right of way between Bullion Street and Highway 140/49 was repurposed as a public gathering space and outdoor seating for local businesses.
Mariposa’s current and future public art and creative placemaking projects and programs are (and will be) valuable community assets. As such, cataloging them in an attractive and user-friendly way is important.

This cataloguing system should consider relevant data about the project or program including:

- Project name
- Artist/designer’s name
- Interpretive text, location
- Date installed and/or exhibition timeframe
- Funder and producing organization’s information
- Maintenance/repair schedule and budget
- Cost of project
- Evaluation data and analysis.

Attractive visual/audio documentation could also be included.

This information should be easily available to community organization and stakeholders leveraging these projects and programs to support county’s economic, ecological, social, and cultural vitality. For individuals and organizations wanting to contribute to Mariposa creative placemaking portfolio, this catalogue can be used to demonstrate Mariposa’s commitment to intentional, well designed, transparent, publicly informed, and partnership-driven cultural and creative placemaking policy to funders.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

If this program can develop a solid system at the outset, it should be a relative light lift for all involved in the long run. Therefore, identifying a proper platform, criteria and protocol for capturing the needed data will be critical. Once those pieces are in place, it can be populated with information for existing creative placemaking effort and public art projects.

Roles

CPSAC is the appropriate lead for this program with strong support from the Arts Council.
Policies

A lack of cultural policy in Mariposa County has made the process of developing and implementing public art and creative placemaking projects and programs confusing and inconsistent for individuals and organizations alike. The policy recommendations here aim to make the process clear, representative, and transparent, and:

- **Support a culture of creativity**
- **Celebrate** quality, professionalism and rigor
- **Remove** barriers that limit access for creative placemaking practitioners in Mariposa County

**Policies Overview**

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

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Transportation for America State of the Art Workshop and Training Yosemite Bug Hostel, Bodie Building

Joseph Kunkle, principal and director of MASS’s Sustainable Native Communities Design Lab and a 2019 Obama Fellow, presents ideas for creative placemaking design that is responsive to native communities.
**Establish Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory Committee as a Review Body for Public Art & Creative Placemaking Projects / Programs**

With the goal of building an intentional, thoughtful and representative creative placemaking portfolio in Mariposa and providing guidance and resources to individuals and organizations seeking to develop and install public art or creative placemaking assets, CPSAC shall assume more responsibility as the County’s designated advisory/review body for all public art and physical creative placemaking assets.

Developing standard criteria for this advisory process will be a priority task for CPSAC and it is recommended the review process include the following considerations:

- **Safety and accessibility**
- **Artworks and events fit in with larger context of community beyond the scope of the Gold Rush Era**
- **Artworks have a clear story and contribute to the conversation about Mariposa’s identity**
- **Artistic proposals should answer why the proposed work is meaningful and important to the residents of Mariposa County**
- **Each approved work becomes part of a thoughtful Mariposa County collection**
- **Artists’ credentials and background are considered alongside artworks; demographic diversity of the county is represented in the artists, stories and aesthetics, with special emphasis on historically underrepresented populations**
- **Budget & maintenance for artworks and installations are planned thoughtfully**
- **Installation guidelines are made clear and easy to use (i.e. lighting, access, positioning, installation, hardscape and infrastructure questions answered adequately)**
- **Develop a policy for gifts of public art.**

CPSAC’s expanding responsibilities will also include guidance to individuals and organizations interested in developing and implementing creative placemaking projects and programs. While there are a number of department and organizations identified in this document as significant players in developing Mariposa’s Creative Placemaking portfolio, at the end of the day, creative placemaking is a community building endeavor and members of the community should feel empowered and inspired to contribute creative placemaking assets to the County. That said, conceptualizing and executing a public art or creative placemaking project/program can be a complex process and the CPSAC can serve as a valuable resource to those navigating these waters.

There will be many situations in which a public art or creative placemaking project will be proposed for locations within Mariposa’s Historic Design Overlay, requiring both CPSAC and the Historical Sites and Records Preservation Committee to review and make recommendations on the proposal. In an effort to keep review processes streamline and user friendly, it is recommending these advisory bodies develop a “one-stop-shop” review system for projects and programs proposed within the County’s designated historic overlay areas which considers the adopted policies and criteria of both committees. Additionally, review time limits should be established, to ensure streamlined review.

Finally, acknowledging Mariposa County’s historic and systemic inequities, the profound importance of representation, and wealth of public input from the online survey calling for a greater diversity of artistic voices and projects/programs centering Mariposa’s indigenous communities CPSAC shall develop an Equity Statement that informs and guides all the committee’s work.

**Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources**

The County Planning Department will initiate an amendment to the existing Creative Placemaking Strategy Advisory committee resolution to include review and advisory responsibility and submit it to the County Board of Supervisors for adoption. At the same time, CPSAC will develop review criteria and an Equity Statement. It will also work with the Historical Sites and Records Preservation committee to:

- Gather best practices for reviewing proposed projects in Mariposa County
- Create a efficient review process for projects proposed with the County’s historic overlay.
Connect Creative Placemaking Projects & Programs with Arts Education Curricula / Programs

In 2021, the Mariposa County Office of Education/Mariposa County Unified School District School Board adopted an Arts Education Strategic Plan which includes the following strategic goals: create authentic learning experiences/art instruction for students of all ages; create inspiring school campuses through the installation of public art and creative placemaking projects; and grow partnership between schools and community art partners/projects. Additionally, a significant number of survey respondents strongly stated the need for creative opportunities and art instruction for the County’s youth.

With the assistance and coordination of the Mariposa County Office of Education and the Arts Council, many projects and programs recommended in this plan have the potential to provide opportunities for students, classroom teachers and teaching artists to: work alongside professional artists installing work on or nearby school campuses; develop and implement their own creative placemaking projects and programs; develop arts curricula connected to or supporting the county’s existing and future creative placemaking portfolio. Bearing this in mind, where and when creative placemaking projects and programs can support schools and students they should be designed to do so. An advantage of integrating arts education into creative placemaking efforts is the ability to access the numerous state, federal and philanthropic grants supporting arts education.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

CPSAC will embed in both guidance and review conversations on the topic of integrating art education opportunities into public art and creative placemaking efforts, making available the Mariposa County Office of Education’s Strategic Arts Education Plan and inviting MCOE’s Visual and Performing Arts Consultant to advise on how best to fold students and teachers into the proposed projects and programs.
Establish Funding to Support Public Art Created by Local Artist

While working with nationally and internationally recognized artists and designers to build Mariposa’s creative placemaking portfolio is desirable. These opportunities will depend on securing competitive grants and large, inconsistent sources of funding. However, recognizing the extensive wealth of local/regional artists and cultural practitioners and their deep knowledge of the County, it is recommended that CPSAC work with the Arts Council to establish a fund and protocol that would allow Mariposa’s own artists to regularly create temporary and/or permanent public art for the community in priority locations identified by CPSAC.

Next (or First) Steps & Potential Funding Sources

CPSAC will determine and secure a number of sites across the county suitable for a temporary (possibly permanent) art program and work with the Arts Council to develop guidelines, submission and review processes, and funding for this program. Potential funding sources include: local sponsorship, the Mariposa Community Foundation, and individual donations.

Mobility & Accessibility

Isolation and accessibility is a serious issue in Mariposa, especially for older and disabled residents who may live in the county’s more remote communities. Moreover, across the county, the shortage of ADA compliant infrastructure/venues and inclusive resources at events serve to create additional barriers for individuals living with mobility, sensory or cognitive challenges.

Given the physical challenges posed by historic venues, inadequate and patchy sidewalks, and the fact that much of Mariposa’s artistic and cultural programming is organized and produced at a grassroots level, powered by volunteers, and operating on a shoestring budget it’s easy to see how the costs and work associated with accessibility often falls short. That said, there are a number of policy recommendations that when implemented can make way for inclusive programming for everyone, including:

- A resource guide and collection of accessibility assets, developed and obtained by CPSAC and the Arts Council, identifying all available accessibility resources and loaning assets to existing Creative Placemaking projects and programs. Furthermore, these partners will develop a checklist of accessibility requirements presenting and producing entities can utilize when organizing programs and events. Potential funding support for this may come from the California Arts Council, the John C. Fremont Hospital Foundation and other philanthropic foundations with a focus on inclusion (eg. Ford Foundation).
- CPSAC and the Arts Council will work with County Departments (specifically the Community Services division of Health and Human Services Agency), the Mariposa County Office of Education and the John C. Fremont Healthcare District - all of which have significant interpretive and accessibility resources - to both develop creative programming specifically for County residents with accessibility challenges and make connections between these entities and other artistic and cultural program producers.
- Represent issues surrounding inclusion and centering artists, performers and individuals living with mobility, sensory and cognitive challenges in creative placemaking projects and programming.
CPSAC and the Arts Council will begin gathering information and resources related to accessibility best practices and services and building partnership with organizations and individuals in a position to make creative placemaking projects and programs more accessible to all. Meanwhile, the Arts Council will continue to grow creative programming specifically for individuals and communities currently isolated and in need of accessibility services. Finally, the CPSAC pay special attention to issues pertaining to mobility and accessibility as it develops both review criteria and an Equity Statement.

F/STOP Photography: Previsualization Exhibition
Cinquain and photograph by Larry Arnold

In 2019, participants from F/STOP Photography - a free photography program for Mariposa residence age 55 and over provided by the Arts Council - utilized artistic techniques to effectively advocate for their vision of green spaces throughout Mariposa County through their photographic and poetic work. Participants focused on the Mariposa Creek Parkway and on themes surrounding preservation, accessibility, and community.

Images were submitted to the County as part of the public input component of the Creek Parkway Master Plan project and featured in a public photography exhibition.