

Sonoma County Fire Memorial Public Art Work Plan

1. About this Document

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors has initiated and is providing funding for a commemorative artwork recognizing families whose members perished in the 2017 wildfire complex. The Supervisors have designated Creative Sonoma as the entity that will facilitate the project on the County's behalf.

This Project Plan is a roadmap for this commemorative artwork, intended to provide clear guidance to all involved with the project. It describes the entities that are involved in the process, what their roles will be, how decisions will be made, and a budget and timeline. Some aspects of the project might be determined later in the process, at which point this Project Plan will be updated.

2. Background

In June 2022, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved a \$250,000 allocation to fund a memorial artwork recognizing the impact of the Sonoma Complex Fires on the County's residents and specifically honoring the memories of those whose lives were lost. The announcement of this project will occur shortly after the five-year anniversary of the onset of the fires.

Sonoma County's artists and arts organizations responded to the fires by creating a wide variety of projects, including community art making and story-telling projects, visual arts exhibitions, poetry, and musical compositions and more. Additionally, at least one memorial was created at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts.

3. Goals

These goals will be established through a process that will be led by Creative Sonoma and will include input from a Memorial Task Force, established by Creative Sonoma staff, that will include affected families and other stakeholders.

Potential Goals

The community engagement process and resulting memorial will:

- Create a place for acknowledgement, remembrance, gathering, and reflection
- Create opportunities for community healing that acknowledge the community's individual and collective grief and sense of loss
- Recognize that people have experienced and are processing grief and trauma in individual ways, and accommodate those differing paths as much as possible

The process will be designed with significant flexibility for artists to conceptualize many types of memorial artworks, based on feedback gathered through community engagement

activities. Proposed memorial artworks might include physical sculptures, gardens, mosaics, story collections and kiosks, and other process-oriented works.

Finally, because the threat of wildfire continues in Sonoma County, it should be noted that this memorial project is not intended to be a “capstone” on the impact of fires in our community.

4. Location

Criteria for a location for the memorial will be established through a process that will be led by Creative Sonoma and will include input from the Memorial Task Force. Criteria could include:

- Accessibility and visibility of the site
- Appropriateness of the site to fulfill the goals of the project
- Relevance of the location to the goals of the memorial
- Viability of the site in terms of ownership, ability for any necessary site improvements to be made within the available budget and project time frame, and future access and maintenance.

Preliminary conversations have suggested that the County would benefit from situating the memorial in a place of strong community resonance, not necessarily locations directly impacted by the fires.

5. Memorial Task Force

Creative Sonoma will establish and organize a Memorial Task Force that, in conjunction with Creative Sonoma, will oversee this project.

Memorial Task Force Role

The Memorial Task Force will finalize the project plan, including project goals and themes, the artist selection process, and the community engagement process; participate in community engagement; select the artist(s); support the development of the project concept; and advocate for the project when it is being developed and when it is completed. These expectations, as well as the time commitment members will be expected to make, will be outlined in a Memorial Task Force Charter.

Memorial Task Force Selection Process

Creative Sonoma will solicit recommendations and self-nominations of individuals to serve on the Memorial Task Force. Creative Sonoma will establish a small ad hoc committee, including representatives from Districts 1, 3 and 4, and the Creative Sonoma Advisory Board, to review the pool of applications and recommend who the Memorial Task Force members should be. As part of the review process, Creative Sonoma will interview potential Memorial Task Force members as needed. The recommendations for the Memorial Task Force will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for its consideration and approval.

Memorial Task Force Composition

The Memorial Task Force of approximately 7 members will consist of a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including representatives of families who lost loved ones in the fires and first responders.

Potential Stakeholders include:

- families directly affected by displacement, loss of family
- first responders
- public health / behavioral health responders
- artists and arts professionals
- people affected by taking in displaced people, volunteering to assist with critical services, etc.
- local government officials

6. Technical Advisors

A variety of technical advisors will be called on to assist with this project. Some technical advisors can be drawn from other County agencies and others might need to be retained through consulting contracts. These advisors could include:

- Consulting therapists specifically experienced in trauma or eco-trauma / climate trauma, potentially from the County Department of Health Services
- Sonoma County General Services project management staff
- Sonoma County Behavioral Health community response and engagement professionals
- Memorial, public art and public history experts
- Facilities / operations teams from the specific site selected as location for the memorial
- Landscape architect
- Public art conservator
- DEI professional
- Conflict Management professional

Technical advisors can meet as necessary with project management staff and be in attendance when the Memorial Task Force meets to provide counsel in their areas of expertise.

Technical advisors will continue to be engaged while the artist is working with the community and developing their design to assist, as needed.

7. Artist Recruitment and Selection

The artist recruitment and selection process will follow a traditional public art “request for qualifications” selection process. For a memorial project, it is important to invite the selected artist to spend time with stakeholders and the community so that they can understand how their work can support the goals of the project. An RFQ process is most appropriate, to ensure that the artist does not develop a concept before this engagement occurs.

The Memorial Task Force will oversee the development and implementation of an open call RFQ process.

The RFQ will include background information on the project; provide the scope of work for the artist; outline the artist selection process, including eligibility and selection criteria; outline the artist’s responsibilities; and provide information about budget and schedule.

Potential Themes to be Explored Through the Art and Process

- Remembrance of those people whose lives were lost in the fires.
- Healing the fabric of our community and providing a vision of hope for the future.
- Acknowledgement of individual and collective trauma experienced broadly throughout the community.
- Reflection of the impact that fires in Sonoma County have had, and continue to have, on the community’s health.

Key RFQ Steps

- Develop and circulate the RFQ.
- Offer a pre-application workshop for interested artists to review the project opportunity and goals and discuss required submission materials.
- Offer a question period and share answers with all artists that have expressed interest in the project.
- Select a finalist group, based on review of qualifications.
- Invite the finalist group for a site orientation.
- Finalists will be asked to meet with the Memorial Task Force to present their qualifications and initial thoughts about how they will approach this project.
- Based upon these interviews, the Memorial Task Force may recommend an artist for final selection. Alternatively, several of the finalists could be asked to develop design concepts, which would be presented for review before a final decision is made.
- The Memorial Task Force’s decision will be reported to the Board of Supervisors.

Desired Artist Qualifications

The Memorial Task Force will determine the desired artist qualifications. Following is a sample list of qualifications to consider:

- Live or work in Sonoma County or have a personal or professional affiliation with Sonoma County that provides them with insight into this project and its subject matter. (Local preference scaling will be applied.)
- Artistic innovation and creativity as demonstrated by past work and submitted materials.
- Understanding of the project in general, and memorial projects specifically, and ability to create an artwork and surrounding environment that responds to the goals of the project.
- Ability to create artwork and site for reflection that expresses the emotional impact the fires have had in Sonoma County.
- Experience in community engagement in the design and creation of the work.
- Ability to meet the project timeline.
- Ability to manage the technical aspects of design, fabrication and installation.
- Ability to collaborate with other design professionals on site design / preparation.

8. Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Stakeholders provide essential perspectives in the development of a public art project including local, lived experience, emotional context, and representation of the audience that the project is intended to serve.

Potential Touchpoints for Stakeholder / Community Involvement

Broader community engagement can occur in two general ways during the project development.

One is engagement in the process of helping the artist understand the stories related to the fires and the impact of the fires, to inform their approach to the memorial. This could be led by the artist, in collaboration with Creative Sonoma.

The other is engagement in a parallel process of hands-on activities related to remembrance and recovery. Parallel activities might be undertaken in collaboration with partners, such as the Museum of Sonoma County and the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art who have archives of art and stories created in the aftermath of the fires. They could also involve partner County agencies, such as the Department of Health Services. These activities might be created specifically as part of this project, or they might be pre-existing and publicized / promoted along with this project. (*Note: The budget proposed below does not include funds for this activity.*)

Technical advisors in mental health could provide assistance in designing either or both of these processes.

Potential touchpoints during the project development include:

- community conversations during the concept development process
- community presentations when the concept is being reviewed

Potential related activities include:

- storytelling, story-gathering related to people's experiences with fire and recovery
- art making/art therapy workshops to help ameliorate the impacts of trauma

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Supervisors

- approve County funding for project
- approve Work Plan
- authorize Creative Sonoma staff to establish a Memorial Task Force and approve its members
- approve site selection
- confirm that the selection process has been followed diligently

Creative Sonoma

Creative Sonoma will manage the project up to the point of installation when General Services will assume the management role. Creative Sonoma will hire a dedicated project manager. Creative Sonoma's responsibilities will include:

- confirming the schedule and funding and managing the project to those parameters
- facilitating the organization and operation of the Memorial Task Force
- facilitating the artist solicitation, selection process and artist contracting
- working in partnership with General Services on the process of identifying a site and negotiating permissions
- guiding the project through appropriate review and approval milestones with Sonoma County and key stakeholders
- in collaboration with the Memorial Task Force, the selected Artist(s) and appropriate outside advisors, help design, plan and implement the stakeholder / community engagement process
- documenting the process, publicizing the process, and providing status reports to the Board of Supervisors

General Services

- working in partnership with Creative Sonoma on the process of identifying a site and negotiating permissions

- advising and assisting on site preparation -- participating in field review and preliminary analysis, supporting the contracting process for sitework
- supporting and approving contracts and invoices for the project as necessary

Ad Hoc Committee to Recommend Memorial Task Force

This group will review nominations for Memorial Task Force members and recommend the composition of the Memorial Task Force to the Board of Supervisors.

Memorial Task Force

The Memorial Task Force will provide community input into the technical aspects of the project. Its role will include:

- finalizing the Work Plan, including the goals of the memorial
- ensuring that appropriate artists are invited to participate in the RFQ process
- selecting finalists and selecting a finalist to commission for the work
- supporting the community engagement work designed by the artist
- reviewing design development of the project, as appropriate

Technical Advisors

Technical advisors will be involved on an as-needed basis. They will provide specialized subject-matter support. They may be County staff, paid consultants and contractors, or volunteers. Potential roles include:

- advising on aspects of the project plan within their areas of expertise
- advising on / assisting in the design of community engagement, particularly in regard to addressing ongoing issues of wellness and resiliency
- advising on communications and interpretive strategies
- reviewing designs for construction feasibility and maintenance protocols

Technical advisors will not have a formal or voting role in decision-making.

Artist

The artist's role will be outlined in the Scope of Work that is included in the RFQ. Key considerations in the artist's Scope of Work will be:

- the artist's role in conceiving and managing a public engagement process
- the artist's role in site design and preparation
- the artist's role in fabrication and installation of the memorial

10. Schedule

Following is an estimated schedule that would be completed in approximately 19 months.

2023

- February: complete Work Plan, announce project, open nominations for Memorial Task Force, post job announcement for project manager, confirm Ad Hoc committee members
- March: convene Ad Hoc Committee to develop recommendations for Memorial Task Force, recruit Memorial Task Force members, draft RFQ; prepare preliminary inventory of sites
- April: obtain Board of Supervisors approval for Memorial Task Force, hire project manager
- May: Memorial Task Force Meeting 1: Orientation, project plan
Memorial Task Force Meeting 2: Finalize RFQ
- May-Sept: develop artist contract
- June: recruit artists and distribute RFQ. Offer a pre-application workshop
- July: offer a pre-application workshop
- August: gather and distribute artist submissions to the Memorial Task Force for initial review, meet with Memorial Task Force to select three to five finalists, invite finalists to a project orientation
- Sept-Oct: invite finalists to interview with the Memorial Task Force where artists present their qualifications, initial thoughts about how they might approach the project and discuss their community engagement practice, Memorial Task Force selects final artist, BOS reviews and gives approval.
- Oct: negotiate and execute Artist contract; create public engagement process
- Oct-Jan: public engagement and research period
- Oct-Jan: concept design development period

2024

- February: review initial concept designs with Memorial Task Force, Creative Sonoma, and technical advisors, proceed with development of final design
- April: review and approval of final design (Memorial Task Force, technical review)
- May: Begin fabrication, begin site work to prepare for installation
- August: installation work begins on site