

Monday, January 10, 2022

TO: Jeff Mitchem, Planning & Building Director  
Samantha Thomas, Associate Planner  
City of Calistoga Planning and Building Department

FROM: Board of Directors, Calistoga Art Center

RE: Proposal for a Covid-19 Memorial Project for the City of Calistoga

Calistoga and the world are still in the midst of the most horrendous pandemic of our lifetimes. We don't know when it will end, but hope the worst is behind us. Throughout history, life-changing events have been memorialized through the arts, by poetry, by statuary, by music, by literature. These reflect the pain of the past and hope for the future.

The proposed Calistoga Covid-19 memorial will not be the first in the country nor in the world, and, we hope, not the last. The largest, and most compelling, is at the National Mall, Washington, D.C., titled "In America, Remember." The artist, Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg, has written: "...the most important thing we can afford people is their dignity." So far, there are almost 700,000 white flags, one for each reported U.S. Covid-19 death, at this dramatic site. Ms. Firstenberg's art installation has not only brought awareness; it has brought a sense of community. We expect that same sense of community around our installation. We may gather, and talk, and remember.

Last spring, a Calistoga Junior/Senior High School eighth-grader, Loma Henry, wrote an essay about her feelings during that first year of isolation and at-home schooling and entered it in the City of Calistoga's Government Essay Contest along with 20 other students. Loma's essay, titled "Acceptance and Hope," was awarded the first prize of \$800. When we read her essay in the Calistoga Tribune, the Board members of the Calistoga Art Center had an immediate and positive response: we wanted to work with Loma to realize her vision (a copy of her essay follows).

Ms. Henry's idea is simple, provocative, and powerful: she proposed that an art installation be made up of *decorated tiles* that could help people express themselves about their grief and losses from the pandemic. She also referenced the Calistoga Art Center as being one of the agents to bring her vision into reality.

To that end, the CAC is presenting this proposal as an outline of how this vision might be accomplished, the organization of which is as follows:

1. Project Scope
  - a. Ms. Henry's letter
  - b. Outline of Ms. Henry's ideas
  - c. How Ms. Henry's idea may be implemented as a memorial project
2. Technical Production Specifications and CAC role
  - a. History and definitions of ceramic tiles
  - b. Production and execution using CAC facilities
  - c. Production timelines and calendar

3. Installation Sites
  - a. Covid Memorial at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.
  - b. Introduction: overview of the memorial installations in the City of Calistoga
  - c. Memorial tiles on the Berry Street bridge
  - d. Memorial tiles in Fireman's Park
  - e. Memorial sundial or memorial tiles in Logvy Park
  - f. Memorial sundial composed of tiles at Tedeschi Field
  - g. Memorial tile insets on public sidewalks
4. Project Benefits
  - a. Magnet for visitors
  - b. Point of municipal pride for the city
  - c. Most important—an enduring and thoughtful gathering place for Calistoga residents
5. Funding
  - a. Cost of finished tiles
  - b. Installation cost estimates for each site proposed
  - c. CAC Administration costs \$5000
  - d. City Administration costs TBD
6. Project Launch
  - a. Bay Area Publicity
  - b. Acknowledgement of Loma Henry
  - c. City launch events (Chamber and Businesses Participation)
7. Maintenance

### 1a. Ms. Loma Henry's Essay titled "Acceptance and Hope"

French author Alphonse de Lamartine once said "Grief knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can; and common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys." While of course I believe that we can find unity in common joys, everyone has lived through over a year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, a project for the whole community to participate in would bring us all together. The Calistoga government could promote unity in our beautiful, diverse community by endorsing a COVID-19 memorial art installation. The art could help everyone express our grief from the losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be a moving and unifying experience that is accessible to all members of the community.

My idea is to create an art installation made up of tiles, which anyone could decorate. Everyone who participates would get one tile to decorate in a way that symbolizes a loss they suffered due to the pandemic. This could be a loved one, or it could be a trip, a graduation, wedding, quinceañera, or other significant event or ceremony. Alternatively, the tile could be decorated to represent something that helped them get through the pandemic. According to the Calistoga City Council Mission statement, "We are dedicated to serving the needs and desires of our citizens by...maintaining the small-town, rural character of Calistoga." I think this art installation would do just that.

This project would be a way for people to release the burdens of some of the losses endured during the pandemic, and help us move forward collectively as a community. It could also help us see how others have coped with the pandemic. According to healthline.com, the sixth of the seven stages of grief is "reconstruction and working through." I believe we are ready to face this stage. The art installation could be a special way for our community to work through the grief this pandemic has caused, and begin to reconstruct.

Throughout this pandemic, the Calistoga Art Center has done a wonderful job creating art kits for the Calistoga youth. Perhaps the city council could partner with the Calistoga Art Center, or with another organization such as the Calistoga Boys and Girls Club to hand out free bags of decorating supplies to anyone, and everyone who wants to join. The heart of the project would be self-expression, with accessibility for all. Supply bags could include a tile, paint, and a brush. On a set date, everyone would drop off their finished tile, and then volunteers from the community could organize all of the tiles together to form a beautiful mural that represents our community. The community could also come together to decide on the right place to install the mural.

Our town has a beautiful, unique, and diverse community, and everyone here has their own unique story to tell. This art installation could let people tell a piece of their story, and bring us back together through collective healing. Upon completion of this project, we will be ready to enter the final stage of grief: Acceptance and Hope. We may never be able to "return to normal," but we must find a way forward.

Loma Henry  
1601 Foothill Blvd. Calistoga, CA  
April 26, 2021

### **1b: Outline of Ms. Henry's Ideas**

The CAC heartily endorses the main ideas behind this project. Tiles have used throughout the centuries to decorate and commemorate in all of earth's civilizations.

With the help of the Planning and Building Department, City Council, City Manager, the Mayor, and Public Works Department we would like to carry this idea to fruition by curating, creating, and installing these tiles at select public and possibly even private areas in the City of Calistoga.

**Project Scope 1c: How Ms. Henry's Idea can be implemented using real world scenarios**

In order to insure that the installation will stand the test of time, the CAC will sponsor instructional classes at the art center to decorate bisque-fired tiles with proper under- and over-glazes supplied by CAC. Our proposed admin budget includes dollars for instruction and supplies so any Calistoga resident can participate at no cost to themselves. Anyone who wishes to memorialize a person, or event lost due to the pandemic may create a tile for display. Also, design and content will be left to the creative freedom of any Calistoga resident that wants to contribute a memorial tile.

## 2. Technical Production Specifications and CAC role

Tiles have been used for centuries as decorative touches both inside and outside all types of buildings for the past 6,000 years, beginning with their use in Egypt around 4,000 BC. They are a permanent type of artwork and have proven to last (if properly maintained) thousands of years. Very few other types of media can make this claim.

The CAC ceramics studio is now fully capable of manufacturing tiles from scratch using raw materials (such as flint, silica, ball clay, kaolin, and other mineral compounds). Our newly acquired pug mill allows us to create custom clay bodies (including stoneware and porcelain) as the need arises. Our slab roller allows us to create homogeneous sheets of clay at virtually any tile-suitable thickness, which can then be cut into tiles uniformly. The CAC can then control the quality, quantity and size of tiles produced in-house. The CAC has decided on a final finished size of 6"×6".<sup>1</sup> The other alternative the CAC can employ is to buy premade bisque-fired tiles in various sizes.

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<sup>1</sup> Effectively, the largest tiles that can be produced using porcelain as the clay body is about 10" by 10". Anything larger can be prone to warping, curling, and other defects. Other clay bodies such as terracotta have a significant amount of grog (bisque fired clay granules) that lends it structural strength so that sizes up to 18" square may be created for use such as floor tiles.

**Illustration of Covid Memorial at National Mall in Washington, D.C.**



White flags stand near the Washington Monument in a temporary art installation on the National Mall. At the time of this writing, close to 700,000 flags are now part of artist Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg's *In America: Remember*, honoring Americans who have died of Covid-19.

*Mandel Ngan/AFP via Getty Images*

Installation site 3b — Memorial tiles on the Berry Street Bridge



For concept only, not to scale. Tiles pictured are for illustration purposes only, and do not represent the finished project.



Installation site 3b — Memorial tiles in Fireman's Park



For concept only, not to scale. Tiles pictured are for illustration purposes only, and do not represent the finished project.

Installation site 3c — Memorial Sundial in Logvy Park



For concept only, not to scale. Tiles pictured are for illustration purposes only, and do not represent the finished project.

This is an analemmatic sundial. The boxes in the center are marked with months of the year. When a person stands in the box, their shadow will be cast on the hour it is.

Installation site 3c — Memorial Sundial in Logvy Park addendum

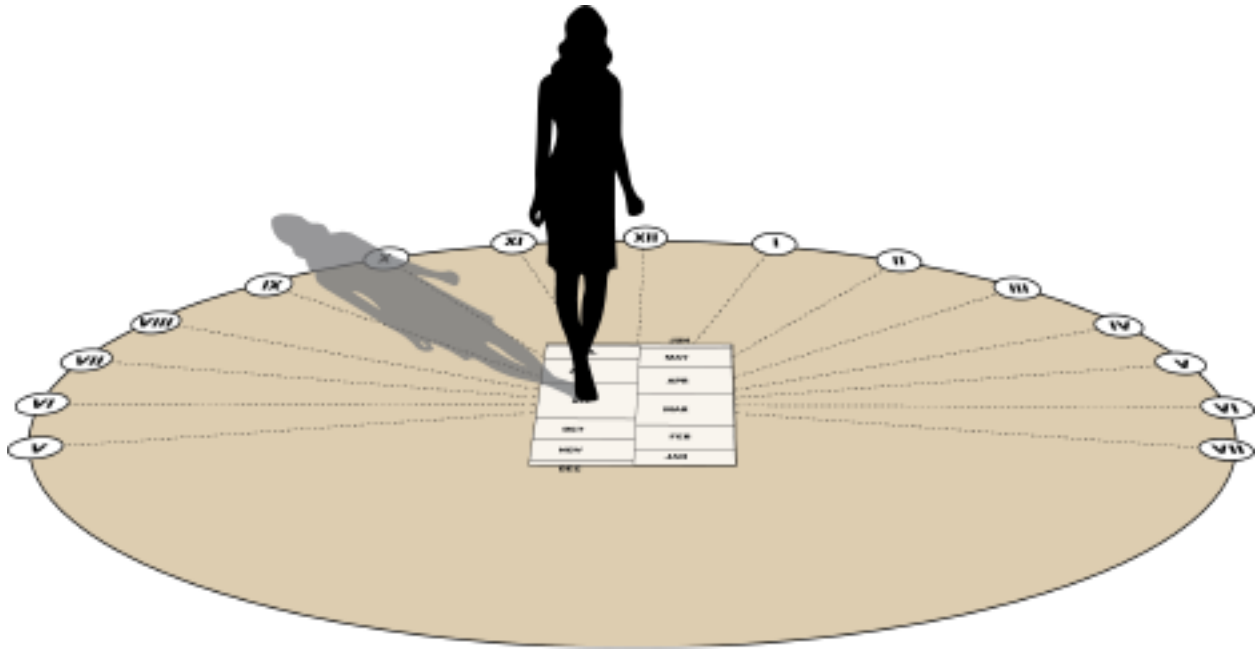


Illustration of the analemmatic sundial in action. The number 12 at the top of the dial points North. The hour lines and dimensions of the ellipse are calculated to show correct solar time for the longitude and latitude of Calistoga, CA, USA.

The dial would be laid out and then cast in reinforced concrete. Tiles would be directly embedded in the concrete.

Installation site 3d — Memorial Sundial in Tedeschi Field



For concept only, not to scale. Tiles pictured are for illustration purposes only, and do not represent the finished project.

This is an analematic sundial. The boxes in the center are marked with months of the year. When a person stands in the box, their shadow will be cast on the hour it is.

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**4. Project Benefits a – Magnet for visitors**

To be addressed

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**4. Project Benefits b – Point of municipal pride for the city**

To be addressed

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**4. Project Benefits c –an enduring and thoughtful gathering place for Calistoga residents**

To be addressed

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**5. Funding a – Cost of finished tiles**

Estimating with labor, firing, and material costs to be about \$15 per tile.

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**5. Funding b – Installation cost estimates for each site proposed**

Depending on site selected and materials involved to be between \$10K to \$30K

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**5. Funding c – CAC Administration**

Estimating around \$5K

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**5. Funding d – City Administration costs TBD**

Depends on site(s) selected

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**6. Project Launch a – Bay Area Publicity**

To be addressed

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**6. Project Launch b – Acknowledgement of Loma Henry**

To be addressed

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**6. Project Launch c – City launch events**

To be addressed

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**7. Maintenance**

This will depend on the scope and placement of the memorial. This would be an appropriate for Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, and other community organizations.