**SACRAMENTO VALLEY SPARK**

**PLAYA ART PARK**

FEASIBILITY STUDY

May 2020

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sacramento Valley Spark, an arts organization in the City of Rancho Cordova, will create an Art Park with six to eight large, unique pieces what will form a unique experience for our region and community. Funded by the Community Enhancement Program of Rancho Cordova, the Playa Art Park will provide interactions with art, educational opportunities for local schoolchildren, an attraction for both locals and tourists, and inspiration and validation for the local art community.

The art selected by Sacramento Valley Spark will be either inspired by or previously displayed at Burning Man, the annual festival near Reno, Nevada. The pieces will be engaging, whimsical, appealing, thought-provoking and accessible. The Playa Art Park in Rancho Cordova will be located at 2300 Mine Shaft Lane, near the local light rail Regional Transit service and US Highway 50, easy to get to for visitors to the area, and accessible to thousands of locals on their lunch hours or bike trips.

Based on the experiences of similar organizations with Art Parks, individual installations and installations inspired by Burning Man, we expect the Art Park to attract thousands of unique visitors who will experience the city’s dedication to art through an exciting experience they could not have had anywhere else. Temporary outdoor art attracts visitors; one installation in Reno, Nevada, clocked a 50% increase in foot traffic. Visitors to the Playa Art Park in Rancho Cordova also will share their experiences on social media. We expect that the Art Park will have a definite positive impact on numbers of visitors to the City of Rancho Cordova and on Regional Transit ridership.

The Playa Art Park will offer citizens weary of months of lockdown an opportunity to celebrate their senses in our art park experience. While interaction and the participatory nature of art are principles dear to Sacramento Valley Spark and its connection with Burning Man, all necessary adjustments will be made in our post-COVID-19 world to protect the health of our visitors. We believe that the experience of viewing new, vibrant art in an outdoor setting will be timely aesthetic and social nourishment.

# Project Background & Description

Sacramento Valley Spark plans to create an Art Park, an installation of large pieces of public art in an accessible location that will attract thousands of visitors, offer educational opportunities, inject inspiration into the local art community, and enhance the reputation of the region and the City of Rancho Cordova as an area vibrantly alive to the importance of art to the human spirit.

When we first approached the City of Rancho Cordova to participate in the Community Enhancement grant program, we were delighted to receive cooperation and funding. The grant has enabled us to proceed with a project we believe will truly enhance arts, culture and entertainment in the city, bringing measurable numbers of people to the area while providing a unique experience that can gain attention beyond the region. Initiatives such as the Community Enhancement Fund are why Rancho Cordova was named a 2019 All-America City by the National Civic League—a place where people “live, work, learn and thrive”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Sacramento Valley Spark

Sacramento Valley Spark, inspired by the Ten Principles of Burning Man,[[2]](#footnote-2) unites the local community through art and positive change. The organization was founded in 2012, the result of a community effort to showcase local art and encourage freedom of expression.

Our other projects include the Playa Academy Makers Camp, a weekend campout with workshops, classes and demonstrations to help people prepare for their Burning Man art experience. Last year, Sacramento Valley Spark received a Burners Without Borders grant that facilitated a successful “leave no trace” program that encouraged residents to clean up trash (“MOOP” or “matter out of place”).

The objectives of Sacramento Valley Spark are carried out by volunteers in support of local artists and the “Burner” community. We are a member-driven 501( c )3 organization. Legal documents, the annual organization budget, meeting agenda and minutes are available on our website: <https://www.svspark.org/organization/>.

**Sacramento Valley Spark 2018-2020 Board of Directors:**

Ed Fletcher, President

Jon Thompson, Vice President

Sage Skywatcher, Secretary

Tim Eliseo

Eric Halsey

Angela Gentry

Partnerships

Our chief partner in the Art Park is the City of Rancho Cordova, which has provided initial funding. The Burning Man Project/Black Rock Arts Foundation serves as our inspiration and may be a funding source as well. Sacramento Valley Spark is actively seeking further funding for the Playa Art Park. In addition to funding partnerships, opportunities for cross-promotion exist, such as the Sacramento Museum Week held each February.

# Art in the Region & Community

Public art has a long history in the area, with hundreds of individual pieces throughout the county, some of which have been in place for decades and have become part of the landscape. Sacramento, of course, has notable public art installations, including “Subtile” by Federico Diaz, the shimmering sculpture above the West Sacramento river walk.[[3]](#footnote-3) The City of Rancho Cordova has an established commitment to art; City Hall almost always has a juried art installation, but it doesn’t stop there. Rancho Cordova Arts is a not-for-profit committed to making the city a “vibrant arts destination”. Our Regional Transit system is already entrenched in public awareness as a source for cultural experiences, with the recent establishment of the Mills Station Arts and Culture Center (MACC) with its robust series of exhibits. Rancho Cordova Arts and The MACC are both supported by the Rancho Cordova Community Enhancement Fund. Sac Open Studios, presented by Verge Center for the Arts, is a well-established arts studio tour showcasing artists in Sacramento County. These organizations and venues are not competitors in any sense, but rather part of a growing web of arts programming and experiences for the city, to which the Sacramento Valley Spark project will be an addition.

Our region offers an abundance of things to do for residents and visitors, from the American River and its 32-mile paved trail, winery tours and the Crocker Art Museum to nights on the town. Sacramento Valley Spark sees the other attractions in the area as a synergistic blend that would be enhanced by the Playa Art Park, which is unique.

The arts are an important generator of economic activity in the region as well. A U.S. Department of Commerce study released in March 2020 reported that arts and cultural economic activity, adjusted for inflation, increased 3.6% in 2017 and 5.3% in 2016. The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, as the study is known, analyzes arts and cultural activity as a portion of GDP. California leads the 50 states in percentage of state arts and cultural value added as a portion of state GDP at 8.2%, in part due to the film industry but with substantial contributions from other sectors of arts and culture.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Public art helps a city establish an identity. Art that is attuned to the community can bring forth the identity of a place, to “…build a city that is healthy, inclusive and distinct”.[[5]](#footnote-5) We live in a vibrant region. While Sacramento County is rich in cultural and other attractions, Rancho Cordova is a diverse and distinct city. The community needs and demands cultural and educational experiences. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 40% of households in Rancho Cordova include children under the age of 18, while in Sacramento in 2010 about 33% of households included children.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The Playa Art Park in Rancho Cordova is for everyone in the community. All of our marketing efforts and community outreach will cover the socio-economic spectrum and cultivate an awareness of the richly diverse community of the region.

# Education

The opportunity to work with K-12 teachers on school visits to the Art Park is an important facet of the project. With that in mind, Sacramento Valley Spark will work to promote awareness of the Art Park to teachers, to facilitate visits (assuming school field trips become possible again in the foreseeable future), and to offer enhancements to arts curricula using the Art Park. If we secure further funding from a grantor dedicated to education, we will create curricula for use in arts and reading classes at different grade levels based on the installation.

# Artists

Art for the Sacramento Valley Spark installation will be selected in the coming months. Since its inception in 2012, Sacramento Valley Spark has helped local artists realize their vision, on the playa at Burning Man and here at home as well. The Playa Art Park in Rancho Cordova will feature art previously displayed at, or inspired by, Burning Man by chiefly local artists. After the park closes, the art will be returned to them unless a satisfactory sale has been facilitated by exhibition.

# Relevant Exhibitions and Similar Installations

*“No Spectators”, a saying on the Playa, means that nobody is supposed to just stand and look at something—art is meant to be participatory.*

**Reno Public Installations and Reno Playa Art Park**

The city of Reno, Nevada, has installed art from Burning Man in public spaces since the early 2000s. More recently, a Reno Playa Art Park supported by with the first installation in November 2016. The Reno park only recently was dismantled, and the curator worked with a developer to create a permanent art trail for temporary art near the original location, as part of a hotel/residence property. The Art Park in Reno graced a transitional neighborhood and facilitated visits to the area by tourists with much positive feedback.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Reno installations have long been featured on travel websites including [travelnevada.com](http://www.travelnevada.com) and [visitrenotahoe.com](http://www.visitrenotahoe.com).

**Playa to the Paseo, 2016-18**

In San José, a couple of notable downtown installations of large pieces—the “Monumental Word” series by Laura Kimpton and Peter Hudson’s interactive zoetrope experience, “Homouroboros” —were the result of the “Playa to the Paseo” partnership between San José and Burning Man Arts.

**City of Dust: The Evolution of Burning Man**

[Nevada Museum of Art](https://www.nevadaart.org/art/exhibitions/city-of-dust-the-evolution-of-burning-man/), Reno, Nevada, July 1, 2017 - January 7, 2018

The companion exhibition and forerunner to the “No Spectators” traveling exhibition, “City of Dust” was featured in national news media.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man**

Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., March-January 2019

Cincinnati Art Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio, April-September 2019

Oakland Museum of California in Oakland, California, October 2019-February 2020

**No Spectators: Beyond the Renwick**

In collaboration with the Renwick Gallery exhibition in Washington, this first-ever-for-the-Renwick outdoor extension brought large-scale works into the surrounding Golden Triangle neighborhood with multiple installation sites. Pedestrian counters were installed at five of the six sites, revealing thousands of exposures to each piece, with 60-200 persons per hour. For some pieces, the increase in pedestrian traffic measured before and after the installation was as high as 50%. While these numbers reflect every pair of feet that went by, of course they cannot capture the level of engagement and excitement experienced by the viewers. These installations also became part of dozens of walking tours, both by the Smithsonian and by other groups such as local universities, the D.C. City Council, and professional teams for a lunch break team experience.[[9]](#footnote-9)

*See also:*

Slide show from outdoor installations linked to Smithsonian exhibition:

<https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/burning-man/online/jack-champion>

# Project Logistics

The proposed location of the art park is at 2300 Mine Shaft Lane, in Rancho Cordova directly adjacent to the local light rail Regional Transit service and US Highway 50. The property, which is fenced, consists of a large, asphalted lot, is approximately 25,000sf in size and includes ample parking spaces. There are no structures on the property.

This area around Highway 50 and Folsom Boulevard is home to many of the city’s largest employers, with thousands of people coming to work here every day.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The art pieces will all be of substantial size and designed for outdoor installation, i.e. weather-proof. Sacramento Valley Spark will transport the installation pieces to the property using a moving vendor with which we have worked in the past, and will consult with building code authorities in Rancho Cordova and the county to ensure these temporary art installations conform to code as it applies to temporary art pieces. As soon as the installation pieces have been selected, information on their dimension, weight etc. as well as plans for any pieces that are engineered will be shared with code authorities so appropriate plans may be made.

It is desirable, with the location visible from the highway and transit line, for the art park to be illuminated at night. The property is on the grid and has electrical hookup available; we have confirmed with organizations that have conducted similar installations that LED lighting is quite adequate and low cost.[[11]](#footnote-11) Lighting will also conform to relevant code, will be installed by licensed electricians, will illuminate the art effectively and where possible according to the specifications of the individual artists. Some pieces may include creative illumination, a common feature of Burning Man art installations.

The operational hours of the art park will be 24/7. We will consult with a security company before making the decision about whether to employ a night guard. If the virus situation permits, the art park will be available for use as a venue, during which times it will be temporarily closed to the public.

# Goals

The goal of the Sacramento Valley Spark Art Park, inspired by the art of Burning Man, is to make a range of 21st-century art pieces available in one place for the enjoyment and enrichment of the public, both residents of and visitors to Rancho Cordova. The art park will be an attractive, viable addition to the cultural life of the entire region, will become an attraction stop for tourists and locals, and will also engage the community of local artists. The art park installation also will afford opportunities for art education for public and other K-12 schools in the area.

# Strategies

Rancho Cordova has an existing dynamic plan for community enrichment and engagement. By cooperating closely with the city in its vision, Sacramento Valley Spark will provide, through the Art Park, something new, lighthearted, whimsical, and nourishing. Major strategies include:

***Effective Communication****:* The Board will communicate the results of this Feasibility Study and all project plans with key volunteer staff for the Art Park installation. Frequent communication is key to the project’s success both in the installation and operation phases.

***Identification of Further Resources****:* Sacramento Valley Spark will pursue other funding for the project as appropriate and will leverage the visibility of the Park to create further opportunities for local artists as well.

***Tracking Visitors and Engagem****ent:* The Playa Art Park in Rancho Cordova will include a pedestrian tracker at the entrance to count the number of visitors, and Sacramento Valley Spark will promote a Playa Art Park hashtag and track social media engagement with the Park.

***Reporting:*** Sacramento Valley Spark will prepare a complete report on the number of visitors, events, educational experiences and other outcomes and deliver this to the City of Rancho Cordova six months after the Art Park closes.

# Marketing and Outreach Plan

Marketing and outreach efforts for the Art Park will begin as soon as the pieces have been selected. Sacramento Valley Spark will have a multitude of attractive photos of each piece and later of the installation in its entirety. A virtual tour of the Art Park will form part of the outreach efforts.

Target audience:

* Regular people who live and work in Rancho Cordova and who can easily access the Art Park
* People planning travel to the region
* Local K-12 teachers
* The art community
* Regional Transit riders; Sacramento Transit Riders’ Union has monthly meetings and we will ask to present

Marketing tactics include:

* Press releases
* Public service announcements
* Liaison with third-party promoters of “things to do” attractions as well as travel agencies promoting the region
* A kickoff event in late summer (this may have to be partially or wholly virtual)
* With additional donations, Sacramento Valley Spark will be able to purchase advertising for the park: radio, regional publications

In addition to marketing for the Playa Art Park as an entity, each individual artist and piece has a life of its own and can be used to target micro-markets as appropriate. (Just as an example: a piece that has an agricultural angle could be promoted in regional agricultural media, etc.)

# Playa Art Park Timeline

Phase 1

Fall 2019: Phase 1: Planning and initial funding (COMPLETE)

Phase 2

July 2020: Complete selection of art

Late August 2020: “Summer of Spark” kickoff event: possibly virtual or an indoor event with controlled entry to keep numbers at an appropriate level

Phase 3

September 2020: Installation complete; Art Park opens to the public

October 2020: Event at the Art Park

Through Fall 2021: Art Park remains open

Phase 4

Art Park disassembled

Final report delivered to City of Rancho Cordova

A more detailed schedule will emerge as the project progresses that will include all tasks and milestones.

# Financial Considerations

The Community Enhancement grant from the City of Rancho Cordova has enabled Sacramento Valley Spark to proceed with the Art Park. The second round of funding will enable us to complete selection and install the pieces at the selected property on Mine Shaft Road, which has been offered to us at an attractive lease. Artists will maintain ownership of their works throughout the installation period. Sacramento Valley Spark will carry insurance on the art both during moving and when in place; in a separate liability policy, the city and property owner will be named on the policy. Staffing as described above, as well as any advertising, will be compensated through further donations solicited by our members.

# Definition of Success

Sacramento Valley Spark will consider the Art Park a success when we know that the community is finding, enjoying and sharing its experiences in the Art Park. Some will hear about the Art Park, some will find it serendipitously. In addition to gracing the city with a new and viable opportunity to experience art, the Art Park will bring new visitors to Rancho Cordova who will leave with a favorable impression of an art-loving community.

# Critical Issues

**COVID-19.**  Sacramento Valley Spark continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation in California and will of course comply with all federal, state and local regulations on visitors, opening hours, wearing of masks etc.

COVID-19 Mitigation Approach

Sacramento Valley Spark is committed to creating, with the Playa Art Park, a COVID-19 sensitive experience, and will take concrete steps to mitigate the risk and spread guests out in space and time through smart event design and planning. Scientific studies about virus transmission suggest that an outdoor art experience would be safer than indoor options. No one can create a completely risk-free public experience, but the site under consideration lends itself to controlled ingress/egress, participant counting, and touchless temperature taking. The project will include a dedicated Infection Mitigation Officer who will oversee surface testing and cleaning schedules. Signage will demand the use of masks, hand washing at provided stations, and physical distancing. Contact tracing measures can easily be added if the situation warrants.

An outdoor touchless art experience may be a great cultural option during the proposed installation period, and our exact open and close dates remain flexible to respond to the evolving situation. While our original plan called for larger events, these will be discarded in favor of small group visits only, which will be easier to monitor and control.

Art displayed outdoors on a walking surface facilitates social distancing while nourishing a need for new cultural experiences; we feel that the Playa Art Park is the right thing at the right time.

*There is no line between artistry and citizenship.*

# SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

Experienced and committed team

Support of City of Rancho Cordova

Recent success of touring Burning Man art exhibition still fresh

Weakness:

Need for further funding

Opportunities:

Community interested in the arts

Nothing exactly like the Playa Art Park exists in Rancho Cordova

Threats:

COVID-19; further outbreak could cause closure

Future traffic patterns are an unknown

# Recommendation

This feasibility study indicates that the Art Park installation planned by Sacramento Valley Spark for 2300 Mine Shaft Road in Rancho Cordova has a strong likelihood of increasing community enjoyment of and participation in the arts, fostering art education opportunities, creating opportunities for local artists, and bringing more viable art to the city of Rancho Cordova. The team has a plan in place for COVID-19 mitigation. The recommendation based on the study is that Sacramento Valley Spark proceed as planned with the Art Park installation with a target opening date of October 2020.

1. *City of Rancho Cordova Community Enhancement Fund: Citizen Report, Fiscal Year 2018/19.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://burningman.org/culture/philosophical-center/10-principles/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Fletcher, E. This shimmering artwork is a sight to behold along the Sacramento River. *Sacramento Bee*, December 28, 2017. <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article192050764.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. “News Release: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2017.” March 17, 2020. <https://www.bea.gov/system/files/2020-03/acpsa0320.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Russell, G. (2015). Find Your Pebble! *Landscapes/Paysages*, *17*(1), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. U.S. Census Bureau.[*"2010 Census Interactive Population Search: CA - Rancho Cordova city"*](https://archive.today/20140715032636/http:/www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=06:0659444) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Maria Partridge, Director and Curator, Reno Playa Art Park, personal interview with Ed Fletcher, May 6, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. National Public Radio report, June 27, 2017 by [Fred Wasser](file:///C:\Users\Jacks\Desktop\Fred%20Wasser) <https://knpr.org/knpr/2017-06/city-dust-evolution-burning-man>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Karyn Miller, Public Space Activation Curator, Golden Triangle Business Improvement District, Washington, D.C.; personal interview with Ed Fletcher, April 26, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. City of Rancho Cordova Economic Development Department, “Top Employers” Map, <https://www.selectranchocordova.org/why-rancho-cordova/top-employers> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Maria Partridge, Director and Curator, Reno Playa Art Park, personal interview with Ed Fletcher, May 6, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)