

# 4

## Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture



## 4. Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture

Santa Rosa is made up of diverse neighborhoods, corridors, and districts, each with their own distinct character and identity. Pride in these communities and the city as a whole is a big part of what makes Santa Rosa a great place to be. Attractive design of buildings and outdoor spaces, historic preservation, and art in public spaces together support a high quality of life and esteem for Santa Rosa residents and businesses. Of course, although community character is celebrated across the city, some areas need more investment to reach their full potential.

This chapter considers the key characteristics that contribute to Santa Rosa's sense of place. Goals, policies, and actions in this chapter implement the community vision by supporting the preservation of historic and cultural assets and using design standards and public art to shape the form and feel of neighborhoods and gathering spaces. This chapter recognizes the power of art to connect people, promote cultural inclusion and diversity, create civic pride and a sense of community, stimulate the local economy, and inspire the creative spirit. Beyond its impact on the built environment, a successful Public Art Program also supports an empowered, thriving, and inclusive Santa Rosa community connected through the power of art.

In addition to visual character and image, the design of the city has important implications for adapting to climate change, reducing carbon emissions, improving public health, and promoting social equity. For example, community design policies can help Santa Rosa respond to risks from natural hazards such as wildfire with adaptations that increase public safety. Design-related policies can also support conservation through increased use of renewable energy and more efficient use of water, and by following sustainable building construction practices.

Some policies and actions in this chapter, as in others, prioritize the needs of Equity Priority Areas to support equitable outcomes. Similarly, some goals, policies, and actions prioritize implementation in Areas of Change to focus the City's resources and realize the community's vision for the General Plan.

**Equity Priority Areas or EPAs** are areas in Santa Rosa where residents suffer most from economic, health, and environmental burdens. The General Plan prioritizes the environmental justice needs and health and equity considerations of EPAs in the goals, policies, and actions of this and other chapters of the General Plan. EPAs are depicted on Figure 2-4 and discussed in more detail in chapters 2 and 6, Land Use and Economic Development and Health, Equity, and Environmental Justice.

**Areas of Change** are places where the City will focus efforts to address housing, services, connectivity, and/or infrastructure needs to help make these complete neighborhoods. Goals, policies, and actions throughout the General Plan prioritize Areas of Change for implementing actions that promote complete neighborhoods, such as active transportation infrastructure, quality housing, healthy food options, opportunities for social connections, and access to parks and commercial services.

Areas of Change are depicted on Figure 2-5 and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, Land Use and Economic Development.

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This chapter focuses on key goals that work to implement the vision for Santa Rosa. These goals and their associated policies and actions are especially pertinent to the following component of the Vision Statement (shown in full in Chapter 2, Policy Framework):

- **Cultural:** Art, cultural resources and activities, historic assets, and live music thrive in every neighborhood, are

accessible to everyone, and work to celebrate our diverse community, bring people from all areas of the city together, and support the local economy.

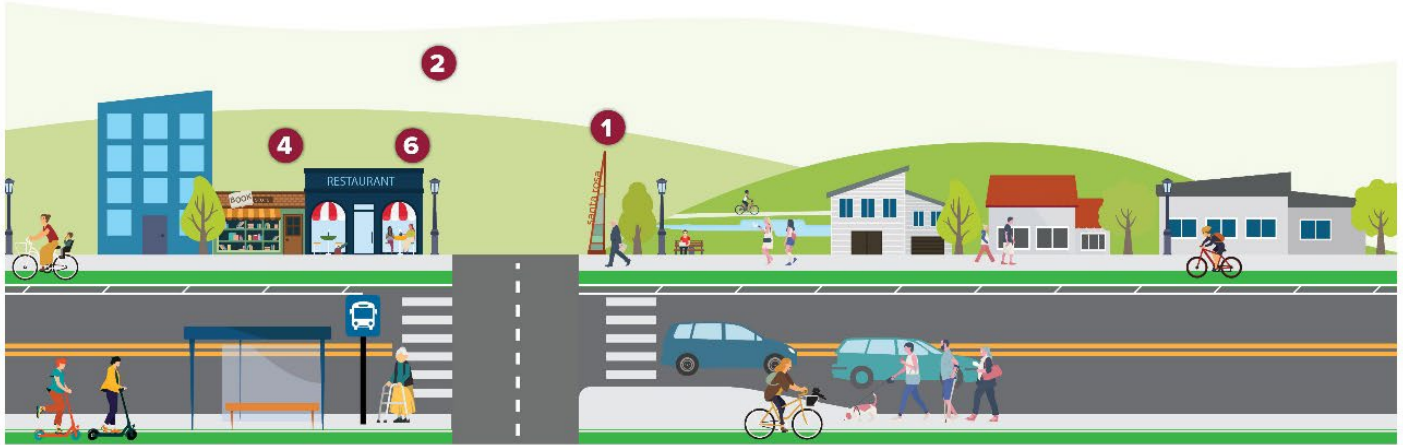
**Figure 4-1** illustrates some of the key concepts addressed in this chapter.

## Urban Design

Santa Rosa has a rich landscape of historical buildings, thoughtfully designed contemporary developments, and views of the local landscape. The physical form of each neighborhood, gathering or shopping area, corridor, and district can contribute to livability and quality of life. Appropriate urban design standards encourage development to highlight and not detract from the natural and historical features of established areas, create distinct architectural identities in emerging areas, and protect views of the natural, unbuilt areas surrounding Santa Rosa.

Figure 4-1: Visualizing the Concepts

# ► URBAN DESIGN, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND ART AND CULTURE



Attractive Gateways



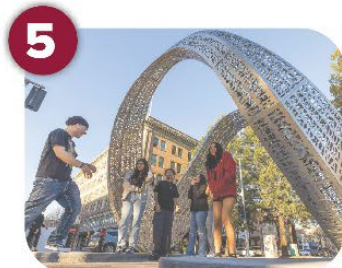
Hillside and Creek Preservation



Native American Heritage



Historic Preservation



Public Art



Placemaking

## Goals, Policies, and Actions

**Goal 4-1:** Preserve and enhance Santa Rosa's community character through attractive urban and environmental design and intentional development.

**Policy 4-1.1:** Preserve and enhance the visual value of the city's natural waterways, hillsides, historic districts, structures, and landscapes.

**Action 4-1.1:** *Maintain view corridors to natural ridgelines and natural landmarks, such as Taylor Mountain and Bennett Mountain, by updating the Zoning Code hillside development standards.*

**Action 4-1.2:** *Maintain and restore the floodplain and riparian vegetation along the city's network of creeks and further develop trails along creeks to serve as an alternative transportation network.*

**Policy 4-1.2:** Strengthen and emphasize community focal points, visual landmarks, and features that contribute to the identity of Santa Rosa by applying the design concepts and standards of the Zoning Code, Design Guidelines, Preservation District Plans, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and the Citywide Creek Master Plan, including, but not limited to, Old Courthouse Square, DeTurk Round Barn, Railroad Square Water Tower, St. Rose School, Hotel La Rose, Santa Rosa Creek, Luther Burbank Home and Gardens, Juilliard Park, and views to the hills.

**Action 4-1.3:** *Update the City's Design Guidelines, Objective Design Standards, and/or Zoning Code, as appropriate, to:*

- Expand objective standards for residential development in compliance with State requirements.
- Require landscape design to be related to the natural setting and graded areas in new development and revegetated with native plants as fire resistance allows.
- Require structures in new developments to step with the slope of the site and absorb site topography through use of split-level designs.

**Policy 4-1.3:** Enhance and strengthen the visual quality of major entry routes into the city and major corridors that link neighborhoods with downtown.

**Action 4-1.4:** *Develop and implement a strategy for gateways, depicted in **Figure 4-2**, that enhances their visual quality and supports placemaking, economic development, active transportation, and other, complementary City goals.*

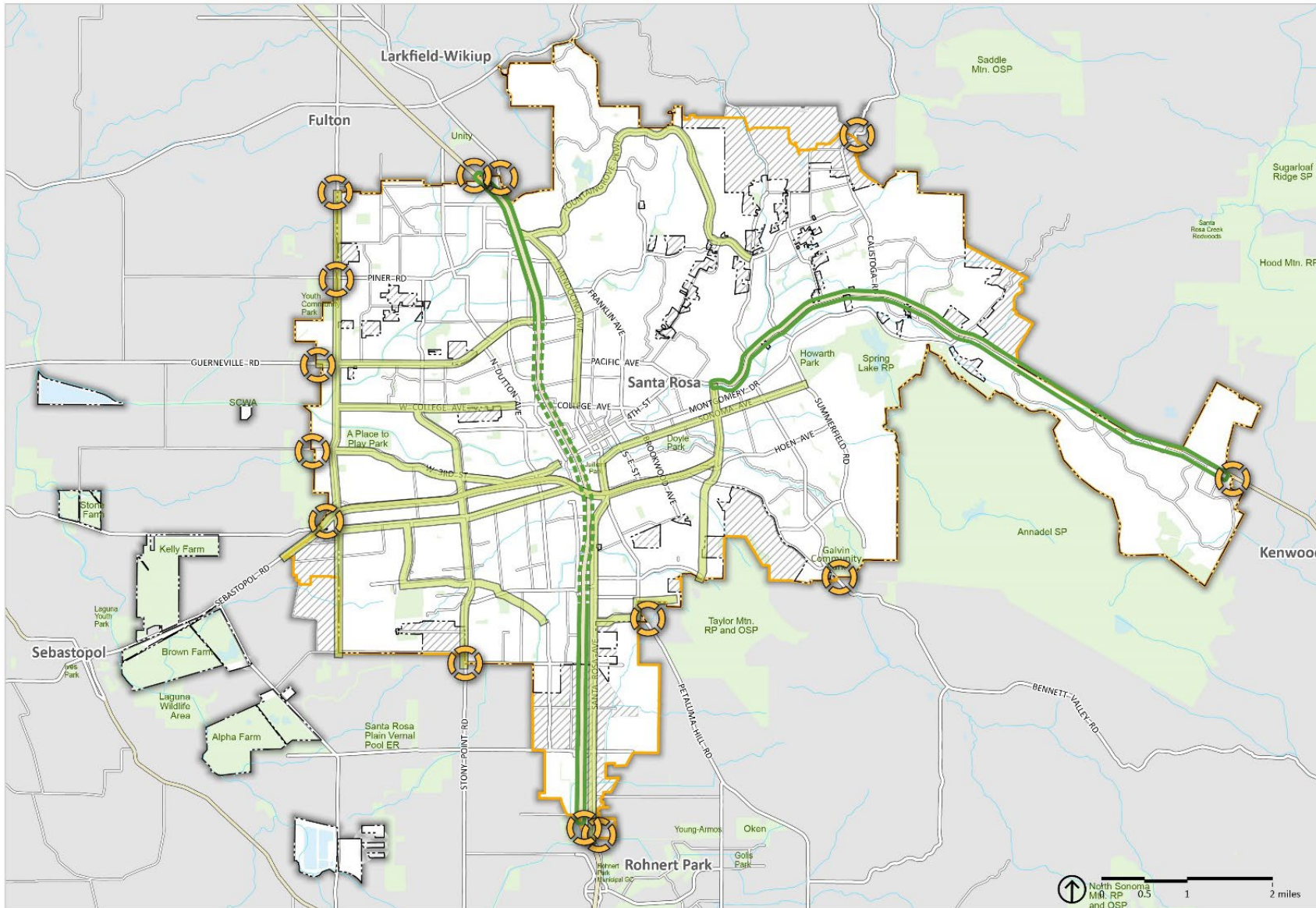


Figure 4-2  
Gateways and Corridors

- City Limits
  - Urban Growth Boundary
  - City Sphere of Influence
  - Planning Area
  - Creeks and Waterways
  - Parks and Open Space
  - Outside of Planning Area
- Urban Form**
- Gateway / City Entry
  - Landscape Buffer
  - Landscaping with Views of Downtown
  - Streets with Planted Medians

Source: City of Santa Rosa 2023



**Action 4-1.5:** *Where feasible and prioritizing EPAs and Areas of Change, provide planting strips with large canopy trees between the road and sidewalk to buffer pedestrians from traffic and help define the street space along commercial streets, and install pedestrian amenities such as:*

- Street lighting
- Seating
- Bus stop shelters
- Bicycle racks
- Mailboxes

**Action 4-1.6:** *Update the Zoning Code to require screening of development along Highway 101 with dense landscape.*

**Policy 4-1.4:** **Avoid strip patterns of commercial development and improve the appearance and operation of existing commercial strip corridors, especially in Areas of Change.**

**Action 4-1.7:** *Work with property owners to restructure existing strip developments to cluster commercial uses in neighborhood nodes, with higher-density housing included where possible and lower-density residential, office, or institutional uses that generate less traffic located between the nodes.*

**Policy 4-1.5:** **Create public/civic spaces at the neighborhood, city, and regional scale to serve residents of all areas of the city, prioritizing EPAs.**

**Action 4-1.8:** *Provide for new open space opportunities throughout the city, especially in neighborhoods that*

*have less access to open spaces, including creek corridors, bicycle and pedestrian connections, civic spaces, and publicly accessible conservation areas.*

**Action 4-1.9:** *Enhance pedestrian activity and safety by requiring that streets, buildings, pathways, and trails have lighting and wayfinding signage, and provide a visual connection with public spaces, such as parks and Santa Rosa Creek, where possible.*

## Historic Preservation

### Native American Heritage

Native American habitation in the Santa Rosa region began about 7,000 years ago, and the city contains almost 200 recorded Native American resources, according to the California Historical Resources Information System. Remnants of Native American civilization have been discovered along Santa Rosa Creek and its tributaries; in the adjacent alluvial valleys, surrounding plains, hills, the Trione-Annadel State Park area, and the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The Santa Rosa Basin encompasses the Planning Area and includes six major drainages (Santa Rosa, Matanzas, Piner, Rincon, Austin, and Brush Creeks), each of which may contain additional, undiscovered Native American archaeological sites.

Trione-Annadel State Park in the southeast corner of the Santa Rosa Planning Area was an important obsidian source for Native American tools. Resources there include chert and obsidian flakes, projectile points, mortars, pestles, shell and bone debris, and human remains. The remains of entire settlements, including three former villages, have been found in northern Santa Rosa. Given the archaeologically rich nature of the Santa Rosa area, and the fact that about half of the Planning

Area has not been surveyed for archaeological resources, there is a high potential for finding more Native American sites in Santa Rosa.

## Historic Resources

Historic resources include sites, structures, districts, landmarks, or other physical evidence of past human activity generally more than 50 years old. Santa Rosa has a rich architectural heritage spanning many periods—Mexican adobes, nineteenth-century Gothic structures, Greek Revival and Italianate houses, turn of the century Stick/Eastlake homes, early 20th-century Craftsman and California bungalows, 1920s Spanish Revival houses, and 1930s Art Deco buildings.

Numerous well-preserved structures represent the eclectic styles and periods that contribute to the city's character and identity. Some of the more notable historic resources are the Luther Burbank Home and Gardens, Rosenberg Department Store, Flamingo Resort Sign Tower, DeTurk Round Barn, Church of the One Tree, Carrillo Adobe, Fountaingrove Winery (the Fountaingrove Round Barn was lost in the 2017 Tubbs Fire), and Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery. Recognizing the value of Santa Rosa's historic resources, the City Council adopted a preservation ordinance in 1988 and created the Cultural Heritage Board to:

- Undertake and update historic inventories or surveys.
- Recommend designation of landmarks and preservation districts.
- Review proposed alterations to historic buildings.
- Promote public awareness of preservation issues.

With Cultural Heritage Board guidance, the City has prepared inventories to document historical buildings and neighborhoods. The resulting Cultural Heritage Survey is not just a list but also

a narrative and pictorial summary of the city's past that documents the architectural style of each structure and historical features by neighborhood. The Cultural Heritage Board has designated especially significant structures and sites that have a specific historical, archaeological, cultural, or architectural value as Landmarks, and key historic neighborhoods as Preservation Districts. The districts designation officially recognizes these places as key components of the city's heritage. Santa Rosa has 21 Landmarks and 8 designated historic Preservation Districts, which are Burbank Gardens, Cherry Street, McDonald, Olive Park, Railroad Square, Ridgway, Saint Rose, and West End.

## Goals, Policies, and Actions

**Goal 4-2:** Protect the historic and cultural resources of Santa Rosa and enrich the sense of place and understanding of the city's history and prehistory.

**Policy 4-2.1:** Protect Native American heritage and honor the early stewards of this land.

**Action 4-2.1:** Continue to review proposed developments in conjunction with the California Historical Resources Information System, Northwest Information Center, at Sonoma State University to determine whether project areas contain known archaeological resources, prehistoric and/or historic-era, or have the potential for such resources.

**Action 4-2.2:** Continue to require that project areas found to contain significant archaeological resources be examined by a qualified consulting archaeologist with recommendations for protection and preservation.



**Action 4-2.3:** *Work in good faith with interested communities to evaluate proposed development sites for the presence of subsurface historic, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources. These efforts may include:*

- Consideration of existing reports and studies.
- Consultation with Native American tribes as required by State law.
- Appropriate site-specific investigative actions.
- Onsite monitoring during excavation if appropriate.

**Policy 4-2.2: Treat Native American human remains with sensitivity and dignity and ensure compliance with the California Health and Safety Code and the California Public Resources Code. Collaborate with the most likely descendants, as identified by the Native American Heritage Commission.**

**Action 4-2.4:** *If cultural resources are encountered during development, halt work to avoid altering the materials and their context until a qualified consulting archaeologist and Native American representative (if appropriate) have evaluated the situation and recorded identified cultural resources—which may include animals, structures, landscapes, or plants—and determined suitable mitigation measures.*

**Policy 4-2.3: Preserve Santa Rosa’s historic structures and neighborhoods.**

**Action 4-2.5:** *Establish priorities for and pursue designating new landmarks and historic preservation districts, following study by the Cultural Heritage Board.*

**Action 4-2.6:** *Follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction for the treatment of historic properties.*

**Action 4-2.7:** *Integrate the common goals of the City’s green ordinances and historic preservation objectives when reviewing proposals related to historic structures or places.*

**Action 4-2.8:** *Provide building owners of older and historic structures clear and cost-effective options to measurably enhance energy efficiency while maintaining the structure’s historic integrity to the greatest degree possible.*

**Action 4-2.9:** *Pursue designation as a Certified Local Government Program by the National Parks Service to assist in funding local historic preservation.*

**Action 4-2.10:** *Seek funding and establish mechanisms, such as periodic flyers, to educate property owners in preservation districts about the steps required for changes to historic properties.*

**Action 4-2.11:** *Consider removing or simplifying obstacles for owners of historic properties to support preservation, including guides for repurposing facilities and concurrent review of entitlement and building permit applications.*

**Action 4-2.12:** *Update the building code to require the preservation of materials, such as historic*

*windows, doors, siding, and trim, when historic structures are demolished or renovated.*

**Action 4-2.13:** *Work with the local tourism industry, property owners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other public agencies to develop and promote Heritage Tourism opportunities, integrating efforts with ongoing initiatives for economic development and the creative economy.*

## Art and Culture

For several decades the City of Santa Rosa has collaborated with community partners to build a thriving Public Art Program, including the recent adoption of the 2021-2024 Public Art Program Strategic Plan. Recognizing the value of Santa Rosa’s public art and cultural resources, the City Council adopted the Public Art Policy in 1996 and created the Art in Public Places Committee (APPC) to oversee the Public Art Program in Santa Rosa. The Program:

- Develops projects that focus on issues and places that are important to Santa Rosa civic dialogue.
- Develops projects in collaboration with other public agencies, nonprofit cultural groups, and curators.
- Reviews projects, gifts, and loans proposed by others for City property.
- Reviews murals that are publicly funded or on City property.
- Facilitates community participation in the development of public art projects.
- Stimulates public awareness of public art.
- Reviews projects initiated by developers.
- Organizes exhibitions in City facilities.

- Manages the existing collection through assessment, maintenance, and conservation.

Public art and cultural facilities enhance the city’s identity, pride, and image. Gathering places contribute to community bonding and pride, support a positive business climate, and provide a draw for tourism. Public art and arts districts can help revitalize underserved areas, fulfill the need for affordable live-work space for artists, and bring increased tax revenue to the City. Art in educational programs can foster skills, develop creative and critical thinking needed for the contemporary workforce, and provide a vital outlet for youth to express themselves. The City’s art and culture programs celebrate and build on Santa Rosa’s rich cultural diversity.

The mission of the Public Art Program is to champion artistic expression and amplify community voices through a diverse array of public art experiences to support an empowered, thriving, and inclusive Santa Rosa community connected through the power of art.

**Public art** is art—in any media—that is created for the benefit of the general public. Public art is inherently expansive, needing only to be visually and/or physically accessible to the public. Public art is placemaking, meaning-making, and community-building, made by art makers of any discipline, practice, background, and vision.

## Goals, Policies, and Actions

**Goal 4-3:** Support an empowered, thriving, and inclusive Santa Rosa community connected through the power of art.

**Policy 4-3.1:** **Champion artistic expression and amplify community voices through a diverse array of public art experiences, especially in Areas of Change.**

**Action 4-3.1:** *Continue to implement current Public Art Master Plans and Strategic Plans and update as needed.*

**Action 4-3.2:** *Represent, include, and celebrate diverse voices in the programming, process, outreach, and infrastructure of the Public Art Program.*

**Action 4-3.3:** *Partner and build strong relationships with culturally diverse local and regional community organizations and associations.*

**Action 4-3.4:** *Infuse all neighborhoods with art and empower community leaders across the city to champion arts programming.*

**Action 4-3.5:** *Integrate public art in capital improvement projects, especially in streetscape design on major corridors and arterials and at gateways, where feasible.*

**Policy 4-3.2:** **Fund and maintain public art as a core component of placemaking and economic development, prioritizing public art in EPAs and Areas of Change.**

**Action 4-3.6:** *Better leverage public art to drive economic activity.*

**Action 4-3.7:** *Increase staff capacity and strategic collaborations for public art.*

**Action 4-3.8:** *Improve outreach and demystify APPC and Public Art Program processes.*

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