

CULTURAL COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: May 6, 2015

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 3A

STAFF: Ms. Erica Gallegos, Artist/Carson High School Student
Vern L. Krahn, Senior Park Planner

REQUEST: Presentation and discussion only on the completed Fulstone Wetlands Mural Project by Ms. Erica Gallegos.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

At the beginning of this school year, Erica Gallegos, a senior AP art student at Carson High School approached our department to do a senior project that involved painting a mural for Carson City. As the Commission may or may not know, every senior at Carson High School is required to successfully complete a senior project in order to graduate from high school. This presented staff with a wonderful opportunity to support Erica, increase art and cultural awareness in the community, address an unattractive and graffiti prone neighborhood entrance into the Fulstone Wetlands, and create a public/private partnership with an adjacent private property owner.

The Fulstone Wetlands neighborhood entrance and concrete masonry unit (CMU) wall is located near the intersection of Eastridge Lane and Spooner Drive in the Northridge Subdivision. The mural's theme is "A day at the wetlands edge." (Exhibit A).

Erica will be at this meeting with a PowerPoint presentation to announce the mural has been completed and to share with the Commission what lessons she learned from the project, including how this project is impacting her future education decisions. In addition, staff has provided the Commission with Erica's Senior Project research paper that was required as a part of her mural project (Exhibit B and C).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: This agenda item is for informational purposes and to allow the Commission to celebrate the successful completion of Erica's project. No formal action can be taken at this time.

APRIL 4, 2015



JIM GRANT / JGRANT@NEVADAAPPEAL.COM

Carson High School senior Erica Gallegos leans against a mural she painted on a cinder block wall by the Fulstone Wetlands.

WALL-TO-WALL COVERAGE

Gallegos' mural beautifies Fulstone Wetlands entrance

By Charles Whisnand
cwhisnand@nevadaappeal.com

When Erica Gallegos considered what she should do for her senior project at Carson High School, she wanted to incorporate her interest in art. The end result was an artistic way to help the community in the form of a mural.

Anyone who crosses the entrance path to the trails where the Fulstone

Wetlands are located near the Boys and Girls Clubs of Western Nevada on Russell Way are now greeted by a mural painted by Gallegos that takes up the entire wall which is 63 feet long and six feet tall on the path.

"I wanted to merge my artistic interest with something that would help the community," Gallegos said. "I thought a mural would be a good way to do that."

Gallegos began on the project in September and just completed the mural less than two weeks ago. The entire

project took her 66 hours over that time while the actual painting of the mural took her 30 to 35 hours.

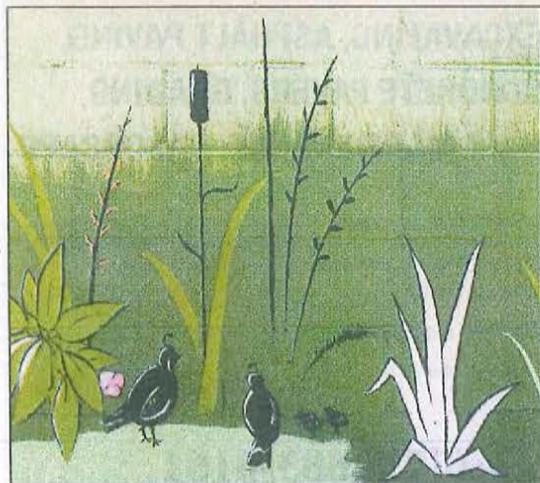
She worked on receiving approval for the project from the city's Parks and Recreation Department, along with the city's Open Space Committee and Cultural Commission. She began with three designs and working with city staff, she came up with the design which now makes up the mural. She

MURAL, A4



JIM GRANT / JGRANT@NEVADAAPPEAL.COM

CHS senior Erica Gallegos painted a mural on a cinder block wall near the Fulstone Wetlands.



Carson High School senior Erica Gallegos painted a 63-foot long mural on a cinder block wall near the Fulstone Wetlands.

MURAL

From page A1

also had to receive approval from property owners in the area to go ahead with the mural.

The mural displays the habitat of the Fulstone Wetlands, including a huge image of a heron and another huge image of two coyotes.

There's also various images of ducks, other birds, wet areas and rocks. Those who enter the path to the Fulstone Wetlands trails are greeted by a red-tail hawk.

"I wanted to capture the essence of the wetlands," said Gallegos, who added she plans to major in environmental science and possibly minor in art at the University of Nevada.

The project is part of the city's anti-graffiti effort. Gallegos said the plan is for her mural to be the first of many as part of a collaboration between CHS students and the city in its anti-graffiti effort.

Exhibit B

The Benefits of Public Art

By

Erica Gallegos

Carson High School
AP Literature A1
Mr. Macy
January 9, 2015

Erica Gallegos

OUTLINE

- I. Introduction:
 - A. Public art definition
 - B. Thesis: It can bring awareness to an issue, mark an event, or simply allow people to interact and collaborate together on a project. With both economic and social value, public art plays a significant role in developing a community.
- II. One of the benefits of establishing public art is the economic impact on the area.
 - A. Culture and uniqueness
 - a. Icons, diversity
 - b. Tourism and cultural capital
 - B. Pulling power
 - a. LGA report, profit
 - b. New York economy
 - c. Freeway in Nevada
 - C. Artist community
 - a. Alternative to capital investments
- III. Beyond the economic assets that public art can contribute, it also delivers a cultural essence to unite individuals in a community and improve society.
 - A. Identity
 - a. Sense of unity and pride
 - B. Improves society
 - a. Ferguson and Yogyakarta City
- IV. As demonstrated in the Paint for Peace project, public art can also be used to send a message that either represents a community's lifestyle, its history, or its opinions.
 - A. Political messages
 - a. Statue of David
 - B. Counterclaim
 - a. Must be appropriate for that community
- V. While public art can have a conceptual impact, like a tighter community or a historical or cultural significance, it can also serve a function.
 - A. Graffiti Prevention
 - a. Castle Rock
 - b. Nevada
 - c. Melbourne, Australia

- B. Eco Art
 - a. Washed Ashore Project
- C. Other functions

VI. Lastly, the simple beauty that public art contributes to an area impacts the mood of a community.

- A. Raises satisfaction
 - a. Richard Florida
 - b. Sony Studios
- B. Engenders inspiration

VII. Conclusion

Erica Gallegos
Mr. Macy
AP Literature A1

From murals and statues to multi-media sculptures and memorials, public art exists in many forms and for many purposes. The term “public art” encompasses two dimensional or three dimensional projects that are open to the community and freely accessible, providing a creative and strengthened connection between a city and its aesthetic culture. It can bring awareness to an issue, mark an event, or simply allow people to interact and collaborate together on a project. With both economic and social value, public art plays a significant role in developing a community.

One of the benefits of establishing public art is the economic impact on the area. Cities and towns strive to seek an identity, to seek something that distinguishes their culture from others and attracts outsiders to their location. Just looking at the historic and memorable icons of certain places, such as the Egyptian Pyramids or the St. Louis Arch, public art remains a great way to accomplish this goal. It “adds meaning to our cities and uniqueness to our communities,” the Public Art Network phrases it, something extremely important from an economic standpoint (Public Art Network). This sense of diversity and creative identity leads to tourism and eventually a profit for the community, referred to often as “cultural capital.” In fact, according to the publication of *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society*, a study was completed in 2013 by the Local Government Association to discover the economic correlation between public art and local communities. This case found that art and culture produce a “pulling power” that reels in visitors to local shops, hotels, and restaurants, and can bring in a substantial amount of money. For instance, Hepworth Wakefield, an art gallery in England, grossed \$10 million in its first year towards the local economy (Mowlah, Niblett and Blackburn). This surge in profit

illustrates just how much art can affect a community's growth and prosperity. By creating an artistic attraction peculiar or significant to a site, the artists and the city also create a cultural appeal and a reason for people to travel there. Here in the United States, Susan K. Freedman, president of New York City's Public Art Fund, claims that the cultural institutions in the state "bring in more than \$6 billion to the economy" and that "the arts bring in 25 million annual visitors" (Laneri). In large cities like New York, art is clearly vital for the cultural and economic input, but even in small towns, this pulling power comes into play again, drawing in visitors and economic benefits. Lucy Joyce, the Landscape Architecture Supervisor at the Nevada Department of Transportation, explains how the aesthetic designs on the freeways in Reno and Carson City "encourage visitors to get off the freeway and explore the area," and to even come back again in the future to live there or to establish a business (Joyce). Public art impacts the overall economy of the community, and it also provides employment for the artists involved. Investing in the arts offers alternatives to capital investments like stadiums and convention centers, and by expanding talent and creativity, the financial benefits for art-supporting businesses broaden, circulating more money within the community.

Beyond the economic assets that public art can contribute, it also delivers a cultural essence to unite individuals in a community and improve society. Public art engages people on different levels, from basic community tasks to state and even federal cooperative projects, causing people to feel connected and often passionate about this revitalized culture. Author and urban theorist Richard Florida claims that "art, especially public art, helps to give a community an identity" and that, if used throughout an urban region, it "can create a unified feel and sense of cohesiveness" (Florida). From the pride and unity that develops in a community by representing a piece of artwork together, change and a drive for improvement may occur to reflect the

opinions of the masses. For example, after violent protests in Ferguson, Missouri left restaurant owner Natasha Bahrami with broken windows, she reached out to the community, asking people to help paint the boarded up restaurant. Artists convened, and soon, Paint for Peace, a new project, had spread throughout the area, growing in support and participants (Segal). This alternative to violence allowed a peaceful outlet for the protesters and the community in Ferguson. "As soon as they saw the whole community come out the way that they did, they started losing all of that anger," Bahrami explains. By utilizing the qualities of public art, this community found a way to begin to heal, showing the extensive ways that art can be used to bring people together and tend to pressing issues. Another example can be seen in a study from Yogyakarta City in Indonesia that examined the impact of public art in an urban setting. After a mural project was completed to paint neglected spaces in the city, polls showed that most citizens felt the artwork had improved the safety and communication within the neighborhoods as well as the community's artistic capacity, beauty, and youth engagement (Setiawan). This data proves that public art has many positive effects on a community, and that it can apply to many different places and situations.

As demonstrated in the Paint for Peace project, public art can also be used to send a message that either represents a community's lifestyle, its history, or its opinions. Because public art originates from the artist's perspective and exists in a diverse culture, it can take shape in more controversial ways, such as political rights, yellow journalism, or environmental issues displayed through different mediums. By sending a message, art gives the people a way to express their freedom of speech while encouraging awareness and education. Historically, for instance, the famous statue of David constructed by Michelangelo was intended to contain political connotations (Sooke). The artwork symbolized the independence and strength of

Florence, and eventually became a token of history. This reveals how public art can shift from reflecting an idea to representing a culture, time, and place. In many ways, public art becomes a memorial with information and insight. Just look at the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, or Mount Rushmore—all epitomes of what public art can accomplish. Whatever the message, however, it is important to plan the art in an appropriate location and to encourage public involvement. Richard Florida stresses that “art has to be consistent with the vitality and soul of the community,” hence the “public” in public art (Florida).

While public art can have a conceptual impact, like a tighter community or a historical or cultural significance, it can also serve a function. Murals, for example, can be used not only to cover up graffiti and graffiti prone areas, but to prevent the vandalism from occurring again. This past summer, Castle Rock police officers in Colorado adopted the “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” concept to curb graffiti in their area. This solution consisted of painting murals along the major bridges and tunnels in hopes that gangs would either respect the artwork or lose the opportunities to tag the property. In Nevada, Lucy Joyce and other city workers have found that as they upgrade the community with public art, graffiti greatly reduces. She asserts that “gangs typically respect art” and when the community gets involved in a project, individuals feel they contributed in developing the design, and therefore, are less likely to tag (Joyce). Castle Rock and Nevada have become just two of many places that have borrowed this public art technique as a means to improve the landscape. In Melbourne, Australia, for instance, the city has a graffiti program named “Do art not tags” to educate and encourage teenagers about choosing street art instead of graffiti (Setiawan). This “street art” and other public art wane the ugliness and criminality associated with graffiti or neglected spaces, and act as a function to improve the community. There are also environmental purposes for public art, such as the

contemporary “eco art,” which relates nature and ecology into sculptures and statues. Many of these artists creatively transform trash and recycled plastics into public displays of artwork, helping the community aesthetically and fundamentally. One example of the eco-art process includes the Washed Ashore Project, an organization that brings awareness to ocean pollution. Through this program, community members help collect debris and trash along beaches, and then artists utilize these materials to construct sculptures of marine life (About Washed Ashore). This program encourages community interaction, cleans up the beaches, provides environmental awareness, and presents an agreeable display of artwork—all positive influences on the given location. Other functions of public art include reducing road rage, returning rural themes into an urban area, and preventing boredom. Nevada holds a greater fatality rate in motor vehicle accidents due to drowsiness than drunk driving, so by giving the driver something to look at, public art can increase focus and awareness (Joyce). The fact that public art can not only provide a visual, but can actually improve living conditions and revitalize one’s surroundings says something about its usefulness. The system of public art benefits the community in multiple ways, appealing to different factions in the nation and addressing different issues.

Lastly, the simple beauty that public art contributes to an area impacts the mood of a community. Having something colorful and aesthetic in place of plain or unkempt spaces creates a lighter atmosphere. Richard Florida maintains this notion, stating, “Our research indicated that the higher people rate the beauty of their community, the higher their overall level of community satisfaction,” delineating the importance of visual art to citizens of a town or city (Florida). Furthermore, if people are looking at new places to live, the visual and artistic properties of the location will likely be a factor in their decision. Generally, it makes people feel welcome and pleased when they observe art around their community. When artist Tony Tasset completed a 94

foot rainbow in Sony Studios, for example, people were reported as “giddy” during the opening ceremony. The design brightens the community, in more ways than one, and it upholds the idea that art simply raises the quality of life (Green). The effects of public art also produce inspiration for future artists in the community. With large sculptures and murals implemented throughout a city, new generations of creative and talented artists can grow and interact within the community, and new public art projects can develop.

Public art provides a community with cultural capital, a combination of economic, social, and aesthetic benefits. It has both instrumental and intrinsic value, and there are a range of different ways communities can implement this art form into their districts. The adjustments vary in degree, from painting trashcans to bring awareness to littering, to creating something that will define a community and memorialize it. The advantages to encouraging this kind of construction are unlimited, especially if members of a community have strong cultural values and goals. As vice chairmen of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, Darren Walker summarizes the many influences of public art in his statement, “Public art is a public good” (Laneri).

Works Cited

- "About Washed Ashore." December 2 2014. *Washed Ashore*. Web. 27 December 2014.
- Florida, Richard. *Interview with Richard Florida*. Mason Riddle. *On the Fringe*, n.d. Issue 39. Web. 27 December 2014.
- Green, Jared. "Why Public Art is Important." 17 October 2012. *The Dirt*. Web. 27 December 2014.
- Joyce, Lucy. Telephone Interview. 31 December 2014.
- Laneri , Raquel. "Why We Love—And Need—Public Art." 5 May 2009. *Forbes*. Web. 26 December 2014.
- Mowlah, Andrew , et al. "The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society." Evidence Review. 2014. Web.
- Public Art Network. "Why Public Art Matters." 2014. *Americans for the Arts*. Web. 26 December 2014.
- Segal, Corinne. "From shattered glass to blank canvas, Missouri communities paint to heal." 5 December 2014. *PBS*. Web. 27 December 2014.
- Setiawan, Teguh. "Role of Public Art in Urban Environment: A Case Study of Mural Art in Yogyakarta City." September 2010. Web. 27 December 2014.
- Sooke, Alastair . "What is the purpose of public art?" 31 July 2013. *BBC*. Web. 26 December 2014.

Exhibit C

April 27, 2015
Erica Gallegos
Carson City, NV 89701

Vern Krahn
Senior Park Planner
3303 Butti Way
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Vern,

I wanted to thank you for all that you have done concerning my senior project. You helped set me on the path for creating the mural, from handling all of the documentation to suggesting a location and a completion plan. This project would not have been possible without your assistance and guidance, so thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to help me.

This mural project has really opened my eyes to the possibilities of improving a community through art, and I hope we can work together again on future projects. I plan to continue on this course, and hopefully when I graduate from college, I can become a mentor to students just as you were to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Erica Gallegos".

Erica Gallegos