



Staff Reports

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To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
From: John Coates, Parks & Recreation Services Director
Prepared By: Katrina Gregory, Recreation Manager

TITLE:
2019 Helen Putnam Award for Economic Development through the Arts

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive the 2019 Helen Putnam Award for Economic Development through the Arts for the Napa Lighted Art Festival from the League of California Cities.

DISCUSSION:

Helen Putnam was the first woman elected President of the League of California Cities in 1978. To the League and to California cities, Helen Putnam defined excellence. The Award for Excellence is given in her memory. Established in 1982 by the League of California Cities, the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence program recognizes outstanding achievements by California's 482 cities. These winning cities have made unique contributions to community residents and businesses. The purpose of the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence program is to recognize and promote the outstanding efforts and innovative solutions by city governments.

The City of Napa is receiving the Helen Putnam Award for Economic Development through the Arts from the League of California Cities. The award is recognizing the Napa Lighted Art Festival. The award was first announced during the League of California Cities Conference in October 2019 at Long Beach. All 12 of the 2019 recipients will be featured in the Western City Magazine in the upcoming issue. The previous Helen Putnam award was received in 1998 for the Napa River Flood Control Project.

Below is an overview of the Napa Lighted Art Festival and its economic impact to the Napa community:

While the City of Napa is often most known for its vineyards and wine tasting, Napa is also becoming a destination for cultural arts. With the Rail Arts District, BottleRock music festival, and the Napa Art Walk, Napa continues to be enriched and enhanced by incorporating the arts in its community fabric. The Napa Lighted Art Festival supports the City's effort to expand the arts in the community as well as supports the City's economic strategy during a slower time of the year.

Napa Lighted Art Festival is a 9-day free festival featuring iconic architecture becoming the painting in this unique lighted art walk. Original artwork created by local and international artists are installed at approximately 12-15 locations in Downtown Napa and the Oxbow District. Supporting innovative techniques using light and light technologies as a growing art medium, the Napa Lighted Art Festival is a celebration of creative arts, technology and lights. Artwork displayed at the Napa Lighted Art Festival includes light art, video art, 3D video mapping projections, lighted sculptures and projects that use technology or interactivity. Residents and visitors can enjoy art, entertainment and delicious food both day and night during the festival in the heart of Napa Valley.

So, how do you brighten the darkest days in Napa? Cabernet Season is a phrase coined to describe the off season from late fall to early spring in Napa Valley when things slow down for this world-renowned destination. There is especially a steep drop off for visitation after the holidays. It is the lowest month for Transient Occupancy Tax which comprises 25% of the City of Napa's annual revenues. Not surprisingly, it is also the slowest month for downtown businesses as well. Most travelers have just visited their families, gone on a winter break vacation, or are recovering from spending extra money on holiday gifts. The difficult challenge is luring people out of their homes during the darker, colder time of year when it is their instinctual desire to hibernate in January. City staff had to entice them not by our world class wineries but by something so exciting and unique they were willing to venture out.

After researching potential ideas from around the globe, City staff developed a winter time special event focusing on the arts by partnering with the local business community and local Arts Council. The goal of the festival is to embody creativity and innovation and be uplifting and inspiring for those who attend. The Napa Lighted Art Festival took a bolder approach to the visual arts by incorporating emerging light technologies. This high impact artwork was moved out of museums and ticketed venues into the City streets with large outdoor canvases. This fresh approach provides an opportunity to expose a diverse audience to innovative, interactive artworks and reduced some traditional barriers by providing a free, assessable art experience.

The installation sites are a combination of private and public buildings and locations in the heart of Napa. The sites provide an opportunity to celebrate the unique character of Napa and include many iconic, historic buildings in the downtown corridor. Staff also wanted to represent the cultural charm of Napa. An example of this includes the "Night Bloom" in which majestic hot air balloons light up the night sky against a backdrop of the Napa River.

The funding for the event was formed by partnering with the Tourism Improvement District, Property Business Improvement District, private property owners, as well as individual and corporate sponsors. In 2019, City staff raised over \$225,000 for the festival which supported 80% of the direct expenses for the event.

City staff also developed a local community engagement component for the festival which included partnering with the Napa Valley United School District. It consisted of having 25-30 students in the

digital design lab at New Tech High School create one of the installations downtown. These students worked together and showcased their artwork next to other highly acclaimed international and regional artists. The students were mentored by one of the festival's international artists via Skype to help create a high-quality installation. The teacher and students received an international award for being one of the Top 100 Global Innovations in Education and recently traveled to Helsinki, Finland to receive their award. Additionally, ten students from this class were able to acquire their Adobe Premiere certification based on the software proficiency developed by working on this digital art installation. In addition to local student involvement, the festival also has a family-friendly Lantern Parade where the community gets to create their own lighted art. Participants of all ages explore their creative side by making a lantern and then share it with other community members on this special night during the festival.

In 2019, approximately 35,000 people attended the Napa Lighted Art Festival with approximately 40% arriving from outside Napa County. The economic impact was estimated at \$1.8 million. The community satisfaction and pride for the event was overwhelming with nearly 97% of those surveyed stating it met or exceeded their expectations. Downtown businesses were thrilled by the significant boost in revenue during this 9-day period in January. Lodging properties were also pleased with the increase in room night stays during this traditionally slow period. By partnering with Napa Downtown Association (Do Napa) and Visit Napa Valley, the festival outreach efforts and engagement strategies exceeded expectations and was the top performer on their websites and social media platforms.

The Napa Lighted Art Festival creates a tremendous amount of pride for the local public art community, enhances the community's vibrancy as well as supports the City of Napa's economic development strategy. With the help of the Napa Lighted Art Festival, January has never been so bright in Napa.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

None

CEQA:

None

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

None

NOTIFICATION:

None