



CITY OF GRASS VALLEY

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February 22, 2022

Brian Dahle
State Senator, District 1
State Capitol Suite 2054
Sacramento, CA 94249

Dear State Senator Brian Dahle

We, the City of Grass Valley, write to offer our support for Governor Newsom's 2022-23 state budget proposal, the *California Blueprint*, that includes \$30 million in one-time funding to support and expand the California Cultural Districts Program, in the hope that you, too, will support this proposal.

Nevada County is home to two unique state designated Districts of only four rural districts within an inaugural cohort of fourteen, and are now nearing the end of a five year pilot. Grass Valley-Nevada City Cultural District is the state's only twin city partnership, this special designation having been formed as a result of Assembly Bill 189 in late 2015, and enacted in 2017 under the California Arts Council.

We believe that the California Cultural District Program is one of the state's success stories and investment in it will drive recovery as we eye the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether through spurring economic and cultural development, tourism, or business and workforce development, Nevada County's California Cultural Districts are ready to serve.

Part of the program's success is that California Cultural Districts must be created as multi-sector partnerships between municipalities or units of government, business sectors and the creative sector. This provides a public-private infrastructure that can readily respond to a broader range of opportunities, matched funding and innovation, while engaging with a larger range of constituents and stakeholders.

Pre-Covid Grass Valley-Nevada City Cultural Districts:

1. Supported cultural planning efforts regionally - across the whole county. We published an economic impact study, a strategic plan for education and a public arts master plan, and we engaged in vital cultural asset mapping, shedding light on places of most importance to all people living in Nevada County, as a key driver for cultural tourism.
2. Worked hand in glove on initiatives to spur innovation in our devastated downtown areas such as *Art in Storefronts*, *Shopping with Artists* and our *Nevada County Artist Relief*

Fund - all of which provided much needed income to artists, but also an important focus on local businesses.

3. Importantly, our state designation has thrown our local Tribe in the West, one of the most endangered in California, in the spotlight in the best of ways. Where once there was barely recognition for our indigenous peoples, the Nisenan Tribe now has its own downtown location - a gallery - in the heart of one of our business districts. In the Eastern part of our County, in Truckee Cultural District, the Washoe Tribe is the focus for the largest creative placemaking initiative, *FOREST-FIRE*, our county has ever seen.
4. Supporting Grass Valley's intangible cultural heritage has been important, and our state designation as a California Cultural District has enabled us to support heritage that forms the very make-up of our region, and our least visible communities. With investment, these histories - and our heritage - will become less "intangible" and more a critical part of our everyday lives. Both our California Cultural Districts in Nevada County benefit from participating in a Community of Practice for Equity in the Arts which, looking forward, will strengthen our work with our partners.

Looking beyond Covid, our California Cultural Districts will provide a nerve center for economic and social recovery in all three of our incorporated areas - but they need investment. With state funds, our District partners can continue to leverage local support and, together, fuel projects that carry real meaning not only for business and tourism, but for the people who live here - your constituents - who need our collective support.

Thank you for supporting Governor Newsom's 2022-23 state budget proposal, the *California Blueprint*, and its provision for \$30 million in one-time funding to support and expand the California Cultural Districts Program. If ever there were an opportunity to maintain California's economy as the fifth largest in the world, investment in our Cultural Districts will surely provide a pathway to recovery and support one of its most valuable resources - its diversity.

Sincerely,

Ben Aguilar
Mayor of Grass Valley