

Contra Costa County Plaques and Memorials Policy

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for assessing requests, installation, and ongoing maintenance and management of plaques and memorials in County public space.

2.0 POLICY

The policy covers plaques and memorials on benches and picnic tables in County-owned public spaces, including within road right-of-way, parks, and open space lands, and areas adjacent to County-owned buildings. All new plaques and memorials will be required to conform to this policy.

There may be existing plaques and memorials in the public space that predate this policy and should not be taken as a precedent for future approvals, nor should they necessarily be removed or modified for non-conformance.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Public space is a significant part of the County's social and cultural heritage and makes a valued recreational, environmental, and aesthetic contribution for people who live, work, and recreate in the County. Plaques and memorials provide recognition and can contribute to an understanding of people closely associated with this history.

Any decision regarding plaques and memorials needs to consider the balance between the desire to commemorate individuals, the public and aesthetic value of the bench or picnic table to which the plaque is attached, the ongoing enjoyment of uncluttered, well maintained County public space, and all associated costs with establishing and maintaining Memorials, as well as maintaining County property for other County or public purposes.

This policy will provide a consistent and standard procedure for assessing requests.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Within this policy, the following definitions apply:

County Public Space – County property that is open or accessible to the public. County Public Space includes but may not be limited to:

- Public open space and lands, including parks, trails, natural areas, and landscaped grounds.
- Land reserve areas owned, occupied, or otherwise controlled by the County.
- Activity center locations within public space, including trails and footpaths, median strips, and public plazas.
- Road right-of-way areas, parking lots, and other transportation areas, including associated landscaped areas.

Donation Term – The donation term for a memorial object or installation is the earlier of ten years, or the useful life of the memorial object, as determined by the Public Works Director.

Memorial – A new bench or picnic table installed within a public space on which a Plaque is affixed.

Plaque or Dedication – A flat tablet of metal inscribed to commemorate a deceased person who had a strong tie to Contra Costa County or a specific Contra Costa County community. A plaque may be affixed to an existing bench or picnic table located within a public space.

5.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The County recognizes that dedications and memorials are important in recognizing and celebrating deceased persons closely associated with Contra Costa County or a specific community within Contra Costa County.

Policy Objectives

The County's objectives under this Policy include:

- Providing an opportunity to recognize and celebrate deceased persons who have made positive contributions to the community.
- Protecting the intended purpose, environmental values, and aesthetic appearance of County public spaces.
- Encouraging installation of memorials that serve to fill a specific need or provide a utilitarian function at a particular County public space.
- Providing a clear and equitable framework to manage requests for plaques and memorials to be located within County public spaces.
- Ensuring risks are adequately considered in relation to plaques and memorials on County land.

General Principles

To protect the intended purpose and aesthetic appearance of County public space, the County selectively considers installation of plaques and memorials on benches and picnic tables owned by the County. Plaques and memorials will only be considered where they are consistent with the County's strategic and design vision for the proposed location. The proposal must be consistent with relevant County strategies, master plans and the land's public purpose, and must not result in a change of use of the land. The location or appearance of a plaque or memorial bench or picnic table must not negatively impact the aesthetic or environmental value, safe operation, or use of public space or right of way, nor on the use of the space by the community.

The placement of any mementoes, e.g., flowers, statues, personal belongings, etc., in the vicinity of the memorial is prohibited.

The Public Works Director or designee has sole discretion to approve or deny an application for a dedication or memorial consistent with this Policy. Unless otherwise authorized by County:

- All costs associated with the design, purchase, construction, installation and maintenance of plaques and memorials are to be paid by the person or organization making the request for the plaque or memorial bench or picnic table.
- Purchase and installation of any plaque or memorial must be undertaken by the County.
- Installed benches and picnic tables will become the property of the County.
- Maintenance of memorial plaques, benches, and picnic tables shall be undertaken by the County.
- Wording on plaques is subject to County approval.
- All requests will be considered in the order received.
- Only one dedication per bench and picnic table is allowed.
- Memorial benches and picnic tables are for public enjoyment and are not reserved for exclusive use of donors.
- Plaques and memorials placed in County public space without County approval will be removed. Reasonable efforts will be made to identify and contact the people responsible for placing the item to advise them of this policy and to return any removed items to them.
- The County reserves the right to deny any plaques or memorials where it is determined they do not meet the criteria listed above.

The County does not guarantee to retain memorial plaques, benches, and picnic tables in a particular location through the donation term. If a bench or picnic table requires removal or relocation due to site safety, maintenance, or construction activities, the County will endeavor to contact the donor to identify one or more alternate site locations for relocation. At the end of the Donation Term, the County may contact the donor to determine if the donor wishes to renew an expiring memorial/dedication for an additional donation term. It is the donor's responsibility to notify the County of any change in contact information.

Existing plaques and memorials

Plaques and memorials that were established before the adoption of this policy will generally be retained in place for as long as practicable, subject to exceptions as listed above.

Requests for new plaques and memorials on County-owned land or Right of Way

The Public Works Director, or designee, will consider requests for new dedications to honor deceased individuals, including those from private individuals and community groups, for installation of plaques and memorials on land owned by the County.

Plaques and memorial requests from individuals or groups will only be considered to commemorate a deceased individual who had a strong, positive tie to Contra Costa County or a specific Contra Costa County community. Memorialized individuals should be known to or revered by a substantial number of community residents.

Inscriptions will not be permitted if they:

- Detract from the image of the County;
- May be considered discriminatory, derogatory, or offensive, including any inscriptions that discriminate on the basis of a protected class; or
- Exceed the space available on one plaque per object.

6.0 APPROVAL PROCESS

Placement of plaques or memorials in a public space requires prior written approval from the County. Persons making initial inquiries regarding the installation of a plaque or memorial should be referred to this policy for direction regarding criteria applicable to the inquiry. For initial inquiries, please contact the Public Works Department, Special Districts Section at 925-313-2000.

New plaques installed by the County

- A. Applications must be in writing and submitted on a County-issued application form. The application should include, among other information, all relevant details including the proposed text as well as the preferred location for the plaque.
- B. Final approval for the design and layout, wording, and location of any proposed plaque rests with the Public Works Director or designee. The County will determine the type and style of benches and picnic tables to choose from and the style of memorial plaque and lettering.

Requests for new plaques and memorials on County-owned land

- A. The Plaques and Memorials Application must be completed in full and demonstrate compliance with this policy. The application should include all relevant details including proposed text as well as the preferred location for the plaque or memorial. A list of current bench and picnic tables and potential locations is available upon request.
- B. Submit the completed application to the following location:

Public Works Department
255 Glacier Drive
Martinez, CA 94553
Attention: Special Districts Manager

- C. Review of the application will be made by Public Works Department in accordance with the criteria in this policy.

All costs associated with the purchase and installation of a plaque or memorial will be calculated by the Public Works Director, or designee, at the time an application is approved. Payment in advance is required. The cost will reflect the actual cost of the plaque or memorial (i.e., bench or table with inscribed plaque) and all staff costs to install the plaque or memorial, which may include the cost of any required concrete pad.

- D. Once an application is approved and the donor has paid costs associated with the donation, a reasonable installation schedule will be coordinated with the applicant but will be determined by the County. Schedules are subject to change.
- E. Inscriptions shall be limited to a maximum of three lines and 20 characters/spaces per line, and donors may choose to include verbiage such as "In memory of _____" or "Dedicated to _____." The County will approve all text for plaques.

Replacements

The County will replace plaques and memorials that are damaged beyond repair due to vandalism. Plaques and memorials that are damaged repeatedly may not be replaced.