

San Francisco Arts Commission, Visual Arts Committee
401 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 325
San Francisco, CA 94102

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is concerning the Middle Ground project, a temporary interactive installation created by the Exploratorium's Studio for Public Spaces in partnership with the San Francisco Public Library Main Branch and the Civic Center Initiative (formerly referred to as Civic Center Commons). The installation is focused on social psychology and is designed to engage people in conversations around biases and stereotypes. The project was presented to the Visual Arts Committee for approval on April 17, 2019 and the motion to approve the project was unanimously approved. The original motion language reads as follows:

Motion: Motion to approve Middle Ground, a temporary interactive installation focused on social psychology developed in partnership by the Civic Center Commons Initiative, the SF Public Library Main Branch, and the Exploratorium's Studio for Public Spaces and funded by the National Science Foundation. The installation will be placed on the Larkin Street plaza in front of the main entry to the Library. The design consists of approximately 17 columns, each 12 ft. 3 in. high, rising from a base measuring 3 ft. by 3 ft. which serve as individual stations for interactive exhibits and shall be up from July 2019 to July 2020 pending approval from Public Works and the Historic Preservation Commission.

After obtaining all necessary approvals, the Middle Ground project was installed at the Larkin Street entrance of the San Francisco Public Library Main Branch building in July 2019, formally opening in August of 2019. The project has been immensely successful and has been well cared for since it opened and recently won a SF Design Week award in the category of Civic + Government design.

The project was originally intended to be displayed for approximately one year, with a removal date in July of 2020. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic necessitated temporary closure of the exhibit in March 2020. This temporary closure has prematurely curtailed community interaction with the installation and has impacted the Exploratorium's ability to conduct a robust evaluation of the exhibit, which is required by the National Science Foundation grant funding the project. To allow for additional community interaction and evaluation, the Exploratorium wishes to extend the display of Middle Ground to December 2020. The Exploratorium and partners are aware that the City plans to install a monument to Maya Angelou at the project site and is committed to coordinating with the Arts Commission. The Exploratorium agrees to remove the Middle Ground exhibit upon request of the Arts Commission and pending the Maya Angelou sculpture installation date.

Sincerely,



Shawn Lani
Director, Studio for Public Spaces
Exploratorium