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### **Santa Cruz Honors Historic Chinatown with Bridge Naming and Public Artwork**

*A mosaic-covered water dragon atop a non-traditional Chinese style gate will decorate the Chinatown Bridge, renamed by Santa Cruz City Council, bringing attention to a forgotten chapter of Santa Cruz history.*

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. – Sunday, November 1, 2020, is the planned date for installing the water dragon as part of Santa Cruz’s newest and most unique work of public art at the Santa Cruz Riverwalk along the San Lorenzo River. Years of work, both public and behind the scenes, will leap forward Sunday as artists and crews transport the water dragon from its Kathleen Crocetti’s workshop in Watsonville to its final resting place atop the Chinatown Gate, built by Tom Ralston Concrete.

While the contributions of Chinese immigrants have shaped the historical, economic and social development of California and the Monterey Bay region, few monuments or memorials help us remember that story. Too many residents have forgotten or never knew this important chapter of our local history. The last of multiple Chinatowns in Santa Cruz, destroyed during the December 1955 flood, was located near the river where the Galleria currently stands, next to Trader Joe’s downtown. The pedestrian bridge from San Lorenzo Park, over the river to the Galleria, never had a formal name. And there was only an obscure plaque in a Galleria walkway, nearly hidden, to honor this place where the city’s final Chinatown once stood - until now.

The Santa Cruz City Council voted unanimously to approve the naming of the pedestrian bridge that crosses the San Lorenzo River where this final Chinatown once stood as the “Chinatown Bridge.” Along with the formal bridge naming, the Council approved the installation of a new public art piece, consisting of a non-traditional Chinese-style gate with a mosaic-tiled water dragon, to be constructed at the west end of the bridge spanning the river where this last Chinatown stood. The art piece will beautify the Santa Cruz Riverwalk, draw attention to the renamed bridge and educate and inspire passers-by with the story of Santa Cruz’s diverse history. Chinese immigrants contributed significantly to Santa Cruz, this region and the state, even in the face of severe discrimination, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and local anti-Chinese movements. In spite of those challenges, early Chinese-Americans played important roles in shaping Santa Cruz’s early history.

The project is led by the Coastal Watershed Council (CWC), who views the bridge re-naming and the public art piece as a key step in realizing the Santa Cruz’s vision of a healthy, welcoming and fun San Lorenzo River that connects our diverse community to nature and that is recognized as an attractive and desirable location for outdoor recreation and reflection. Local artists Kathleen Crocetti and Tom Ralston, among others, and Santa Cruz philanthropist George Ow, Jr., have teaming up to develop the public art to commemorate Chinatown.

Kathleen Crocetti’s mosaics can be seen adorning the Santa Cruz Riverwalk, from the large-scale river depictions at the Tannery Arts Center to the student-installed mosaics along the Riverwalk path, among other places in town. Among many other impressive works, Tom Ralston created a 17-foot Chinese memorial gate, installed at Evergreen Cemetery in 2014 to honor Santa Cruz’s early Chinese immigrants—fishermen, railroad workers, servants and farm laborers. The gate, like the Chinatown Bridge public art piece, was supported by former Chinatown resident George Ow Jr. Mr. Ow lived in the Chinatown along the San Lorenzo River as a young boy. George and the entire Ow family are a link to this history and have kept this history alive by supporting this project highlighting, honoring and chronicling local Chinatowns. They also supported prior

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works by authors, photographers and historians to document and share the story of Chinatown through several books on Santa Cruz and regional Chinese history.

Work on the Chinatown Bridge artwork has continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a planned completion date by the end of 2020. Additional artists and contributors include Michael Corcoran, Sean Monaghan, Tony Armor of DayOne Solar, Geoffrey Dunn and Sandy Lydon. Funders include Ow Family Properties, the City of Santa Cruz Department of Economic Development and Arts Council Santa Cruz County. More information is available on the CWC website at <https://coastal-watershed.org/san-lorenzo-river/chinatown-bridge/>.

#### About the Coastal Watershed Council

The Coastal Watershed Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was formed in 1995 in response to the declining health of watersheds connected to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. CWC's mission is to preserve and protect coastal watersheds through community stewardship, education and monitoring. All of CWC's work takes place on unceded territory of the Awaswas-speaking Upyi Tribe. Over the past 25 years, CWC has trained thousands of volunteers and educated thousands of students to monitor water quality, enhance habitat and preserve and protect the natural resources along California's Central Coast. Today, CWC uses this expertise to help to empower youth and adults to revitalize the San Lorenzo River. CWC invites the community to get involved today by calling (831) 464-9200 or visiting the CWC website at [www.coastal-watershed.org](http://www.coastal-watershed.org).

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