

Dust & Wonder Trail

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

Supplemental Project Description & Supporting

Organization	Comstock Historic District Commission
Contact	Joe Curtis 775.742.0138 P.O. Box 128, 20 N. E Street, Virginia City, NV 89440
Project Type	New Installation — Public Art / Wayfinding Sculptures
Project Name	Dust & Wonder Trail Interpretive Railroad Spike Sculpture

Project Overview

The Dust & Wonder Trail requests approval to install one (1) interpretive railroad spike sculpture at the V&T Railroad Company Depot parking area. This sculpture is part of the Dust & Wonder Trail, a regional cultural corridor connecting historic and cultural sites across Carson City, Carson Valley, Silver City, and Virginia City.

The Dust & Wonder Trail was formally established in the Summer of 2025 through a collaboration between Visit Carson City, Visit Carson Valley, and the Virginia City Tourism Commission. The project was made possible through a Travel Nevada Destination Development Design (3D) grant award covering all design, fabrication, and transportation costs.

The railroad spike sculptures here and throughout Storey County will serve as public art wayfinding markers, celebrating Nevada's pioneer, mining, and railroad heritage and drawing heritage tourists deeper into Storey County's historic districts.

1. Architectural Design & Measurements

Sculpture Form

The sculpture is modeled after a railroad spike sourced from the V&T Railroad, an object directly tied to Nevada's 19th-century railroad and mining heritage. Its vertical, tapering form is visually legible as a wayfinding element while maintaining a silhouette that does not replicate or visually compete with historic structures. The design is abstract and contemporary in scale, clearly distinguishable as public art rather than a reproduction of any historic building or feature.

Dimensions

Overall Height	144 inches (12 feet) above grade
Shaft Width	Approximately 16 inches square (tapers toward top)
Base Plate Footprint	Approximately 24 x 24 inches (above grade)

Below-Grade Footing	Reinforced concrete pier, 36" diameter, 36" deep
Sculpture Weight	Approximately 800 lbs.

Interpretive Panel Content

This sculpture incorporates laser-engraved and cut text panels featuring:

- Site-specific historical narratives about the location, written in collaboration with the venue. These will be engraved on two sides of the sculpture.
- A QR code made of anodized aluminum links to the Dust & Wonder Trail’s interactive digital map, connecting all 30+ trail locations.

2. Materials

Sculpture Body

Structural Core	Internal welded steel framework (structural tube/plate steel)
Exterior Skin	Corten (weathering) steel — ASTM A588 or equivalent
Base Plate	Welded steel plate, typically ½”–¾” thick, with pre-drilled anchor bolt holes
Fasteners	Galvanized and stainless steel, anchor bolts (½”–¾” diameter), washers, lock washers, and nuts

Foundation / Anchoring

Footing Type	Reinforced concrete pier, below grade
Diameter	36x36 inches
Depth	36 inches (adjusted for frost depth and soil conditions)
Reinforcement	#4 rebar cage (verticals with ties)
Concrete Strength	3,000–4,000 PSI
Anchor Method	Cast-in-place J-bolts or epoxy-set threaded rods embedded 8–12 inches into concrete

All materials are non-combustible, non-toxic, and fully removable. The sculpture does not require utility connections of any kind. No permanent alterations to the historic structure or its foundation are required.

3. Colors & Surface Finish

The sculpture will be powder coated dark bronze. This finish is self-sealing and requires no ongoing maintenance.

Surface Treatment	Natural weathering — no paint or applied finish
Initial Color	Dark bronze (as shown in submitted photo)
Weathered Color	Deep bronze
Engraved Areas	Natural bare steel revealed by laser engraving; will develop a contrasting patina tone over time

The dark bronze finish is contextually compatible with the rustic and agrarian character of Storey County's historic districts. The finish references the industrial heritage the sculpture commemorates without introducing bright or artificial coloration.

4. Proposed Location on Properties

The sculpture is proposed to be sited on the V&T Railroad Company Depot's parking lot area. The exact placement will be determined in coordination with the venue and the Comstock Historic District Commission.

- Visible to pedestrians and trail visitors without obstructing sightlines to the historic buildings
- Positioned to avoid interference with existing pathways, landscaping, snow removal or site features
- Set back sufficiently from the historic structure so as not to create a visual impression of attachment or alteration to the building
- Accessible for visitors to interact with the QR code and interpretive panels
- A site plan identifying the exact proposed location is attached in this application

5. Artist

The Dust & Wonder Trail sculptures are fabricated by Seth Johnson, a Carson City-based sculptor and master metal fabricator specializing in large-scale, structurally engineered public art. Following a nationally advertised Request for Proposals, Johnson was selected by the Dust & Wonder Trail public art committee.

Johnson has lived throughout the greater Sierra Nevada Mountains and finds the Sierra's to have a dynamic natural beauty that inspires his art. His work as a landscape architect and designer informs his sculpture, weaving artistic concepts, natural landscapes, flora and civic ideas into his projects. Notable projects include a 12' Yellow dog, (Rancho Cucamonga, CA), 14" Red Bull, (Portland, Oregon), 13' Wings, (Tustin, CA), 14' Flaming Horse, (Sacramento, CA), 13' Angelic Wings, (Sacramento, CA), numerous Nevada Department of Transportation Sculptures, Burning Man installations, and private sector installation.

6. Project Timeline

Fabrication	Currently underway (July 2026)
Earliest Installation	September 1 (contingent on all approvals)
Target Completion	No later than October 30, 2026
Interpretive Content	Being finalized in collaboration with venues

7. Historic Preservation Compatibility

This sculpture is designed to be fully compatible with placement in historic districts and are developed with awareness of review standards. Key compatibility considerations include:

- The sculpture is a freestanding, independent object and does not attach to, alter, or obscure any historic building or site feature
- The abstract industrial form is clearly distinguishable as contemporary public art and does not attempt to replicate or imitate historic architectural elements
- All materials are non-combustible, non-toxic, removable and the installations are fully reversible with no permanent impact on the historic fabric of the site
- The powder coated steel palette is visually compatible with the earth tones and agrarian character of Storey County's historic streetscape
- The sculpture's interpretive content actively celebrates and promotes Storey County's significance of the Comstock Lode and the region's railroad and mining heritage
- The Dust & Wonder Trail and Visit Carson City will assist with all city, state, county, and/or national regulatory compliance and permitting requirements

The Dust & Wonder Trail and Visit Carson City respectfully request the Comstock Historic District Commission's approval of this Certificate of Appropriateness. We welcome the opportunity to present additional information, answer questions, and appear before the Commission at its convenience.

A photograph of the fabricated prototype sculpture and proposed location are attached to this application.

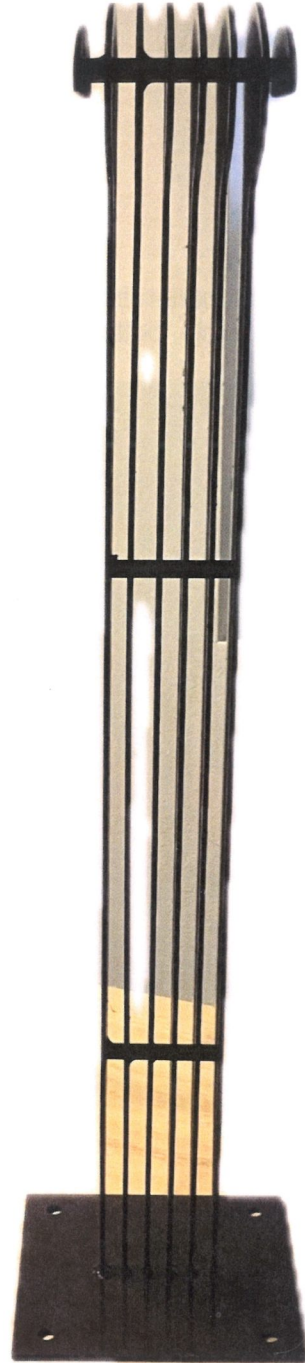
Submitted by: Eric Brooks | 775. 600.3782 | ebrooks@visitcarsoncity.com
716 N. Carson City Suite A Carson City, NV 89701

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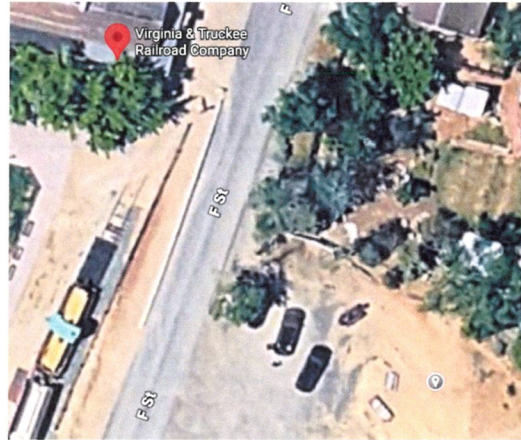
Supplemental Project Images and location



Solid side



See through side



The proposed location for the sculpture is across the street from the venue, indicated by a white dot in a white circle, bottom left of photo.



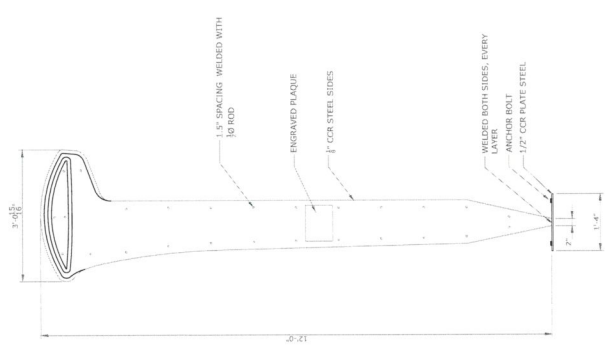




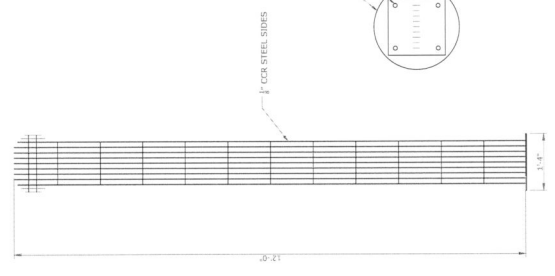
ECCENTRIC DESIGNS LLC
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
NY, LIC. 982
775-842-4054

12' TALL RAILROAD SPIKE
DOCUMENTS

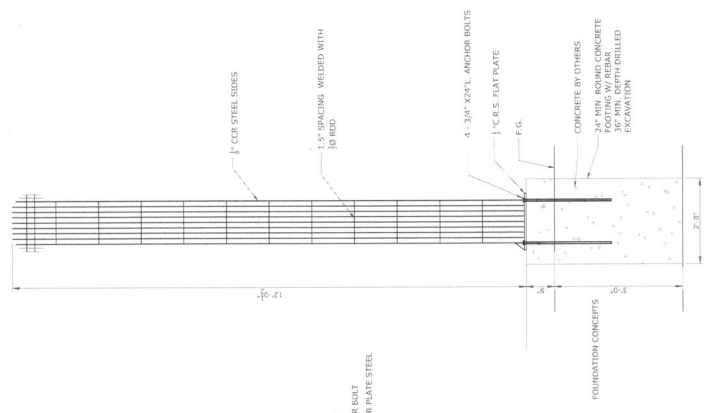
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Scale:	
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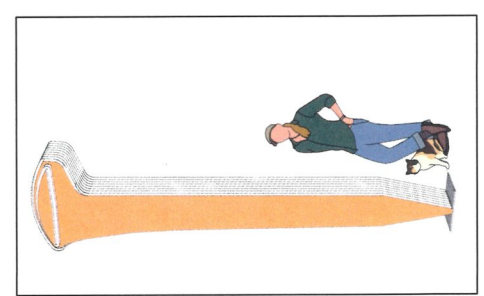
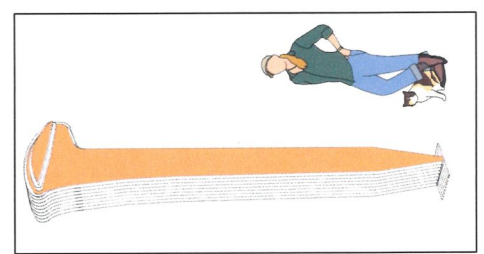
① SPIKE SIDE $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0''$



② SPIKE FRONT $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0''$



③ FOUNDATION $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0''$



PRELIMINARY NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

Nicholas Brothers, P.E.
20 Middlefield Pl
Washoe Valley, NV 89704
775-530-8735
nbrothers775@gmail.com

3/13/2026

To Whom It May Concern,

As a licensed Civil Engineer in the State of Nevada, I have reviewed the design and installation details of the "Railroad Spike" sculpture proposed for installation. Based on the evaluation in accordance with **ASCE 7-16** and the anchor bolt requirements provided, I hereby certify the following:

- The sculpture has been evaluated for applicable **dead loads and wind loads** per **ASCE 7-16**.
- The anchor bolt system shall consist of **(4) 3/4-inch diameter anchor bolts**, installed with a minimum embedment depth of **2 feet**, and are designed to resist the calculated **uplift, shear, and overturning forces** with appropriate factors of safety.
- Pier foundation shall be not less than **3 feet in depth**.
- Based on the information reviewed and assuming the sculpture and anchorage system are installed in accordance with the layout and description as provided by the architect, the sculpture is considered **stable under the design loading conditions**.

This certification is provided solely for the purpose of documenting the structural adequacy of the anchorage and does not constitute an inspection of the final installation. Final responsibility for compliance with installation specifications remains with the contractor and/or installer.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Brothers, P.E.
CE 023679 Nevada Civil Engineer



