



## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

### ANNUAL REPORT 2020

#### BID Board of Directors

**President Elect 2021 & Event Chair  
2020 – Jaime Ortiz**  
Bank of Marin

**Vice President 2020-21 – Adam  
Dawson**  
Mike's Bikes

**Secretary, July 2020-21 – Tobi Lessem**  
Bodywise Massage

**Secretary, Jan. - June 2020 –  
Bonnie Ayers Namkung**  
Marketing & Communications

**Treasurer, 2020-21 – Jed Greene**  
Five Corners Group

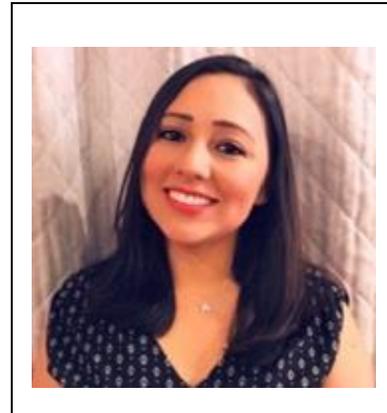
#### Directors

**President/Social Media Chair 2020 –  
Erika Bowker,**  
Pleasures of the Heart

**Jeff Brusati 2020-21 – T & B Sports**

**Morgan Schaufler 2020-21 –  
Youth in Arts**

**Elisabeth Setten 2020-21 –  
Art Works Downtown**



### President's Message

Dear Fellow BID Members,

The BID Board is happy to present a summary of our 2020 activities to support San Rafael's unique Downtown business area. It was far from business as usual this year.

We focused on keeping our Downtown business owners informed and ready to respond to the ever-changing Covid-19 landscape. We constantly worked on promoting our Downtown through social media, our website and marketing campaigns. Our goal was to keep our community and members current as we moved ahead through the many challenges.

As I finish my term, I thank you for your perseverance and resilience in pivoting to stay open and relevant in these unprecedented times. Keep up the good work and please to contact Jaime or Eda to get involved in improving your community!

*Erika Bowker, President 2020*



## 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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- **Banners** – created and installed **Shop Local \* Eat Local \* Support San Rafael** cross-street banners immediately at lockdown and all events were canceled. Banners remain in the east and west ends across 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Posted bumper stickers with same message.
- **Donations** – BID was an original donor to the SR Small Business COVID-19 Grant Program and voted for remaining Target funds to support this initiative during the early stages of the crisis. We also supported the nonprofit Marin Multicultural Center and CFI.
- **Member emails, newsletters, and updates** – continuously communicated with members to keep them informed of Covid-19 information updates and Tier status for closings and re-openings. Explained details and provided links to information sources, including Marin Recovers, PPE and safety protocols, PPP loans, small business grants and classes, permits and more.
- **Hands-on help** - executive director engaged with members by email, phone and in person amidst day-to-day changes of the pandemic.
- **Parking** - worked with City Parking and Public Works depts. to quickly create four free 15-minute parking spaces per block for safe pickup of food and goods. Promoted free weekend parking program and three hours free holiday parking in City garages and lots.
- **Website updates** – presented current content for BID members and public visitors, highlighted Dining Under the Lights and built status box to notify partners and public of confirmed and canceled dates. Also featured a link to air quality reports.
- **Created online searchable directory** - Downtown businesses can create and continuously update their listing (closed, open for takeout only, special hours, sales, etc.) Drove traffic to directory through banners, ads and social media.
- **Collaborations** – worked with City government and departments including Economic Development, Public Works, Parking, Recreation and SRPD. Partnered with Downtown San Rafael Arts District (DSRAD), SR Chamber, SBDC and other Marin Cities.
- **Outdoor dining areas** – liaison between businesses and the City for outdoor areas to offer any services, since indoors was not allowed. Helped with permits and interest and ability to work outside. Advised re: TAM Grant for restaurant dining in parking spaces.
- **Beautification initiatives** – after spearheading the West End pilot Tivoli overhead lighting project in 2019, acted with City Public Works to extend the lights east to the SMART station in time for the kickoff of Dining Under the Lights.
- **Bike racks** – worked with DSRAD and City to install eight Cultural Art District branded bike racks paid for by California Arts Council in Downtown locations.
- **Art in empty store windows** – collaborated with Dominican professor and students to install original, uplifting art in windows of empty street-level locations.

- **Dia de los Muertos altar window displays** – 25+ downtown merchants, in a show of community, presented Day of the Dead window art. Collaboration included BID sponsor, Marin Multicultural Center, San Rafael Dia de los Muertos, City Rec Dept. and artists.
- **Online posts of art news** – DSRAD/BID cross promotional Instagram @artsanrafael - 508 followers, Facebook - 441 followers, +35% from 2019.
- **Social media director** – board member Erika Bowker actively posts to 3,500 followers on Instagram and Facebook, multiplying effects by engaging with Downtown businesses with their own social media and email campaigns. BID added 1,000 followers this year.
- **Downtown and DUTL promotion** – marketed through print ads and digital media: BID website, Facebook page, Nextdoor, Marin newspapers, as well as PR sites and articles. Strategic paid ad boosts on Facebook, coached merchants to feature Dining Under the Lights (DUTL) on their websites, newsletters and email lists to increase diners and shoppers Downtown.
- **Partnered with CFI (California Film Institute) and Mill Valley Film Festival** – sponsored Grab and Go Program with the goal of promoting our BID District and supporting local small businesses.
- **Holiday window decorating contest** – annual contest with prizes to bring festive fun to merchants and shoppers.



## 2020 Events

Sadly, we were forced to call off all our traditional events due to the pandemic. We were also sad to say goodbye to Brian Auger on his retirement as the City's events coordinator, after his decades of cheerful and expert help on our events, including our current canceled lineup:

- **32<sup>nd</sup> Annual May Madness** (pivoted to Sat. Night Cruise in August)
- **32<sup>nd</sup> Trick or Treat on Fourth Street** (became Dine in Costume at DUTL)
- **Clean & Green Day**
- **Sidewalk Sales**
- **Hops & Vines Stroll**
- **West End Village Celebration**
- **Shop Local Saturday** (now **Shop Local Season** - featuring print and digital ad campaigns highlighting the many reasons to support Downtown businesses)

## Dining Under the Lights and Outdoor Dining Areas

To bring hope, commerce and life back to our Downtown, we created a new program—Dining Under the Lights, with substantial help from the City of San Rafael. We are extremely grateful for the fast action and generosity of so many City departments in making it happen.

We are proud to have been one of the first in Northern Calif. to develop an on-street dining program. We launched on Thursdays in June, added Fridays in July, and eventually extended the program through November.

This created the opportunity for restaurants to begin rehiring staff and serving seated diners. We acted as liaison between departments of the ABC, the County and City to encourage over 45 restaurants, caterers, breweries and bars to partner and safely participate.

Dining Under the Lights (DUTL) also gave the weary public an outlet to feel safely distanced and protected, enjoy a moment of normalcy and support their local small business owners.

Our DUTL program allows restaurants to maximize their profit potential without costly building permits, construction costs or the lost foot traffic caused by construction. Providing our local restaurants with the ability to seat more diners represents a significant revenue improvement which will help them navigate these extremely difficult times.



DUTL also promotes our Downtown by providing foot traffic for other local businesses. This “free advertising” will draw more patrons of different demographics to our Downtown, giving our local retailers a boost.

Outdoor seating of every variety offers benefits that make our restaurants more attractive to a variety of diners. Street seating can also address other issues, such as providing guests with mobility issues the easy entry and exit of al fresco dining. This ground-level seating is ideal for guests who use wheelchairs and other walking aids. Diners with bikes and dogs also appreciate the freedom of outdoor dining.

This spring, in the season of growth and renewal, we advocate for more outdoor dining options. These can stimulate higher revenues and brighter financial forecasts for bring our City and Downtown businesses.

We hope to continue our successful DUTL in 2021. Some BID members are suggesting starting the 2021 season as early as April or whenever weather permits.

## The BID Organization and 2021 Work Plan

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Our 2021 agenda emphasizes ensuring the BID's organizational foundation is strong, fiscally responsible and able to promote Downtown to members and the community. With the future very much unknown, including our level of funding and what events may be allowed, our intention is to:

- **Communicate with members** – continue engagement through routine communications via website, email, newsletters and in person
- **Add board members and volunteers** – actively recruit committee members and engage prospective board members
- **Raise BID funding** – explore supplemental funding sources through business sponsorship of events, matching funds and more
- **Collaborate with local groups** – continue partnerships with SR City Departments, the SRPD, the Chamber and the DSRAD to expand the BID's reach and create more visibility and excitement for Downtown.
- **Resume Dining Under the Lights** – restart the program in the spring when the weather turns warm
- **Continue May Madness** – host our legacy event whenever and however it can be safely done (parade or cruise). Hopefully, we can produce other events as well.

See current information, status and business directory at:  
**[DowntownSanRafael.org](http://DowntownSanRafael.org)**

### Our Mission

The Business Improvement District promotes the economic vitality of Downtown and the common interests of Downtown business owners. We help promote a district that is a welcoming place to shop, dine, work, live and enjoy.

### Our Vision

Downtown is the cultural heart and soul of our City, where activity, dining, entertainment and commerce blend with creative and entrepreneurial spirit. Downtown is where hometown pride and community thrive.

