



**SAN RAFAEL
DOWNTOWN BID**

**Downtown San Rafael Business
Improvement District**

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO...

What is the BID?

The Downtown San Rafael Business Improvement District (BID) is a 501 C(6) nonprofit corporation established in 1979 to revitalize the downtown corridor and promote the common interests of Downtown businesses. Through attention to streetscape, marketing and promotions, special events and advocating on issues of safety, public parking and other factors affecting the economic vitality of the downtown district, the BID fulfills its mission. The BID is a special assessment district formed to fund services, activities and programs above and beyond services provided by the City, for the purpose of improving the common areas and strengthening businesses within the district.

BOARD & STAFF 2024



President:
Terrance Thornton, San Rafael Martial Arts



Vice-President:
Adam Dawson, Mike's Bikes



Secretary:
Tobl Lessem, Bodywise Massage, Inc



Board Members:
Amy & Bisham Bullock, Salon B Style Lab



Board Member:
Jeff Brusati, T&B Sports



Board Member:
Morgan Schaffler, Youth in Arts



Board Member:
Kelly Phu, Vin Antico



Board Member:
Jay Yinger, Yinger Studios



Board Member:
Valon Grajcevci, Tam Commons



Your Image
Here

Join our team & become a board member!



Director:
Sarah Tipple



Social Media Contractor:
Erika Bowker, Pleasures of the Hear



Karen Strolia
San Rafael Chamber of Commerce

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear fellow BID Members.

Last year, we experienced a profound loss with the passing of our colleague, Jed Greene, who was not only a valued BID Board member but also a dear friend to many of us. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family during this difficult time.

2024 has been a year of accomplishments and a year of firsts. Our accomplishments include: supporting the growth of the Thursday Night Summer Farmers Market, amazing volunteers mulching the intersections of Downtown for further beautification, and an increase in public art with vivid artwork on power boxes throughout downtown.

The BID produced our first Lunar New Year celebration, our first Pride Art Walk, our first Juneteenth Happenings Page, and our first Dancing Under the Lights. As we look ahead to 2025, we will continue to build inclusion within our whole community. We will explore ideas for beautification and events to benefit the downtown, while remaining open to new opportunities and possibilities.

The BID has completed its first calendar year partnered with the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce. I would like to thank Karen Strolia for her active participation and supporting voice and standing with us as we turn the pages of what's next; together.

Terrance Thornton, President

Prospective New Board Members for 2025:

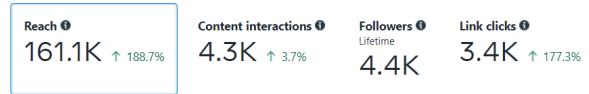
Karina Ramirez-Cortez, Multicultural Center of Marin
Joe & Saandra Carlo, Pink Owl Coffee

BID ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2024

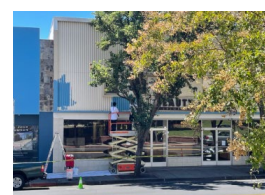
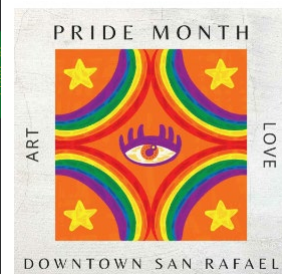
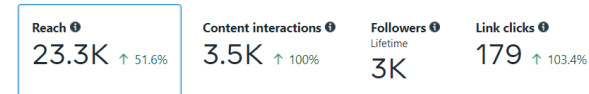
Marketing, Promotions, Programming, Fundraising, & Collaborations

- 2024 Social Media Marketing** – In its second year, the BID continued the social media marketing plan by showcasing 3 businesses per week on Instagram and Facebook with its remarkable social media contractor. FB = 4,396 followers (up 200 from last year), IG = 2,969 followers (up 300 from last year). Over the last 90 days, our audience reach has gone up 97% on Facebook, and engagement has gone up 46%. For Instagram we have reached over 16k accounts.
- Fundraising & Event Management** – Three of our four signature events are fundraisers, and through these efforts, we were able to net roughly \$20k to the BID in operations support.
- Fe-BREW-ary** – In its 2nd year, the BID continued the well-known North Bay February brewery promotion through a partnership with SMART.
- Scavenger Hunts** – Our community is highly responsive to family-friendly activities in the Downtown, so the BID introduced two new scavenger hunt-based promotions to bring people Downtown. The Chinese New Year & Pride Scavenger Hunts bolstered visitation, while also celebrating diversity and art. The 3rd Annual Elf Hunt will be held.
- Adding Culturally Diverse Promotions** – We created several new promotions Downtown to bring more culturally responsive, diverse, relevant, & inclusive events to our downtown celebrating - Chinese New Year, Pride Month, and Juneteenth.
- Storefront Beautification Projects** – The BID has proposed potential opportunities to the City's Economic Development Department to find more funding to increase power washing, business frontage grants, awning cleaning, and more.
- Beautifying the Vacancies at 1001 4th Street** – The BID was vocal about beautifying the vacant buildings on 4th Street, and supported efforts led by the City's Economic Development Department and the Downtown San Rafael Arts District to add public art to the large buildings located at 1001 4th Street. A substantial window mural is set to be installed in late 2024.
- Website management, calendar, & promotions** – Since 2023, the BID has managed the updates to our DowntownSanRafael.org website, saving us \$1440/year. The Director strives to provide clear, fun, relevant, and timely information on our Downtown San Rafael website. NEW this year, is the online community Calendar for businesses to post their own events. Our website is THE place to learn about all things Downtown – promotions, events, news, online directory, shopping, dining, etc.

Performance



Performance



BID ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2024

Marketing, Promotions, Programming, Fundraising, & Collaborations



BEFORE

AFTER

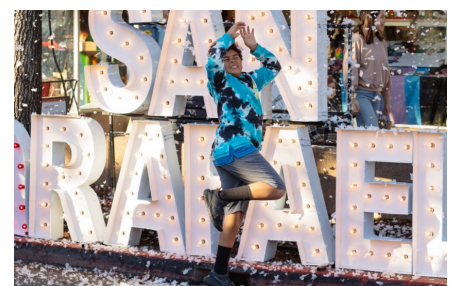


- **Landscaping upgrades** – The BID is in its 2nd year of the volunteer-led “mulching project”. The BID coordinates 3 days per year to weed and mulch all of the intersections on 4th Street.
- **Public Art Inclusion Efforts** – The Director of the BID sat on the steering committee for the Downtown San Rafael Arts District (DSRAD) to identify opportunities to expand public art and arts programming in the Downtown. The BID proposed the following projects for 2024 and 2025 with the funding focused on beautifying Downtown: cultural event window paintings, a rainbow crosswalk, matching mural grant funding for Downtown businesses, a downtown public art sculpture, under-the-freeway mural projects, and an expanded utility box art program to enliven more utility boxes in Downtown.
- **Thursday Night Summer Farmer’s Market growth** The BID supported AIM in promoting and marketing the weekly Thursday Night Summer Market, to expand attendance and reach.
- **Partnerships** – Continued and strengthened partnerships with the following organizations to bring more foot traffic to our Downtown Businesses: SR Chamber, Pacifics Baseball Team, Embassy Suites, DSRAD, California Film Institute, SMART, Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau, City Council.
- **Member emails, newsletters, and updates** – The BID shares all things downtown with its members via monthly Newsletters.
- **Transit Center Conversation** The BID joined the conversation to hear about the updates and impact of the new San Rafael Transit Center.
- **Bike Route Dedication** – The BID is working with the City to explore dedicating the Downtown Bike Route to our dear friend, and bike enthusiast, Jed Greene, as well as some other ideas.

BID EVENTS 2024

FUNDRAISERS

- 34th Annual May Madness** (May 11) – This Annual event produced by Rick Lewis, the volunteer BID Event Committee, and the Director of the BID brought roughly 5,000 people to Downtown. We raised over \$26k (a new record!) to be split between the BID and other local non-profits.
 - Total Expenses = \$16,268.42 / Total Income = \$43,030.50
 - Event Net Profit = \$26,762
 - Net Profit for BID = \$13,381.04**
- Dancing Under The Lights** (Aug 9) – A pivot from Dining Under the Lights, this new annual celebration in Downtown San Rafael brought together music, dancing, art, and local businesses for an evening of joy and community connection. Being a 1st Annual, we are hoping to grow sponsorships and beverage income to make this signature event a bigger fundraiser.
 - Total Expenses = \$16,742.77 / Total Income = \$16,950.45
 - Net Profit for BID = \$207.68**
- 4th Annual Hops & Vines Stroll** (Sept 21) – The Annual Hops & Vines Stroll brought nearly 300 people INTO Downtown Businesses for an afternoon of craft beer, wine and spirit tastings, and local camaraderie.
 - Total Expenses = \$6,759.76 / Total Income = \$9,480
 - Net Profit for BID = \$2,720.24**
- San Rafael Holiday of Lights & Winter Wonderland on Shop Small Saturday 2023** – For the second year in a row, the BID event committee volunteered to keep this tradition alive by creating a paired-down version of the 45-year-old event the day after Thanksgiving. Our intimate version of this event, that was once produced by a professional event company, was designed to bring people to Downtown on Shop Small Saturday. The event brought over 2000 people to Downtown on Shop Small Saturday. We are looking to engage an event producer to take over the event in 2024 so it can be bigger and better! Below are our fundraising numbers from 2023.
 - Total expenses = \$16,584.40 / Total Income = \$23,926
 - Net Profit to BID = \$7,341.60**



BID EVENTS 2024

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

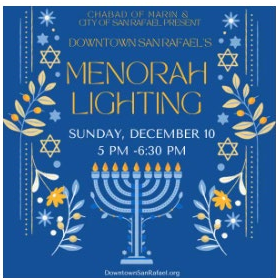


- **Clean & Green Day, City of San Rafael & The BID** (April 22) – The City and BID join efforts every year on Earth Day to promote Clean and Green Day by inviting more than 40 volunteers to help mulch, remove graffiti, pick up litter, and clean parking meters and poles.

- **Downtown San Rafael May Madness Classic Car Cruise** (May) – The BID kicks off the May Madness Car Show & Parade Celebrations early and participants *cruise* 4th Street the Friday night before the big festival, to bring more people to Downtown and celebrate this historic tradition.



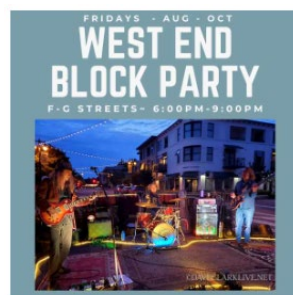
- **West End Block Party** (8 Fridays from August-Oct) – This popular event held in the West End, includes bands booked by the Pint Size Lounge. It drew hundreds of people to not just the West End, but to the broader Downtown area. Past surveys showed that people travel from all over Marin and throughout the Bay Area to enjoy the exceptional music and atmosphere.



- **36th Annual Trick or Treat on 4th Street & Pet Costume Contest** (Oct. 26) – This Annual tradition brings hundreds of smiling families to our Downtown!

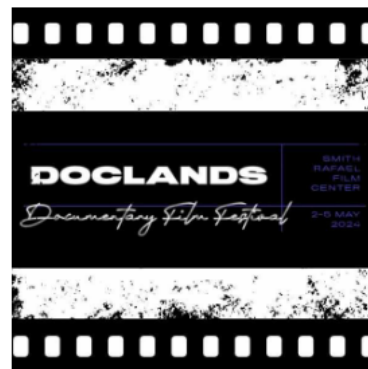
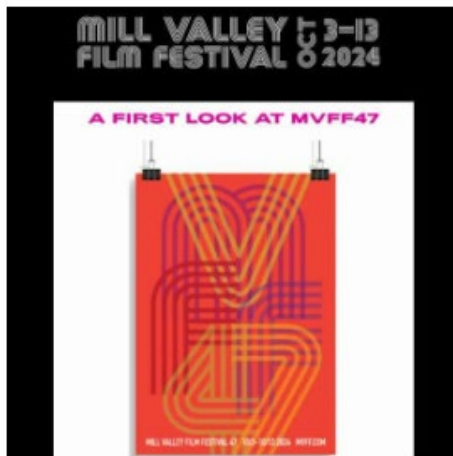
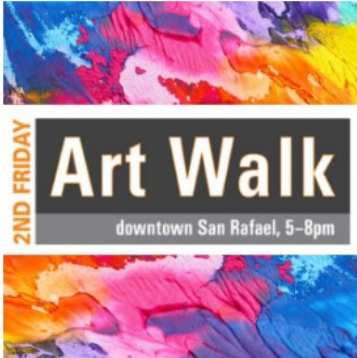


- **Annual Menorah Lighting** (Dec. tbd) - For the 3rd year, we will be collaborating with Chabad of Marin to light a Giant Menorah in celebration of Hanukkah. We will offer latkes, hot chocolate, dancing, and a gelt drop!



BID PROMOTIONS 2024

THE BID SUPPORTED & PROMOTED COMMUNITY EVENTS





Downtown San Rafael BID Preliminary Work Plan 2025

FUTURE MARKETING, PROGRAMMING, EVENTS, & OPERATIONS

- **Public Art** – Work with Downtown San Rafael Arts District (DSRAD) and the City Library & Rec Director to finalize plans to expand public art in Downtown.
- **Make “Mulching Project” Permanent** – Create a final schedule for 2025 to make the Downtown “Mulching Project” a dedicated, ongoing effort..
- **Power Washing** – Assist in supporting and expanding the existing scheduled power washing plan for Downtown San Rafael. Request and share monthly reports of the blocks cleaned.
- **Graffiti Removal** - The volunteer of the year, Tom Harrison, has been spending his own time and money to remove the graffiti in Downtown for many years. The BID would like to propose a small annual budget to give to him for 2025.
- **Frontage Improvements** – Work with the Economic Development Department & DPW to explore more opportunities for Downtown Beautification (business frontage grants, awning cleaning, and more).
- **Vacancies** – Work with the City’s Economic Development Department to assist with their strategy to fill vacancies, by sharing the City Go-Program & support Art Installations in vacancies by creating a BID committee in 2025.
- **Social Media Marketing Plan** – Increase the budget for our social media contractor to showcase businesses weekly on Instagram and Facebook.
- **Thursday Night Summer Farmer’s Market growth** – Work with AIM to assist in promotion and marketing to expand the weekly Thursday Night Summer Market. Possibly add the A to B block to include an Outdoor Dining experience.
- **Support our Culturally Diverse Activities** – Increase awareness of the events supporting culturally diverse communities in Marin – Lunar New Year, Pride Month, Juneteenth, Banned Books Week, Dia de los Muertos, Menorah Lighting, and more – by adding more promotion and participation.
- **Outdoor Movie Night** – Work with DSRAD and Parks & Rec to bring their successful outdoor movie night in the park program to our Downtown.
- **Promotional Programs** - Continue the Fe-BREW-ary promotion and scavenger hunt-based promotions to get people INTO local businesses.
- **Partnership & Collaboration** – Continue to align the BID with DSRAD stakeholders, the SR Chamber, Pacifics, Embassy Suites, the City, SMART, SRPD, etc.
- **CBiD Support** - The BID will work with the Chamber and the City to support the efforts to introduce the new Community Benefit District (CBiD) to enhance economic vitality to our Downtown.
- **Communication with members/community** – Continue engagement via website, email, newsletters, social media, and in person.
- **Events:** The BID has committed to continue events produced in 2024 – May Madness, Dancing Under the Lights, Hops & Vines Stroll, and Trick or Treat.

Dear Friends of Downtown San Rafael,

With less than \$60k in our operating budget, I strive to produce events and promotions that either raise money or pay for themselves to make sure we have a robust calendar of activity downtown. This year, we saw an array of brand-new festivities that brought vibrancy, art, and community to our downtown – Chinese New Year Dragon Hunt, Pride Month window paintings, the Juneteenth Happenings page on our website, and Dancing Under the Lights. I am hoping that these 1st annuals become staples in our Downtown schedule of promotions for years to come.

Additionally, upcoming public art plans and our 2nd Annual Mulching Project will help make the downtown area more visually appealing for everyone. For the second year, our social media contractor has been vital in making sure that our businesses are highlighted and that Downtown is a destination location to eat, shop, and play. Our website continues to be *the* place to learn about all things downtown, especially now with its newly added community calendar.

I want to extend my thanks to Karen Strolia, CEO San Rafael Chamber, for a delightful first year of partnership. Also, to the City of San Rafael for their support this past year in helping make many of our projects a reality. And a special thank you goes to our Board — your voice and passion for Downtown has been crucial in getting things done!

Looking ahead, I am interested to see how the discussions surrounding the Community Benefit District (CBiD) unfold, as it could hold more potential for the future of downtown. Here’s to building on the momentum of 2024 - focusing on strengthening our existing events and beautification programs and creating even more opportunities for our downtown to thrive in the years to come!

-Sarah Tipple, Director