



Downtown San Rafael Utility Box Art Program

Artist & Sponsorship Guidelines

2026

Theme: *San Rafael: The Heart of Marin*

Program Overview:

The Downtown San Rafael Utility Box Art Program is a new permanent public art initiative coordinated by the **San Rafael Business Improvement District (BID)** in partnership with the **Downtown San Rafael Arts District (DSRAD)** and the **City of San Rafael**. This program brings local artists and community sponsors together to transform utility boxes into vibrant works of public art throughout Downtown San Rafael.

This program expands upon utility box art projects originally created by the **San Rafael Chamber Leadership Institute in 2019 and 2024** and establishes a long-term, sustainable model for adding new public art to Downtown each year. Our goal is to beautify Downtown streets, support local artists with paid opportunities, reduce graffiti through creative placemaking, and create fun walking destinations for the community.

Application Requirements:

Sponsor and artist applications can be found on the website. Artist applications will include a completed form, brief concept description, a simple visual sketch, and up to three examples of prior work. Through the sponsorship application, sponsors may select from available utility box locations, propose a style they prefer, and recommend an artist (subject to program guidelines and BID approval).

Box Locations:

For the 2026 launch year, approximately five utility boxes in Downtown San Rafael will be selected for inclusion in the program. Locations will be confirmed and published prior to installation.

Project Timeline 2026 (subject to change)

- March 1: Announcement and distribution of RFP
- March 24: Deadline for receipt of proposals
- March 31: All submissions reviewed and finalists selected
- April 1: Final Artists asked to submit final proposals for approval
- April 15: Art design finalized and sent to Public Art Review Board for approval
- May 1: Sent to City Council for Approval
- May 15: Work begins
- June 15: Artists complete work

SPONSORSHIP DETAILS:

Sponsor a Utility Box:

Community members, businesses, and organizations can sponsor a utility box mural for **\$2,000 per box**. Sponsorship funds support artist compensation, project coordination, permitting, insurance, and overall program administration.

Sponsors may choose from available utility box locations and can either recommend an artist or request that SRBID match them with a local artist. All designs are subject to program guidelines and City approval.

Sponsoring a utility box is a great way to support local artists while helping beautify Downtown San Rafael with meaningful public art.

ARTIST DETAILS:

Artistic Vision:

2026 Theme: *San Rafael: The Heart of Marin*. Artists are welcome to interpret what it means for San Rafael to be the cultural, civic, and creative heart of Marin County through bold, welcoming public art!

Artists are invited to create designs that celebrate the character, creativity, and diversity of Downtown San Rafael. Artwork should be engaging, welcoming to all ages, and visually dynamic from multiple angles. Suggested inspiration includes Downtown life, arts and culture, local identity, place and environment, and movement and connection. Designs should feel community-centered and timeless.

Who Can Apply:

Open to artists of all experience levels. Artists under 18 must have a parent or guardian co-sign project agreements. Priority may be given to artists who live or work in San Rafael or Marin County. Individual artists or teams may apply.

Selection & Approval Steps:

1. All submissions are reviewed by SRBID.
2. Approved artists will be asked to submit the final design with edits.
3. The final proposals will be submitted to the Public Art Review Board, for suggestions/approvals/edits.
4. Those final images will be forwarded to the San Rafael City Council for final approval.

Artist Compensation & Materials:

- Selected artists will receive a **\$1300** stipend per project, **intended to cover both artist labor and materials**.
- Artists are responsible for purchasing their own supplies needed for the project

- Utility box preparation and protective coating will be provided by the BID.
- Approved artists will be sent a contract. Signed contract and W9 are required prior to work beginning.
- Payment will be issued upon successful completion of the project.

Artwork Content Guidelines:

- To ensure originality and avoid copyright issues, proposals may not include copyrighted or trademarked imagery, logos, brand names, or business references.
- Artwork must be original and appropriate for all ages.
- Content may not include political or religious messaging, explicit content, discriminatory content, alcohol/tobacco/drugs, gambling references, logos or copyrighted material, memorials, or imagery resembling traffic signals.
- Artwork must not cover labels, locks, vents, or access panels, and should avoid dark heat-absorbing palettes.

Installation Requirements:

- Final artwork must closely match approved designs.
- **Professional exterior acrylic paints** are recommended for durability and UV resistance. Cheaper craft paints won't hold up outdoors.
- ADA and pedestrian access must be maintained during installation. Work areas kept clean.
- Utility boxes must remain fully accessible for maintenance.
- Each box is a little different, artist must be prepared to pivot the design as needed.
- Anti-graffiti coating applied – minimum of 2 coats. Provided by BID.

Maintenance & Lifespan:

- If artwork experiences wear or vandalism, artists may be contacted to help with reasonable touch-ups or repairs when possible, in coordination with the BID.
- Utility box art is temporary public art and may be refreshed, repaired, or replaced due to wear or infrastructure needs.
- While the BID may assist with graffiti removal as needed, it is not responsible for any damage to or loss of the artwork.
- If we cannot get ahold of the artist, the BID may perform maintenance as needed to preserve appearance.

Rights & Ownership:

By signing up here, artists agree to transfer ownership and rights of their box artwork to the BID. They accept that their artwork becomes part of the public realm and may be photographed, documented, and displayed for promotion. Artwork may be removed or replaced as needed for infrastructure or program updates, with credit given whenever possible.