



**SAN RAFAEL**  
THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Agenda Item No: 4.e

Meeting Date: May 6, 2024

**SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

Department: Library and Recreation

Prepared by: Craig Veramay, Assistant Library and Recreation Director

City Manager Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC: PUBLIC ART PROJECT PROPOSAL TO PAINT SIX (6) PUBLIC UTILITY BOXES THROUGHOUT SAN RAFAEL**

**SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE SAN RAFAEL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PROPOSAL TO PAINT MURALS ON SIX (6) PUBLIC UTILITY BOXES THROUGHOUT SAN RAFAEL**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the San Rafael Leadership Institute proposal to paint murals on six (6) public utility boxes throughout San Rafael.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of San Rafael welcomes proposals for the creation and display of public artworks and exhibitions on property that is owned, occupied, or managed by the City. The Public Art Review Board (PARB) has the authority to approve short-term temporary art installations (one-year or less). For long-term installations of greater than one year, the PARB provides recommendations to the City Council, who has the final authority to approve public art project proposals.

The City has established [Public Art Review Guidelines](#) to review public art proposals. These guidelines include careful consideration of project readiness, qualification of artists or groups, project funding, community engagement, maintenance, design, and diversity.

Utilizing the City’s Public Art Review Process, the San Rafael Leadership Institute Class of 2024 has proposed a project called “Art with a Purpose” (Attachment 1). The “Art with a Purpose” proposal is to paint six (6) public utility boxes throughout the City, utilizing existing infrastructure to inspire residents, job seekers, and employers by promoting Chamber of Commerce values, such as sustainability, inclusivity, and equitable opportunities.

**ANALYSIS:**

The San Rafael Leadership Institute (Leadership Institute) is a program of the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce and describes their program as “Marin’s premier leadership program for professionals who seek to hone their capacity to lead, develop a leadership vision, explore current issues, and to better understand the decision-making systems in Marin.” The Leadership Institute provides the opportunity for

---

**FOR CITY CLERK ONLY**

Council Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Disposition: \_\_\_\_\_

participants to experience working with a group of dynamic, diverse professionals from many industries and disciplines. The program brings together many of Marin's policymakers and offers participants the chance to build relationships with key stakeholders in the county.

In March 2024, the Leadership Institute published a "Call for Artists," which resulted in eight (8) proposals. From that group, the Leadership Institute identified six (6) artists that best represented the values of the program. The Leadership Institute then worked with those artists to develop their concept in alignment with one or more of the Chamber of Commerce values and identify utility box locations that suited the artwork and values of the program.

The project seeks to engage the local artistic community in capturing the essence of one value per utility box. The proposal calls for each box to include information about the project and include a vinyl adhesive sticker QR code that links to the City's Public Art Page, where community members may find additional information about the City's Public Art program, the Leadership Institute project, the artists, and descriptions of the art and concepts.

Staff received the group's initial public art proposal on March 20, 2024. Upon receipt, staff initiated an internal review process and shared objective recommendations, questions, and comments with the Leadership Institute. In response to staff comments and recommendations, the Leadership Institute submitted a revised proposal. Staff determined that the proposal met initial internal review guidelines to initiate the formal Public Art Review process, and, on April 17, 2024, the Leadership Institute presented their proposal to the PARB. The PARB provided feedback to the Leadership Institute and conditionally recommended the proposal be routed to City Council for review and approval. Staff have confirmed that the Leadership Institute has incorporated the feedback from the PARB into their updated proposal.

The Leadership Institute artists will be required to obtain encroachment permits and comply with the City's construction barricade policy. Upon completion of the painting, the murals will become the property of the City. The expected lifespan of the murals is 5-10 years, and no maintenance plan has been identified. Based on previous experience with utility box murals, staff do not feel that a maintenance plan is required.

If approved, the Leadership Institute intends to begin painting later this month, prior to the graduation of the Leadership Institute participants in June. As a permanent art installation (longer than 1 year), the proposal requires City Council approval.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:**

The San Rafael Leadership Institute has developed this project proposal through community conversations and partnerships with several local arts organizations to identify qualified local artists, develop the art concepts, and raise funds for this project. Those partner organizations include Artworks Downtown, Marin Society of Artists, Multicultural Center of Marin, Youth In Arts, Canal Alliance, San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, Marin School for the Arts, College of Marin Art Classes, the Downtown San Rafael Business Improvement District, Marin Open Studios, Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival, Dominican University Art Classes, and the Marin County Public Art Commission.

The group has furnished two (2) letters of community support (San Rafael Business Improvement District and Youth In Arts), which are included as Attachment 2.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this project, as it is entirely funded by the San Rafael Leadership Institute. This project is estimated to cost \$6,000 and the San Rafael Leadership Institute has raised adequate funds to cover all costs. The Leadership Institute intends to furnish each artist with a \$1,000 stipend to pay for supplies, materials, and their time to complete the project. Funds for this project are generated from personal pledges of class members, and from the organizations and companies they represent.

**OPTIONS:**

The City Council has the following options to consider on this matter:

1. Approve the public art installation.
2. Approve the art installation with modifications.
3. Direct staff to return with more information.
4. Take no action.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Approve the San Rafael Leadership Institute proposal to paint murals on six (6) public utility boxes throughout San Rafael.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. The San Rafael Leadership Institute 'Art with a Purpose' proposal
2. Letters of Support
  - a. San Rafael Business Improvement District
  - b. Youth In Arts

# San Rafael Leadership Institute Class Project 2024 Utility Boxes “Art With a Purpose” City Council Proposal

## Utility Box Painting Program returns to San Rafael!

**What:** The San Rafael Leadership Institute Class of 2024 “Art with a Purpose” project promotes creating a healthy, sustainable, inclusive, and resilient community.

**Why:** Install art on existing infrastructure, aiming to inspire residents, job seekers, and employers by promoting chamber values such as sustainability, inclusivity, and equitable opportunities. Specifically, we plan to feature a creative interpretation of these values through Utility boxes designed by local artists. This is a project of the San Rafael Leadership Institute, a program of the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce.

Artists submitted their ideas for additional Utility Box painting to occur during May 2024. This project will focus on the pillars of:

**Community Resources**  
**Disaster Preparedness**  
**Diversity**  
**Equity**  
**Inclusion**  
**Economic Vitality**  
**Sustainability**  
**Workforce Development**

We are seeking to engage the local Artistic Community in capturing the essence of one of these topics per box. Each box will have a QR code incorporated into the design linking agencies that pertain to the topic.

**Site Locations:** There will be 6 utility boxes throughout the City of San Rafael that will be selected for this project.

# "Art with a Purpose" Utility Box Art Project

Untitled layer



4th Street & A Street



4th Street & B Street



Civic Center Drive & McInnis Parkway



Las Gallinas Avenue & Nova Albion Way

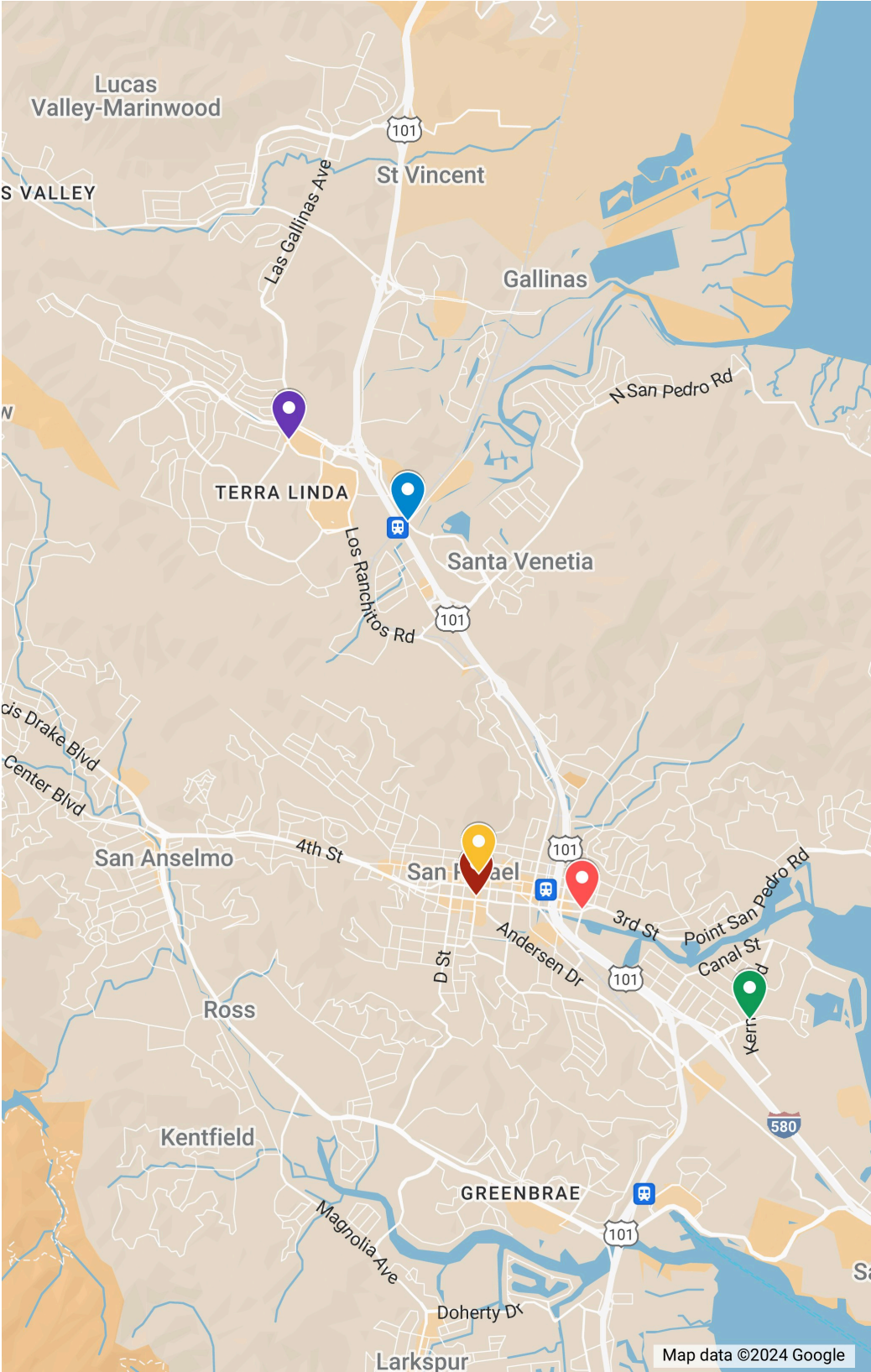


Bellam Boulevard & Kerner Boulevard



Second Street & Grand Avenue

San Rafael Leadership Institute - Class of 2024



# Travis Neditch

## Box #1 @ Northgate

THEME: COMMUNITY RESOURCES

QR CODE LINK TO:

<https://srpubliclibrary.org/community-resources/>



My piece is entitled "The Tower"... The Piece would wrap the box and appear as a continuous line of people ascending their way to the top of a tower.... Many of the themes in which the city of San Rafael suggested appear in narrative form within the illustrated piece. Health and wellness/Immigration/Employment/Diversity/Family Relations/Transportation... In addition I added my own themes which explore different facets of human nature from greed and self absorbed behavior to empathy and Heroism. My piece ultimately represents the importance of working together in society. My main inspirations for my box was the story of the Tower of Babel and the story of Sisyphus forever pushing the boulder up the hill.

### Changes after PARB:

- 1)The top tier now represents a handicapped figure with basketball and a child reading with imagination cloud behind her.
- 2)Middle tier now has woman on motorcycle, and woman as the medic with medical backpack. Added crutch to with injured man and trowel with construction worker.
- 3) The bottom tier added new ambiguous character and provided a bit more detail to all characters.
- 4) I also added broken ladders to represent the peril of short cuts taken in life.

**PARB RESPONSE:** PARB liked concept, but asked whether it was possible for the artist to incorporate more diverse representations of the people. The concept proposal seemed to represent mostly male-presenting figures, and the PARB recommended revising artwork to represent more gender diversity and perhaps a wider variety of abilities to represent San Rafael more broadly. Artist doesn't need to revise concept, but the proposal should include a response to this question.

# Devlin Espeleta

## Box #2 Civic Center

THEME: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Box Sponsored by SRFD

QR CODE LINKING TO:

<https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/emergency-management/>



Fireman silhouettes with red and yellow backgrounds. No text. 4 Firefighters (one with a ponytail to hit on inclusion theme) and each one will feature a different way to fight/protect against wildfire. Goats, native plants, and wildflowers. No fish or owls in final design (originally to represent our endangered species).

**PARB RESPONSE:** They liked this one, too, but didn't want to have "Thank You....." on the art. One of the PARB commented that she liked the animal connection but all weren't clear on it. Everyone liked the silhouette idea.

# Eyan Higgins Jones

## Box #3 @ 4<sup>th</sup> & B Street

THEME: ECONOMIC VITALITY

Box Sponsored by San Rafael Business Improvement District

QR CODE LINK TO:

<https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/departments/economic-development/>

OR

<https://downtownsanrafael.org/>



I aim to make fun, approachable, Diverse and professional artistic work for San Rafael. The ideas I submit will always have a story and will join at least two pillars. I believe color and great images on walls can bring about a brighter more positive feeling to the streets of a city. I would really like to produce more mural work for the city of San Rafael as I believe its power is important for all to see and enjoy.

my thinking was characters of 4th st - the small business owners all looking insanely happy because they all work on 4th st. - like real life :)

Hopefully if work grows then these characters could be featured in other mural ideas or marketing ideas for the city & commerce. With additional color the whole thing would pop.

**PARB RESPONSE:** Originally had Star Wars characters, but there was a question about licensing, so he removed them



# Yuan Chen

## Box #4 @ 4<sup>th</sup> & A Street

THEME: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION

Box Sponsored by Water Components

QR CODE LINK TO:

<https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/racial-and-social-equity/>



In our diverse community, embracing and celebrating our differences is paramount. My proposed mural, titled "One of Us" or "All Connected," aims to promote the values of diversity and inclusion through art. This mural will depict individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and identities coming together in harmony, showcasing the beauty of our differences. Through vibrant colors and powerful imagery, the mural will symbolize unity and interconnectedness, emphasizing that despite our unique experiences, we are all part of the same human family. By prominently displaying this mural in a central location, we hope to inspire conversations and foster a greater sense of understanding and acceptance among community members. Let us come together to celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity, ensuring that everyone feels valued and represented in our shared space.

**PARB RESPONSE:** loved this image. No comments for change. PARB wasn't sure how it would be wrapped around the box but I'm sure the artist has an idea on this.

# Oscar Morales

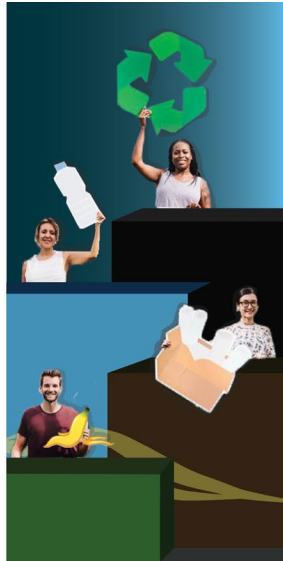
**Box #5 @** 2nd & Grand

THEME: SUSTAINABILITY

Box Sponsored by Marin Sanitary

QR CODE LINKING TO:

<https://marinsanitaryservice.com/residential/residential-recycling/>



**FOCUSING ON SUSTAINABILITY AND RECYCLABILITY!**

Food is not garbage, be a part of the change, you're part of the solution, earth.

Oscar will be making some edits in the final version based on PARB response.

# Youth in Arts Students with Lead Artist Keena Romano

## Box #6 @ Bellum

THEME: EQUITY & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Box Sponsored by Marin Community Foundation

QR CODE LINK TO:

<https://www.marincf.org/>



This design incorporates elements from two Youth in Arts murals that were recently completed - "Universe of Imagination" at Bahia Vista and "Falcons in Bloom" at Venetia Valley K-8 School. These murals were created as part of Youth in Arts I AM (Intensive Arts Mentorship Program) in the summer of 2023. Youth in Arts recruited 20 emerging youth artists, aged 16 - 20, from Marin County's most racially marginalized and underserved neighborhoods to work with professional BIPOC artists, and Mentor Muralists, Fred Alvarado and Keena Azania Romano. The I AM emerging artists interviewed students from Bahia Vista and Venetia Valley's summer programs to ascertain what they would like to see represented at their schools, then based on that feedback, conceptualized and installed the murals. Youth in Arts' I AM program aims to center and amplify youth voice. We offer the emerging artists stipends for their time, providing early onramps to job training as well as furthering their arts education opportunities.

**PARB RESPONSE:** loved this image. No comments for change.



---

Date: April 15, 2024

To: Craig Veramay  
City of San Rafael – Public Art Review Board

**RE: Proposal “Art with a Purpose”  
Project of the San Rafael Leadership Institute Class of 2024**

The San Rafael Business Improvement District is proud to support the Project Proposal of the San Rafael Leadership Institute – Class of 2024. The San Rafael Leadership Institute, a program of the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, is a highly regarded leadership development and team-building program in Marin County.

The Downtown San Rafael Business Improvement District (BID) stands as a beacon of community dedication, not only committed to the economic prosperity of its downtown corridor but also fostering a vibrant artistic atmosphere. Established in 1979 as a 501 C(6) nonprofit corporation, the BID has continually championed the revitalization of the area, promoting the common interests of Downtown businesses while nurturing the flourishing arts scene that defines California's designated art districts. Through initiatives aimed at enhancing streetscape aesthetics, dynamic marketing and promotional efforts, and the organization of special events, the BID not only advocates for factors crucial to economic vitality but also actively fosters an environment where art thrives, ensuring that the cultural heartbeat of the community remains strong.

This year's Class Project focuses on connecting with community residents through art. The project will be working with local artists to paint six Utility Box structures throughout the City of San Rafael. The art itself will improve the beautification of San Rafael but the topics/issues explored with each artist's rendering will also include access to resources for the community (e.g. workforce development, racial equity & diversity, disaster preparedness, sustainability/recycling) by incorporating QR codes that will lead residents to these resources.

We're very excited about the possibilities for this project as a model for future art installations in San Rafael and we support this project.

Sincerely,

Terrance Thornton  
San Rafael BID President



April 18, 2024

To: Craig Veramay  
City of San Rafael – Public Art Review Board

**RE: Proposal “Art with a Purpose”  
Project of the San Rafael Leadership Institute Class of 2024**

Dear Craig:

Youth in Arts is delighted to endorse the Project Proposal of the San Rafael Leadership Institute – Class of 2024. Run by the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, this program is celebrated for fostering leadership skills and team cohesion in Marin County.

Youth in Arts, as a committed community nonprofit, dedicates itself to delivering equitable arts education across all San Rafael City Schools. This mission is deeply intertwined with the broader goal of cultivating community through art. By integrating arts into the everyday lives of students and residents, Youth in Arts not only enhances educational outcomes but also fosters a sense of shared identity and belonging within the community. This project aligns seamlessly with our goal of making art accessible and meaningful, ensuring it serves as a catalyst for conversation, education, and unity.

This year, the Class Project aims to engage community members through the medium of art, collaborating with local artists to transform six utility boxes across San Rafael into vibrant public artworks. These artworks will not only enhance the city’s aesthetic but also serve as informational hubs. Each piece will explore themes such as workforce development, racial equity and diversity, disaster readiness, and sustainability. This will be achieved by integrating QR codes that direct viewers to vital community resources. We are thrilled about the potential of this initiative to set a precedent for future art installations in San Rafael, and we wholeheartedly support this endeavor.

With deepest gratitude,

Morgan Schauffler  
Director of External Affairs

917 C Street  
San Rafael, CA 94901

415.457.4878  
youthinarts.org  
yia@youthinarts.org

Kristen Jacobson  
Executive Director

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Naomi Tamura  
President

Tim Distler  
Treasurer

Sarita Patel  
Secretary

Jane Burkhard  
Dr. Orin Carpenter  
Devin Dixon  
Lorenzo Jones  
Kathleen Newsom  
Lara Treharne-Jones  
Suzanne Reich  
Sheila Tuffanelli