



**SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

Department: City Manager

Prepared by: Cristine Alilovich,  
Assistant City Manager

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

**TOPIC: SAN RAFAEL SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY ART GROUP PROPOSAL FOR A PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION**

**SUBJECT: RESOLUTION APPROVING THE DESIGN AND INSTALLATION OF A PUBLIC ART MURAL AT ARBOR PARK**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt resolution approving the design and installation of a public art mural at Arbor Park.

**BACKGROUND:**

On [February 16, 2021](#) the City Council approved Ordinance No. 1991, amending Section 14.25.040 of the City of San Rafael Municipal Code, exempting from environmental and design review any public art projects that undergo review through a separate review process established by the City for that purpose.

Public art is defined as all forms of art including, but not limited to: sculptures, murals, mosaics, and fountains, which are located on the exterior of a publicly owned facility or on a privately owned property when such artwork is placed in a location intended to be visible to the general public.

To facilitate a path for reviewing public art projects, the City created a Pilot Public Arts Program for the calendar year 2021. Previously the San Rafael Municipal Code classified murals and mural signs on private property as "major physical improvements" that required Environmental and Design Review. This type of review required a recommendation by the Design Review Board and a consideration and approval by the Planning Commission. The process took up to six months and required extensive staff and applicant time in coordination and preparation of reports. It was burdensome for arts groups and the \$8,523 fee which is now waived (as part of the Pilot Public Art Program) likely discouraged prospective public mural art projects from happening in San Rafael.

The Pilot Public Arts Program also includes a Public Art Advisory Group made up of local community art representatives, a member each of the Planning Commission and the Design Review Board, and a representative with diversity, equity & inclusion expertise. For public art projects that are being proposed for installation at a City park, a member of the Park & Recreation Commission will also be included as a member of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group was created to discuss and provide feedback on

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**FOR CITY CLERK ONLY**

**Council Meeting:**

**Disposition:**

proposed public art projects in a public forum that includes an opportunity for both the Advisory Group members and members of the public to comment on proposed public art projects.

The Advisory Group is an advisory body only and was formed in order to provide the City Council with their collective feedback on the public art projects that come forward during this pilot program. The Advisory Group does not have official authority to approve public art projects. Once reviewed by the Advisory Group, public art projects are considered by the City Council for approval.

The San Rafael Social Justice Community Art Group along with the Canal Arts Initiative, were the first two groups to go through this pilot process. The Canal Arts Initiative has since completed and successfully installed their mural at 3301 Kerner Boulevard.

The San Rafael Social Justice Community Art Group (SJCA group) came together in Fall 2020 in response to the chalk art mural created at the intersection of Manuel T. Freitas Parkway and Las Gallinas Avenue over the summer of 2020. The chalk mural, honoring the life of Breonna Taylor, was removed per City policy to keep public property clear of markings. The SJCA group is comprised of 11 arts and community members who live and work in San Rafael and supported by a local, professional facilitator, Lorenzo Jones. In addition, the group partnered with Youth in Arts, a San Rafael based non-profit to provide expertise, fundraising, and a youth component to the project. The project's focus is on creating art that includes a positive message to celebrate the core themes of JEDI – Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion through the lens of a Marin-based Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) perspective. The hope of the SJCA group was that the art piece would inspire neighbors to gather and have crucial conversations around the critical issues of racial and social justice. YIA is also planning to hold community art programming/events in Arbor Park in the spirit of continued community building at this location.

The SJCA group identified Arbor Park, a small parkette at the southwest corner of the intersection of Manuel T. Freitas Parkway and Las Gallinas Avenue as their preferred location for the artwork. This location is close in proximity to the original chalk art mural and is owned by the City of San Rafael. Arbor Park resides in the northern part of San Rafael in the Terra Linda neighborhood. Located at the southwest intersection of Las Gallinas Ave and Manuel T. Freitas Pkwy, Arbor Park is what San Rafael calls a Parkette, or a small park. It consists of a few benches, grass area, and walking path. The park is highly visible to cars and pedestrians who travel in Terra Linda along Manuel T. Freitas which is the main thoroughfare for the neighborhood.

YIA (on behalf of the San Rafael Social Justice Community Public Art Group) was able to secure a \$10,000 grant from the County of Marin for this project. The City of San Rafael also provided an additional \$10,000 of funding to support the artists creating the art piece and in acknowledgement of the assistance provided by the Social Justice Community Art Group in their collaboration with City staff on the City's public art pilot program.

**ANALYSIS:**

The SJCA group issued a Call for Artists in early 2021. All artists, adults and children practicing in and around San Rafael were eligible and encouraged to apply. Two applications were received and one of them was considered to meet the minimum qualifications defined in the Call for Artists. The SJCA selected Orin Carpenter, Teacher and Visual and Performing Arts Director at Marin Catholic High School, to lead/mentor a group of youth to co-create the art piece.

Orin Carpenter is not only a youth art educator, but an accomplished artist in his own right. The SJCA found Orin's response to the Call for Artists to be exceptionally responsive based on his lived experience, expertise and passion for working with youth. The following is a direct quote from Orin:

*“Being an artist of color (AOC), I have the power to bring others into the world I experience through the lens of my creations. I have the power to educate, elevate, and challenge anyone who encounters my works of art. Allowing everyone to see the world through my eyes and hopefully change their perception with a new vision and offer them the opportunity to share in the journey... my journey.”*

Orin’s artwork can be found here: <https://www.orincarpenter.com>.

Youth in Arts (YIA) held an application process in early summer and ten (10) youth artists applied and were selected (Figure 1) including nine (9) local high school students and one (1) college youth art assistant, Owen Martinez-Alejandre, who is a recent graduate of Marin School for the Arts. The youth program working under the name “C Street: Untitled” met this summer on Monday and Wednesday mornings from June 28 to August 4 at Youth in Arts to co-create the piece. The youth artists were also paid a stipend for their work. The group was mentored by Orin and Owen drafted concepts around the words, “Liberty, Freedom, and Justice.” The youth artist also chose to create an art piece that represented empowerment, justice, peace, and humanity.

**Figure 1**

<b>Name</b>	<b>School</b>
<b>Amber E.</b>	Terra Linda High School
<b>Anaya R.</b>	San Marin High
<b>En-Ya Z.</b>	Terra Linda High School
<b>Kyndall C.</b>	Marin Catholic High School
<b>Miya K.</b>	Archie Williams High School
<b>Natalie W.</b>	Balboa High School
<b>Natasha H.</b>	Marin School of the Arts
<b>Owen M.</b>	Sonoma State University
<b>Valerie B.</b>	Terra Linda High School

**“C Street: Untitled”**

The proposed art piece is an original painted mural (see Attachment 2) that would be installed as a triptych with three separate panels, each 6 feet wide and 9 feet tall at Arbor Park facing the intersection of Las Gallinas Ave. and Manuel T. Freitas Parkway. This project qualifies as a public art project pursuant to San Rafael Municipal Code (SRMC) Section 14.25.040 and is therefore exempt from design review and application of development standards. Nonetheless, careful consideration was taken to ensure that the panels would not be higher than adjacent property fences and will not be seen from the backyards of private residences. Additionally, placement of the artwork will comply with sight distance requirements established by SRMC Section 14.16.295. The artwork would be printed on vinyl or a similar medium and applied onto the panels, along with an anti-graffiti coating. Vinyl prints allow for easy replacement if the mural is damaged or needs to be reprinted for any reason. Additionally, the SJCA group has proposed improvements to the park site including a bench, plants, and trees. Staff is still working with the SJCA group to determine final material choices for the park, as well as items including lighting and specific plant types.

The project was presented before the Public Advisory Group in May and July and received unanimous support. Comments included support that the theme fit the park well, as well as requesting that information about the project and an interpretation panel were provided. The feedback was taken, and the artists are incorporating that suggestion into the final product.

Per the Pilot Public Art Program, the City Council has the authority to approve public art in San Rafael. Staff recommends approval of the mural design, size, and location.

If approved, it is anticipated that the installation of the mural would be completed this Fall. It is the intent that the mural will be displayed for multiple years. There may be opportunities in the future to rotate artwork at the site, but any changes would include extensive community outreach and would also require approval by the City Council at that time.

YIA plans to activate the San Rafael Public Art Social Justice piece by offering in-person family workshops, artist “talk-backs”, and digital content and study guides accessible digitally on the YIArts.COR, the organization's creative online learning platform. All offerings will be free to the community. In addition to artist names and information on theme, motif, symbols, and artist intent, the piece will also include a QR (quick response) code that can be scanned to access additional digital education and informational content. All such programming is being developed in tandem with the creation of the piece and will be available by the unveiling.

Youth in Arts is excited to showcase Youth Emerging Artists' work in progress and process documentation from C Street: Untitled in an exhibit at the YIA Gallery from September 17 - November 19. The exhibit is free and open to the public. More information can be found at YIA's website: <https://youthinarts.org/programs/c-street-untitled/>.

**Pilot Public Art Program – Next Steps**

Per approval by the City Council, the Pilot Public Art Program will run through 2021. Using the information and feedback gained from the Canal Arts Initiative and SJCA group projects, staff will evaluate the pilot program and make recommendations to the City Council for moving forward. Staff will conduct further community outreach and ensure all stakeholders are given an opportunity to provide input on the Pilot Public Art Program. Any revisions made to the program guidelines and/or process will be brought to the City Council for consideration in 2022.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:**

Extensive community outreach has been conducted with community groups in Terra Linda including the Terra Linda Homeowners Association. In addition to the two Public Art Advisory meetings and one Park and Recreation Commission meeting, staff presented informational reports regarding the project at the February 16 and [June 21, 2021](#) regular meetings of the City Council. A virtual community meeting was held on August 10 where the artist presented the final art design and the community provided their feedback.

Throughout the process, the City has been updating a [webpage](#) dedicated to Public Art with information regarding these projects and an opportunity for members of the public to sign up for news and notices about public art projects in San Rafael. The City also promoted updates on the projects on Nextdoor, Twitter, and other social media.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The City previously provided \$10,000 to the project, which was included as part of the City's general fund fiscal year 2020-21 budget. The City has also offered to provide in-kind services to support the art installation and improvements to the park.

**OPTIONS:**

The City Council has the following options:

1. Adopt resolution to approve the design and installation of a public art mural at Arbor Park.
2. Adopt resolution with modifications.
3. Direct staff to return with more information.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution
2. San Rafael Social Justice Community Public Art Group Mural Design

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL APPROVING THE DESIGN AND INSTALLATION OF A PUBLIC ART MURAL AT ARBOR PARK**

**WHEREAS**, On February 16, 2021 the City Council approved Ordinance No. 1991, amending Section 14.25.040 of the City of San Rafael Municipal Code, exempting from environmental and design review any public art projects that undergo review through a separate review process established by the City for that purpose; and

**WHEREAS**, Public Art is defined as all forms of art including, but not limited to: sculptures, murals, mosaics, and fountains, which are located on the exterior of a publicly owned facility or on a privately owned property when such artwork is placed in a location intended to be visible to the general public; and

**WHEREAS**, the City developed a pilot Public Art Advisory Group as part of the separate review process; and

**WHEREAS**, the San Rafael Social Justice Community Art Group came together in fall 2020 in response to the chalk art mural created at the intersection of Manuel T. Freitas Parkway and Las Gallinas Avenue over the summer of 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, the San Rafael Social Justice Community Art Group in partnership with Youth in Arts solicited a “Call for Artists” and selected a local artist to develop and create public art with the theme of social and racial justice; and

**WHEREAS**, the artist mentored ten (10) local youth artists over the summer of 2021 and co-created a mural; and

**WHEREAS**, the public art project was presented to the Public Art Advisory group on two occasions, the Park and Recreation Commission, as well as at a community meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, public art and its location must be approved by the City Council;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the City Council hereby approves the installation of the proposed mural at Arbor Park.

I, **LINDSAY LARA**, Clerk of the City of San Rafael, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly introduced and adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of San Rafael, held on Monday, the 16th day of August 2021, by the following vote, to wit:

**AYES:**           **Councilmembers:**  
**NOES:**           **Councilmembers:**  
**ABSENT:**       **Councilmembers:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Lindsay Lara, City Clerk**

