

**County of Humboldt • Department of Public Works
1106 Second Street • Eureka • CA • 95501 • 707.445.7205**



Utility Box Public Art

Guidance & Information



Painting by Patricia Sennott

Prepared by:

**Humboldt County Public Works
Land Use Division
707.445.7205**

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
MAILING ADDRESS: 1106 SECOND STREET, EUREKA, CA 95501-0579
AREA CODE 707

On-line
Web: humboldt.gov

	Public Works Building Second & L St., Eureka Fax 445-7409		
Administration	445-7491	Natural Resources	445-7741
Business	445-7652	Natural Resource Planning	267-9542
Engineering	445-7377	Parks	445-7651
Facility Management	445-7621	Roads	445-7421

Clark Complex
Harris & H St., Eureka
Fax 445-7388
Land Use 445-7205

Public Works supports Public Art!

Public art projects are known to be an effective means to build community, improve vibrancy of neighborhoods, and create pride by showing off the talents and creativity of local artists, whether it's art in a park, a mural, or painting utility boxes. (Technically, these are "traffic control cabinets," but are more commonly known as utility boxes.) The Department of Public Works supports public art by providing the canvas for utility box painting projects!

This handout is intended to provide guidance to unincorporated areas of the County interested in beautification of their community through a utility box painting project. The numerous topics included for your group's consideration are not meant to be limitations but are meant to contribute to the success of the project. We encourage community groups to run their own program with their own special style, but there are a few rules we ask you to respect.



Painting by José Moreno



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Guidance for the Organizing Body

Following are some elements of a successful program. We recommend consideration of the following at a minimum. There are likely to be additional considerations for your specific situation. It is up to your group to determine how elaborate or simple to make your community project.

PURPOSE

Define the overall goal of your project. For example, is your project intended to celebrate or create cultural uniqueness, is it meant to reduce targets for graffiti, or is it one part of a larger beautification program?

Keeping this core purpose in mind will help determine whether or not to have a theme or a campaign name, and what those might be. It can also help maintain focus when the coordinating group is making program decisions.

Your group is in charge of administering a call for artists, publicity, and the preparation and installation of paintings. Your group is responsible for communicating with applicants, creating a selection committee or panel, and defining the criteria by which artists and artworks will be approved.

You will also need to designate a point person for communicating with a Public Works Land Use Division representative during the active period of the project and afterward.

FUNDING

Budget considerations:

- Will publicity require printed materials in addition to online resources?
- If sponsors will be solicited, how will the sponsors be recognized? Will their name be on the painting, your website, or print materials? May a sponsor choose an artist or a design?
- Provide a monetary target when requesting sponsors, e.g. Full box \$500, Half-box \$250.
- How and where can people make donations – online, in person, by mail?
- Funds for maintaining the artwork, graffiti/vandalism repair, and end of useful life, that is, replacement due to paint deterioration.
- Consider covering paintings with an anti-graffiti treatment to make them longer lasting. Keep in mind this treatment will need to be applied all at once, so there may need to be a deadline for each artist to complete their particular project.

- Will artists be compensated (stipend or honorarium)? Will supplies be provided or reimbursed?
- Will the organizing body provide insurance (\$2M) for the artist, or will the artist be responsible for obtaining their own insurance?

CALL FOR ARTISTS

Decide if your program is open to individual artists, teams, community groups with a designated lead artist, or all of the above. Are they required to reside in your community? Whatever the case, at least one participant must be responsible for maintaining the finished work over time.

Let the artists know whether they will be compensated or reimbursed for supplies.

Can an artist bring in their own sponsor, or vice versa? Who should they contact with questions?

Designs must be original work. They need to cover all sides of the box. Does that include the top of the box? Changes to a design may need to be made to accommodate site requirements, such as keyholes, meters, or handles.

May an artist submit more than one proposal to demonstrate versatility? How many boxes may they paint?

Where are applications available? How will applications be submitted - on paper? Electronically? Set a deadline for submitting applications.

Are samples of past work required in addition to the proposed design?

SELECTION CRITERIA

Beyond creating a panel who gets to choose winning artists and designs (subject to final approval of the County), define criteria to be used when considering applications.

Some ideas:

- Artistic excellence
- Appropriateness of scale, form, content
- Relationship to the defined purpose or theme
- Residence in the community or the County
- Demonstration of community partnership

Designs cannot violate trademarks or brands or include images of illegal activity. Nor may they be obscene or offensive. Be prepared to screen for this and for how you will say “No.”

Set a deadline for announcing winning participants. Remember, the County must approve the artwork. Coordinate with the County prior to publicly announcing winners.



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Humboldt County Public Works Policies & Rules

1. The County retains ownership of the traffic control cabinets, also known as utility boxes, whether or not the cabinet is painted.
2. Public Works will provide the locations of utility boxes available for painting. Only County owned boxes are eligible.
3. Paintings must be appropriate for the entire community to view. Paintings shall not depict advertisements, religious, sexual, or negative imagery, or political partisanship. Paintings shall not include trademarks, brands, or images of illegal activity. No object(s) may be attached to the cabinets.
4. For safety purposes, paintings shall in no way represent or mimic traffic control devices, such as traffic lights, traffic signs, or signals, or the colors of traffic lights or signs.
5. Artists may not paint over box ID numbers, codes, keyholes, meters or handles, or restrict function of or access to the box.
6. Public Works Land Use Division shall have final approval of art selections and may allow or disallow any painting before or after installation.
7. The organizing body shall obtain a no-cost Encroachment Permit prior to painting. The permit will require use of safety cones and reflective safety vests. Cones may be borrowed from the County. The artist and/or governing body must provide the County with two million dollar (\$2M) insurance coverage in a manner approved by the County Risk Manager.
8. Paintings are expected to be maintained in perpetuity. At any time the County determines that the painting needs repair (including but not limited to, for reasons of vandalism, paint-failure, or fading from sun exposure), the painting shall be repaired in a timely manner by the artist upon notification by the County. The County has the discretion to repaint any box that it deems is not being adequately maintained.

9. The Department has currently approved the following organizing bodies to facilitate public artwork:

Greater Eureka Area:

City of Eureka Community Development Department
Lisa Savage, Property Management Project Manager
531 K Street, Eureka (707) 441-4186

Greater McKinleyville Area:

McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce
Cyndi Bainbridge, President CEO
1640 Central Avenue, McKinleyville (707) 839-2449

10. Allowable paint types include Premium high solids; 100% acrylic latex waterborne exterior wall and trim paint; and, Low-sheen, eggshell or satin finish. There should be a minimum 1.5 mil dry thickness per coat. Do not use oil-based paint. Nova Color paint is the product preferred by muralists.



Painting by Patricia Sennott



Painting by Debbie Sholes