



Contra Costa County
Public Works
Department

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC ART PROGRAM ON COUNTY-OWNED UTILITY BOXES



June 23, 2025

Contents

I. PURPOSE	1
II. OBJECTIVE.....	1
III. OVERVIEW	1
IV. PUBLIC ART ON COUNTY-OWNED UTILITY BOX CONDITIONS	2
V. PROCESS	5
1. County-owned Utility Box Availability	5
2. Design Review Package.....	5
3. Public Works Encroachment Permit	6
VI. RECORD	6
Attachment A: Design Review Package	7
Attachment B: Encroachment Permit	8

I. PURPOSE

The Public Art on County-Owned Utility Box Program aims to foster partnerships among community organizations, neighborhoods, and residents by beautifying Contra Costa County's owned utility boxes. This initiative, identified in the County Public Art Policy, brings vibrant, colorful artwork to the streetscape, enhancing the visual appeal of our community.

II. OBJECTIVE

The Public Art on County-owned Utility Box Program supports initiatives to promote public art and facilitates the process of beautifying Contra Costa County-owned traffic signal boxes.

III. OVERVIEW

Contra Costa County (County) supports the incorporation of public art on County owned utility boxes. County-owned utility boxes include but are not limited to traffic signal boxes, irrigation controller boxes, and others. The majority of the County-owned utility boxes are traffic signal boxes. The County owns approximately 155 traffic signal boxes throughout the unincorporated area of the County. Each Supervisory District has approximately 15-45 traffic signal boxes. The Department of Public Works, which operates and maintains these boxes, will allow beautification displays (for a limited time) under this program. An Encroachment Permit from Public Works is required to install public art on County-owned utility boxes. These guidelines outline the considerations for developing a public art project, art/artist requirements, and the application and review process to obtain an encroachment permit.



IV. PUBLIC ART ON COUNTY-OWNED UTILITY BOX CONDITIONS

1. Artist-Applicants must reside in Contra Costa County. If an interested person is under 18 years old, that person must have a parent/guardian provide signatures to apply for the art approval process and to eventually apply for a permit.
2. County retains ownership of the utility box, whether or not the cabinet is painted.
3. The County shall not be liable for any costs incurred by the applicant/artist.
4. The public art on county-owned utility box is considered a Temporary Public Art. A Temporary Public Art means an artwork intended to be exhibited for a limited period of time, 5 years or less. Artwork created under this program will be the sole property of the County. As such, the County retains the right and sole discretion to remove, modify, or replace the artwork.

The availability of the County-owned boxes for public art will be determined by a first-come, first-serve basis. The order will be based on the approval sequence by the Public Art Advisory Committee. Once an artwork is approved, the artist-applicant will have six months to obtain the encroachment permit from Public Works and complete the artwork; otherwise, the artist will need to reapply. The initial approval duration will be for 3 years. The 3-year period commences with the issuance of the Encroachment Permit. The artist must assume responsibility for maintenance, including but not limited to, addressing vandalism, graffiti, environmental exposure, dilapidation, etc. of the artwork during these 3 years. Public Works is not responsible for maintaining or refreshing the artwork. At the sole discretion of the Public Works Director, Public Works may remove or cover the artwork. After 3 years, the artist can choose to resubmit the existing artwork for a new 3-year renewal or others may submit a different artwork to replace the existing artwork on a first come, first serve basis. If after 3 years, the artist does not resubmit the artwork for renewal through the encroachment permit process, at the sole discretion of the County, the County may repaint the County-owned utility box or continue to leave the artwork on the County-owned utility box indefinitely.

At any time, at the sole discretion of Public Works, the County-owned utility box may be replaced. Public Works will not replace any existing artwork. The new County-owned utility box will be eligible for new artwork.

County will retain the right to use the final artwork otherwise as needed and reserve the right to modify artwork if necessary. County will reserve the right to use the image on social media or for other purposes.

5. County-owned utility boxes vary in size. The artist is responsible for providing all supplies to complete the project, including but not limited to, sanding, priming, and painting.
6. The artwork may only be painted directly on the outside of the County-owned utility boxes. The artwork may **NOT** be applied to the County-owned utility boxes as vinyl wraps (except in District I where the weather is more moderate and there is a less chance of equipment overheating). Paint must be rated for outdoor. Spray paint is prohibited. Artwork must be painted in fade-resistant acrylic paint.
7. To prevent heat buildup, light-colors are encouraged for artwork on County-owned boxes. No more than 25% of the surface area should be covered with dark colors. Light colors are defined as those with high reflectance, such as white, light gray, pastel shades, and other colors that reflect more light than they absorb. Dark colors, on the other hand, include black, dark gray, deep reds, blues, and other hues that absorb more light than they reflect. Light Reflectance Value (LRV) quantifies the lightness and brightness of a color on a scale from 0% (absolute black) to 100% (perfect white). Colors with a LRV of 60% or higher are generally considered light colors, while those below 60% are considered dark colors.

Below is the reference table to help determine if a color is considered light or dark based on its LRV.

Light Colors	LRV (%)	Dark Colors	LRV (%)
White	85-100	Medium Gray	40-60
Light Gray	70-85	Dark Gray	20-40
Pastel Shades	60-70	Black	0-20

8. Anti-graffiti coating must be applied to all County-owned utility box artwork.

9. Paint shall NOT be applied over keyholes, warning labels, box ID number, codes, meters, handles, or other restrict function of or access to the County-owned utility box.
10. The artwork cannot restrict any vents or airflow through the boxes, during or after installation. County crews must always be able to fully access the components inside the County owned utility box.
11. Any masking tape or prep materials must be removed upon completion. Any spilled paint on the sidewalk, pedestal, or adjacent ground must be cleaned immediately.
12. Use of heat guns or heat lamps is prohibited.
13. Artwork must be:
 - a. Appropriate for all ages.
 - b. Original (not identical to another artwork on any utility box, County-owned or not).
14. The artwork must **NOT** contain:
 - a. Brands, copyrighted, intellectual property, or trademarked material.
 - b. Plagiarized, stolen, or copied from any other sources.
 - c. Logos, words, letters, or numbers that could be constituted as a sign.
 - d. Written materials (words/sentences)
 - e. Promotional or advertising material for any community group, organization, or business
 - f. Promote violence, nudity, alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, or any illegal activity.
 - g. Explicit material
 - h. Political messaging (statement, or person)
 - i. Religious messaging (references, symbols, or numbers)
 - j. Discriminatory matter
 - k. Portrays obscene, vulgar, profane, or scatological acts.
 - l. Resemble a traffic control device or regulatory sign.
 - m. Contain reflective material, mirror, or cause a glare.
 - n. Defame any person, alive or deceased.
 - o. Addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, URL's social media handles/tags/links

15. The name of the artist may be included on the artwork but shall be limited to no more than 2” tall x 10” wide letter block, located on no more than two sides of any traffic signal box, and placed in the lower one-third of the artwork. Artist name shall not detract from the artwork.
16. All County roads shall remain open in all directions at all times. The work shall not require any lane closures.
17. Artists may use traffic cones, barricades, or signs to outline the work area but may not interfere with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The use of these traffic control devices shall not obscure existing traffic signs, encroach onto the traveled way, or impede the movement of traffic.
18. The County strongly recommends that each artist-applicant has their own insurance coverage (medical, liability) for his/her own protection.

V. PROCESS

1. County-owned Utility Box Availability

If there is existing artwork on the County-owned utility box, contact the Public Works Permit Center to inquire if the box is available for repainting. Although a County-owned utility box can be repainted three years from the date the encroachment permit was issued, the County highly recommends that Artists look for a County-owned utility box without artwork before considering painting over existing artwork.

2. Design Review Package

Each District Supervisor will establish a District Public Art Selection Committee (DPASC). The Artist-Applicant will submit the proposed artwork to the District’s Public Art Selection Committee for initial review, approval, and recommendation to the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC). The Artist will contact the respective District Supervisor office to submit the Design Review Package (Attachment A). A copy of the review package is attached to these guidelines. If the artwork proposal is recommended by DPASC, the District Supervisor office will forward the artwork



proposal to the PAAC for review and approval. After the PAAC approves the artwork proposal, the Artist-Applicant will contact Public Works to apply for an Encroachment Permit.

3. Public Works Encroachment Permit

The Artist-Applicant will contact County Public Works to apply for a Public Works Encroachment Permit. The Artist-Applicant will attach the approved design review package as part of the Encroachment Permit submittal (Attachment B). Once the encroachment permit is issued, the Artist-Applicant will become a Permittee approved to install their art.

The County will waive all fees, bonds, and insurance requirements for this type of Encroachment Permit. The permittee will not be required to submit an insurance certificate; however, the County strongly recommends that each permittee has some type of liability and/or medical insurance for his/her own protection.



VI. RECORD

Public Works will maintain the record of the artwork on the County-owned utility boxes via an on-going status spreadsheet which will be kept on file by the Permit Center technician.

Attachment A: Design Review Package

PUBLIC ART ON COUNTY-OWNED UTILITY BOX PROGRAM



Review Package for District Public Art Selection Committee Review (DPASC) and Public Art
Advisory Committee (PAAC)

DPASC Application

Supervisor District: _____

Permittee Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Proposed County-owned utility box location (cross streets or address): _____

Title of Artwork: _____

Waiver and Release

I represent that I am the author of and owner of all rights in and to the Artwork and that I have the sole and exclusive right to make within the grant of rights, including but not limited to moral rights, that neither I nor anyone else has any contractual or other arrangements which will interfere with rights herein granted and warrant that the rights herein granted will not infringe on the rights of any third party and that the consent or permission of no other party is required by Contra Costa County (County) in connection with the use of the Artwork. I agree to indemnify and hold County harmless from and against any and all liability, damages, claims and demands of whatever kind and nature, either in law or in equity, which arises or may hereafter arise from the County's use or display of the Artwork or in connection with the breach or alleged breach of my representation and/or warranty made hereunder.

Permittee Signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____

District Public Art Selection Committee Review

DPASC Recommendation: **Recommended**

Not Recommended

Review comments from the DPASC Review:

DPASC committee chair signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____

Additional notes, if any, from District Supervisor Office:

District Supervisor/Staff signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____

Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) Review

PAAC Approval: **Approved**

Not Approved

Review comments from the PAAC Review:

PAAC committee chair signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____

Additional notes, if any, from PAAC Staff:

PAAC Staff signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____

Attachment B: Encroachment Permit



Construction Inspector:

Permit No.: _____
Road No.: _____
Area: _____
TBM: _____
USA No.: _____
Fed Tax ID No.: _____

APPLICATION AND PERMIT CENTER

ENCROACHMENT PERMIT: PUBLIC ART ON COUNTY-OWNED UTILITY BOX

Rev 02/21/25

For Office Use Only

Type of Encroachment Permit: Small Large Utility

Permit Violation

Permit Fee \$ **Waived** Inspection Fee \$ **Waived** Cash Bond \$ **None** Receipt No.: G- N/A

Permit to do work in accordance with Title 10 of the Ordinance Code of Contra Costa County, County Standard Plans and Specifications, and any Special Requirements shown or listed herein. **Read both sides of this Permit and all the attachments carefully. Keep this Permit at the work site.**

Permittee

Contact Person:

: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No.: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Fax No.: _____

Email Address: _____

Cell Phone No.: _____

Expiration Date: All work described in this permit, including clean-up, shall be completed on _____
If all work covered by this permit, including clean-up is not completed by this date, you must acquire a new permit.

Permitted Activity: Public Art on County-owned Utility Boxes

Location:

Intersection: _____

GPS Coordinates: _____

Latitude/Longitude: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Cell Phone No.: _____

Items Attached or Referred to Herein and Made Part Hereof:

Design Review Package (with Public Art Advisory Committee approval)

The Permittee agrees to save, indemnify and hold harmless the County of Contra Costa, its officers, employees and agents from all liabilities imposed by law by reason of injury to or death of any person(s) or damage to property, including without limitation liability for trespass, nuisance or inverse condemnation, which may arise out of the work covered by this permit and does agree to defend the County, its officers, employees and agents against any claim or action asserting such a liability. Accepting this permit or starting any work hereunder shall constitute acceptance and agreement to all of the conditions and requirements of this permit and the ordinance and specifications authorizing issuance of such permit.

Signature of Permittee: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

By: _____

Date: _____

Robert B. Hendry III, Senior Engineering Technician

For: Warren Lai, Public Works Director, Contra Costa County

Work Completed

Expired

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

APPLY PENALTY – No Inspection Requested

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

G:\grpdata\engsvc\Permit Center\Permit Forms\Encroachment Permit Forms\Encroachment Permit Bike-Foot Race Master 24.docx

" Accredited by the American Public Works Association "

255 Glacier Drive, Martinez, CA 94553-4825

Main Office (925) 313-2000 • Direct (925) 374-2136 • Fax (925) 313-2021 • email: pw.permits@pw.cccounty.us

www.cccpublicworks.org

STANDARD PUBLIC ART ON COUNTY-OWNED UTILITY BOX PROGRAM PERMIT CONDITIONS

1. **ARRANGE** for an **INSPECTION** by phoning _____ or email _____ @pw.cccounty.us *at least* two working days before you begin the artwork. If you cannot reach the inspector contact the construction office at (925) 313-2320. **STARTING ARTWORK WITHOUT NOTIFICATION IS SUBJECT TO A PENALTY OF \$100.**
2. You must schedule a **FINAL INSPECTION** by phoning your inspector.
3. THE INSPECTOR may modify this permit to meet field conditions.
4. All painting and art work installation shall be performed during daylight hours only (between sunrise and sunset).
5. No paint shall be applied when the ambient temperature is below 50 degrees F or during precipitation/rain.
6. The applicant shall ensure that no paint or runoff from the cleanup reaches the gutter and/or storm drain inlet. No rinsing or spraying down the sidewalk or ground is allowed.
7. <<<ADD MORE - Copy from the program section IV when the program doc has been finalized>>>