

CALL FOR ARTISTS + DESIGNERS

Temporary Art + Design Activations

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Deadline: November 20, 2026 | 11:59 PM PT

About the Downtown San Diego Partnership

The Downtown San Diego Partnership (DSDP) serves as the leading advocate for the economic vitality and growth of Downtown San Diego. We are a member-based, nonprofit organization with nearly 300 members, representing a variety of business sectors including real estate, technology, banking, law, defense, insurance, communications, energy, and tourism. Our members are committed to creating a vital and vibrant urban center that benefits the entire San Diego region.

In addition, we manage the Property and Business Improvement District (also called our Clean & Safe Program), City Center Business Improvement District (BID), and three charitable foundations. Through these programs, we provide enhanced services in maintenance, safety, and beautification within 275 blocks in Downtown, support business promotion and retention, and improve the quality of life within our community. These programs provide an annual contractual budget of approximately \$15 million.

Clean & Safe is committed to serving the following neighborhoods that make up Downtown San Diego: City Center, Columbia, Cortez Hill, East Village, Gaslamp Quarter, and Marina. Its 24/7 operations include maintenance services along the public right-of-way, beautification efforts, and security and outreach services. Maintenance services include sweeping, trash removal, doggy bag dispenser refills, tree trimming, pressure washing, and graffiti, gum, and sticker removal. Clean & Safe is committed to providing great customer service and a cleaner, safer Downtown for our stakeholders and residents.

To learn more about our work, please visit downtownsandiego.org.

1. About + Opportunity

The Art + Design District is the creative heart of Downtown San Diego—a living urban ecosystem where art, design, education, and creative enterprise come together to shape how the city is experienced.

Through this call, we invite artists, designers, landscape architects, urban planners, environmental designers, makers, fabricators, curators, creative studios, and multidisciplinary teams from San Diego and Tijuana to propose temporary creative interventions across Downtown's storefronts, façades, streets, windows, sidewalks, vacant spaces, and shared environments.

Projects may include murals, projections, digital media, interactive experiences, pop-ups, light-integrated design work, and other approaches that explore artistic ideas, invite experimentation, and create meaningful public encounters with art and design.

Applicants are encouraged to propose ideas with a distinct point of view, a meaningful relationship to place, and a clear, realistic path to execution.

2. Two Tracks

TRACK A

Storefront + Pop-Up Activations

We invite artist- and designer-led proposals that explore Downtown's urban context through temporary interventions in storefronts, vacant or underused spaces, interiors, windows, façades, exterior pillars, sidewalks, and other public-facing District spaces.

Projects may include murals, temporary installations, projections, interactive experiences, artist- or designer-led pop-ups, window interventions, sculptural elements, digital media, temporary landscape installations, planted elements, modular gardens, shade interventions, and other unexpected uses of the public-facing environment.

We welcome distinctive, ambitious ideas grounded in artistic inquiry, conceptual strength, and a thoughtful relationship to place. Experimental approaches and unexpected uses of materials or spaces are encouraged.

If your concept explores an opportunity not listed here, propose it; selected teams will work with the District to assess its feasibility and site fit.

TRACK B

Light-Integrated Design

Focused on the California and Broadway Corridors, this track treats light as a creative medium. We invite both interior-to-exterior and fully exterior lighting proposals, including architectural lighting, illuminated installations, projections, digital media, window interventions, and façade transformations.

Projects may glow from within storefronts or vacant spaces, animate exterior building elements, and reshape the nighttime experience of the corridors from the street.

Track A may be proposed throughout the District, including California, Broadway, and C Street. Track B is focused on the California and Broadway Corridors. All projects are temporary, with most installations expected to remain in place for approximately six months. See Section 6 for project duration requirements.

Applicants may submit multiple proposals, including proposals for either or both tracks and for different sites. Each proposal must be submitted separately; see Section 11 for submission instructions.

3. Creative Framework

Proposals should connect meaningfully to one or more of the following principles.

Downtown Urban Context — Respond to the architecture, streets, sidewalks, buildings, and evolving character of Downtown.

Art + Design Integration — Bring together art, design, architecture, fabrication, technology, and everyday urban experience.

Creative Production — Make creativity visible as something made, tested, shared, and experienced.

Binational Exchange — Reflect the creative relationship between San Diego and Tijuana.

Public Realm Transformation — Turn overlooked or underused places into memorable public experiences.

4. Site Opportunities

Explore the digital opportunity map and site inventory for available locations, photos, dimensions, and known site conditions, where applicable. [View site opportunities + reference materials](#)

CALIFORNIA CORRIDOR — Priority opportunities for storefront, façade, exterior, and light-integrated interventions.

BROADWAY CORRIDOR — High-visibility opportunities for nighttime presence, architectural lighting, windows, projections, and public-facing work.

C STREET + DISTRICT-WIDE — Track A opportunities for storefronts, façades, interiors, sidewalks, pop-ups, and urban interventions. Plazas, sidewalks, storefront edges, building entrances, vacant spaces, and other hardscape areas may also be considered for temporary urban greening and landscape interventions, subject to accessibility, maintenance, site availability, and approval.

Applicants may identify a preferred site or propose a type of site that supports their concept.

Applicants are not required to secure property-owner approval prior to submitting a proposal. Proposed locations are not guaranteed; final site selection will be coordinated with the Art + Design District and is subject to availability, property-owner participation, site conditions, and required approvals.

For projects requiring electrical access, the District will coordinate with property owners and selected applicants to assess infrastructure needs and installation options. Electrical availability and permitted modifications vary by site and are not guaranteed. Proposals should identify anticipated electrical needs and budget assumptions; feasibility, cost responsibilities, and approvals will be confirmed before fabrication and installation.

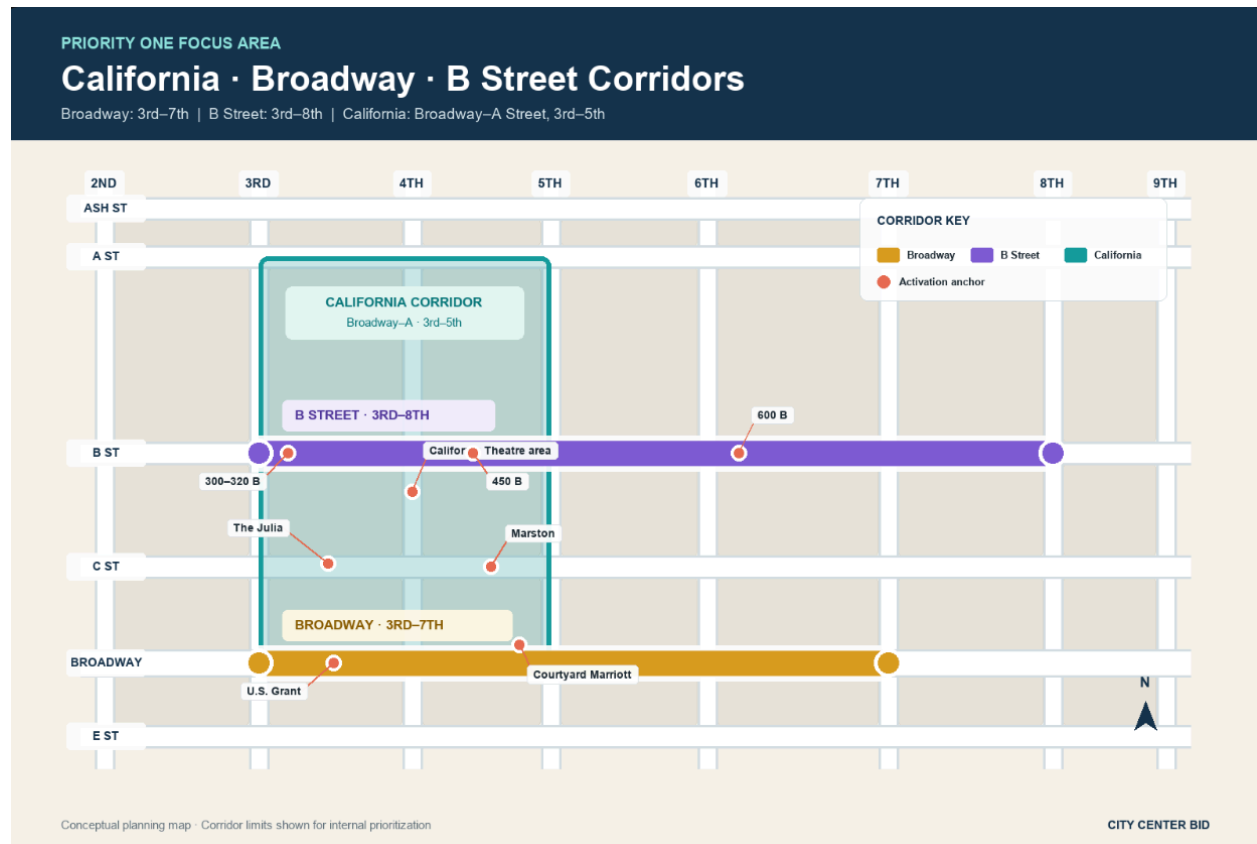
Track B focuses on the California and Broadway Corridors. See Attachment A below for the focus area map. For a more detailed view, visit the site opportunities website linked above and look for “Integrated Lighting Design — Priority One Corridors.”

ATTACHMENT A

Light-Integrated Design Focus Area

Track B proposals focus on the California and Broadway Corridors, priority areas within the larger Art + Design District. Proposals may place light-based work inside storefronts or vacant spaces, where it can be experienced from the street, or directly on exterior façades and other visible building elements. Projects should contribute meaningfully to the nighttime identity and public experience of these corridors.

Storefront activations, murals, and pop-ups may also occur in these corridors through Track A. The B Street corridor and activation markers are shown in this planning map for context only.



Corridor boundaries and potential activation sites are shown for reference. Final sites are subject to availability, site conditions, and required approvals.

5. What We're Looking For

BOLD — A clear, memorable concept with visual and experiential presence.

SITE-RESPONSIVE — Shaped by the architecture, use, history, movement, and conditions of its location.

PUBLIC-FACING — Visible, inviting, and meaningful from streets, sidewalks, windows, and shared spaces.

TEMPORARY + TRANSFORMATIVE — Designed for a limited installation of up to six months

while creating a powerful shift in how the place is experienced.

URBAN + EXPERIMENTAL — Connected to the District's urban creative ecosystem and open to inventive materials, media, technology, formats, and collaborations.

NATURE-INTEGRATED — When applicable, incorporates planting, shade, habitat, or other nature-based elements that improve the comfort, character, and experience of the public realm.

FEASIBLE — Achievable within the proposed budget, schedule, site conditions, maintenance needs, approvals, and safety requirements.

6. Scope of Work + Project Duration

Selected applicants will work with the Art + Design District team and relevant property partners to refine their concept and adapt it to the selected site.

The scope includes final design development, an all-inclusive budget and schedule, required approvals, fabrication, installation, maintenance, removal, and site restoration. Selected applicants may also participate in project documentation and promotional activities.

ARTIST RIGHTS + SITE CONDITIONS

Artists and designers will retain copyright in their original work. The selected applicant agreement will define ownership of the physical work and provide a limited, non-exclusive license for project documentation and District promotion, with appropriate credit. Merchandising or other commercial uses will require separate written permission.

Final placement, access, display conditions, and procedures for any relocation, alteration, or early removal will be agreed upon with selected applicants and property owners before installation, with consideration for artistic intent and site requirements.

TEMPORARY INSTALLATION PERIOD

The majority of selected projects are expected to remain installed or active for the full six-month period. However, ephemeral or shorter-term projects will also be considered when they offer particularly strong artistic merit or public impact. Applicants should specify their proposed duration and explain how it supports the project's concept and intended impact.

All commissioned work must be temporary. Installation is anticipated to begin in early September 2027. Final dates, operating requirements, maintenance expectations, and removal/restoration responsibilities will be confirmed through site coordination and the selected applicant agreement.

Final responsibilities, deliverables, schedule, and payment terms will be confirmed in the selected applicant agreement.

7. Budget Framework

The Art + Design District anticipates awarding approximately 15-20 commissions through this call, welcoming projects across a range of scales, disciplines, and sites. The final number of selected projects will depend on the proposals received, site feasibility, and available funding.

Applicants must submit an all-inclusive proposed project budget that clearly states what the requested award amount will deliver and accounts for all anticipated costs, from design development and fabrication through installation, maintenance, removal, and site restoration.

The proposed budget must account for artist, designer, and collaborator fees; materials; fabrication; equipment; installation and removal; transportation; insurance and permits; engineering; electrical work; site preparation; maintenance; contingency; and other required professional services, as applicable. Artist and designer fees must be identified as separate line items. Nature-based proposals must also account for plant materials, irrigation or watering, ongoing landscape maintenance, and site restoration. Any costs proposed to be covered separately by the District or other partners must be clearly identified and are subject to confirmation.

Proposals at all listed funding levels are encouraged and will be evaluated using the same selection criteria. Applicants may also describe how their concept could expand with additional funding. This is optional.

Project Type	Typical Award	Typical Scope
Pop-Up / Interactive	\$5,000–\$10,000	A concise, site-specific pop-up, window moment, or public-facing creative intervention.
Mural / Façade Intervention	\$15,000–\$25,000	A mural or visual transformation for a façade, exterior pillar, or other prominent building surface.
Façade Lighting	\$20,000–\$30,000	Light integrated into a façade or exterior building element to strengthen visibility after dark.
Urban Greening / Landscape Intervention	\$15,000–\$30,000	Temporary planting, modular gardens, shade elements, living installations, or other nature-based public-realm interventions.
Window / Interior-to-Exterior Light	\$15,000–\$25,000	An interior light-based installation experienced through a storefront or window from the public right-of-way.
Site-Specific Art / Urban Intervention	\$40,000–\$200,000	A larger-scale, site-responsive installation or intervention that transforms a visible District space or element. <i>*This category may include larger-scale proposals developed from any of the project types listed above.</i>

These ranges guide awards; selection and final funding will depend on creative strength, site fit, feasibility, and available funds.

Lighting proposals requiring a broader scope or more complex technical coordination may be considered under the Site-Specific Art / Urban Intervention category, with awards of up to \$200,000. Proposed budgets should reflect the full scope of the work, including anticipated electrical infrastructure, engineering, permitting, and installation requirements.

Award & Budget Guidance: Applicants are responsible for developing a complete and realistic project budget that accounts for all anticipated costs, including design and artist fees, fabrication, installation, permitting, insurance, engineering, electrical work, site preparation, and contingency, as applicable. Any additional funding sources, in-kind contributions, or costs outside the requested award should be clearly identified in the application, if applicable.

8. Selection Process + Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the Art + Design District Curatorial Art Committee and District team. Review may include eligibility screening, panel review, shortlisting, requests for clarification, finalist presentations, and final scope/budget confirmation. The District may select multiple projects across tracks, sites, scales, and disciplines.

Criterion	Weight
Concept + Artistic/Design Merit	35%
Relationship to Site	15%
Public Impact + Contribution to District	20%
Experience + Ability to Execute	20%
Feasibility + Maintenance	10%

Concept + Artistic/Design Merit: Originality, conceptual strength, and artistic or design quality, including a thoughtful approach to experimentation, materials, and public experience.

Relationship to Site: Responsiveness to the proposed location or type of site, including its physical, cultural, or urban context. Review will recognize that final locations may change and will consider the concept's adaptability while preserving its artistic intent.

Public Impact + Contribution to District: The potential to create meaningful public encounters with art and design while contributing to the District's cultural identity, creative ecosystem, and/or public realm. Assessment will consider the quality and relevance of the proposed experience beyond visibility or promotional value alone.

Experience + Ability to Execute: Demonstrated capacity to deliver work of comparable scale, complexity, budget, and technical requirements. Relevant experience and skills across the team and collaborators will be considered, including transferable experience and qualified project partners.

Feasibility + Maintenance: A realistic preliminary budget, schedule, and approach to fabrication, installation, safety, durability, maintenance, removal, and site restoration, with key technical assumptions.

9. Proposal Requirements

Submit applicant and team information; selected track and preferred site or type of site; and a **concept statement of no more than 500 words explaining the idea**, creative approach, and relationship to the District. Include sketches, reference images, or other supporting visuals. Initial proposals are preliminary; finished renderings and detailed technical drawings are not required. Detailed design development will take place after selection as part of the commissioned scope of work.

Include a **Public Impact + Contribution to District statement of no more than 150 words** describing how the project will create a meaningful public experience and contribute to the District's cultural identity, creative ecosystem, and/or public realm. Applicants may also address accessibility, community engagement, cross-border exchange, or other relevant forms of public impact, as applicable.

Provide a preliminary schedule and proposed duration; an all-inclusive preliminary budget with artist and designer fees listed separately; and anticipated technical or site requirements, noting key assumptions. Include relevant past work, experience, and brief biographies or résumés demonstrating the applicant's or team's ability to deliver the project. Applicants may demonstrate capacity through individual experience, transferable skills, collaborators, or the combined qualifications of the proposed team.

Submission Length: Each proposal should be submitted as a single PDF and should not exceed 10 pages, excluding the cover page.

**Proposals involving plants or living materials should also include a preliminary planting palette and a plan for watering, maintenance, seasonal conditions, removal, and site restoration.*

10. Eligibility

This opportunity is open to artists, designers, landscape architects, urban planners, environmental designers, makers, fabricators, curators, creative studios, museums, galleries, nonprofit organizations, and multidisciplinary teams based in San Diego County or Tijuana.

Team and institutional proposals should identify a lead artist or designer with an active role in shaping the project's concept and execution, along with collaborators responsible for installation, maintenance, and other key project responsibilities.

Selected applicants must be able to enter into an agreement with the Art + Design District / Downtown San Diego Partnership and meet applicable insurance, permitting, accessibility, safety, and contractual requirements. **All contracted applicants must provide a completed W-9 with a valid Social Security Number (SSN) or Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) in order to receive payment.**

Tijuana-Based Artists: Tijuana-based artists are strongly encouraged to participate. To meet U.S. contracting and payment requirements, Tijuana-based applicants may participate in collaboration with a San Diego County-based sole proprietor, nonprofit, or corporation. Cross-border and multidisciplinary collaborations are welcomed and encouraged.

11. Submission Process

Applicants may submit more than one proposal, including proposals for different tracks or sites. Each proposal must be complete and submitted as a separate PDF by email to:

ddeleon@downtownsandiego.org

Email subject line: Art + Design District 2026–2027 RFP [Applicant / Team Name]

Please submit all materials for each proposal as one PDF attachment (maximum 15 MB). If files exceed this limit, include one download link with access enabled through January 31, 2027. Incomplete submissions or submissions received after the deadline may not be reviewed.

Questions + Q&A

Applicants may email questions about the RFP to ddeleon@downtownsandiego.org by October 30, 2026, using the subject line “Art + Design District RFP Question.”

A bilingual virtual information session and live Q&A in English and Spanish will be held on October 23, 2026, at 3:00 PM PT. **Join the virtual session [here](#).** Official responses to submitted questions and any updates to the RFP will be issued by email on November 5, 2026.

Activity	Date
RFP Launch	September 30, 2026
Bilingual ENG/SPAN Virtual Q&A	October 23, 2026
Deadline to Submit Written Questions	October 30, 2026
Official Responses + Addendum Issued	November 5, 2026
Proposal Deadline	November 20, 2026 11:59 PM PT
Curatorial Art Committee Review	November–December 2026
Finalist Presentations	January 4–8, 2027
Selected Creatives Notified by Email	January 11–15, 2027
Contracting + Site Coordination	January–February 2027
Design Development + Permitting	Winter–Summer 2027
Installation Begins	Early September 2027

Questions: Daniela De Leon, Project Manager, Art + Design District ddeleon@downtownsandiego.org