

Artist Opportunity: Sanford Dam Mural Project –Sanford, Michigan

Presented by: Sanford Dam Mural Steering Committee



Project Overview

A local group is leading an effort to install a large-scale mural on the Sanford Dam powerhouse wall and create a greenspace and educational walkway that chronicles the impact of the dams in the Four Lakes system — Sanford, Edenville, Smallwood, and Secord — while recognizing the tremendous community effort to restore the lakes after the 2020 dam failures. The Sanford Dam Mural and Walkway Project recently received approval from the Midland County Board of Commissioners and will transform the downstream area of the dam into a meaningful public destination that celebrates the community's perseverance, collaboration, and renewal.

The project includes:

- An 80-foot mural on the Sanford Dam powerhouse wall
- An accessible paved trail connecting Sanford Village Park to the dam overlook
- Interpretive and directional signage telling the story of the dams and lake restoration

Mural Location: Downstream back wall of the Sanford Dam powerhouse

Dimensions: Approximately 80 feet wide x 25 feet high

Timeline: Installation anticipated Summer 2026, with an estimated one-to-four-week completion period (weather permitting).

Theme & Intent

Community feedback revealed a vision for the mural — a blend of reflection and aspiration, honoring the efforts of those who have been instrumental in restoring the dams and lakes. The mural will stand as a visual narrative of hope, unity and perseverance.

Core Message: Resilience, unity, and hope

Tone: A balance of reflective and aspirational — acknowledging loss while celebrating renewal.

Emotions to Evoke: Hopefulness, pride, gratitude, joy

Themes & Imagery: Connection between people and water, a sense of rebirth and forward movement

Community Representation: The mural should honor the efforts of the project team to restore the lakes, and others locally and throughout the state who have helped make the recovery possible.

In short, the mural should embody: ***“Resilient. United. Reborn.”***

Budget & Support

The selected artist’s commission — inclusive of design, materials, travel, and installation — will be \$30,000. Wall preparation and priming will be supported by the Steering Committee as well as the provision of wall paint and scaffolding or lift equipment.

Selection Process

Phase 1 – Request for Qualifications (RFQ): Artists submit a portfolio and professional qualifications. No mural design is required at this stage. Three to six semifinalists will be chosen based on artistic merit, experience, and relevance to the project.

Phase 2 – Request for Proposals (RFP): Semifinalists will each receive a \$500 stipend to develop a concept proposal for the Sanford Dam mural. These concepts will be reviewed and voted on by the Steering Committee.

Phase 3 – Final Selection: One artist or artist team will be selected from the semifinalists to complete the final mural commission.

Eligibility

This call is open to U.S. residing professional artists and artist teams with demonstrated experience creating large-scale outdoor murals or public artworks. Local and regional artists are strongly encouraged to apply.

Submission Requirements (Phase 1 – RFQ)

Submit a single PDF to dacia@parkerlane.art with the subject line “Sanford Dam Mural Proposal – [Your Name/Team Name].”

Required Materials:

1. Cover letter (1 page) describing your interest and artistic approach.
2. Artist resume or CV (individual or team).
3. Portfolio of up to eight images of past mural or public art projects (include title, size, year, and location).
4. Two references familiar with your public art experience.

Note: Do not submit a mural design proposal at this stage.

Evaluation Criteria

Artist submissions will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following considerations:

1. Artistic Strength and Vision

The overall quality, originality, and expressive strength of the artist's body of work, as demonstrated through past mural and public art projects.

2. Alignment with Project Goals and Community Values

The degree to which the artist's work and approach resonate with the themes of resilience, renewal, collaboration, and connection to place as outlined in this call.

3. Experience with Large-Scale Outdoor Work

Demonstrated ability to successfully design and execute murals or public artworks of comparable scale, complexity, and environmental exposure.

4. Technical Approach and Durability

The artist's understanding of materials, surface preparation, and long-term durability appropriate for an exterior, highly visible public site.

5. Responsiveness to Site and Context

Showing awareness of the mural's physical location, visibility, scale, and relationship to the surrounding landscape and community spaces.

6. Professionalism and Project Readiness

Completeness, clarity, and organization of submission materials, along with evidence of reliability, communication skills, and the ability to meet timelines.

Timeline

Call Released: February 16, 2026

RFQ Submission Deadline: April 3, 2026

Semifinalists Announced: April 13, 2026

Concept Proposal Development (Stipend Stage): May 1, 2026

Final Artist Selection: May 11, 2026

Design Development & Approval: May 31, 2026

Mural Installation: Summer 2026 (approx. 1-4 weeks)

Submission & Contact

All submissions and inquiries should be directed to:

Dacia Parker

Parker Lane Art & Design Studio

Email: dacia@parkerlane.art

Parker Lane Art & Design Studio serves as the art consultant for this project and will oversee the artist selection process in coordination with the Sanford Dam Mural Steering Committee.