City of Benton Winter Banner Program — Call to Artists

About the program

The City of Benton is seeking original artwork for a set of winter banners that will hang from the light posts around the Public Square through the winter.

Selected artists will receive a gift card, $100 for first place and $50 for second place, along with public recognition if they choose. There is no fee to enter. Entries are due **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2026**.

This packet contains everything you need: the guidelines, design specifications, entry form, and the artist agreement. Please read the full packet before you begin. Questions go to Damien Wilburn, Deputy City Clerk, at grants@bentonil.gov or 618-439-6131, ext. 400.

Theme and content guidelines

The theme is **Winter in Benton**. Designs should celebrate the season as a whole, since banners stay up well past the holidays.

Good directions include:

- Snow, ice, and winter landscapes
- Winter wildlife and plants, such as cardinals, deer, or evergreens
- Benton landmarks in winter, including the Square and the courthouse
- Community life in the cold months: sledding, skating, warm windows, gathering together

Designs may not include:

- Religious symbols or messages
- Political content or messages
- Business names, logos, or advertising
- Copyrighted or trademarked characters, such as Frosty, Rudolph, the Grinch, or any movie, TV, game, or brand character
- Artwork, photos, or clip art that is not entirely your own, including traced images and stock images

- Content the City considers inappropriate for a public, all-ages space

The banners are a City display. The City decides which designs are used, and it may decline any entry for any reason, including choosing not to select any design.

Eligibility

The call is open to residents of the Benton Consolidated High School District 103 boundaries. Artists of any age who live within the district are welcome to enter.

- Entrants under 18 must include the Parent or Guardian Consent form in this packet.
- Artists may submit as many designs as they like. Each design is a separate submission and needs its own entry form and signed agreement.
- Members of the City Council and their immediate families may not enter, since the Council selects the winning designs.
- There is no entry fee.

Design specifications

Banners are viewed from the street and the sidewalk, often for only a few seconds. Bold shapes, strong contrast, and simple compositions work best. Keep text to a minimum, or leave it out.

Item	Requirement
Artwork size	20 in. wide x 30.5 in. tall, vertical
Full banner size	20 in. wide x 37.25 in. tall. The City adds a solid color band to the top and bottom of your artwork to reach full size. These bands hold the pole hardware.
Sides	Double-sided. The same design is printed on both sides.
Safe zone	Keep important details at least 1 in. inside the edges of the artwork area.
Bleed	Extend background color or artwork 0.5 in. past the left and right edges

Item	Requirement
Digital files	PDF, TIFF, PNG, or JPG at full artwork size, at least 300 dpi; vector files (AI, EPS, SVG, PDF) are welcome. CMYK color preferred.
Physical artwork	Accepted if it can be scanned or photographed at high quality. Proportions must match the 20 x 30.5 artwork size.
Text	Optional. If used, no smaller than 3 in. tall at finished size.
Name or signature	Entries are judged anonymously, so submit an unsigned version with no name anywhere on the front. If you want your signature printed on the banner, also submit a signed version, with the signature inside the safe zone. Signed versions are kept separate and are not shown to the Council. Physical artwork should be submitted unsigned; if it is selected, you may sign it at City Hall before it is scanned.

Design templates showing the artwork area, color bands, safe zone, and bleed are available at bentonil.com/?page_id=6819 and at City Hall: a one-page reference sheet, a full-size PDF, and a 300 dpi blank canvas for digital artists. Colors may shift slightly in printing, and the City may make minor adjustments needed for production.

Selection and award

All entries will be presented to the City Council anonymously, without artist names. The Council will vote to select a first-place and a second-place design.

The Council will consider:

1. Fit with the Winter in Benton theme
2. Visual impact from a distance
3. Originality
4. Suitability for printing at banner size

Award:

- Two designs will be selected, a first-place design and a second-place design. Both will be displayed on light posts around the Square.
- First place receives a $100 gift card. Second place receives a $50 gift card. Each winning artist chooses on the entry form whether their name, signature, and photo are shared publicly.
- Selected artists must sign the Artist Agreement before the prize is awarded.

The City may ask a selected artist for minor changes to make a design work for printing or display. The City may select fewer designs than planned, or none.

Timeline and how to submit

Milestone	Date
Call opens	Friday, October 9, 2026
Entries due	4:00 p.m., Thursday, November 5, 2026
Selected artists notified	Tuesday, November 10, 2026
Final files due from selected artists	Thursday, November 12, 2026
Physical artwork available for pickup	After Friday, November 13, 2026
Banners installed	Thursday, November 19, 2026

To submit, send all of the following for each design:

1. A completed Entry Form
2. A signed Artist Agreement
3. The Parent or Guardian Consent form, for entrants under 18
4. Your unsigned design for judging, plus a signed version if you want your signature on the banner

Submit by:

- **Email:** grants@bentonil.gov. Put "Winter Banner Entry" in the subject line. Attachments are limited to 50 MB per email; larger files may be sent by file-sharing link.
- **Mail:** City of Benton, P.O. Box 640, Benton, IL 62812. Mailed entries must arrive by the deadline. Label physical artwork on the back with your name and phone number. Physical artwork can be picked up at City Hall after Friday, November 13, 2026.

- **In person:** City Hall, basement of 901 Public Square, Benton.

Late or incomplete entries may not be considered. The City will confirm receipt of each entry by email within 3 business days.

Entry form

Complete one form for each design.

Field	Response
Artist name	
Mailing address	
Phone	
Email	
Under 18? If yes, age	
Title of design	
Medium or software used	
Short description of the design (2 to 3 sentences)	
Name as you would like it credited	

Please answer:

- ☐ I live within the Benton Consolidated High School District 103 boundaries.
- ☐ I confirm this design is entirely my own original work and contains no copyrighted characters, trademarks, stock images, or work by anyone else.
- ☐ I have read the full packet and signed the Artist Agreement.
- ☐ I understand that entries submitted to the City may become public records.

If my design is selected (check any you want):

- ☐ The City may announce my name publicly as the artist.
- ☐ Print my signed version on the banner.
- ☐ The City may use my photo in announcements and publicity.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Artist agreement

This agreement is between the City of Benton, Illinois ("the City") and the artist named below ("the Artist") for the design titled _____ ("the Design"). It takes effect only if the City selects the Design.

1. **Ownership.** The Artist assigns to the City all copyright and other rights in the Design, including the right to reproduce, print, display, distribute, adapt, and publish it in any form, for any public purpose, without further payment. The City grants the Artist a permanent, free license to show the Design in the Artist's portfolio and to sell prints or reproductions of the original artwork, as long as they are not presented as official City products.
2. **Changes and removal.** The Artist understands the City may crop, resize, recolor for printing, or otherwise adjust the Design, and may take down, store, retire, or dispose of the banners at any time. To the extent allowed by law, the Artist waives any rights under the federal Visual Artists Rights Act (17 U.S.C. 106A) and any similar rights to object to these actions.
3. **Original work.** The Artist confirms the Design is the Artist's own original work; it does not copy or include anyone else's work, characters, logos, or trademarks; and the Artist has the right to sign this agreement.
4. **Responsibility.** If a claim is made that the Design infringes someone else's rights, the Artist will cooperate with the City, and the City may remove the Design. The Artist agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the City of Benton and its officers, employees, and agents from claims, damages, and costs arising from a claim that the Design infringes the copyright, trademark, or other rights of another person.
5. **Credit and publicity.** The City may use the Design to announce and promote the program. The City will use the Artist's name, signature, and photo only as the Artist chooses on the entry form. If the Artist chooses public credit, the City will credit the Artist as listed on the entry form.
6. **Prize.** If the Design is selected, the Artist will receive the prize described in this packet, a $100 gift card for first place or a $50 gift card for second place, after signing this agreement. There is no cash payment or other compensation.
7. **Selection.** The City decides whether to use the Design, and signing this agreement does not guarantee selection or display.

Artist signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

For the City of Benton: _____ Date: _____

Parent or guardian consent (entrants under 18)

I am the parent or legal guardian of the youth artist named below. I give permission for my child, a minor, to enter the City of Benton Winter Banner Program. I have read the full packet, including the Artist Agreement, and I agree to its terms on my child's behalf. I consent to the City's use of my child's design to announce and promote the program. My child's name, signature, and photo will be used only as chosen on the entry form.

Artist's name: _____ Age: _____

Parent or guardian name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Parent or guardian signature: _____ Date: _____