

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 6, 2023 **WARD(S):** ALL

TITLE: ART ON BOXES TRAFFIC SIGNAL BOX PROGRAM – THE GROUP OF SEVEN REMIXED PILOT UPDATE

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager
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ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This is an update on the Council-directed City-wide ARTonBOXES traffic signal box program. The ARTonBOXES: Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project launches to the public in June 2023 and unveils original artwork commissioned to animate Vaughan's public realm. The report also provides an overview of the framework for a 10-year implementation strategy as directed by Council at the meeting of June 22, 2021.

Report Highlights

- Vaughan leverages Public Art as a catalyst for placemaking to reflect Vaughan's unique identity and economic vitality by delivering innovative, high-profile, signature visual art initiatives that position Vaughan as a progressive, creative urban city.
- On June 22, 2021, Council directed staff to develop and launch the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot for the ARTonBOXES traffic signal box art wrapping program, and to report back in Q2 2023 on its implementation with a proposed framework to guide the development of an implementation strategy for the City-wide ARTonBOXES program.

Report Highlights continued

- The first phase of the City-Wide ARTonBOXES traffic signal box art wrapping program – the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project – launches with this report to Council. Artwork will be installed across the City in June 2023.
- The City of Vaughan collaborated with the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) and York Region District School Board (YRDSB) to create original artwork for the pilot in alignment with the Ontario Curriculum for visual art.
- 12 traffic signal box art wrap designs were selected from 64 student artist submissions from St. Elizabeth Catholic High School and Westmount Collegiate Institute (Vaughan’s two secondary school visual art specialty programs) for installation at locations across all five wards of the City.
- Art designs selected for installation on the traffic signal boxes are inventoried as Public Art assets in the Civic Art Collection of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.
- The comprehensive ARTonBOXES traffic signal box program 10-Year implementation strategy currently under development will be completed in Q4 2023.

Recommendations

1. THAT the staff presentation be received;
2. THAT staff report back in Q4 2023 with a comprehensive ARTonBOXES traffic signal box program 10-year implementation strategy;
3. THAT the City Clerk forward a copy of this report to York Region, York Region District School Board, and York Catholic District School Board; and
4. THAT the Office of Communications and Economic Development be directed to implement a Public Art awareness campaign profiling the ARTonBOXES program and Group of Seven REMIXED pilot across the City’s channels where appropriate.

Background

On June 22, 2021, Council directed staff to develop and launch the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot for the ARTonBOXES traffic signal box art wrapping program, and to report back with a proposed framework to guide the development of a comprehensive multi-phased implementation strategy for the City-wide program.

On June 6, 2023, the first phase of the City-wide ARTonBOXES Traffic Signal Box art wrapping program is being implemented through this report, which unveils the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project. Led by the cross-departmental team of Economic

Development and Transportation and Fleet Management Services, original works of art were commissioned for installation on the traffic signal cabinets.

The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot is administered under the auspices of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program, providing a testing ground and blueprint to guide the development of the forthcoming strategy to deliver a comprehensive 10-year ARTonBOXES program.

The Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program was approved by Council in 2016. It guides the development of Public Art and enhances the City's image and identity across its dynamic and diverse communities.

Art in public places (Public Art) is defined as original artwork that has been selected, commissioned, or acquired for location in the public domain, is physically or visually accessible, is on public or private lands, is created by or in collaboration with artists, has aesthetic qualities, is context specific and may be permanent or temporary.

The City-Wide Public Art program governs art in the public realm. This includes: Sculpture and Discrete elements; Site Specific Art; and Integrated Public Art. Art on Traffic signal boxes falls under the Integrated Public Art category. This encompasses works that are parts of landscapes, sites, and structures.

The City-wide ARTonBOXES program launches with the Group Of Seven REMIXED pilot project which adopts a global best practice to use traffic control cabinets as canvases for public art.

Traffic signal control cabinet boxes are located at signalized intersections across the City of Vaughan. Many cities in Canada and internationally, adopt programs that wrap traffic signal boxes with original artwork applied as vinyl wraps featuring digitally translated designs. In effect, these traffic signal boxes provide art canvases to enhance the creative urban character of Vaughan's neighborhoods, beautify city streetscapes, and discourage "tagging" vandalism.

The first phase of the annual city-wide ARTonBOXES Traffic Signal Box art wrapping program was implemented through the launch of the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project. It features original artwork commissioned for traffic signal boxes as art assets in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program. The implementation schedule for the pilot project is outlined in Attachment 1.

The launch of the ARTonBOXES program | Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project includes locations across the City in all five wards.

The pilot project includes 12 traffic signal box art wraps installed in all five wards across the City. Site selection was based on three criteria to maximize viewer engagement:

- alignment with the locational focus areas identified as key opportunities for Public Art in the City-Wide Public Art Program
- optimum positioning at high-traffic vehicular | pedestrian traffic intersections
- alignment with the Traffic Signal Controller Conversion Project

The original plan targeted representing two traffic signal box locations in each of the City’s five wards for a total of 10 boxes. As the project progressed, two additional locations were added to animate the Woodbridge Avenue Improvements and Streetscaping Project within its scope to integrate Public Art. A total of 12 traffic signal boxes are included in this pilot phase of the program. A location map is presented in Attachment 2.

ARTonBOXES program Group of Seven REMIXED pilot City-Wide Locations	
WARD	LOCATION
Ward 1	Melville Avenue & Springside Road
Ward 1	Major Mackenzie Drive & Keele Street (York Region)
Ward 2 Woodbridge Streetscape	Woodbridge Avenue & Clarence Street
Ward 2 Woodbridge Streetscape	Woodbridge Avenue & Kipling Avenue
Ward 2 Woodbridge Streetscape	Woodbridge Avenue & Market Lane
Ward 2 Woodbridge Streetscape	Woodbridge Avenue & Islington Avenue (York Region)
Ward 3	Famous Avenue & Colossus Drive
Ward 3	Chrislea Road & Northview Boulevard
Ward 4	Apple Mill Road & Millway Avenue
Ward 4	Ilan Ramon Boulevard & Lebovic Campus Drive
Ward 5	Clark Avenue & New Westminster Drive
Ward 5	Yonge Street & Centre Street (York Region)

The projected lifespan of wrapped boxes is approximately five to seven years based on local environmental conditions.

Traffic signal boxes are functioning equipment that the City will need to repair or replace over time and can become targets of vandalism. Artwork may become damaged or removed at any time after completion.

The City collaborated with regional school boards to create original works of art capturing the Canadian landscape by re-interpreting Group of Seven paintings.

The pilot re-imagined the iconic work of the Group of Seven. This was an opportunity for secondary school students specializing in visual art to contribute to the public realm.

A reimagining of Group of Seven artwork aligned with the Ontario Curriculum for the Arts. City staff collaborated with both the YCDSB and the YRDSB through an in-class assignment at the two Vaughan secondary schools offering specialty visual art programs, St. Elizabeth Catholic High School and Westmount Collegiate Institute, to develop original artwork for the City's pilot project.

The pilot project profiles original art designs by 12 Vaughan secondary school visual art specialty students in grades 11 and 12 from St. Elizabeth CHS and Westmount CI. Students were tasked with capturing the spirit of the Canadian landscape by re-interpreting Group of Seven paintings to create newly imagined original works – digitized for vinyl application - designed specifically to wrap around 12 designated traffic signal boxes located across the City in all five wards.

Thematic Art Interpretation: students were asked to draw inspiration from Canada's landscape.

Members of the Group of Seven explored a variety of techniques over the years, each developing their own visual vocabulary to symbolize the natural beauty of Canada. They were, however, unified through their inspired appreciation of this country's unique landscape, one ultimately that gave rise to distinctively Canadian art.

The original art designs students created to wrap around the 12 traffic signal boxes were inspired by the iconic and stylistically diverse body of plein air paintings of the Group of Seven. Their designs do not replicate any specific Group of Seven painting; but rather, capture the "spirit" of the Canadian landscape, newly imagined through each student's interpretive style. Students supported their art designs with artist statements relating to the *Group of Seven REMIXED* theme.

Student Art Design Criteria: the goal is to animate Vaughan’s streetscapes.

Students worked according to the following design criteria:

- Successful Traffic Signal Box Designs:
 - Animate urban streetscapes positively with visually impactful art.
 - Wrap imagery around all four faces of the traffic box continuously.
 - Are visible and understandable when viewing two sides of the traffic box.
 - Ensure designs are visible from 20+ feet for pedestrian | vehicular traffic.
 - Align imagery with operational requirements: vents, hinges, and handles.
 - Depict imagery that is appropriate for all viewers in the public realm.
 - Avoid:
 - depictions of traffic lights, signals, or signs.
 - logos branding for any business, product, service, or viewpoint.
 - large, vacant compositional areas to help deter potential tagging.
 - locating key design elements on edges, vents, or handles.
 - fine detail | small text to avoid distraction by viewers while driving.
 - offensive or insensitive content.

Student Art Selection Process: a curatorial selection panel chose from 64 submissions.

Student submission packages included box wrap designs concept boards, high-res digital art files, and Artist Statements. 64 student submissions were received, with 32 submitted by St. Elizabeth CHS and 32 from Westmount CI. A curatorial selection panel led by the City of Vaughan evaluated all student artwork and chose 12 designs – six from each school – to be refined for fabrication and installation on the traffic signal boxes. Evaluation criteria considered:

- **Artistic Merit** – artwork exhibits a high calibre of creative ability and execution.
- **Contribution to Urban Character** – artwork animates streetscape locations with positive visual impact.
- **Applicability** – artwork translates successfully to the large traffic signal box format with a suitably scaled design.

City of Vaughan Student Higher Art Education Bursaries: in line with the art stewardship process, bursaries are provided to artists contributing to Vaughan’s public art and civic art collection.

In the spirit of higher education, to promote Vaughan’s support of post-secondary studies in the arts, 12 City of Vaughan Student Higher Art Education Bursaries of

\$1,000 each were awarded to the 12 students whose art designs were selected to wrap around the designated traffic signal boxes for the pilot project.

The 12 art designs selected for installation on the pilot's traffic signal boxes are inventoried as Public Art assets in the Civic Art Collection of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.

The Program is supported by a Communications Plan.

The Office of Communications and Economic Development is implementing a Public Art awareness campaign to profile the ARTonBOXES program and Group of Seven REMIXED pilot across the City's channels.

Previous Reports/Authority

Traffic Signal Cabinet And Hydro Box Wrapping Program Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021 (Report No. 32, Item 17 of Committee of the Whole dated June 8, 2021):

<https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=80332>

Traffic Box Wrapping Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of Feb 17, 2021 (Report No. 6, Item 14 of Committee of the Whole dated February 9, 2021):

https://vaughan.escribemeetings.com/CW2_Feb09_2021/eSCRIBE Documents/eSCRIBE Raw Attachments/31/Extract_6cw0209_21ex_14.pdf

Vaughan Public Art Program:

https://www.vaughan.ca/sites/default/files/2023-03/Vaughan%20Public%20Art%20Report_Final%20June%202016.pdf?file-verison=1681419821531

Woodbridge Avenue Improvements and Streetscaping:

<https://www.vaughan.ca/about-city-vaughan/projects-and-initiatives/business-projects/woodbridge-avenue-improvements-and-streetscaping>

Graffiti Management Media Release:

<https://www.vaughan.ca/news/come-across-graffiti-community>

Analysis and Options

The ARTonBOXES traffic signal box program 10-year implementation strategy (2025-2035) is under development for Council endorsement in Q4 2023.

The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project was designed as a testing phase for a comprehensive multi-phased ARTonBOXES program. In keeping with best practice, a long-range strategy for implementing a comprehensive ARTonBOXES program between 2025-2035 is under development.

ARTonBOXES program 10-Year Implementation Strategy Highlights:

- Develop the Creative Placemaking Vision, Goals | Objectives, and Thematic Focus
 - Create a comprehensive and dynamic traffic signal box art wrap program that animates Vaughan’s public realm and engages and fosters a vibrant community life that is progressive, inclusive, sustainable, and diverse, reflecting the unique urban character of Vaughan’s neighborhoods and districts.
- Develop a Traffic Signal Box Art-Installation Locational Plan
 - Target the strategic siting of 75-100 art-wrapped traffic signal boxes City-wide by 2035, premised on the annual installation of 10 art wraps per year, corresponding to the five-seven-year longevity projection and expected art replacement cycles for vinyl art wraps in the public realm.
- Develop a Maintenance Plan
 - Establish a sustainable, proactive maintenance program that makes preventative provisions for deterring vandalism of the traffic signal box art wraps, employs responsive protocols for graffiti removal, and identifies a process for art replacement cycles that aligns with the locational plan.
- Build Vaughan’s Civic-Led Public Art Collection
 - Commission traffic signal box art wrap installations that animate the public realm, support creative excellence, and engage diverse audiences through a commitment to recognize, nurture, and profile artistic talent; encourage accessible engagement between artists and public audiences; embrace equality and diversity; foster art appreciation and integrate art into the fabric of everyday experiences.
- Increase Public Art Awareness and Develop Creative Placemaking
 - Raising the profile of Vaughan’s Public Art Program as a vital component of creative placemaking is a key priority for Economic Development. Delivering a comprehensive communication plan to support awareness of the ARTonBOXES program will help position Vaughan as a creative urban city that integrates art into its public realm – a city where art is accessible to residents and visitors alike and is valued as a placemaking catalyst for conveying Vaughan’s unique identity and economic identity.

**ARTonBOXES program 10-Year Implementation Strategy Framework
2025-2035**

PROGRAM VISION	Core Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diversity ▪ Accessibility ▪ Indigeneity ▪ Heritage ▪ Environmental Sustainability ▪ Mobility ▪ Ecology ▪ Innovation Technology ▪ Socio-Economic Development
GOALS OBJECTIVES	Creative Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrate ART into the public realm as an everyday experience ▪ Enhance the urban character of City neighborhoods and districts ▪ Convey Vaughan’s unique identity and economic vitality ▪ Animate streetscapes for pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists ▪ Reflect aesthetic design qualities ▪ Deter vandalism ▪ Foster public engagement ▪ Nurture a vibrant, progressive, inclusive sense of community and civic pride ▪ Commission Public Art unique to Vaughan’s character, history, future, and diversity ▪ Promote artistic excellence and creativity in the public realm
IMPLEMENTATION	Curated Art Themes	<p>Preliminary themes for consideration (not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indigenous Voices ▪ Heritage Vaughan ▪ Emerging Downtown ▪ smARTcity frontier

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transportation Innovation ▪ Diversity – 113 Vaughan Voices ▪ Vintage Vaughan ▪ ArtmeetsDESIGN ▪ healthyCITY ▪ PlanetEARTH Sustainability ▪ The Painted Garden ▪ ART of SPORT ▪ Urban Jungle ▪ Canadian Icons
	Locational Plan	<p>Aligned with the City-Wide Public Art Program and Urban Design Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify potential City-wide locations (10 per year target 75-100 locations based on longevity) ▪ Create a locational inventory based on box model typology ▪ Map out inventory based on viable box models ▪ Accommodate art turnover every five-seven years (vinyl longevity) ▪ City-owned regional boxes ▪ Employ city-wide GIS Mapping ▪ Prioritize districts strategic Urban Design alignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heritage Districts ○ VMC ○ Streetscape Projects ○ NMRP ○ VYSC ○ Vaughan Mills ○ VHCP
	Call to Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual Submission Packages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ set art design and thematic criteria ○ communicate opportunities ▪ Artistic Talent Pool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ emerging artists ○ established artists

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ local regional GTA
	Art Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Art Selection Criteria ▪ Adjudication Panel Composition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ artists ○ educators ○ art curators ○ urban designers ○ public realm coordinators
	Public Art Collection	Employ Best Practices for Commissioning Public Art
	Budget Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify budget Source ▪ Annual Expenses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ production and installation ○ artist fees ○ jury honoraria ○ admin programming staff
	Procurement Process	Art Wrap Production Installation
	Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Artist Agreements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ art ownership ○ intellectual property ▪ Partnerships Collaborations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ York Region ○ art culture organizations
	Art Installation	Technical Guidelines
	Art Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a sustainable maintenance program ▪ Apply anti-graffiti protection ▪ Conduct routine monitoring and inspection ▪ Employ graffiti removal protocols ▪ Identify art replacement cycles
	Communications Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual Communications Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ share artist opportunities ○ program profile ○ public art awareness ○ public engagement
	Consultation and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-Departmental City Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economic Development

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transportation and Fleet Management ○ Urban Design ○ VMC ○ Procurement ○ Infrastructure Delivery ○ Finance ○ Legal ○ Diversity and Inclusion ▪ Stakeholders Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ York Region ○ cultural heritage groups ○ McMichael ○ BIAs ○ resident artists
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The ARTonBOXES program fosters the creation of artwork for traffic signal boxes across the City of Vaughan that considers the urban context of local areas and the City as a whole. Cohesively, these art installations enhance our streets and public realm to create connected, vibrant, and inclusive communities.

Financial Impact

The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project was delivered within budget. The cost to wrap the 12 boxes came within budget at a cost of \$23,865. The costs associated with wrapping two additional boxes to accommodate the Woodbridge Avenue Improvements and Streetscaping Project were allocated for Public Art in the Streetscape project. Project costs included the fabrication and installation of the vinyl wraps produced as digital artwork and the awarding of student art education bursaries to students.

The comprehensive multi-phased program to be outlined in the 10-year implementation strategy will detail costs to administer wrapping up to 75-100 boxes in targeted locations, including art production and installation costs, artist fees, and a contract public realm coordinator to help facilitate the coordination of program logistics. Subject to detailed cost estimates, the annual budget review process, and Council budget approval, program costs would be supported by Tax-levy. Funding from the Public Art Reserve (also tax-funded) may be eligible under the Public Art Program. Opportunities for cost-sharing agreements will also be explored to offset any impact on tax-funded operating budgets or reserves.

Operational Impact

The development of the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot, administered under the auspices of the broader Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program, was led by the internal cross-departmental team of Economic Development and Transportation and Fleet Management Services and included critical consultation with Urban Design, Infrastructure Delivery, Corporate and Strategic Communications, Legal and Procurement.

The development and implementation of the 10-year ARTonBOXES program implementation strategy will involve a broad cross-departmental team and engage external stakeholders and collaborators to address multi-faceted program considerations. Cross-departmental team members will include (but are not limited to): Economic Development, Transportation and Fleet Management Services, Urban Design, VMC Program, Procurement, Infrastructure Delivery, Corporate and Strategic Communications, Finance, Legal, and Diversity and Inclusion. Stakeholders and collaborators will include York Region, cultural | heritage groups, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, art academia, BIAs, artists, and residents.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

York Region was consulted and supported the development of the ARTonBOXES program and the implementation of the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot for three regional traffic signal cabinets. The Region will be consulted further for input on the upcoming locational plan proposing any regional cabinets in the traffic signal box program 10-year strategy currently in development.

YCDSB and YRDSB collaborated with the City of Vaughan, committing generously to the City's curatorial proposal to deliver the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot in alignment with the Ontario Curriculum for visual art. Vaughan secondary school visual art specialty students from St. Elizabeth Catholic High School and Westmount Collegiate Institute represented both regional school boards.

Conclusion

Vaughan leverages the power of Public Art as a dynamic placemaking catalyst to drive a transformative, ambitious, and purpose-driven agenda that shapes and reflects Vaughan's unique identity and economic vitality by delivering innovative, high-profile, signature visual art initiatives to position Vaughan as a progressive, creative urban city.

The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project launching the ARTonBOXES program enhances the public realm by transforming traffic signal boxes into extraordinary works of art to enhance the creative urban character of Vaughan's neighborhoods, beautify

city streetscapes, and discourage “tagging” vandalism. It demonstrates the role and value of Public Art and Vaughan’s City-Wide Public Art Program in creative placemaking and city building. The pilot provides a viable exemplar to advance the development of the forthcoming Public Art implementation strategy for delivering a comprehensive 10-year ARTonBOXES program as well as setting the stage for expanding the mural program in the near future to animate other site-specific installation contexts that could include building facades, transportation overpasses, skateparks, and free-standing structures.

The City of Vaughan appreciates the generous spirit of collaboration demonstrated by York Region and by both the YCDSB and YRDSB to realize the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project, including the supportive senior leadership and commitment of educators at St. Elizabeth CHS and Westmount CI, and the exceptional talent of all participating secondary students from Vaughan’s two specialty visual art programs.

For more information, please contact:

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Attachments

1. [ARTonBOXES Timeline](#)
2. [ARTonBOXES pilot Locations](#)

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