

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, December 5, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: ART ON BOXES PROGRAM 10-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek approval of the ARTonBOXES Program 10-Year Implementation Strategy (Strategy) developed as a signature creative placemaking initiative to enhance the public realm through the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.

Report Highlights

- On June 20, 2023, in tandem with launching the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot for the ARTonBOXES traffic signal box art wrapping program, Council directed staff to report back in Q4 2023 with a comprehensive 10-year ARTonBOXES implementation strategy to enhance the public realm.
- The proposed Strategy provides the working blueprint – within the framework of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art program – for delivering a signature creative placemaking initiative between 2025-2034, integrating art into the fabric of everyday experiences, and helping position Vaughan at the vanguard of public art in York Region.
- The proposed Strategy guides the phased implementation of the 10-year ARTonBOXES program with fairness and transparency based on best practices and the principles of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.

Report Highlights continued

- 75-100 municipal and regional traffic signal boxes, distributed equally across all five wards of Vaughan, will be transformed into extraordinary works of art to enliven streetscapes in urban design priority districts and neighborhoods with high pedestrian and transit activity.
- Animating capital infrastructure with art contributes to the creative urban character of neighborhoods, beautifies city streetscapes, and discourages “tagging” vandalism.
- Art installed on traffic signal boxes is inventoried as assets housed in the Civic Art Collection of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.

Recommendations

1. THAT Council approve the ARTonBOXES Program 10-Year Implementation Strategy (Attachment 1);
2. THAT staff be directed to implement the Strategy;
3. THAT Council authorize the Director of Economic Development (or designate) to negotiate, enter into, and execute all necessary or ancillary agreements in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor (or designate) and City Manager (or designate), with applicants, program partners, grant funding partners, stakeholders, or any other potential third-party partners with respect to the implementation of the Strategy and to terminate agreements when required;
4. THAT Council endorse a future (2025-2034) operating budget request for public art programming;
5. THAT staff report back to provide annual updates on ARTonBOXES program installments; and
6. THAT the City Clerk forward a copy of this report to York Region.

Background

On June 20, 2023, in tandem with launching the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot for the ARTonBOXES traffic signal box art wrapping program, Council directed staff to report back in Q4 2023 with a comprehensive Strategy to enhance the public realm.

The first phase of the City-wide ARTonBOXES program unveiled the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project in June 2023. Led by the cross-departmental core team of Economic Development and Transportation and Fleet Management Services, original works of art were commissioned for installation on designated traffic signal cabinets as inventoried art assets in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.

Inspired by iconic paintings by members of the Group of Seven, the pilot profiled the exceptional designs of Vaughan secondary school visual art specialty students tasked with capturing the spirit of the Canadian landscape by creating newly imagined work – digitized for vinyl application. 12 traffic signal boxes located in high-density traffic areas across all five wards of the city were wrapped with art.

Transforming traffic signal boxes into extraordinary works of art enhances Vaughan’s public realm.

Large metal boxes containing traffic signal controls are located at numerous roadsides and signalized intersections across the City of Vaughan. Many cities in Canada and abroad, adopt programs that encase traffic signal boxes with original artwork applied as vinyl wraps depicting digitally translated designs. In effect, these metal boxes provide art canvases. Transforming the City’s traffic signal boxes through art, as demonstrated successfully by the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot, contributes to the creative urban character of Vaughan’s neighborhoods, beautifies city streetscapes, and discourages “tagging” vandalism.

A strategy for delivering a comprehensive, long-term ARTonBOXES program as a signature creative placemaking initiative helps position Vaughan at the vanguard of public art in York Region.

Following the impactful launch of the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot, staff fleshed out the preliminary strategy framework endorsed by Council, to develop a comprehensive ARTonBOXES program implementation strategy designed to animate the public realm through a dedicated 10-year creative placemaking initiative. To advance mapping out the critical locational plan, city staff consulted with York Region, a major stakeholder and supporter of the ARTonBOXES program, to secure endorsement and collaboration for wrapping an extensive inventory of targeted regional boxes at key intersections across Vaughan. Adopting the first holistic creative placemaking strategy for animating both municipal and regional traffic signal boxes helps position Vaughan at the vanguard of public art in York Region.

Previous Reports/Authority

ARTonBOXES Traffic Signal Box Program – The Group of Seven REMIXED Pilot Update Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 20, 2023 (Report No. 28, Item 21 of the Committee of the Whole June 20, 2023):

<https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=146347>

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-version=1681419821531

Analysis and Options

The Strategy provides a blueprint – within the framework of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art program – guiding implementation between 2025-2034 as a signature creative placemaking initiative that integrates art into the fabric of everyday experiences.

Public art and creative expression are essential to the vibrancy, identity, social well-being, and economic development of Vaughan. The Strategy was developed as the working blueprint for implementing the ARTonBOXES program to deliver a signature public art initiative. This positions Vaughan as a progressive, creative urban city, and animates Vaughan's public realm with an innovative, inclusive, and sustainable city-wide traffic signal box art program that fosters artistic expression, community engagement, and artistic opportunity while enhancing the distinct urban character of Vaughan's neighborhoods and districts for both residents and visitors.

The Strategy guides the phased implementation of the 10-year ARTonBOXES program with fairness and transparency.

Based on employing best practices and adhering to the principles of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program, the Strategy guides staff in implementing the ARTonBOXES program with fairness and transparency. Annual programming is designed to be flexible to align with corporate goals and operations. A copy of the Strategy can be found in Attachment 1.

Key Priorities for Implementation Between 2025-2034

- **75-100 City-owned and regional traffic signal boxes will be actively wrapped in all five wards by 2034.**
 - The selection of locations aligns with the principles of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and Urban Design Guidelines. A City-wide inventory was created to draw from, consisting of 105 existing | planned boxes, distributed equitably across all five wards.
 - Based on wrapping 10 locations per year, over the course of 10 years (considering art recommissioning cycles), 75-100 signal boxes will be animated by 2034. 60 of the 105 locations targeted for art installation are regional traffic signal boxes.
 - Priority districts were identified to align with Urban design projects and high pedestrian and transit planning corridors. This includes Heritage Districts, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, North Maple Regional Park, Vaughan Yonge Steeles Centre, Vaughan Mills, Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct, and streetscape projects.
 - 10 locations have been strategically assigned across the five wards for implementation in Year One (2025) as outlined below in Table 1.
- **10 curated art themes will be developed for 10 annual installments.**
 - Subject matter will evolve to reflect current issues that resonate meaningfully with artists and public audiences and are appropriate for the public realm. Thematic concepts will respect the legacy of Vaughan's past and profile transformation and innovation, embrace equality and diversity, foster art appreciation, and integrate art into the public realm fabric of everyday experiences.
 - Year One (2025) Curated Art Theme / ***the ART of HEALING***
 - Art and creative expression are powerful catalysts in the healing process. Scientific evidence recognizes that producing and appreciating art has measurable psychological and physiological healing properties. In the spirit of positivity, during a post-pandemic era facing global societal and environmental challenges, the ARTonBOXES theme for Year One is dedicated to exploring the ART of HEALING – an inspired intersection of art meeting health – where art plays centre stage in supporting our physical, mental, and social well-being.
 - The implementation timeline is outlined in Table 2.

- **75-100 art designs will be inventoried as public art assets in the Civic Art Collection of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.**
 - Art submissions will be evaluated by qualified adjudication panels according to art design assessment criteria. 10 themed art designs will be selected annually for installation on traffic signal boxes.
- **A proactive maintenance plan will manage art replacement cycles and mitigate vandalism.**
 - The plan employs both preventative and responsive protocols for graffiti removal and identifies a process for art commissioning replacement cycles that aligns with the locational plan and curated themes.
- **Exploring an ARTonBOXES Hydro Box Painting Program**
 - City staff are assessing the feasibility of introducing a parallel City-wide ARTonBOXES programming component to animate hydro boxes as painted murals in the near future. Investigations are underway with neighboring municipalities to determine best practices and discussions will be initiated with Alectra to solicit interest | analyze logistics in pursuing a collaborative partnership for animating Vaughan hydro boxes.

Year One (2025) | the ART of HEALING Locations and Project Timeline

ARTonBOXES program the ART of HEALING Year One (2025) City-Wide Locations		
	WARD	LOCATION
1	Ward 1	Major Mackenzie Drive at Wellness Way (York Region)
2	Ward 1	Jane Street at Vaughan Healthcare Circle (York Region)
3	Ward 2	Islington Avenue at Napa Valley (York Region)
4	Ward 2	Highway 7 at Kipling Avenue (York Region)
5	Ward 3	Weston Road at Ashberry Boulevard/Davos Road (York Region)
6	Ward 3	Ansley Grove Road at Windflower Gate
7	Ward 4	Jane Street at Rutherford Road (York Region)
8	Ward 4	Apple Mill Road at Jane Street
9	Ward 5	Clark Avenue at Hilda Avenue
10	Ward 5	Clark Avenue at Yonge Street (York Region)

Table 1

ARTonBOXES program | 10-Year Implementation Strategy



Group of Seven REMIXED pilot

ANNUAL PROJECT TIMELINES

Artwork will be installed on traffic signal boxes in the late spring | early summer when the weather is typically most conducive to the application | curing of vinyl art wraps on the metal cabinet infrastructure.

CRITICAL PATH | YEAR ONE (2025) | the ART of HEALING

- January-September 2024 | Curatorial Plan, Locational Plan, Stakeholder Collaboration, Logistics
- October 2024-February 2025 | Call for Artist Submissions Opens in October and closes in February
- January 2025 | Procurement – Print and Fabrication Vendor
- March-April 2025 | Art Selection and Art Evaluation Feedback, Artist Agreements Executed
- April-May 2025 | Art Design Refinement and Final Print-Ready Submission of Selected Artwork
- May 2025 | Artist Fee Payments
- May-June 2025 | Art Installations (weather dependent)
- May-July 2025 | City of Vaughan ARTonBOXES | the ART of HEALING Communications Plan
- June 2025 | Annual Council Update: Year One | the ART of HEALING

Table 2

The Strategy aligns with a transformative, ambitious, and purpose-driven creative placemaking agenda focused on enhancing Vaughan’s public realm.

Implemented gradually over a 10-year period, the Strategy aims to achieve the following creative placemaking results:

- Transform 75-100 traffic signal boxes into extraordinary works of art
- Build assets in the Civic Public Art Collection
- Target the engagement of 1000 artists from Vaughan, York Region, and the GTA
- Enhance the creative urban character of Vaughan neighborhoods and districts across all five wards
- Interpret Vaughan’s unique identity, core values, and socio-economic vitality annually through 10 curated themes
- Animate and beautify streetscapes to engage pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists
- Deter tagging vandalism on capital infrastructure through proven art intervention
- Nurture a sense of place, community, and civic pride

- Maximize opportunities to engage emerging and established artists of all skills, experience, and backgrounds by embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Mentor emerging resident artists to facilitate public art learning
- Cultivate creative partnerships with York Region and the arts community
- Respect the legacy of Vaughan's past in heritage districts and profile the City's commitment to smart city innovation
- Install art strategically along streetscapes to create distinctive neighborhood environments, serve as memorable landmarks, and enhance wayfinding
- Generate public art awareness by celebrating artistic excellence and spotlighting resident talent
- Position Vaughan at the vanguard in York Region for developing and implementing a signature traffic box art wrapping program

Financial Impact.

The Public Art Reserve will fund the city led ARTonBOXES program as a long-term capital initiative. The program will be implemented annually over the course of 10 years, commencing with the first installation in 2025 and ending in 2034. The Economic Development Department will administer program expenditures.

A capital project (ED-9607-25) in the amount of \$323,877 has been submitted for the implementation of the 10-Year ARTonBOXES program under the Public Art Reserve. In summary, an annual budget of \$25,000 plus 5% annually to accommodate inflation is earmarked to deliver 10 art installations per year through this program. Annual expenses will include art fabrication and installation, artist fees, art maintenance contingency, jury panel honoraria, and social media.

To cover the operating cost of 2025-2034 program support staff, Economic Development will submit a future ARR through the City's budget process.

Operational Impact

Core Program Team

The development of the Strategy, administered under the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program was led by the cross-departmental core team of Economic Development and Transportation and Fleet Management Services. The core team conducted broad cross-departmental and external stakeholder consultations to consider multiple perspectives from subject matter experts, to ensure operational fluidity and best practices.

Internal Cross-Departmental Consultation

The core program team consulted with internal stakeholder departments, including, but not limited to: Urban Design, VMC Program, Procurement, Infrastructure Delivery, Corporate and Strategic Communications, Finance, Legal, and Diversity and Inclusion.

External Collaboration

Beyond the City's key partnership with York Region, other collaborations may evolve annually depending on thematic content and include representation from cultural | heritage groups, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, art academia, BIAs, artists, and residents. The City is open to entertaining collaborations with members of the arts community to help advance the goals and objectives of the ARTonBOXES program.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

York Region is a major ARTonBOXES program stakeholder and collaborator supporting the wrapping of Regional traffic signal cabinets in Vaughan. City staff consulted with the Region and secured endorsement in principle for wrapping an extensive inventory of up to 60 targeted regional boxes located at key intersections across Vaughan during the program's ten-year implementation period. Wrapping will be conducted at the cost of the City and in accordance with specific public realm guidelines that align with those prescribed for the ARTonBOXES program. The Region is supportive of wrapping traffic signal boxes at regional intersections in local municipalities as per their 2017 report on traffic signal wraps. A formal approval process has not been established, but the City will ensure the Region confirms inventoried locations earmarked for wrapping each year to ascertain municipal programming priorities align with regional capital project schedules and formal agreement protocols.

Conclusion

Building on the success of the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project, the Strategy provides a comprehensive working blueprint to guide the delivery of a signature creative placemaking initiative through the Vaughan City-Wide Art Program. The Strategy aims to integrate 75-100 prominently located art installations into the fabric of everyday experiences to engage residents and visitors. Adopting this long-term transformational Strategy to animate capital infrastructure through a proven art intervention will contribute significantly to shaping the creative urban character of Vaughan's neighborhoods, beautifying city streetscapes, and discouraging "tagging" vandalism and help position Vaughan at the vanguard of public art in York Region.

For more information, please contact:

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Attachments

1. ARTonBOXES Program 10-Year Implementation Strategy

Prepared by

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Approved by



Zoran Postic,
Deputy City Manager, Public Works

Approved by



Nick Spensieri, City Manager