

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, March 8, 2022

WARD(S): 4

TITLE: VMC ASSEMBLY PARK OUTDOOR GALLERY PUBLIC ART
PLAN UPDATE

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on the status of the Assembly Park Public Art Plan to develop an Outdoor Gallery Program featuring temporary Public Art on private land located west of 80 Interchange Way in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (“VMC”), following approval of the minor revision Site Development File DA.21.019 in October of 2021, as approved via delegated authority.

Report Highlights

- Temporary public art which invites community gatherings and expresses the progressive spirit of growth and diversity of the city is a targeted result of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.
- Recommendations 15, 17 and 19 of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework support developing programs for temporary Public Art installations, encouraging programming opportunities that can be implemented on vacant and underutilized lands in the VMC and establishing a strong placemaking identity which embodies the values and aspirations of the VMC.
- QuadReal Property Group filed a minor revision Site Development Application DA.21.019 with the City of Vaughan on April 16, 2021 to facilitate the development of the temporary activation space known as “Assembly Park”, located on private land west of 80 Interchange Way in the VMC.

Report Highlights continued

- The proposal for the temporary outdoor community activation space approved via delegated authority in October 2021, prescribed modifying a large area of existing surface parking by creating a prominent Public Art feature (later named the Outdoor Gallery Program), utilizing shipping containers to anchor landscaped features and animate a section of the VMC that is currently vacant and underutilized.
- QuadReal proposed this Outdoor Gallery as a privately funded discretionary public realm enhancement - one not required as a Public Art Contribution through development review and approval.
- On January 27, 2022 the VMC Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Public Art Plan was presented to the Vaughan Design Review Panel, resulting in QuadReal's submission of a revised Plan in February 2022, respectfully integrating the Panel's insightful recommendations for enhancement.

Recommendations

1. That this report be received for information.

Background

Vaughan is a creative urban city committed to integrating art into its public realm – a city where Public Art is accessible to all people and valued as a placemaking catalyst for conveying Vaughan's unique identity and economic vitality. The role and value of Public Art as a vital vehicle for transforming the VMC through the creative use of art and design strategies recurs as a fundamental theme in a number of Council endorsed documents, including: the VMC Secondary Plan, VMC Streetscape and Open Space Plan, VMC Urban Design Guidelines, Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and VMC Culture and Public Art Framework.

On June 7, 2016, Item 6, Report No. 26, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), was adopted without amendment by Council, which included recommendations that staff work with the development community on advancing the integration of Public Art into development proposals where possible or appropriate.

In the spirit of transformation and fostering community engagement, QuadReal Property Group filed a minor revision Site Development Application DA.21.019 with the City of Vaughan on April 16, 2021 to facilitate the development of the temporary activation space known as "Assembly Park" located on private land adjacent to the north-south/commercial movement along Commerce Street and the east-west recreational/leisure movement along the future Doughton Road extension in the VMC.

The proposal for the temporary activation space, approved in October 2021 via delegated approval authority, prescribed modifying the large areas of existing surface parking by integrating landscaped features with community and outdoor activation space, including Public Art, to animate a significant section of the VMC currently vacant and underutilized. As noted in their Application, “it is intended to provide an interim, privately owned, publicly accessible space within the southwest quadrant of the VMC, and will include a new, temporary Community Hub, that will renovate and adaptively reuse a vacant commercial space.”

A master plan for Public Art programming within QuadReal’s broader Placemaking Strategy for Assembly Park articulated “a need to support the creation, presentation and commission of high-calibre, meaningful, contemporary Public Art within the site”. QuadReal engaged ART+PUBLIC UnLtd to develop a Public Art Plan for Assembly Park and manage its implementation, resulting in the proposal of an Outdoor Gallery Program. This Program is anchored by the strategic configuration of 13 shipping containers – displaying a series of art applications on their structural facades – complemented by plantings and garden beds to define the spatial footprint and create opportunities for inspiring Public Art within the temporary activation space.

Dedicated advocates of Public Art in placemaking, QuadReal Property Group proposed this project as a fully funded discretionary public realm enhancement - one not required as a Public Art Contribution through development review and approval. The Public Art Plan for this Outdoor Gallery Program, coupled with robust activation programming, was developed to provide meaningful opportunities to advance placemaking aspirations for the VMC by creatively animating the existing urban design context.

A budget of \$273,280 was identified for the Outdoor Gallery Program at Assembly Park. The Public Art Plan outlines the costs related to developing and implementing the Outdoor Gallery Program, including art commissioning, fabrication, installation, promotion, maintenance and project administration. The Owner will own and maintain the Public Art.

Conforming to the guiding principles identified in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and the recommendations outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework, QuadReal Property Group’s Public Art Plan has been subject to on-going evaluation by staff and the Vaughan Design Review Panel for its appropriateness for display in the public realm. As art commissioning and installation evolves, City staff will continue to liaise with QuadReal and their Public Art consultant to facilitate the execution of their Public Art Plan.

Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program Project Schedule:

- December 2021 – Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program Public Art Plan submitted to City of Vaughan
- January 2022 – Vaughan Design Review Panel Presentation and Assessment
- February 2022 – Revised Public Art Plan Submitted with DRP Recommendations
- March 2022 – Committee of the Whole Report
- March 2022 – Artist Call for Submissions
- Q2 2022 – Artist Selection, Curatorial Oversight and Contracting
- Q2 2022 – Art Production
- Q2-Q3 2022 – Art Installation: Sites 1, 2, 4
- Q2 2030-2032 –Rotating Installations: changing every two years: Site 3

Previous Reports/Authority

[Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program](#)

[VMC Culture & Public Art Framework](#)

Analysis and Options

Realizing the vision of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework

The realization of the VMC's vision as a vibrant downtown with exciting activities, social capital and cultural events is predicated on collective efforts in creating a sense of 'place'. Culture and Public Art initiatives contribute to that sense of place, by creating memories and experiences that draw people to use and frequent the VMC on a 24/7 basis versus just passing through the area.

Public Art plays many roles in the urban context. As outlined in the City-Wide Public Art Program, some of its key roles include:

- Placemaking - creating and enhancing public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being
- Gateway Marker - an entrance feature that signifies a boundary and assists with wayfinding
- Landmark - an easily recognized feature in the cityscape that contributes to placemaking and orientation
- Local Focal Point – a centre for activity or attention
- Wayfinding - visuals used to convey location and directions
- Interpretation - a work of art that illuminates the character or history of its context
- Activation and Animation - a work of art that energizes a space, can be interacted with and/or can move independently

Assembly Park Site Context and Placemaking Strategy

The Assembly Park site sits west of 80 Interchange Way in the VMC. This temporary, transitional site intends to create an engaging public space with garden beds, plantings and Public Art installed in an Outdoor Gallery for the community to “assemble, gather and connect” for eight to ten years prior to being transformed into future developments.



Figure 1-Site Location within a conceptual rendering of the VMC developments under review

The Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program fits into the broader Placemaking Strategy for Assembly Park, comprising programming and events at three cohesive and mutually supporting activation sites led by QuadReal Property Group:

- **The Gardens** are 1.47 acres of open space, walkways, planting beds, community gardens, and home to the Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program. As a natural, multi-purpose gathering space for communal dining, herb, flower and vegetable gardens, classes and picnics, the Gardens are the green backyard of Assembly Park.
- **The Plaza** is Assembly Park's central public space, spanning approximately one acre. It is a blank canvas for a multitude of diverse potential uses such as farmers markets, food trucks, exhibitions, cultural events, film screenings, games and community gatherings.

- **The Studios** at Assembly Park is a 10,700 square foot multi-use art studio, gallery, event and residency space, classroom, destination, and multi-disciplinary celebration of creativity. This programmable indoor community space supports local artists and talent in the Vaughan and York Region community.

Designed to inspire repeat public visitation locally and regionally, multi-disciplinary programming is scheduled year-round through a combination of direct and community partnering events that will complement and highlight the Outdoor Gallery Program. Programming to date includes the Vaughan Film Festival, the Inaugural Studio Art Show, Screamers Haunted House and Holiday of Lights.

Outdoor Gallery Public Art Locations and Commissions

The following criteria was considered for locating Public Art in the Outdoor Gallery:

- high visibility
- public accessibility
- supports broader public realm initiatives and QuadReal's placemaking objectives
- provides opportunities for unique art that conveys a distinctive neighborhood feel

Four main locations were identified to strategically position the 13 shipping containers featuring nine artist commissions:

1. Entry and Communal Gathering –one regional artist | art fixed for eight-ten years
2. The Gardens and Passage – two regional or GTA artists | art fixed for eight-ten years
3. Interactive Community Wall - one artist (no geographic boundaries) | a rotating art commission installed every two years until 2030-2032
4. Art Alley - five local, regional or GTAH artists | art fixed for eight to ten years

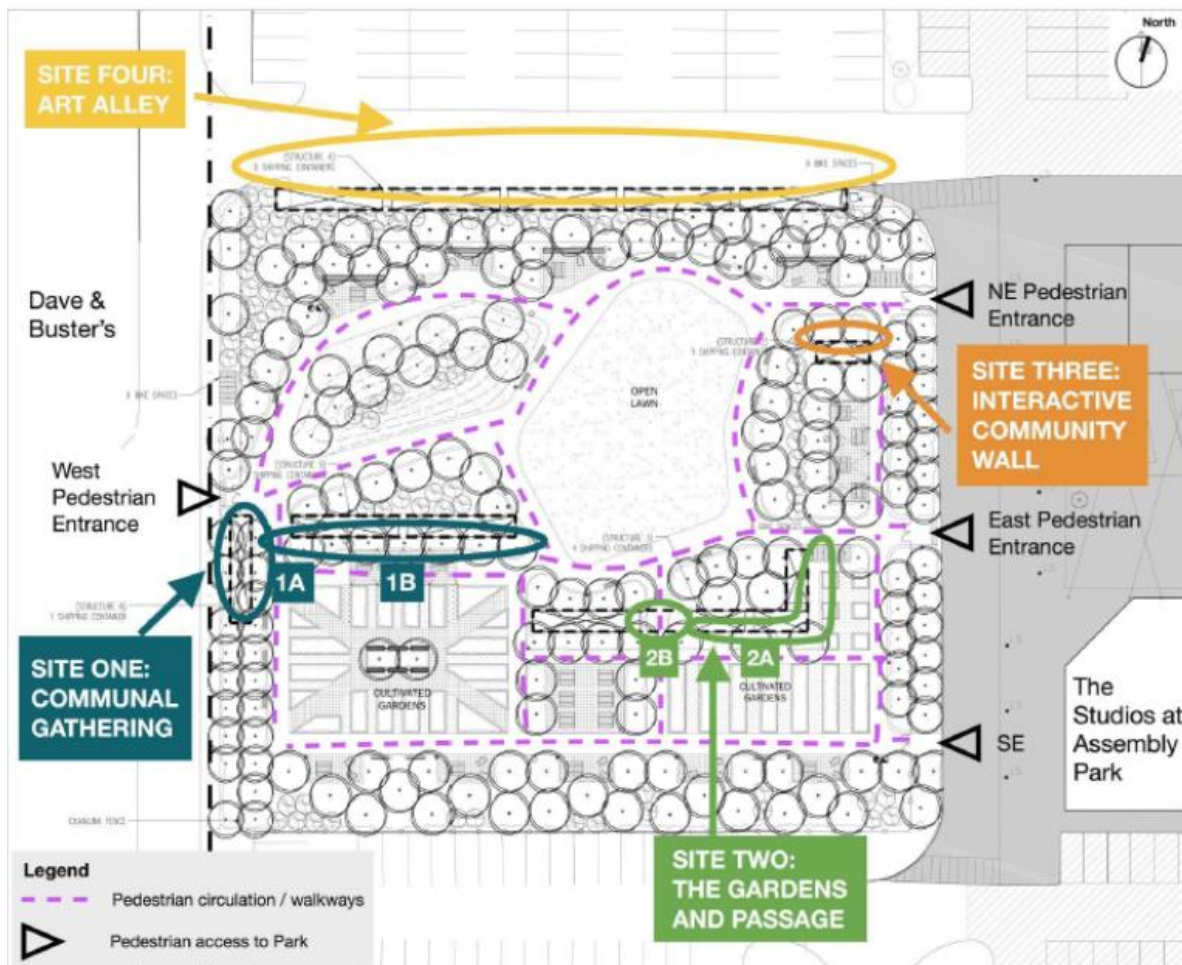


Figure 2 -Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program, Public Art commission sites

Across these four locations comprising the Outdoor Gallery, the shipping container facades will serve as blank canvases for artwork to be applied through various methods: paint applied directly to the corrugated container facades, art media reproduced on paneling then affixed to container facades, and panels produced as custom 2-D cut outs affixed to container facades. The Public Art Plan identifies a need for consistency in materiality, aesthetic considerations and approaches to deliver “a public art experience that is harmonious and of quality”, through curated commissions that “encourage interpretive storytelling, sharing a narrative of place from an artist’s perspective”. A modern aesthetic is envisioned with inclusive thematic that “explore the thematic connections of the urban, built environment and its connection to nature as well as concepts around gathering, community connection and transition”.

Nine artists will be selected for the initial Outdoor Gallery installations, three by direct commission and six through an open call (with the artists for subsequent Community

Wall, installations commissioned over the next eight to ten years). The inclusive open call will strongly encourage artists to apply who identify as Indigenous, Black, people of colour, women, 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and members of other marginalized communities. Networking and career ladder opportunities will provide informal mentorship opportunities, pairing established and emerging artists to work alongside each other; and where possible, facilitate connections between local youth and commissioned artists.

On January 27, 2022 the VMC Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Public Art Plan was presented to the Vaughan Design Review Panel. The Panel was supportive of the zoned installation approach curated for the four Public Art sites through its harmonious aesthetic and qualitative art commissioning program; however, they offered some insightful recommendations. The Panel suggested the Public Art Plan elaborate on QuadReal's placemaking strategy for Assembly Park, aligning the implementation of the broader existing, planned and potential community programming to communicate the robust roster of cross-disciplinary activations that will provide complementary context and support for inspiring people to gather in the space to engage with the Public Art and encourage repeat visitation. They proposed integrating "Outdoor Gallery" into the Program name, branded and linked with the nearby Assembly Park Studios activation site, to convey the visual art gallery programming context both indoors and outdoors. It was suggested the Plan expand on its methodological approach for encouraging interpretive storytelling to share the VMC-centric narrative. The Panel also recommended the Plan make accommodation for considering further enhancements to mitigate environmental conditions such as wind, noise, an immature tree canopy and both sun and heat. Taking the Panel's constructive feedback into serious consideration, QuadReal submitted a revised Public Art Plan, respectfully integrating the Panel's perceptive recommendations.

The VMC Secondary Plan identifies Public Art as "an important element in the VMC's public realm, adding culture, beauty and interest to the streetscapes" (s.4.4.8). Recommendations 15, 17 and 19 of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework speak specifically to developing a program for temporary Public Art installations, encouraging programming opportunities that can be implemented on vacant and under-utilized lands in the VMC and establishing a strong place identity which embodies the values and aspirations of the VMC.

The Public Art Plan developed for the Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program contributes to public awareness of the role and value of Public Art and Vaughan's City-Wide Public Art Program in placemaking and city building as a catalyst for contributing to Vaughan's authentic urban character and economic vitality. It reinforces the

expansive movement of Public Art that is increasingly animating downtown Vaughan, designed to captivate the interest of a diverse viewing audience travelling through the public realm of the VMC at the same time as setting the stage for creative, high profile Public Art opportunities for emerging and established visual artists from Vaughan, the GTA and beyond.

Financial Impact

There is no economic impact resulting from this report, as this project is funded entirely by the Owner as a discretionary public realm enhancement. The Public Art installation will be owned and maintained by the Owner.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The Region's policy for Economic Vitality recognizes culture as an important element in making the Region a place to work, live and play. Vibrant and healthy communities will attract and retain a skilled labour force.

The policies for An Urbanizing Region direct Regional Centres to recognize the importance of creating a sense of place and high-quality open spaces "that include meeting places and urban squares that incorporate art, culture and heritage" (s. 5.3.7).

The Region also sets the requirements for Regional Centre secondary plans to include policies addressing the need for Public Art to be incorporated into major Regional and City buildings and to encourage the inclusion of public art in significant private sector developments.

Conclusion

The Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program Public Art Plan for developing an engaging, inclusive and accessible Public Art component to be located west of 80 Interchange Way in the VMC, aligns with the principles identified in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program, the recommendations outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework and urban design objectives for the VMC. It supports developing programs for temporary Public Art installations, encouraging programming opportunities that can be implemented on vacant and under-utilized lands and establishing a strong place identity which embodies the values and aspirations of the VMC. The Plan advances placemaking aspirations for the VMC, laying the groundwork for realizing a meaningful Public Art program to creatively animate the uniqueness of the existing urban design context through the narrative of transformation and community connection.

Conforming to the guiding principles identified in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and the recommendations outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework, QuadReal Property Group's Public Art Plan is subject to on-going evaluation by staff and the recommendations of the Vaughan Design Review Panel for its appropriateness for display in the public realm. City staff will continue to liaise with the QuadReal and their Public Art consultant to facilitate the execution of their Public Art Plan.

For more information, please contact: Sharon Gaum-Kuchar, Senior Art Curator, extension 8088

Attachments

1. Assembly Park Outdoor Gallery Program Public Art Plan

Prepared by

Sharon Gaum-Kuchar, Senior Art Curator and Planner, ext. 8088
Gaston Soucy, Project Manager – Planning, VMC, ext. 8266

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager