

## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ECONOMIC INITIATIVES (SEI) – 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

**FROM:**

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

**ACTION:** INFORMATION

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**Purpose**

To provide an update on key accomplishments from the programs and initiatives undertaken by Economic Development's Strategic Economic Initiatives unit in 2023.

**Report Highlights**

- The Economic Development Department's Strategic Economic Initiatives (SEI) unit undertakes key strategic projects that establish economic assets upon which our businesses and talent grow.
- In 2023, the SEI unit advanced and expanded the scope of key projects in five areas: Smart Cities Development, Public Art and Art Development, Municipal Partnerships, Economic Asset Development (i.e., Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct) and Strategic Economic Relations and Intergovernmental Relations.
- These projects aim to promote the growth of the City's business community and attract businesses and talent to Vaughan.
- The SEI Year in Review report provides a snapshot of upcoming transformative, ambitious, and sustainable and purpose-driven projects that will catalyze stakeholders, talent, and assets to drive creative placemaking.

**Recommendation**

1. THAT the Economic Development Strategic Economic Initiatives - 2023 Year in Review report be received for information.

## **Background**

***The Strategic Economic Initiatives unit within Economic Development catalyzes stakeholders, talent, and assets to drive creative placemaking.***

The Economic Development Department's Strategic Economic Initiatives (SEI) unit undertakes key strategic projects that establish economic assets. These projects aim to promote the growth of the City's business community and attract businesses and talent to Vaughan. The SEI unit strives to transform placemaking by developing ambitious, sustainable, and purpose-driven projects that better the community.



Within the SEI unit, staff are undertaking projects in the following areas:

1. Smart Cities development
2. Public Art and Art development
3. Municipal Partnerships
4. Economic Asset Development (i.e., Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct)
5. Strategic Economic Relations and Intergovernmental Relations

The 2023 SEI Year in Review will highlight key projects, initiatives, programs, and accomplishments for the past year. It recognizes Economic Development staff, partners, and community stakeholders for their vital role in advancing economic opportunities, attracting new investments, and enabling a climate for businesses to grow, prosper and create jobs.

**Previous Reports/Authority**

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of October 2, 2019 \(Item 1, Report No. 27 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021 \(Item 19, Report No. 32 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 28, 2022 \(Item 32, Report No. 30 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of February 22, 2023 \(Item 9, Report No. 9 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

**Analysis and Options**

In 2023, the Strategic Economic Initiatives Unit has made progress in Smart Cities Development, Public Art and Art Development, Municipal Partnerships, Economic Asset Development, Strategic Economic Relations, and Intergovernmental Relations.

Some highlights from 2023 include:

<b>2023 Key Accomplishments</b>	
Smart Cities Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched OVIN Demonstration Zone, a testbed for emerging mobility solutions in Vaughan, in partnership with City of Markham and secured \$2.5M grant funding from Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN).</li> <li>• Economic Development staff participated in Smart Cities Connect Conference and Expo in Denver, Colorado, in May 2023 to raise the profile of Vaughan’s economy and to promote Vaughan’s strategic city-building projects (Smart City and Next Generation Health and Healthcare delivery) on a world stage.</li> <li>• Received endorsement from the Council-led Accessibility Advisory Committee on CNIB pilot to make city facilities accessible to the visually impaired.</li> <li>• OVIN Demonstration Zone won the 2023 Community Economic Development – Urban award from the Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Received Council approval in the 2024 budget to move forward with a City app.</li> </ul>
Public Art and Art Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In VMC North, a substantial Public Art Plan was developed and approved for implementing a \$2,185,000 program of contemporary art expression (including a monumental gateway feature) in three key locations at 7800 Jane Street, designed to animate the urban design context and advance creative placemaking conceptually aligned with the natural forms of Edgeley Pond and Park and the Black Creek, pre-colonial histories of Indigenous Peoples, early days of agriculture and industry, or post-war boom in population growth and diversity.</li> <li>Curated and installed the exhibition, <i>Selections from the Corporate Art Collection</i> on the SLATE atrium art gallery at Vaughan City Hall, profiling permanent acquisitions housed as fine art assets in the Art Integration Collection.</li> <li>Launched the Group of Seven REMIXED pilot for the ARTonBOXES traffic signal box program, designed to enhance Vaughan’s public realm, unveiling 12 original works of art capturing the spirit of the Canadian Landscape in high-density traffic areas across all five wards of the City; AND in tandem, developed the ARTonBOXES 10-Year Implementation Strategy, approved by Council, for delivering a signature creative placemaking initiative endorsed by York Region.</li> </ul>
Municipal Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secured \$71 million in grant revenue to offset major capital and operating expenses and alleviate pressure on the tax base, including \$59 million from the Housing Accelerator Fund (the single largest amount of government funding secured in the municipalities’ history).</li> <li>Phase 2 of the Digital Billboard Revenue Project was approved for construction, adding 8 locations to the inventory, and expanding the City’s communication network and revenue share.</li> <li>Grow with Vaughan horticulture sponsorship program won the Building Initiatives Award in the 2023 Community Economic Development –</li> </ul>

	<p>Urban category from the Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO).</p>
<p>Economic Asset Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the ventureLAB Hardware Catalyst Initiative (HCI) MedTech lab opening in Vaughan.</li> <li>• Entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the McMichael Art Collection and Vaughan International Film Festival to advance the city's arts, culture and creative industries and bring a new Creative Industries Centre of Excellence to life.</li> <li>• Participated in the Collision Conference in Toronto to raise the profile of Vaughan's economy among global audiences and generate trade opportunities and investment leads across the city's key sectors.</li> <li>• Re-launched the Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct Advisory Task Force.</li> <li>• York University hosted the first annual Community Health Lecture at Vaughan City Hall.</li> </ul>
<p>Strategic Economic Relations and Intergovernmental Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaughan Council endorsed a Strategic Intergovernmental Relations Framework to advance Council-approved initiatives, including advocacy efforts with other government levels led by the Head of Council. This same staff report also outlined the draft Mandate and Terms of Reference for establishing an Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee to support these efforts by further engaging Members of Council and key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Held the inaugural meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee.</li> <li>• Organized and welcomed the Mayor of Tropea, Italy with an official meeting with the Mayor and Members of Council.</li> <li>• Participated in the CIJA antisemitism conference in Ottawa, ON.</li> </ul>

## 2024 Look Ahead

The SEI unit is dedicated to advancing economic opportunities, creating a climate for job creation, and increasing local investments through key projects and initiatives. SEI unit has several standout projects and initiatives scheduled for 2024 and beyond.

2024 Key Activities	
Smart Cities Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch a two-year accessibility technology pilot to help the visually impaired or blind navigate independently in select City facilities, in partnership with the Office of the Chief Human Resource Officer and Facility Management</li> <li>• Deliver the OVIN Demonstration Zone program in partnership with Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management and the City of Markham.</li> </ul>
Public Art and Art Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milestones are advancing for more than a dozen high-profile public art projects positioned to animate the personality of the VMC and districts City-wide during the 2022-2026 Term of Council.</li> <li>• In VMC North, Cortel Group’s landmark three-dimensional, multi-media public art sculpture, “Edgeley Pond Fathom”, will be installed and unveiled this summer on the site of EXPO City CG Tower, overlooking Edgeley Pond &amp; Park, alluding to the previous industrial life of the area through a transformation-themed storyline paying homage to the landscape, history of the land and the story of Black Creek.</li> <li>• In Thornhill at Bathurst and Beverley Glen, the Daniels BAIF multi-media sculptural installation series, “Circle of Life” is slated for completion this summer, unveiling two components of the indigenous-themed artwork referencing the buried rivers and waterways historically used by Indigenous peoples as navigational passages.</li> <li>• The first ARTonBOXES program Call for Artist Submissions will be posted this fall, to adjudicate works designed to animate the curated theme dedicated to the “ART of HEALING” – an inspired intersection of art meeting health – where art plays centre stage in supporting our physical, mental, and social</li> </ul>

	well-being, for installation on 10 traffic signal boxes City-wide in the spring of 2025.
Municipal Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancing Phase 2 and 3 of the Digital Billboard Revenue programs.</li> <li>• Continue to identify, circulate, and apply for eligible grant opportunities city-wide including the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund for up to \$35 million for stormwater redevelopment in the VMC.</li> <li>• Launch a Green Guardians Sponsorship and Donation Program in partnership with Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations.</li> </ul>
Economic Asset Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development department to support ongoing work to develop North Maple Regional Park into a world-class destination for mixed-use sport, recreation, wellness, education, and culture.</li> <li>• Formalizing a partnership with the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the Vaughan International Film Festival to advance a Creative Industries Centre of Excellence in Vaughan.</li> </ul>
Strategic Economic Relations and Intergovernmental Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue providing support to the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.</li> <li>• Execute the City of Vaughan MP/MPP Breakfast.</li> <li>• Build out an international relations plan with gateway economies.</li> <li>• This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Planning for government-to-government trade mission meetings for Chicago Trade Mission, Italy Trade Mission, and India Trade Mission.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to identify international associations (e.g., Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce) and Counsel General offices to liaise with.</li> <li>• Renewal of relevant international economic and cultural partnerships.</li> </ul>

**Financial Impact**

N/A

## **Operational Impact**

All necessary internal departments related to each program were consulted and provided with an opportunity to contribute to the success of the SEI business unit in Economic Development.

Externally, several partners impact the operations of various projects including:

- **Smart City:** City of Markham, Ontario Centre for Innovation, York Region, CNIB.
- **Public Art:** York Catholic and York District School Boards, Cortel Group, Daniels BAIF.
- **Municipal Partnerships:** Program Sponsors, government granting bodies, advertisers and vendors.
- **Economic Asset Development:** McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Vaughan International Film Festival, York University, Mackenzie Health.
- **Strategic Economic Relations and Intergovernmental Relations:** Vaughan MP/MPPs, consulates and chamber of commerce.

## **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The Economic Development Strategic Economic Initiatives - 2023 Year in Review complements communications and outreach strategies to help raise the profile of Vaughan's economy.

A copy of the publication will be uploaded on [www.vaughanbusiness.ca](http://www.vaughanbusiness.ca) and distributed to critical local/regional partners and stakeholders, such as York Region Economic Development, the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, other Chambers of Commerce, consuls in the Ontario and Canadian marketplaces, ministries, local and regional stakeholders, and prospective business relocation opportunities. Sharing this publication with key stakeholders will help raise the City's profile, attract new partners and investments, and support the expansion of the local business community.

## **Conclusion**

The City of Vaughan continues to be a city in demand for both residents and businesses to invest in and grow. In 2023, the SEI unit accelerated and expanded the scope of key projects to help build Vaughan's economic resilience.

**For more information,** please contact Raphael Costa, Director, Economic Development, ext. 8891.



## **Attachment**

1. 2023 SEI YEAR IN REVIEW INFOGRAPHIC.

### **Prepared by**

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### **Approved by**

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

Nick Spensieri, City Manager