

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 8, 2025

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ECONOMIC INITIATIVES - 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

FROM:

Michael Genova, Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on key accomplishments from the programs and initiatives undertaken by Economic Development's Strategic Economic Initiatives unit in 2024.

Report Highlights

- The Strategic Economic Initiatives unit within Economic Development leverages partnerships with regional stakeholders, the capacity of Vaughan's local talent, and the development of City-owned assets to drive creative placemaking and economic opportunity in Vaughan.
- In 2024, the Strategic Economic Initiatives unit advanced and expanded the scope of key projects in four areas: Smart Cities Development, Public Art and Art Development, Municipal Partnerships, and Economic Asset Development.
- In 2025, the Strategic Economic Initiatives unit will advance major initiatives, including the completion of a business and operational plan for the new Performing and Cultural Arts Centre, expansion of the OVIN Demonstration Zone, installation of the latest series of the ARTonBoxes program, and advancement of the Phase 2 and 3 of the Digital Billboard Revenue program.

Recommendation

1. THAT the Economic Development Strategic Economic Initiatives - 2024 Year in Review report be received for information.

Background

The Strategic Economic Initiatives unit within Economic Development leverages partnerships with regional stakeholders, the capacity of Vaughan's local talent, and the development of City-owned assets to drive creative placemaking and economic opportunity in Vaughan.

The Economic Development Department's Strategic Economic Initiatives 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 Strategic Economic Initiatives unit strives to advance economic transformation and creative placemaking by developing ambitious, sustainable, and purpose-driven projects that better the community.



Within the Strategic Economic Initiatives 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)

The 2024 Strategic Economic Initiatives unit Year in Review highlights key projects, initiatives, programs, and accomplishments from the past year. It recognizes Economic Development staff, partners, and community stakeholders for their vital role in advancing creative placemaking, catalyzing economic opportunity, 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 2024, the Strategic Economic Initiatives unit has made progress in Smart Cities Development, Public Art and Art Development, Municipal Partnerships, and Economic Asset Development.

Some highlights from 2024 include:

2024 Key Accomplishments	
Smart Cities Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched an innovative wayfinding pilot project in partnership with CNIB Access Labs to enhance accessibility for people who are blind or partially sighted, enabling them to navigate independently across six City facilities. The pilot leverages cutting-edge technology through the free GoodMaps Indoor Navigation app, which provides real-time guidance to individuals with vision-related disabilities and other diverse visitors, including those using wheelchairs or mobility devices.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched 5 demonstration projects across Vaughan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kevaras Autonomous Services introduced a robot system for inspecting cycle lanes and sidewalks. ○ Loop Parking tested a real-time parking detection solution at Millway Avenue and Highway 7 and along Woodbridge Avenue at Clarence Street in Vaughan. ○ Municipal Parking Services tested their solar-powered parking detection solution within a mixed residential and school area in Maple. ○ Msafe Solutions Inc. utilized Artificial Intelligence-powered analysis and camera detection to monitor travel patterns and behaviours at Martin Grove Road and Woodbridge Avenue. ○ Kiwi Charge Inc. tested their portable electric vehicle charging solution at two community centres in Vaughan. • Hosted the inaugural cohort of Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN) Demonstration Zone project demonstrators to showcase their automotive and mobility technologies at the Automotive Industry Networking and Mobility Technology event. This event brought together more than 100 industry leaders, start-ups, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), government officials, and ecosystem partners to celebrate Vaughan as a hub for automotive and mobility innovation.
Public Art and Art Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In VMC North, all large-scale structural components were installed for the VMC’s first landmark sculptural public artwork, “Fathom,” commissioned for EXPO City CG Tower 5 at Highway 7 and Jane, to facilitate integrating the final mechanical components to complete the piece in Q3 2025.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniels BAIF’s “Circle of Life” multi-media public art series was installed and unveiled at Beverley Glen and Bathurst in Thornhill, depicting an Indigenous narrative comprising two symbolic components celebrating the sustainable revitalization of life forces in this area: a large-scale stainless steel sculpture, representing a fast-flowing river replete with salmon swimming and jumping upstream, and a series of large river boulders inscribed with custom engravings of both Indigenous words and their English translations from the seven traditional teachings. • Building on the successful launch of the ARTonBOXES pilot as the blueprint to implement the signature creative placemaking program between 2025-2034, the Call for Artist Submissions Package and Locational Plan was finalized for the “ART of HEALING”, the curated theme for animating 10 new City-Wide traffic signal boxes with original works of art in Year One (2025) of the 10-Year Program that will realize 100 art wrap activations.
Municipal Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured \$36,481,527 in grant revenue to offset major capital and operating expenses and alleviate pressure on the tax base, including \$35 million from the Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund. • Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Digital Billboard Revenue Project were approved for construction, adding 8 locations of billboards and 15 community signs to the inventory and expanding the City’s communication network and revenue share. • The incoming Sponsorship and Donation Policy was approved, and approximately \$175,000 in sponsorship and \$295,000 of in-kind donations were accepted in 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Saputo Batting Cages ○ Grow with Vaughan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kidde Smoke Alarms Arena Logo sponsorship ○ Enbridge Smoke Alarm giveaway program ○ The HUB Starter Company Plus ○ BDC Small Business Week ○ Woodbrige Soccer Club bleacher donation ○ Wooden bird houses from Tommy Douglas Secondary School ○ Glove donation from Ronco for 20MMakeover ○ Animal Services donations of money, coupons and pet food/toys/blankets
<p>Economic Asset Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivered a successful Health Innovation mission to Chicago, in partnership with the VHCP partners, which resulted in the identification of best practices for developing health innovation ecosystems and connections with private sector, public sector, and governmental stakeholders that could contribute to the development of the VHCP. ● Participated in the 2024 MedTech conference to raise the profile of Vaughan’s emerging MedTech and life sciences sectors. ● York University received provincial support for a new School of Medicine, which will be located in the VHCP. ● Mayor Del Duca announced plans to develop a Performing and Cultural Arts Centre in the VMC and signed an MOU with QuadReal to advance the new centre. ● Attended Placemaking Week in Baltimore, MD and learned about global best practices for cultivating art, culture, and sense of place in the public realm.

In 2025, the Strategic Economic Initiatives unit will advance major initiatives, including the completion of a business and operational plan for the new Performing and Cultural Arts Centre, expansion of the OVIN Demonstration Zone, installation of the latest series of the ARTonBoxes program, and advancement of Phases 2 and 3 of the Digital Billboard Revenue program.

The Strategic Economic Initiatives unit has several standout projects and initiatives scheduled for 2025 and beyond:

2025 Key Activities	
Smart Cities Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the feasibility and deployment of new initiatives that enhance equity, accessibility, and inclusion in Vaughan's facilities and communications. These initiatives will improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities, engage underrepresented groups in Vaughan, and support local businesses through hyper-local advertising opportunities. • Continue to deliver the OVIN Demonstration Zone program and expand the scope of the complexity of the demonstration projects, in collaboration with Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management and the City of Markham.
Public Art and Art Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestones are advancing for more than a dozen high-profile public art projects positioned to animate the personality of the VMC and priority districts City-wide during the 2022-2026 Term of Council. • In VMC North, Cortel Group's landmark three-dimensional, multi-media public art sculpture, "Fathom", will be completely installed and unveiled in Q3 on the site of EXPO City CG Tower, overlooking Edgeley Pond & 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ART of HEALING installment series for the ARTonBOXES program will be installed and unveiled in Q2, profiling the animation of 10 traffic signal boxes City-wide, themed on the intersection of art meeting health – where art plays centre stage in supporting our physical, mental, and social well-being. • The Call for Artist Submissions for Year Two of the ARTonBOXES program will be posted in Q4, curated on the theme: PlanetEARTH Sustainable Ecosystems.
Municipal Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing Phase 2 and 3 of the Digital Billboard Revenue programs. • Continue to identify, circulate, and apply for eligible grant opportunities city-wide, including the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, for up to \$100M to enable housing development. • Generate alternative sources of revenue for the City through Sponsorships and Donations both through solicitation programs and by managing unsolicited proposals.
Economic Asset Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating the development of the York University School of Medicine medical and a long-term care home at the VHCP. • Exploring opportunities to attract new partners and develop additional innovation assets in the VHCP. • Completing a business and operational plan for the new Performing and Cultural Arts Centre. • 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.

Financial Impact

N/A

Operational Impact

All necessary internal departments involved in the delivery of each program and initiative 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 Region, Cortel Group, Daniels BAIF, OCAD University, York University
- **Municipal Partnerships:** Program Sponsors, government granting bodies, advertisers and vendors.
- **Economic Asset Development:** York University, Mackenzie Health, ventureLAB.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The Economic Development Strategic Economic Initiatives – 2024 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 and distributed to critical local and 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 public sector and non-profit partners, and prospective business investors. 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 2024, the Strategic Economic Initiatives unit accelerated and expanded the scope of key city-building projects to help build Vaughan's economic resilience and vitality.

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

Attachments

1. Strategic Economic Initiatives Year in Review Summary

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