

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Wednesday, May 12, 2021

WARD(S): 4

TITLE: TEMPORARY PUBLIC ART MURAL AT THE VAUGHAN
METROPOLITAN CENTRE

FROM:

Jim Harnum, City Manager

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on the status of SmartCentres' commissioning of a temporary Public Art mural to be painted along the entire façade of a large vacant retail building located south of Portage Parkway, between Edgeley Boulevard and Buttermilk Avenue at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC).

Report Highlights

- 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.
- On June 7, 2016, Council approved the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework.
- 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 first 5-year phase of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.
- Recommendations 15 and 17 of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework are to support the delivery of temporary cultural installations / exhibitions and programming, and to develop a program for temporary public art installations in the downtown.

Report Highlights Continued

- SmartCentres proposes transforming the façade (and potentially the roof top) of a large vacant retail building located in the heart of future redevelopment south of Portage Parkway, between Edgeley Boulevard and Buttermilk Avenue at the VMC with a monumental mural as a temporary Public Art installation.
- A complementary site activation plan proposes a number of creative activations for the adjacent surface parking lot, including a drive-in theatre screen with parking, art walk, art installation, food truck area and art maze to be executed in compliance with responsible social distancing.
- SmartCentres hired LNDMRK, respected art integration and activation specialists and creators of Montreal's renowned MURAL Festival to implement the vision and artistic production for the mural project as a credible and innovative Public Art installation that fosters community, national and international engagement and recognition.
- SmartCentres proposed this progressive project as a privately funded discretionary public realm enhancement - one not required as a Public Art Contribution through development review and approval.

Recommendation

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; and that staff pursue and seek partnerships for integrating Public Art installations within the Mobility Hub as quick win placemaking opportunities.

In the spirit of transformation, this June, SmartCentres envisions revitalizing the façade (and potentially the roof top) of a large vacant retail building located in the heart of future redevelopment south of Portage Parkway, between Edgeley Boulevard and Buttermilk Avenue at the VMC with a monumental mural as a vibrant temporary Public Art installation. The mural will feature the work of one renowned artist that wraps around all four faces of the vacant retail building. On a broader programming scale, a complementary site activation plan also proposes a number of creative activations on the adjacent surface parking lot, including a drive-in theatre screen with parking, art walk, art installation, food truck area and art maze to be executed in compliance with responsible social distancing.

Dedicated advocates of Public Art in placemaking, SmartCentres proposed this progressive project as a fully funded discretionary public realm enhancement - one not required as a Public Art Contribution through development review and approval. SmartCentres developed the Public Art Plan for this mural installation coupled with complementary activation programming as a meaningful opportunity to advance placemaking aspirations for the VMC by creatively animating the existing urban design context.

SmartCentres hired LNDMRK, respected art integration and activation specialists and creators of Montreal's renowned MURAL Festival to implement the vision and artistic production for the mural project as a credible and innovative Public Art installation that fosters community, national and international engagement and recognition. A strategic communications plan is intended to ensure the installation is well-positioned across social platforms.

Conforming to the principles identified in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and the recommendations outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework, SmartCentres' Public Art proposal is subject to on-going evaluation by staff and the Vaughan Design Review Panel for its appropriateness for display in the public realm. As planning culminates and the implementation details are finalized, including artist commissioning, art installation and communications, City staff continues to liaise with SmartCentres and LNDMRK to advance the project with due diligence.

Critical Path for Mural Installation:

April 21, 2021 – SmartCentres' Public Art Plan submitted to City of Vaughan

April 29, 2021 – Design Review Panel Assessment

April 30, 2021 – Artist Selection

April 30-May 12, 2021 – Art Design Refinement

May 12, 2021 – Production Timeline Finalized

June 2021 (tbd) – Art Installation

From a planning perspective, this proposal represents a minor site alteration to the building façade (and potentially the rooftop) to facilitate the temporary public art mural program and will be processed through a minor Site Development Application, subject to delegated approval authority to the satisfaction of the City/VMC Program.

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.

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
- 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

The prominent siting of this large scale temporary mural installation wrapping around the entire façade of the vacant retail building (and potentially the roof top) is strategically positioned to animate the urban context. The bold vision and design concept is centered on animating the existing urban context with colour and vibrancy to infuse the emerging pristine built form with a dynamic liveliness to encourage placemaking experiences and anchor the complement of nearby site activations. This project achieves one of the quick win placemaking opportunities endorsed by Council in June 2016, as a temporary

public art installation implemented through the City-Wide Public Art Program and follows the design considerations in principle outlined for private developments outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework.

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 and 17 of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework speaks 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.

This temporary Public Art project 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 coming to 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 Vaughan and GTA visual artists.

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; and therefore, it is not aligned with securing a Public Art Contribution in development review and approval. The temporary Public Art mural 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 temporary art mural proposal for transforming the façade (and potentially the roof top) of a large vacant retail building located in the heart of future redevelopment south of Portage Parkway, between Edgeley Boulevard and Buttermilk Avenue at the VMC aligns with the placemaking vision for integrating Public Art in the new downtown. It supports Vaughan's position as a progressive leader to become the vanguard of Public Art in the Region and beyond.

Conforming to the principles identified in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program, and the recommendations outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework, SmartCentres' Public Art proposal is subject to on-going evaluation by staff and the Vaughan Design Review Panel for its appropriateness for display in the public realm. As planning culminates and the implementation details are finalized, including artist commissioning, art installation and communications, City staff continues to liaise with SmartCentres and LNDMRK to advance the project.

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

Attachments

1. Context and Location Plan
2. Proposed Site Plan
3. Proposed Building Elevations

Prepared by

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Approved by



Jim Harnum, City Manager

Reviewed by



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