

## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, June 8, 2021

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** TRAFFIC SIGNAL CABINET AND HYDRO BOX WRAPPING PROGRAM

**FROM:**

Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

**ACTION:** DECISION

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**Purpose**

To provide a plan for a City-wide traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping program and seek approval to implement a traffic signal cabinet pilot project to enhance the public realm.

**Report Highlights**

- At the February 17, 2021 Council meeting, staff were directed to provide information on an approach for implementing a City-wide traffic cabinet and hydro box wrap program, including potential costs.
- Council also directed staff to prepare a plan to launch a pilot program for wrapping appropriate utility boxes (up to five) in and around the Thornhill Village, with at least one of the boxes to include a rendering of the “Tangled Garden”, a painting by Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald or another painting by MacDonald or other members of the Group of Seven.
- A municipal scan of traffic cabinet initiatives was completed, including the City of Toronto, and the City of Markham.
- Alectra and the Region of York were consulted to determine the requirements for wrapping hydro boxes and Regional signal cabinets, respectively.
- Staff recommends adopting a pilot project to create original artwork designed for the traffic signal cabinets, including addressing the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill (SPOHT's) request to pay tribute to the work of JEH MacDonald and other members of the Group of Seven in the implementation.

## **Report Highlights continued**

- A cross-disciplinary team including Economic and Cultural Development, Urban Design, Finance, and Transportation and Fleet Management Services will coordinate to develop a future multi-phased City-wide program to guide the implementation of a comprehensive City-wide traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping program. This work will be in collaboration with the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and other members of the visual art community and will be in alignment with city planning and the guiding principles of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.

## **Recommendations**

1. That staff be directed to develop and launch a traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping pilot project;
2. That the Mayor and the City Clerk be authorized to execute agreements and any other documents necessary to facilitate the pilot project, in a form satisfactory to Legal Services;
3. That staff report back on the traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping pilot project implemented in Q2 2023, with a proposed framework for a future multi-phased program to guide the implementation of a comprehensive City-wide traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping program; and
4. That the City Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Region of York.

## **Background**

**Council has directed staff to develop a plan for a City-wide traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping program and a pilot program, including costs and possible funding sources.**

At the February 17, 2021 Council meeting, staff were directed to provide information for a City-wide program for wrapping appropriate utility boxes. The plan to focus in and around the Thornhill Village, Kleinburg, Woodbridge and Maple heritage areas was discussed. The City of Vaughan has received support from the Region of York to wrap and/or paint Regional traffic signal cabinets, at the City's own cost subject to the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (Attachment 1).

Staff is also to provide a plan for a pilot program for wrapping appropriate utility boxes (up to five) in and around the Thornhill Village, with at least one of the boxes to include a rendering of the Group of Seven painting. As suggested by the SPOHT, one box shall include a rendering of the JEH MacDonald painting, the Tangled Garden, and additional artwork by MacDonald or other members of the Group of Seven. A project plan and

cost considerations shall be included in this program and presented to Council for consideration in June 2021.

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

Traffic Box Wrapping Extract from Council Meeting Minutes Feb 09:

[https://vaughan.escribemeetings.com/CW2\\_Feb09\\_2021/eSCRIBE/Documents/eSCRIBE\\_Raw\\_Attachments/31/Extract\\_6cw0209\\_21ex\\_14.pdf](https://vaughan.escribemeetings.com/CW2_Feb09_2021/eSCRIBE/Documents/eSCRIBE_Raw_Attachments/31/Extract_6cw0209_21ex_14.pdf)

Traffic Box Wrapping Resolution:

[https://vaughan.escribemeetings.com/CW2\\_Feb09\\_2021/eSCRIBE/Documents/eSCRIBE\\_Attachments/Traffic\\_Box\\_Wrapping\\_Resolution.pdf](https://vaughan.escribemeetings.com/CW2_Feb09_2021/eSCRIBE/Documents/eSCRIBE_Attachments/Traffic_Box_Wrapping_Resolution.pdf)

Vaughan Public Art Program:

[https://www.vaughan.ca/projects/planning\\_growth/cultural\\_framework/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.vaughan.ca/projects/planning_growth/cultural_framework/Pages/default.aspx)

### **Analysis and Options**

**A municipal scan has been completed with the City of Toronto and the City of Markham to determine best practices and approaches for a traffic signal cabinet and hydro box wrapping program to enhance the public realm.**

Staff completed a municipal scan that included the City of Toronto and the City of Markham. The City of Markham has a traffic signal cabinet wrap program as part of their public realm improvement project. The City of Toronto has launched the Outside the Box program to beautify traffic signal cabinets. The following provides information about the City of Markham and the City of Toronto programs.

#### **The City of Markham traffic signal cabinet program**

The City of Markham has previously completed a traffic signal cabinet vinyl wrap design project through their Public Realm department. Based on a chosen theme, Unionville High School art students provide designs to a City of Markham selection panel. The theme is provided prior to the fall semester. Students plan out the art from September to December. The City of Markham selection panel reviews all submissions. Students have the opportunity to present the artwork. Letters of appreciation are provided to all participants. Selected artwork for the traffic signal cabinet program is completed between January and February. Supplies and services to complete the traffic signal cabinet wrapping are procured by the City of Markham. The vinyl wraps are installed

from May to June as it requires a consistent temperature of 13°C throughout the installation process. The estimated cost is about \$750 per traffic signal box.

#### The City of Toronto StART (Street Art Toronto) – Outside the Box Program

The City of Toronto Street Art Program consists of various public art projects throughout the City, and a call for artists is conducted annually through social media to search for different artwork. Public meetings with the community are held to receive inspiration for artwork and themes. The Toronto Advisory committee selects the artwork for the program. A letter of agreement and short-term contract with each artist including copyright considerations is signed. Expert assistant curators are available to assist in the process and artist coordinators provide on-site support and mentorship to the street artists. The wrapping is then procured and installed. The estimated cost is about \$1,000 for Artist fees and \$1,000 for the wrapping of each traffic signal box.

#### **The Region of York and Alectra were consulted to determine the feasibility of wrapping Regional traffic cabinets and hydro boxes.**

The Region of York is supportive of the traffic signal cabinet wrap program as it supports livable and healthy communities aligning with the Regional Official Plan.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Region and the City would be required, detailing the City's responsibilities for the selection, installation and ongoing maintenance.

Alectra does not encourage the practice of wrapping hydro boxes due to the operational impact of this practice. Alectra, has however, allowed this on a very limited basis in the past for cities and municipalities.

#### **Staff recommends developing a traffic signal cabinet wrapping pilot project that aligns with the guiding framework of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program.**

The City has a public art framework that guides the development of Public Art and enhances the City's image and identity across its dynamic and diverse communities. Staff propose adopting a multi-phased approach for implementing a city-wide traffic signal cabinet and hydro box wrap program to be recognized under the banner of the ARTonBOXES Program, featuring original works of art commissioned for the cabinets, administered under the auspices of the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program. Phase I of the program would be launched through a pilot project.

## PHASE I – PILOT PROJECT: ARTonBOXES Program I The Group of Seven REMIXED

Art in public places (public art) is defined as original artwork that has been selected, commissioned or acquired for location in the public domain, is physically or visually accessible, is on public or private lands, is created by or in collaboration with artists, has aesthetic qualities, is context specific and may be permanent or temporary.

Reproductions of existing artwork by other artists falls outside the purview of the definition of Public Art, and as such, are considered more as decorative enhancements or marketing elements; therefore, only original works of art, created by contemporary artists specifically for the ARTonBOXES Program will be considered.

Inspired by iconic works of art painted by members of the Group of Seven, thematically, the pilot project, entitled The Group of Seven REMIXED, proposes to invite Vaughan secondary school visual art specialty students to capture the spirit of the Canadian landscape through their own original art that re-interprets The Group of Seven paintings and resonates with them personally, and to create newly imagined works designed specifically to wrap around a series of designated traffic signal and hydro boxes in all five wards of the City.

The theme for the pilot phase, premised on re-imagining the iconic work of the Group of Seven masters is very well suited to secondary school students specializing in visual art, as it presents a meaningful alignment with the Ontario Curriculum for the Arts, as opposed to attracting more established artists through broader open competitions that are planned for subsequent phases of the ARTonBOXES Program. Therefore, the pilot phase proposes to solicit interest from St. Elizabeth Catholic High School and Westmount Collegiate Institute, Vaughan's two secondary schools offering specialty visual art programs, in collaborating with the City of Vaughan, to develop original artwork inspired by the Group of Seven, designed specifically for The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project.

The proposed theme and implementation approach aligns with the guidelines of the City-Wide Public Art Program to feature original art by contemporary artists, at the same time as addressing the request made by Ms. Valerie Burke (SPOHT) to include a rendering of the "Tangled Garden", a painting by Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald or another painting by MacDonald or other members of The Group of Seven, given the application of straight reproductions would be deemed purely decorative and not fall within the purview of the Public Art Program. In effect, the pilot would deliver original student artwork (in a variety of two-dimensional art media), digitized for vinyl application on 10 signal boxes, depicting a range of imagery inspired by the Group of Seven in key designated locations throughout the City.

The City's Senior Art Curator and Planner will oversee the pilot project to liaise with both school boards and high schools respectively, develop the curatorial parameters for the project and work collaboratively with Traffic Engineering and other cross-departmental staff to execute The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot phase of the ARTonBOXES Program.

In the spirit of higher education, it is proposed 10 City of Vaughan Student Higher Art Education Bursaries of \$1,000 each be awarded to students for each of the 10 works of art selected for The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project to promote Vaughan's support of post-secondary studies in the arts.

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **Option 1: Proposed timeline to launch The Group of Seven REMIXED**

Given the impact of COVID 19 on formal education during the global shift to remote learning, Ontario is actively exploring measures to support learning recovery. With this, it is anticipated both St. Elizabeth Catholic High School and Westmount Collegiate Institute will be pre-occupied with working on critical plans to target learning loss immediately upon return to in-class learning. Therefore, to respect educational priorities and appeal to both schools' willingness to collaborate with the City, it is most feasible to plan to launch the project in 2022 with the following anticipated schedule (Attachment 2):

- **January–March 2022** – Seek School Boards permission to approach St. Elizabeth Catholic High School and Westmount Collegiate Institute to solicit interest in participating in the ARTonBOXES pilot with a view to advance planning in fall 2022
- **September–December 2022** – Advance pilot planning with high schools
- **January–February 2023** – Student artwork adjudicated, and 10 selections finalized for The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project
- **February–March 2023** – Public Art Awareness Campaign to promote student artwork selected for The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project
- **May–June 2023** – Installation of Phase I Pilot, weather permitting
- **May–June 2023** – Awarding of 10 City of Vaughan Student Higher Art Education Bursaries
- **May - June 2023**- Report on Multi-Phase Framework Report for ARTonBOXES Program

## PROPOSED LOCATIONS

A list of potential locations selected for the pilot project will be based around the historical district areas, locations with high pedestrian activity, and key intersections containing municipally owned traffic signal infrastructure and Regional owned traffic signal infrastructure.

The list of proposed locations includes the following locations:

- Ward 1 – Major Mackenzie Dr at Keele St, Melville Ave at Springside Rd
- Ward 2 – Woodbridge Ave at Clarence St, Woodbridge Ave at Kipling Ave
- Ward 3 – Chancellor Dr at Aberdeen Ave, Chancellor Dr at Ansley Grove Rd
- Ward 4 – Apple Mill Rd at Millway Ave, Apple Mill Rd at Edgeley Blvd
- Ward 5 – New Westminister Dr at Clark Ave, Yonge Street at Centre St

### **Option 2: To seek an expedited schedule from School Boards or the consideration of procuring the services of professional artists**

Staff can make efforts to advance the pilot program for implementation for the Spring of 2022 by considering the following options:

- i. seeking School Board cooperation to expedite the time-line associated with the creation of the art-work; or
- ii. seeking to procure the services of professional artists. It should be noted that the thematic approach inspired by The Group of Seven paintings outlined in Option 1 was specifically designed with student artists (and the Ontario Curriculum for the Arts) in mind and would not present a proper fit for more established adult artists or the vision of our Public Art Program. As a result, soliciting the interest of adult artists for the pilot phase, would require the entire thematic approach outlined in option 1 to be revised. Another critical consideration is the alignment of the Group of Seven "rendering" to satisfy the Council resolution. The option of employing reproductions of The Group of Seven works would fall outside the purview of our Public Art Program (which is why it was not considered) as The Group of Seven REMIX pilot does not lend itself well to substituting student artists with adult artists if the schools are not able to comply with the expedited schedule.

It should be noted that the City's traffic signal Control system and field equipment upgrades, as outlined in the MoveSmart Mobility Management Strategy, will not be completed by the spring of 2022. As a result, expediting the traffic signal wrap pilot project implementation timeline for the spring of 2022 would require changes to the proposed locations with more artwork to be installed on non-City owned traffic signal

control cabinets. A public realm coordinator would be required to help facilitate the coordination of the program logistics for the pilot project implementation in the Spring of 2022.

Note: the locations are subject to detailed site assessment and an MOU will be required for installation on Regional traffic signal cabinets.

**A collaborative approach between City departments and external stakeholders for the development of the multi-phased ARTonBOXES Program is required.**

Collaboration between stakeholders such as secondary schools and expert curators are to be considered. A collaborative effort from the following teams will be necessary for the implementation of a multi-phased ARTonBOXES program:

- Economic and Cultural Development Department for collaboration with existing cultural, BIA and heritage programs to promote this program and establish the program framework, curatorial vision and program administration
- Urban Design and Public Realm Department for planning and selection of artwork themes
- Transportation and Fleet Management Services for roadway permits and cabinet and hydro boxes wrapping
- Stakeholder representative selection panels to be established to adjudicate art submissions

Staff will report back on the traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping pilot project with a proposed framework for a future multi-phased program to guide the implementation of a comprehensive City-wide traffic cabinet and hydro box wrapping program.

**Financial Impact**

The proposed commissioning process based on implementing student artwork in the pilot phase determines the program costs. Program costs will include the fabrication and installation of implementing the vinyl wraps of digital artwork and awarding student higher art education bursaries. The life cycle of the vinyl wraps is anticipated to be five years until replacement is required – at which point, it is proposed a new artwork will be applied through subsequent implementation phases of the ARTonBOXES Program.

Based on the appropriate costs for the City of Markham and the City of Toronto programs, the City of Vaughan program is estimated to cost \$2000 per traffic signal box (\$1000 artist fee/bursary and \$1000 for the wrap).

The City of Vaughan has about 95 traffic signal cabinets on the City's road network. The Region of York has about 268 Regional traffic signal cabinets. Alectra has about 14,163 transformer box locations.



Estimated cost for Pilot Project:

Type of Infrastructure	Artist/Bursaries Cost Estimate	Installation Cost Estimate	Total Estimated Cost
City Traffic Signal Cabinets (8 locations)	\$7000	\$7000	<b>\$14,000</b>
Region Traffic Signal Cabinets (2 locations)	\$3000	\$3000	<b>\$6000</b>
Total Estimated Cost			<b>\$20,000</b>

To administer a multi-phased City-wide program, considering all City owned traffic signal cabinets would cost approximately \$190,000. A City-wide program to consider wrapping all Regional traffic signal cabinets and Hydro boxes would cost in the millions, therefore, a program framework needs to be developed to select appropriate locations.

To administer the ongoing execution of the multi-phased ARTonBOXES Program, and more broadly, to help implement the expanding City-wide Public Art portfolio, a contract public realm coordinator is required to help facilitate the coordination of program logistics.

Subject to detailed cost estimates, the annual budget review process, and Council budget approval, program costs would be supported by Tax-levy. Funding from the Public Art Reserve (also tax funded) may be eligible under the Public Art Program. Opportunities for cost sharing agreements will also be explored to offset any impact to tax funded operating budgets or reserves.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The Region of York will need to be consulted for the program development as it relates to any Regional traffic signal cabinets.

The School boards will need to be consulted for the program development of the Pilot Project.

### **Conclusion**

The City has a public art framework that guides the development of public art and enhances the City's image and identity across its dynamic and diverse communities. The City is committed to fostering a creative environment in which artists of all ages can develop their artistic potential. The ARTonBOXES Program launched through The Group of Seven REMIXED pilot project can enhance the public realm and inspire young

emerging student artists to express their civic pride through a meaningful contribution. A multi-phased collaborative program framework will need to be developed for commissioning art, program administration and implementation.

**For more information**, please contact:

Peter Pilateris, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Fleet Management services, ext. 6141.

Raphael Costa, Director, Economic and Cultural Development, ext. 8891.

### **Attachments**

1. Region report – Traffic Signal Cabinet Wrap
2. Anticipated Pilot Implementation Schedule: ARTonBOXES Program I The Group of Seven REMIXED

### **Prepared by**

Veronica Wong, Technical Coordinator, 6213

Sharon Gaum-Kuchar, Senior Art Planner/Curator, 8088

Margie Chung, Manager, Traffic Engineering, 6173

### **Approved by**



Nadia Paladino for Zoran Postic,  
Acting Deputy City Manager, Public  
Works

### **Reviewed by**



Jim Harnum, City Manager