

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, November 9, 2021

WARD(S): 4

TITLE: VMC EXPO CITY-CG TOWER PUBLIC ART PLAN UPDATE

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on the status of the EXPO City-CG Tower Public Art Plan to develop Public Art on private land located at the northwest corner of Highway 7 and Maplecrete Road in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (“VMC”), following Council approval of the site development application on June 12, 2019.

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.
- Recommendations 16 and 19 of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework are to support the urban design objectives for the VMC, enhance the pedestrian experience, to create memorable environments and enhance wayfinding; and to establish a strong place identity, which embodies the values and aspirations of the VMC; and further, as a Site 10 priority, all private developments within the VMC in publicly accessible spaces are appropriate for Public Art consideration.

Report Highlights Continued

- The EXPO City-CG Tower Public Art Plan details the process for realizing a meaningful, multilayered, and accessible Public Art component to complement the CG Tower site and advance placemaking aspirations for the VMC by creatively animating the uniqueness of the existing urban design context.
- The Public Art Plan proposes developing a thematic art design concept that interprets a storyline of “transformation” inspired by the site’s proximity to the Edgeley Pond and Park through an exploration and celebration of the landscape, the history of the land and the story of Black Creek.
- As a condition of site plan approval, the Owner is required to develop a Public Art Plan and enter into an agreement to commission and install permanent piece(s) of Public Art on-site, funded by the Owner; and a budget of \$500,000 was identified as a discretionary public realm enhancement.
- On September 30, 2021, the EXPO City-CG Tower Public Art Plan was presented to the Vaughan Design Review Panel, which currently serves as the City’s interim Public Art Advisory Committee providing input on site and artist commissioning processes; and the Panel conveyed their support for the direction of the Plan.

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. As a condition of the Expo City Tower 5 site plan approval, the Owner was required to develop a Public Art Plan and enter into an agreement to commission and install

permanent piece(s) of Public Art located on-site at the northwest corner of Highway 7 and Maplecrete Road in the VMC. A budget of \$500,000 was identified for the project. The Public Art Plan outlines the framework for the commissioning of the art and the collaboration of the lead artist to create the installation. Upon finalizing the Public Art Plan, the Owner will enter into a Public Art Agreement with the City. The Owner will own and maintain the Public Art.

Recognizing the catalytic role Public Art plays in placemaking, the Cortel Group developed a Public Art Plan to realize a meaningful, multilayered, and accessible Public Art component to complement the CG Tower site and advance placemaking aspirations for the VMC by animating the uniqueness of the existing urban design context through a strong creative art storyline.

The Public Art Plan envisions a design concept that will interpret a storyline of “transformation”. The site’s proximity to Edgeley Pond and Park inspired the Plan’s thematic exploration of transformation to be interpreted creatively by the artist team in concept design and development, recognizing the “transformation from early indigenous settlement to the agricultural community, the transformation of these lands from industry to an urban community, and the ongoing transformation of Black Creek and the storm water ponds”.

The Cortel Group hired Public Art Consultant, Karen Zwart-Hielema (dexd) to develop the Public Art Plan and manage its implementation. The collaborative artist team of Alan Tregebov and Joanne Heinen, known for their large-scale sculptural installations sensitive to historical context and local community character, were commissioned to create the artwork. A mentorship opportunity is being considered to involve a student/emerging artist (prioritizing Vaughan-based talent), interested in gaining experience in public art planning, designing site specific public art, and the associated fabrication, coordination and installation process. The consultant will assemble an art advisory panel composed of artists, curators, art educators, architects or landscape architects to provide comment and feedback to the artist team at the concept design stage and the design development stage; and that feedback will be shared with the City of Vaughan’s Senior Art Curator and Planner.

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, the Cortel Group’s Public Art Plan is subject to on-going evaluation by staff and the Vaughan Design Review Panel for its appropriateness for display in the public realm. City staff will continue to liaise with the Cortel Group and their Public Art consultant to facilitate the execution of their Public Art Plan.

Public Art Project Schedule:

- August 23, 2021 – EXPO City-CG Tower Public Art Plan submitted to City of Vaughan
- September 30, 2021 – Design Review Panel Presentation and Assessment
- November 9, 2021 – Committee of the Whole Report
- Q3/Q4 2021 – Public Art Agreement
- Q3/Q4 2021 – Artist Brief and Contract
- Q4 2021/Q2 2022 – Artist Design Concept
- Q3 2022/Q3 2023 – Design Development/Fabrication
- Q3 2023 – Artwork Installation (Substantial Completion-Building Construction)

Previous Reports/Authority

[Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program \(June 2016\)](#)

[VMC Culture & Public Art Framework \(September 2015\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 12, 2019 \(Item 10, Report No. 20 of the Committee of the Whole for Z.19.006 and DA.18.050\)](#)

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 space.

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
- Functional Element - a work of art that also serves a utilitarian purpose

- Activation and Animation - a work of art that energizes a space, can be interacted with and/or can move independently

The prominent CG Tower site is directly adjacent to and overlooking the future Edgeley Pond and Park. Given the landscape design for Edgeley Pond and Park, Strata Park, and the CG Tower demonstrates an integrated plan of connectivity where public access to the parks is encouraged alongside the West property line of CG Tower, the zone to the south and west of the CG Tower is the area of focus for the potential Public Art locations. The Public Art Plan proposes three potential art locations that includes an overall zone to the west of the tower, where the artwork could be integrated into the site landscape elements and/or furniture:

- Art Zone A – located north of the public pedestrian mews, and facing Edgeley Pond and Park, to be incorporated with landscape elements such as paving, seating and smaller sculptural elements to be included in landscape planters;
- Figurative Placement B – located at the corner of Highway 7 and the public pedestrian mews, is the preferred location for a larger sculptural work for maximum visibility and public access; and
- Figurative Placement C – located adjacent and north of Art Zone A, identified as a supplementary location for sculptural work.

2.4. PUBLIC ART LOCATIONS

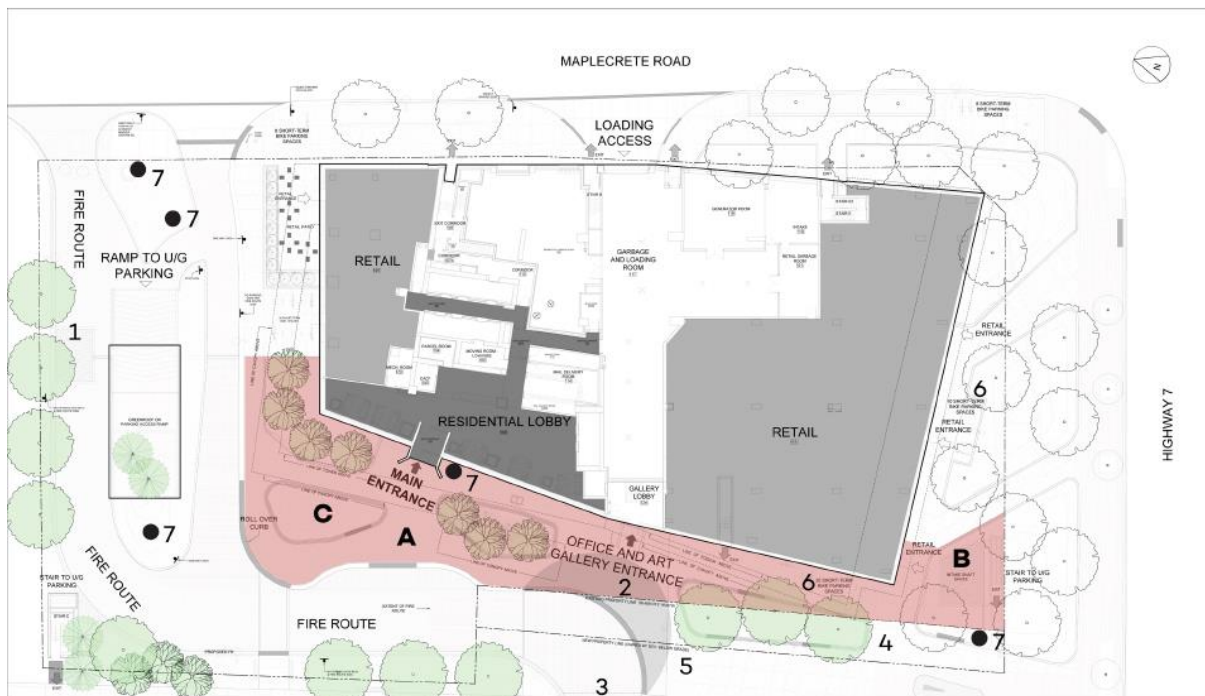


Figure 11. CG Tower Site Plan. Art Locations

The Vaughan Design Review Panel is supportive of the direction adopted for this Public Art Plan, uniquely anchored by its interpretive concept of transformation. The Panel shared insightful feedback for consideration related to the scale, materiality, location, lighting and seasonal positioning of the eventual artwork to best complement the landscape, architecture and public space, and to help foster memorable viewing experiences. Taking these constructive recommendations into consideration, it will be at the discretion of the artist team if the public art will be distributed across several locations or in only one location.

The Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program is supported by the vision of the VMC Secondary Plan which informs the provision of “public art as an important element of the VMC’s public realm, adding culture, beauty and interest to streetscapes (Policy 4.4.8, VMC Secondary Plan). Recommendations 16 and 19 of the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework are to support the urban design objectives for the VMC, enhance the pedestrian experience, to create memorable environments and enhance wayfinding; and to establish a strong place identity which embodies the values and aspirations of the VMC; and as a Site 10 priority, all private developments within the VMC in publicly accessible spaces are appropriate for Public Art consideration.

This Public Art Plan 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 shaping the City’s authentic urban character and economic vitality in a key priority location for Public Art in the VMC. It reinforces the expansive movement of Public Art that is beginning to populate 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. 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 EXPO City-CG Tower Public Art Plan for developing a meaningful, multilayered, and accessible Public Art component to be located at the northwest corner of Highway 7 and Maplecrete Road in the VMC aligns with the principles identified in the Vaughan City-Wide Public Art Program and the recommendations outlined in the VMC Culture and Public Art Framework. It aligns with the urban design objectives for the VMC, to enhance the pedestrian experience, create memorable environments and enhance wayfinding; and establish a strong place identity which embodies the values and aspirations of the VMC. Supported by staff and the Vaughan Design Review Panel, the Plan complements the CG Tower site and advances placemaking aspirations for the VMC by laying the groundwork for realizing a significant contemporary work of Public Art that creatively animates the uniqueness of the existing urban design context through the storyline of “transformation”.

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, the Cortel 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 Cortel Group 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 and Planner, extension 8088

Attachments

1. EXPO City-CG Tower 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 to the right.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager