



City of San Leandro

Meeting Date: June 1, 2015

Staff Report

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Agenda Section: ACTION ITEMS

Agenda Number: 10.B.

TO: City Council

FROM: Chris Zapata
City Manager

BY: Cynthia Battenberg
Community Development Director

FINANCE REVIEW: David Baum
Finance Director

TITLE: Staff Report for City Council Direction on the Utility Box Art Program

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report provides a proposed approach to carry out the next phase of the Utility Box Art Program and fulfills a City Council request for additional detail on the differences between painting and wrapping the utility boxes with art. Staff requests Council direction on the proposed approach.

BACKGROUND

The Utility Box Art Demonstration Project presented by staff at the November 16, 2013 Arts and Culture Town Hall meeting received enthusiastic support from meeting participants. Based on this feedback, the Office of Business Development in partnership with Streets Alive initiated the Utility Box Art Demonstration Project. The demonstration project consisted of seven locations in and around Downtown San Leandro and one in the industrial area (Next Generation Workplace District). Because most locations were comprised of two adjacent utility boxes, a total of fifteen boxes were wrapped with murals to the theme of Innovation, Sustainability & Technology. On the evening of March 24, 2015, Business Development staff and Streets Alive led a public walking tour to celebrate the new murals and interact with the artists and interested community members.

Analysis

With successful completion of the utility box demonstration project, the next phase of the Utility Box Art Program will be a new grouping of City-funded boxes to be placed throughout the City. Business Development staff will identify eligible boxes with particular attention given to areas where the artwork could make a positive impact, such as high visibility corners. Staff anticipates that the City Council's appropriation of \$25,000 will be sufficient for 7-10 utility box locations.

In addition to City-funded box art, the program will also be open to businesses or individuals to sponsor boxes of their choosing. The City may administer the call-for-artists, development, preparation and installation of artwork. Alternatively, the sponsor may use one of the existing artists/artwork from a previous call or identify a specific artist for the work. Utility box artwork cannot be an advertisement for a business, but may feature artwork that is thematically consistent with the sponsor or surrounding area. For example, a coffee shop may show artwork featuring themes from the coffee industry. Staff will review and provide feedback on the artwork. Finally, the sponsor's name will appear in the title block at the base of the box.

Arts Commission

The Arts Commission will provide advisory recommendations to staff pertaining to selecting box locations, artists, artwork, and assist with public outreach. Business Development staff will make two presentations to the Commission. The first presentation will provide information on the recommended box locations and an overview of the artist selection (call-for-artists) process, including discussion of the Arts Commission's role in getting the word out. The second presentation will include the artwork of select artists for the Arts Commission consideration and input.

Acrylic Paint vs. 3M Polymer Wrap

The City Council requested that staff provide an analysis on the feasibility of painting the boxes versus using the current method of wrapping them. In general, painting a box requires light sanding, priming and the use of acrylic paint. Once dry, one to two coats of clear acrylic sealant is painted over the mural to give it an anti-graffiti finish and protect it from the elements. Wrapped boxes use professionally installed 3M Control Tac polymer with an anti-graffiti laminate. In terms of longevity, a typical box painted or wrapped can last 5-7 years. Below is a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Painting

Advantages:

- Original artwork of the artist;
- Cost: \$1,000-\$1,500; (\$750 artist stipend, \$500 supplies, administration, call-for-artists, selection process, public outreach);
- Installation on box open to community involvement, volunteers and children;
- Sense of ownership by artists and community.

Disadvantages:

- Limited to muralists, excludes other types of artists and mediums (such as photography and digital art);
- Not easily replaceable when damaged or when the box is replaced;
- Paint fades overtime on some boxes;
- Requires multiple coats of acrylic sealant;
- Graffiti removal is more difficult;
- Could seal doors and vents if not properly painted.

3M Polymer Wrap

Advantages:

- All artists and art mediums can be presented with digital graphics;
- Cleaner appearance and quicker installation;
- Easily replaceable if damaged or when the box is replaced;
- Artist keeps original artwork after digital conversion.

Disadvantages:

- Cost: \$1,500-\$2,500; (\$750 artist stipend, \$750-\$1,750, administration, call-for-artists, selection process, graphic design, photography, printing, and professional installation);
- Not the original artwork, but a digital graphic.

Adjacent City Paint/Wrap Policy

Hayward	Paint only
Livermore	Paint only
San Jose	Paint (Wraps not prohibited, but not encouraged)
Oakland	Wrap only
Berkeley	Wrap only
Alameda	Wrap only
Redwood City	Paint only
Fremont	Paint (Wraps not prohibited, but not encouraged)

The majority of utility boxes around the City are owned by Caltrans, PG&E, AT&T or the City. AT&T does not permit any artwork on their boxes. Caltrans and PG&E may permit painted boxes on a case by case basis subject to their approval and standards. Both agencies require the City to maintain the artwork and reserve the right to remove it when replacement is needed. It is recommended that only City owned boxes be painted, considering that a painted box will be the original artwork and irreplaceable. The City can control whether or not a box is replaced and how the art will be handled.

Use of Paint and Wraps for the Next Phase of the Project

For the next phase of the utility box art project, staff recommends that both wraps and paint will be considered. The determination of the best approach will be made on a box-by-box basis based on the nature of the art selected, the preference of the artist and the ownership of the box.

Previous Actions

- On April 20, 2015, by Resolution No. 2015-086, the City Council approved a budget of \$25,000 for the next phase of the utility box art program as part of a larger appropriation for economic development and public art projects.
- The Council also directed staff to provide an outline of a selection process that includes the Arts Commission and an analysis of painting the boxes versus the 3M wrap material.

Budget Authority

The second phase of the Utility Box Art Program will cost \$25,000. Funding was appropriated

by Resolution No. 2015-086 adopted on April 20, 2015. Account 010-41-003-5890.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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