



TO THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND COUNCIL:

DATE: July 28, 2015

SUBJECT: UTILITY BOX ART PILOT PROGRAM

Report in Brief

The Youth and Education Committee was directed by the City Council to deliberate the placement of art on utility boxes within the City of Concord. This report presents a draft pilot program for the placement of art on utility boxes.

Staff and the Youth and Education Committee are recommending that the City Council authorize staff to work with Streets Alive!, an initiative of Earth Island Institute that produces public art projects, to place vinyl wrap artwork on utility boxes and to help solicit sponsorships to fund the art on utility box program.

Background

On April 7, 2015 at its regularly scheduled meeting, the City Council directed the Youth and Education Committee to deliberate the placement of art on utility boxes within the City of Concord. The motion was made by Councilmember Leone and seconded by Councilmember Birsan.

On May 18, 2015 the Youth and Education Committee met to deliberate the placement of art on utility boxes. After hearing the staff report, the Committee began defining a pilot program that would initially begin with five locations in the Monument Area. The Committee expressed a desire for the art on utility box pilot program to contain the following elements:

- Involvement of youth – grades 6th through 12th – through art contests/submissions
- Use of vinyl wrap in lieu of direct painting of utility boxes
- Funding sources other than the General Fund, including donations/sponsorships
- Consideration of tactfully placed sponsorship recognition on wraps
- Encouraging art that incorporates cultural designs representing the area (no words)
- Using the Youth and Education Committee to select art designs and approve artwork

Staff was directed to return to the Committee with a draft program and additional information including a cost comparison of vinyl wraps against graffiti abatement and the ability to print and install vinyl wraps in-house. Staff returned to the Youth and Education Committee on June 15, 2015 and July 20, 2015 as follow up to the Committee's previous information requests. During the second of these meetings the

Committee reached a consensus to partner with Streets Alive!, an initiative of Earth Island Institute that produces public art projects.

Discussion

One of the items that the Youth and Education Committee directed staff to analyze was the cost of vinyl wraps as compared to graffiti abatement. Staff reviewed graffiti abatement records from the last twelve months focusing on tags on utility boxes. Records of graffiti tags abated from utility boxes were found to be inconsistent, meaning they happen sporadically throughout the City and at different times. Staff could estimate fairly accurately the abatement costs if all utility boxes in the City were being considered; however, staff could not pinpoint exactly how much money the City would save if abatement did not need to occur on utility boxes in five specific locations in the Monument Area.

To speak more generally, the costs to remove tags from a utility box can range from as low as \$40 to as much as \$160 per occurrence depending on the amount of vandalism and the abatement methods used. The occurrence can be as low as once per year to as much as twice per month. With this information, the best estimate from staff is that the annual graffiti abatement cost for a utility box is a range of \$40 on the low to \$3,840 on the high. Staff has not yet solicited bids from vinyl wrap contractors but has received initial cost information from Streets Alive!, who indicates that the average cost of placing vinyl wrap artwork on utility boxes is \$2,500 per location. The Youth and Education Committee also directed staff to determine the in-house ability to print and install vinyl wraps. Staff determined that printing vinyl wraps in-house is beyond the City's existing technical and equipment capabilities, and therefore must be outsourced to a company specializing in the materials and methods used.

At its July 20, 2015 meeting, the Youth and Education Committee heard from Streets Alive!, an initiative of Earth Island Institute that produces public art projects. The organization offers art production and consulting services to municipalities, business associations and neighborhood groups. The group consults with cities across the nation placing artistically painted utility boxes in communities. The group raises funds for their work from individuals, foundations, businesses, associations and local governments. The Streets Alive! organizers expressed a desire to assist the City of Concord with a pilot program to place art on utility boxes. The group has also agreed to assist with the solicitation of sponsorships to fund the artwork, but has made it clear that it will need equal support from the Youth and Education Committee in seeking donations. The Youth and Education Committee committed their support in helping to acquire the necessary sponsorships and donations to make this program work.

Staff and the Youth and Education Committee are recommending that the City Council authorize staff to work with Streets Alive! to place vinyl wrap artwork on utility boxes and to help solicit sponsorships to fund the art on utility box program.

While deliberating a pilot program for the placement of art on utility boxes, the Youth and Education Committee invited the following persons and community groups to attend the May 18th and June 15th meetings; these same groups were also invited to attend tonight's City Council meeting:

- Dr. Nellie Meyer, Superintendent, Mount Diablo Unified School District
- Carol Longshore, President, Concord Historical Society

- Darrin Walters, Chair, Todos Santos Business Association
- Mike Van Hofwegen, Executive Director, Monument Impact
- Maribel Delgado, Volunteer, Monument Business Association

Fiscal Impact

This pilot program will be funded through sponsorships and donations; at this time no City resources are being allocated to the program other than the minimal staff time needed to work with the Streets Alive! organizers. The Youth and Education Committee will be providing Streets Alive! with support to acquire the necessary sponsorships and donations to bring this project to fruition.

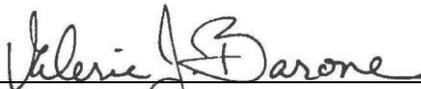
Public Contact

The City Council Agenda was posted, and an announcement was sent to the following persons and community groups:

- Dr. Nellie Meyer, Superintendent, Mount Diablo Unified School District
- Carol Longshore, President, Concord Historical Society
- Darrin Walters, Chair, Todos Santos Business Association
- Mike Van Hofwegen, Executive Director, Monument Impact
- Maribel Delgado, Volunteer, Monument Business Association

Recommendation for Action

Staff and the Youth and Education Committee are recommending that the City Council authorize staff to work with Streets Alive! to place vinyl wrap artwork on utility boxes and to help solicit sponsorships to fund the art on utility box program.



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