

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator
Meeting Date: September 23, 2026
Report Code: CS-26-094
Subject: River District Public Art Installations by ArtCures Grey Bruce, Approval of Utility Box Project

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-094 respecting River District Public Art Installations by ArtCures Grey Bruce - Approval of Utility Box Project, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council approve the project as outlined in the report.

Highlights:

- Proposed utility box designs reflect Owen Sound's natural environment, using water-inspired colours and local wildlife to create a cohesive public art concept throughout the River District.
- ArtCures Grey Bruce will facilitate the community art component, engaging local residents and community groups in bringing the designs to life and strengthening community connection and pride.
- The project supports Vision 2050 and the River District Action Plan by enhancing existing infrastructure, supporting placemaking, and contributing to a more vibrant and welcoming River District.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Celebrating and Embracing Culture - Uplifting all aspects of the City's local culture, including Indigenous Peoples' cultural

histories and practices, the cultural histories and practices of all residents, and formal institutional arts and culture.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Vision 2050 Long-Term Strategic Plan](#)

[River District Action Plan](#)

[Report CS-26-041](#) Re: River District Public Art Installations by ArtCures Grey Bruce

At its meeting on June 15, 2026, City Council approved the minutes of the Community Services Committee held on May 20, 2026, including resolution no. CS-260520-004 as follows:

"THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-041 respecting the River District Public Art Installations by ArtCures Grey Bruce, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council approve the:

1. River District Art Installations by ArtCures Grey Bruce for the Peace Ribbons, under the Public Art Policy, in the area in front of City Hall and in Percy England Parkette, subject to the conditions outlined in Attachment 2; and
2. **Proposed public art murals by ArtCures Grey Bruce on Public Utility Boxes in principle, with the final design, details and conditions of approval to be brought forward to a future Committee meeting."**

[Report CS-26-002](#) Re: 2026 Events, Activations & Promotions Plan

[Policy AG10](#) – Public Art Policy

Background:

The Community Services Committee previously considered staff report CS-26-041 regarding public art installations by ArtCures Grey Bruce. As part of that report, Committee recommended that City Council approve the proposed public art murals on public utility boxes in principle, with the final design, details, and conditions of approval to be brought forward to a future Committee meeting.

Since that time, City staff have continued working with ArtCures Grey Bruce, who are facilitating the artistic and community components of the project.

This project follows the success of the It's A Wrap, Peace Ribbon installation in the City Hall Plaza set to come down at the end of the month.

ArtCures has developed a proposed design concept for up to six utility boxes throughout the River District, using blue and white tones inspired by Owen Sound's waterways and simplified images of local wildlife and aquatic species as seen in attachment 1.

Staff have also continued to work with Public Works and Engineering to establish the technical parameters for the project, including paint coverage, access to infrastructure, appropriate materials, and long-term maintenance considerations.

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval of the proposed utility box mural design concept and to authorize staff to proceed with the project in partnership with ArtCures Grey Bruce, subject to the conditions of approval being met.

Analysis and Options:

The proposed utility box mural concept continues to align with the City of Owen Sound's Vision 2050 Long-Term Strategic Plan and the River District Action Plan, particularly the goals of celebrating and embracing culture, strengthening community identity, and enhancing the River District through placemaking and public realm improvements.

The proposed designs use blue and white tones inspired by Owen Sound's waterways and incorporate simplified imagery of local wildlife and aquatic species. This provides an opportunity to reflect the natural character of Owen Sound while creating a consistent visual approach across the six utility boxes.

ArtCures Grey Bruce will facilitate the creative and community components of the project, including working with community members and groups to bring the artwork to the utility boxes. This community-led approach is an important part of the project and supports the broader goal of creating public art that residents feel connected to and take pride in.

Staff have continued to work with Public Works and Engineering to establish the technical parameters for the project, including the amount of each box

that can be covered, maintaining access to infrastructure, and identifying appropriate materials. Consideration is also being given to durability, heat sensitivity, and long-term maintenance.

Approval of the proposed concept will allow ArtCures Grey Bruce and staff to move forward with the project and begin implementation, with the established technical and operational requirements incorporated into the installation process.

The project provides a relatively low-cost opportunity to improve the appearance of existing infrastructure and add additional colour, character, and community identity to the River District. It also builds on the City's previous approval in principle and allows the project to move from concept development into implementation.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

The River District Board of Management allocates up to \$200 for initiatives with a minimum of 4 businesses supporting. The project falls within this category and will benefit from \$200 being used for promotion. Should the River District Board of Management approve this budgetary line item in 2027.

ArtCures is working through several grant applications to fund this project.

Human Resources

All work is within staff's responsibilities and workplans.

Time and Scheduling

ArtCures plans to complete the project early spring 2027. Boxes will remain painted until such a time they are deemed to show a loss of integrity. At which time a report to committee will outline future opportunities to redo the boxes or return them to their original state.

Technology and Infrastructure

N/A.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Communication and Engagement:

This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the meeting.

The utility box project will be communicated through a media release and promotion through the art group, River District & City of Owen Sound social media channels once the project has an execution date.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

- Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
- Mason Bellamy, Manager of Public Works & Engineering
- Manan Monga, Engineering Technologist – Traffic
- ArtCures Grey Bruce

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 – Proposed ArtCures Utility Box Concept
2. Attachment 2 – Conditions of Approval for Utility Box Painting Project

Reviewed by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator at vgravel@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1209.