



STAFF REPORT

DATE: March 4, 2026
TO: Cultural Arts Commission
FROM: Shaunna Hunter, MPA
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1. SUBJECT

Signal Cabinet Art Program Consideration

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION/MOTION

- A. Receive and file report
- B. Provide input to staff

3. BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

This report provides background and analysis for consideration to establish a Utility (Signal) Box Art Program in Westminster, a public art initiative to turn traffic signal cabinets and utility boxes into community-engaging artwork. It includes California examples, application techniques, cost structures, and sponsorship models to inform decision-making and consider potential implementation.

Westminster has 62 traffic signal cabinets spread throughout the City. Public Works Engineering provided a map (Attachment 1) of the two styles of traffic signal box locations by type within the City boundaries.

Cabinet Types and Quantities

- 39 -Type 333 Traffic Signal Cabinets, represented on the map with a red dot are stand-alone cabinets (22"x 58.5"x 26") with two large front facing cabinet doors.
- 23 - Type P Traffic Signal Cabinets, represented on the map with a blue dot are stand alone cabinets (38"/44" x 46" x 26"). Some of these cabinets may be placed against a wall so all 4 sides may not be accessible.

What Is a Traffic Signal Box Art Program?

An incremental art program that can transform blank traffic control, electrical, or utility boxes into visual art installations. These projects have been used to create a positive

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impact on the streetscape by enhancing community identity, reducing graffiti, and visual blight, while engaging local artists and residents. Individual installations can provide accessible and memorable public art across neighborhoods. Installations from other cities vary from street murals on independent signal cabinets, natural wraps, to uniquely painted utility boxes featuring local or neighborhood themes.

Existing Programs in nearby cities include Costa Mesa and Fountain Valley; however, signal box art programs are prevalent throughout the state.

City	Description
City of Costa Mesa	Launched in early 2015, spotlight a handful of utility boxes as beautiful art pieces. Over sixty distinct, artistic designs are now spotlighted throughout Costa Mesa.
City of Fountain Valley	Vinyl wrap application of artwork with an anti-graffiti coating on selected boxes. Fountain Valley's program is funded by the Community Foundation and sponsorship opportunities for individual boxes are available.
City of Dublin	Dublin's program has more than 75 painted utility boxes around the city. Artists are selected through a competitive process and receive stipends for painting boxes.
City of Solana Beach	Solana Beach invites artists to design artwork that is reproduced on anti-graffiti vinyl wraps for multiple locations along major corridors of the City.
City of Long Beach	Long Beach's Arts Council coordinates utility box art installations by various artists across the city. Funding for this program comes through community development block grants.
City of Santa Clara	Santa Clara's Cultural Commission hosts a signal utility box art program with community-themed painted installations.
City of Moreno Valley	Moreno Valley's program invites original artwork for vinyl wraps, with selected artists receiving a stipend; the city prints and installs the vinyl wraps.
Old Town Temecula	Temecula's utility box project vinyl wrapped 20 boxes with designs created by local artists celebrating the area's history and natural landscape.
City of Napa	Downtown Napa's utility box wraps are funded through a Property Based Improvement District (PBID) in partnership with the city. This model highlights how business districts can support public art.
City of Los Angeles	Los Angeles Council Districts are making efforts to decorate utility boxes across neighborhoods, encouraging submissions from local artists.

Application and Execution Techniques

Programs typically use one of three main application methods:

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1. Painted by Artists On Site - Artists physically paint artwork onto utility boxes. This method provides direct artistic engagement and can have lower material costs but requires weather-proofing and anti-graffiti coating. Costs for primer, paint, sealants and supplies vary by size but may be relatively low compared to professional wraps.
2. Vinyl Wraps- Selected artwork is produced digitally on high-quality vinyl with anti-graffiti lamination and professionally installed. Wraps provide longer durability and consistency of finish. Many benchmark cities use this method (Fountain Valley, Solana Beach, Temecula, and Moreno Valley). Fabrication and professional installation tend to range approximately \$1,700–\$2,300 per box, depending on film type and installation conditions
3. Hybrid Models with Sponsors-Some cities allow private or nonprofit sponsorships to offset costs, where sponsors fund the creation and installation in exchange for limited recognition. This model can reduce burden on public art budgets and can strengthen community partnerships.

Cost Considerations

Artist Stipends / Honoraria

Typically range from \$450 to \$1,000 per artwork. Dublin's program pays \$1,000 per painted box, while other cities offer \$500–\$750 per design.

Maintenance & Protection

Anti-graffiti coatings or protective laminates may be required, especially in high-traffic areas or areas prone to vandalism. Use of anti-graffiti coating will extend the life of signal box art but will still need maintenance and replacement over time.

Program Administration

Signal Box Art program administration includes staff time for marketing, press releases, calls for artists, design review panels, contracts, awards and selection events coordination, Public Works coordination, and maintenance oversight.

Sponsorship Frameworks

Sponsorship is a common supplemental funding model. City's must set clear boundaries for how the sponsor will be recognized including logo placement, location, and size (percentage of design or physical size). City's maintain transparent guidelines about funding use, artist compensation, and community benefits. Sponsorship is implemented in structured ways to balance artistic integrity and recognition:

- Direct Box Sponsorship with Recognition
Sponsors fund one or more boxes and receive a plaque or title card near the artwork and recognition in program materials (web pages, brochures). In some benchmark cities, advertising directly on art is not permitted to preserve public art quality.

- Tiered Sponsorship Packages
Cities can establish tiered donation levels with corresponding benefits (e.g., recognition in city publications, website listing, event acknowledgement).
- Sponsor-Selected Art (Limited Input)
In some of the benchmark programs, sponsors may nominate a theme or participate in selection committees, subject to established design criteria.

Policy and Implementation Considerations and Next Steps

1. Program Framework & Goals
Define objectives, eligibility criteria, themes, and art standards.
2. Feasibility & Location Planning
Coordinate with Public Works and utility providers to identify candidate boxes and technical constraints.
3. Selection & Review Process
Establish a design review panel including arts professionals and community stakeholders.
4. Funding & Sponsorship Strategy
Evaluate public funding commitments versus sponsorship or partner contributions.
5. Maintenance & Protection Protocols
Create maintenance protocols and graffiti/UV protection standards.

CONCLUSION

Signal box art programs have been successfully adopted by multiple California cities, yielding vibrant public art, community engagement, and graffiti deterrence while supporting local artists. Cultural Arts Commission may review the report and provide feedback on its interest in pursuing additional program guidance.

4. FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact related to the Commission’s review of this item or the recommendation to the City Council.

5. ATTACHMENTS

1. City of Westminster Signal Box Map