Streetcorner Canvases: Traffic Signal Box Art

Participation Guide
Streetcorner Canvases: Traffic Signal Box Art

Program Outline

The purpose of the traffic signal box art program is to enable Indianapolis’ neighborhoods to express their identity, beautify their streets, and discourage “tagging” vandalism of the neighborhood’s traffic signal control boxes (TSBs).

The process is neighborhood-driven, with the Arts Council of Indianapolis assisting neighborhoods or other citizen groups in formulating their program. The Arts Council also represents the project as the Department of Public Works reserves, permits, and tracks the boxes used. Finally, the Arts Council also provides advice and support for finding and working with artists, making sure boxes are of high aesthetic and technical quality, and maintaining the finished TSBs.

Anyone — from a non-profit organization to a neighborhood association to a casual group — has the opportunity to commission artists to enhance TSBs. Artists who have obtained neighborhood association approval can also apply directly to enhance TSBs. Either direct painting or digitally-printed vinyl wraps can be used for these artistic enhancements.

Project organizers are responsible for the following:

- Registering their project with the Arts Council in plenty of time before painting the boxes.
- Obtaining written approvals from the officially-registered neighborhood association and adjacent private property owners to artistically enhance traffic signal boxes
- Identifying specific TSBs and signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Public Works
- Using a self-defined selection process to identify artists and designs
- Signing agreements with the artists and committing to pay them fair fees
- Funding the project through grants, contributions, and sponsorships
- Photographing the completed TSBs and providing images to the Arts Council
- Maintaining the TSBs in good condition for 3-5 years
- Returning the TSBs to “blank” condition when the project is over, or committing to repaint/rewrap the boxes with new designs by submitting a new application

Questions? Contact Julia Moore, jmoore@indyarts.org or Lindsey Lord, llord@indyarts.org or by phone: (317) 631-3301.
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Planning the project

A TSB enhancement effort needs pre-planning. Three to four months is the recommended planning period before the group submits an application to the Arts Council. A longer planning time — up to one year — is ideal. The best time to submit the application to the Arts Council is at least four months before the artwork is added to the boxes.

When planning, consider the following questions:

- **What is the group?** Ideally it is a neighborhood association, but it could also be a nonprofit organization, a CDC or even a merchant’s association. It can even be an individual artist. Applications coming from individual merchants or businesses will not be approved, as this would create the impression that taxpayer-provided public property is being used to advertise or enrich a private entity. However, merchants or businesses should be encouraged to support the project as financial sponsors and can be publicly acknowledged.

- **Who is the contact person?** There should be one centralized contact person with full contact information provided on the application form. Groups preferring to divide the workload using a committee are encouraged to designate only one contact person for regular communications with the Arts Council; this person will need to communicate consistently with the rest of the group.

- **Where will the art be placed?** As part of the application, groups will be required to list and visually document specific boxes, providing accurate street crossing locations (for example, “northwest corner of Broad Ripple Avenue and College Avenue”). Verification of the box dimensions by on-site measurement is advised. Once the application is submitted, there can be no last-minute changes unless the box itself is moved. The group is responsible for communicating to the artists which boxes are included in the program, and for tracking which artist is enhancing each box.

- **Who else needs to know about the project?** The group is also responsible for contacting in advance both the neighborhood association and all private owners of property that touches the public right-of-way where the box is located, to obtain written approval of the box selection and, ideally, of the art that will be on the box. Please allow sufficient planning time to research and contact these entities, understanding that their approval may rest on the specific artwork that will be on the box. Involving these adjacent property owners in the actual artwork selection process may be advisable.

- **What are your desired qualities for TSB artwork?** Although this is not part of the application itself, some discussion about the nature of the box art is important to have during the planning period because it will help in selecting artists. Although you can discuss specific imagery you want to see, a more important discussion to have is the impression the art should leave on the viewer. Is the artwork targeted to residents or to visitors? What statement do you want to make? What distinctive qualities of your neighborhood do you want the viewer to understand? How could the unique nature of your history, location, amenities, and sights be expressed by the artwork? Are you more interested in giving artists a forum for their own personal expression? Don’t be so specific or detailed in this discussion that you end up “directing” the artist(s): they should be free to make their own observations and express their individual, creative viewpoint, and style in their design. The Arts Council expects that these discussions will continue with the selected artist(s) before any designs are created and submitted for review.

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Who will select the designs for the TSBs? Groups will need to assemble an “aesthetic advisory team” and name the participants on the application form. It is also advised that the group choose an artist selection panel—which could be the same group as the aesthetic advisory team—before the application is submitted to the Arts Council. The people responsible for selecting the artists and the artwork designs must include one member of the Arts Council’s public art staff and at least one member of the Arts Council’s Public Art Selection Committee (the Arts Council has provided a list in this program guide). In order to ensure a good result, we recommend that the aesthetic advisory team include, in addition to the two required people listed above, at least one person with a visual arts degree and experience assembling exhibitions or administering public art. The other members of the selection panel can be community members.

Who are the artists that will create the artwork? Although it is tempting to use only artists and other people living within the neighborhood to complete TSB art, the Arts Council recommends opening eligibility citywide or beyond and issuing a broad invitation. Open, competitive processes that allow professional artists to submit either their qualifications or specific designs for TSBs often result in very exciting artwork. Another suggestion is to identify and invite a few highly qualified artists to compete to design a number of boxes as a unified project (a great example of this is Seyed Alavi’s project for Emeryville, California called Signs of the Times: http://www.ci.emeryville.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=550). Because of the time it takes to stage a competition, artist and design information may not be available at the time of application; accordingly, the application only asks for the process that will be used to select the artists and artwork. Actual designs can be submitted later as long as the Arts Council can review them at least four weeks before they are scheduled to be installed.

What will the art look like? The artwork designs can be submitted with the application or can come later (but no less than four weeks prior to the desired start of painting or wrapping). A standard, scaled TSB surfaces template is included in the application packet to be shared with the artists. Submission of the design on this form or a close facsimile will be required when submitting final designs to the Arts Council. It is recommended that the same template be used during the group’s internal selection process in order to assess all the proposed artworks consistently.

When will the artwork be installed? A timeline sufficient to achieve all phases of the project, including an anticipated four weeks just for approval of TSB locations, will need to be submitted with the application package. If the artwork designs are coming later than the application, the timeline should include an additional four weeks for Arts Council approval after submission and should allow for the possibility that one or more artworks will be rejected; time should be allowed for resubmission, if desired. A one-year timeline is suggested from the start of planning to the completion of the TSB artwork.

How much will the project cost and where will the funds come from? The application will require a budget to include items such as materials, supplies, and artist fees. It is a requirement of this program that artists sign a commissioning agreement and are paid a fee for their work; applications that do not show that artists are being paid will be denied participation in the program. Be sure to include the costs of maintenance activities in your budget. Anticipated sources of funds should be disclosed on the budget with “in-kind” contributions as an option except for artist fees. There are a number of community development organizations that might provide neighborhoods support in the form of a grant related to neighborhood economic improvement, beautification, or quality of life.

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Keep Indianapolis Beautiful is a good partner for in-kind support. Crowdfunding (especially through the Arts Council’s “power2Give” initiative, if the sponsoring group is a registered nonprofit) can yield good results if attention is paid to daily marketing of the opportunity. (http://indyarts.org/funding/organizations/power2give) Groups are also encouraged to seek cash donations or sponsorships, either for the program as a whole or for individual boxes. Individual artists may want to look into crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter or GoFundMe. However, in order to stay within code as a “mural” instead of a “sign,” TSB art cannot feature a sponsor’s product or service, address, building, logo, or any text that could be interpreted as an advertisement for the sponsor. Artists should likewise never feel pressure from the organizing group to acknowledge a financial sponsor in the design, or to involve a financial sponsor in the development of the design of a box. Learn more about how to recognize sponsors in the signage section, on page 9.

- **What materials will be used?** As part of the planning process, please carefully review the technical guidelines, starting on page 15, and investigate material options. The application will ask the group to commit to either paint or vinyl wrap. The Arts Council has created a list of recommended products and techniques for both the artwork and maintenance. If vinyl wraps are used they must be from one of the vendors and products listed as pre-approved based on quality standards determined by the Arts Council and the Department of Public Works (DPW). Planning out the materials ahead of time will help when creating a project budget.

- **How will the finished artwork be supervised and maintained?** A maintenance plan should assume that designs will be installed and remain in excellent condition for three to five years. How would incidents like tagging or defacement be handled and funded? Consider actions like including a neighborhood contact number on the box for someone to call if they notice vandalism; this will ensure that if the box is sponsored, the sponsor doesn’t get all the calls. Learn more about maintenance techniques in the technical guidelines section, starting on page 15.

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Submitting the application

In the initial stages of the planning process, it is advisable to sit down with one of the Arts Council’s public art staff to discuss your project and answer a few basic, but important questions. This is just to alert us that you will be submitting an application and allow us time to think about how we can best help your project be successful. We are also able to assist you in filling out the application. **Don’t worry: we will not direct your project or make you work with any specific artists or designs.**

You can submit your application after that first meeting. A complete application consists of the following:

- Application form
- Budget form
- Timeline form
- Box request form, with locations and visual documentation of boxes
- Artwork designs, on a standard template (can come later if designs have not yet been selected, but **must be submitted at least four weeks** before they appear on the boxes)
- Copies of signed artist’s agreements, one for each artist (can come with the box designs if artists are unknown at time of application; if the artist is under 18, must also be signed by parent or legal guardian)
- Signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DPW
- Signed letters of support from the appropriate registered neighborhood association(s) and **all** private property owners adjacent to **each** proposed box

Forms for the first seven items on the list are available for download as a packet from the Arts Council’s website at [http://indyarts.org/public-art/currentprojects](http://indyarts.org/public-art/currentprojects).

If you do not know who the adjacent property owners are, the Arts Council can help you find out. These are the people whose property touches the public right-of-way where the box is located. There may be several or only one for each box.

Applications can be shared via Dropbox, Box or similar cloud storage account with Lindsey Lord, [llord@indyarts.org](mailto:llord@indyarts.org), or (preferred) delivered on one CD / DVD to the Arts Council reception desk addressed to Lindsey’s attention. We are located at 924 N. Pennsylvania St.

*Please submit the application a minimum of four weeks prior to the desired installation start date.* If you are not submitting artist designs with your application, we recommend that you submit the application *four to twelve months* before the artwork is created and follow up by sending the artwork designs *at least four weeks* before the date they are to appear on the boxes.

If your neighborhood is in a designated historic district, send the artwork designs *at least twelve weeks* (three full months) before the date they are to appear on the boxes, as there is an extra layer of approval that the Arts Council will need to pursue.

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Box art design tips

The difference between a successful box design and an unsuccessful one can be subtle. It goes without saying that the artwork itself should be technically competent, interesting, and appropriate for the general public and to the neighborhood context: your selection panel will make sure of that. But there are a few other things to consider when developing art for TSBs in particular.

In general, successful TSB artwork designs avoid the following:

- Large areas of plain, flat colors, particularly light or bright colors. These areas may attract tagging.
- “Brushy” paint that looks muddy when driving by at road speed.
- Fine detail or text of such small size that it may cause drivers to lose concentration as they try to read it.
- Using each face of the TSB for a different image or concept.

Successful designs “wrap” the imagery around all faces of the box in a continuous flow.

Successful designs are appealing to both pedestrians and viewers in vehicles.

Successful designs allow full box operation without workers destroying the artwork: be sure to leave hinges, door handles, and vents freely operational. In particular, do not cover or block vent openings or the contents of the box will overheat and become nonfunctional.

In order to keep the designs classified as artwork and to avoid inadvertently violating the city’s signage ordinance, logos, phrases, or branding designs for the neighborhood or for any business, product, good, activity, service, or private interest may not appear as part of the artwork. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances, for example, when reproducing a historical photograph that shows a business no longer in operation. The Arts Council will assist you in determining if a design might be classified by Code Enforcement as a sign, and will work with you to alter the design so it can remain an artwork. Under this program, neither the project.

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organizer nor the Arts Council may seek, nor will Code Enforcement review or approve, signage code variances or sign permits for TSB artwork projects.

Since this is in a public location and visible to viewers of all ages, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds, please avoid nudity, suggestive poses, scatological humor, hate speech, or imagery that any group might find obscene, offensive, or morally shocking. Political, religious, or memorial artwork is unacceptable for traffic signal boxes.

When asking artists to design for a box, let them know whether they will be painting a box or digitally translating their design to a vinyl wrap. The design techniques appropriate to each type of execution method will be different. For example, an artist designing for a vinyl wrap will want to know whether the vinyl will have a pre-existing background or adhesive color, or will be transparent.

**Signage on the box**

It is important to acknowledge your financial sponsors on the box, and your artists should be instructed to incorporate a place for necessary sponsor signage in their design within the following guidelines:

- The area used for signage cannot exceed 1 square foot in area.
- Signage must be placed on the short end of the box that is facing away from oncoming vehicle traffic. This is to avoid distracting drivers who may be trying to read signage while driving.
- Signage cannot include the logos, phone numbers, or addresses (website or physical) of financial sponsors – only the name and brief text communicating that they are a sponsor. (recommended language: “This box is sponsored by XXXX.”).
- Signage must include a phone number or email contact for viewers to report vandalism so it can be repaired as soon as possible. Please designate this as the reporting number using words like “If this artwork is damaged or defaced, please contact...” or something similar.
- Do not put your neighborhood logo, branding phrase, or similar designation on the box in either the signage area or as part of the artwork design.
- The artist may sign their name to the box on any face, or may add their name to the signage area. It is not legally required to use the © symbol or the date, but both may be used if desired.
- The artist may create the signage as part of the design or can simply leave an area blank for sponsor acknowledgment to be applied later by the sponsoring group.
Selecting and approving artists and designs

It almost goes without saying that a neighborhood wants to be proud of the art on their traffic signal boxes and the statement it makes about their community. The city, too, wants to take pride in the entire traffic signal box art program. Accordingly, the Department of Public Works has asked the Arts Council to make sure that the art on the traffic signal boxes is carefully planned, well-done, engaging, and appropriate to the neighborhood context.

In order to fulfill their task, the Arts Council will work closely with each neighborhood or group planning to put art on their traffic signal boxes and has developed the following policies for all applicants:

1. The group undertaking the box art project will create an aesthetic advisory team, who is empowered to oversee the process of identifying artists and designs. This team is responsible for handling the artist search process and leading the discussions on appropriate and inappropriate designs for the project. The team will also make sure that the final designs submitted to the Arts Council are formatted according to the design layout template (verifying the measurements for each desired box), and will check the artists’ chosen materials and products against the technical instructions to make sure they match the approved material list.

2. The group will also designate an art selection panel, which could either be the same people as the aesthetic advisory team or a specially assembled group who will choose the designs to be submitted to the Arts Council for final review.

3. The art selection panel must include one Arts Council public art staff member and one member of the Arts Council’s standing Public Art Selection Committee. Other people of the group’s choice can be added. Five is the recommended number of people for the selection panel.

4. The Arts Council has the responsibility to review all desired designs and to reject any design or artist that it feels will reflect poorly on the neighborhood or the city. Instead of rejecting a design, the Arts Council may ask the group to pay a professional artist “mentor” to assist nonprofessional or inexperienced artists in executing their box design according to technical guidelines.

5. For painted boxes, the Arts Council will review completed boxes onsite prior to final clearcoating to ensure proper use of materials and accordance with the submitted design. The neighborhood and artist are jointly responsible for coordinating with the Arts Council for that visit.

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Onsite painting or wrapping the box

Information and tips about paints, wrap products, and coatings are found in the technical guidelines starting on page 15. Please review them carefully during the planning process, both in the neighborhood team and with the selected artist(s).

The following policies apply to working onsite to paint or wrap the box:

- Sidewalk traffic must be maintained at all times.
- Artists, volunteers, and vinyl wrap installers must wear a day-glo safety vest or T-shirt while working.
- Head, eye, and hand protection are strongly recommended for safety but are not required.
- Wearing a protective facemask is recommended for certain types of paints and application techniques (see the technical guidelines, page 15, for more details).
- Although it may not be feasible for every site, it is strongly recommended to place safety cones and/or caution tape around the work area to separate viewers from artists and protect onlookers from oncoming traffic. To avoid liability difficulties, do not allow anyone other than the contracted artist and his/her authorized helper(s) to cross the barricade into the work area.
- Protect the sidewalk and/or greenspace around the box with a sturdy dropcloth.
- To ensure security for your materials and tools, leave a “watcher” to protect your paints and materials if you must step away for a brief break. Plan to remove all working materials and equipment overnight.
- For personal health and safety, when working in the summer be sure to hydrate frequently and wear sunscreen.
- If using aerosol application techniques, you must set up a temporary spraybooth and use proper protective equipment.
- Artists or their designated “watchers” must remain at the site with caution tape in place until paint and coatings have cured to touch or are otherwise safe for public exposure.
- Artists and others are working willingly and at their own risk in this potentially traffic-adjacent location. No liability is assumed by the Arts Council or the City of Indianapolis for injuries sustained while working on the box in a public place. Volunteers must sign liability waivers (an example can be provided by the Arts Council upon request), which will be kept indefinitely in the project documentation.
- For painted boxes, before the clearcoat layer is applied the artist must call the Arts Council to come out and verify that the design was executed according to the accepted

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proposal and with proper materials. The Arts Council’s public art staff can be reached at (317) 631-3301, ext. 240.

○ Once the box is completed, take a good-quality, high-resolution image of the artwork and send it to Lindsey Lord, llord@indyarts.org (or deliver on a CD / DVD to the Arts Council, 924 N. Pennsylvania St., to Lindsey’s attention). The Arts Council will then document the box on our online public art database, http://www.indyartsguide.org

Hillcrest Business Association, San Diego, California

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Maintaining the Box

If a group has committed to paint or wrap a box, it is also committing to maintain it. Maintaining the box includes ensuring that the artwork remains in good condition and promptly removing all graffiti or damage. Please see the technical guidelines, starting on page 15, for tips about maintenance products and how to use them.

If the process of removing graffiti damages the artwork layer, the artist must be contacted to repair the damage and recoat the box. Damaged vinyl wraps must be replaced in their entirety; wrap vendor agreements might include one free re-wrap.

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Closing the Project

Generally after three to five years, the artwork will start to show significant aging due to scuffing or fading, or by the vinyl wrap losing color, integrity, or adhesion. This means that the project has reached the end of its useful life, as public art often does. When this happens—or at the five-year mark even if the artwork still looks good—the project must be closed out by notifying the Arts Council of the artwork’s termination. At this time the group must remove any coatings according to the technical instructions and return the boxes to “blank” condition by repainting them a neutral color (typically a light gray).

Alternatively, the group can apply for a new round of artwork on the same box by submitting a new application and artist design.

Artforce Project, Brisbane, Australia

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Technical guidelines for traffic signal box artwork

If created with the proper materials and techniques, artwork on traffic signal boxes can look freshly done for a minimum of three to five years.

Longevity depends on three factors:

- Proper surface preparation
- Use of high-quality materials
- Protective coating applied over image layer

Another important factor in longevity is to look at all the materials used as a SYSTEM. There are a number of different high-quality brands and products available, and the products in a brand line are made to work together. Mixing products from different brands often produces poor results, so don’t choose your products based solely on the price for each step. Review the cost of the system as a whole and select your products based on which brand line will answer all of your needs throughout the process.

WRAPPED BOXES

Wrapped boxes consist of a layer of very thin (max 0.05 mm), printed adhesive vinyl that has been cut to shape and carefully applied to the metal box. The printing technique is usually inkjet printing, however, screenprinting may also be possible for some vinyl products.

Do not attempt to print the vinyl yourself. Contact a qualified graphics vendor to print, cut, and apply the vinyl. Artists will need to supply a high-resolution digital image to the vendor. Follow all vendor requirements for file size, resolution, and format.

Choosing a vinyl wrap vendor

It is strongly recommended that you select a vendor that is local and can provide and warranty all aspects of the wrap, rather than ordering your printed and cut vinyl over the Internet and getting a local vendor to install it. The Arts Council has reviewed the work of the following Indianapolis vendors and pre-certified them for quality of materials, compliance with preferred technique, and excellence of application:

- **Serigraphics**: contact Matt Fuller, mfuller@ki-brands.com or (317) 388-5585. Cost will be $700-$1000 per box, including installation. No free re-wrap if wrap gets damaged, but replacement cost will be less than initial cost.
- **Sport Graphics**: contact Duncan Hewitt, dhewitt@sportg.com or (317) 899-7000, ext. 153. Cost will be $700-$1000 per box, including installation. Discounts may apply depending on consistency of size and design between boxes. Depending on the nature

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of the order, may be able to do 1 free re-wrap per order if original is damaged by vandalism.

- **FastSigns**: contact Amanda, 215@fastsigns.com or (317) 334-1149. Cost will be $700-$1000 per box, including installation. Provides a 1-year warranty against fading and installation failure.

**Choosing a vinyl wrap product**

Ask about the products that the vendor will use, then obtain a sample and carefully review the technical specifications to confirm that they are appropriate for your artists’ designs. Consider the following as you choose your product:

- 3M makes the most popular vinyl products for this type of application. If a vendor offers you an off-brand product, carefully review the product specifications (available from the manufacturer’s website) to see how they compare to the 3M products. The Arts Council can send you the 3M product information upon request.

- The two most common 3M product lines are the ScotchCal (IJ40) and ControlTac (180) lines. ScotchCal is a thinner, “calendared” film intended for shorter-term or smaller size applications on very flat or gently curved surfaces. ControlTac is a high-grade “cast” film generally used for semi-permanent or permanent, larger size applications (bus wraps, trucks, building walls) to closely resemble a painted finish. Either can work for an application intended to last for 3-5 years; **however, neither product is warranted for use on bare metal stainless steel boxes**. If you decide to use it outside of the warranty specifications, performance is not guaranteed.

- The ScotchCal vinyl product is available in opaque white or transparent; ControlTac is available in opaque white only. This choice may affect the look of the colors that are printed on them and the design techniques artists can use.

- Both 3M vinyl products are available in glossy or matte finish.

- Both 3M lines have two basic types of adhesive options: a regular adhesive and a type called “Comply,” which has air egress channels for easier application. Your vendor might automatically use the Comply adhesive, in which case you should review a sample to see if the channels are visible and if the artist’s design would be adversely affected. Either adhesive is available in a choice of gray or transparent; however, the ControlTac offers light-colored and metallic adhesive options, which may serve to enhance the artist’s design.

- ScotchCal is available with a “removable” adhesive, which is recommended for easier changeover at the end of the life of the artwork but may not provide sufficient adhesion to a box that has been previously painted. ControlTac’s adhesive is “permanent,” which can actually be removed, but with a lot of work and possibly incomplete results. The removal of either product will require heat or a chemical solvent.

- For either product, specify that you want an “overlaminate,” which is a clear protective layer that will keep the printed image layer intact, reduce sun fading, and make graffiti removal easier. Over laminates are available in film or liquid, with a glossy or matte finish. A film overlaminate is preferred for this particular application; consult the artist for his/her finish preference. The vendor should match the type of film overlaminate

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(calendared or cast) to the type of printed vinyl film as they are meant to work as a system.

**Surface preparation for vinyl wraps**

**Always read the manufacturer’s surface preparation guidelines for the product you have selected **BEFORE** beginning work.** In general, adhesive vinyl products are meant to be applied to bare, clean, smooth surfaces that are flat or have simple curves only.

Negotiate with your vendor whether you are to prepare the surface or if it is part of their installation services. If at all possible, have the vendor prepare the surface in order to keep their warranty intact, even if the cost to do so is not included in their installation pricing.

For successful installation the temperature of the substrate and the surrounding air must be over 50 degrees F; schedule your vinyl wrap installation for late spring, summer, or early fall.

Remove all stickers, oil, grease, dirt, rust, and loose paint from all surfaces of the box by using a wire brush, hot soapy water, and a mild solvent such as mineral spirits. Tightly adhered paint can usually remain.

Wash the surface with hot soapy water after using mineral spirits, then rinse thoroughly with plain water.

Manually dry the surface of the box and allow to thoroughly air-dry before vinyl installation. Some vinyl products can be applied to a wet substrate; check with your vendor if the product they are using is one of them.

A sacrificial wax coating is generally not required with a vinyl wrap product, as the overlaminate does the job adequately; however, if you find that a wrapped box is repeatedly vandalized and you cannot remove it with typical removal products, you may want to apply one anyway. See below under “Painted Boxes” for information on product choices and application techniques.

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**Painted Boxes**

Painted boxes consist of a primer layer, paint layer(s), and two layers of protective coating: a UV-filtering clearcoat to protect the paint and a thin layer of wax over the clearcoat to protect against permanent damage from graffiti.

The wax coating is removed (“sacrificed”) as part of the successful removal of graffiti or other surface vandalism and so must be re-coated immediately.

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*Questions?* Contact Julia Moore, jmoore@indyarts.org or Lindsey Lord, llord@indyarts.org or by phone: (317) 631-3301.
Surface preparation for painted boxes

1) **Always read the manufacturer’s surface preparation guidelines for the product you have selected BEFORE beginning work.** Certain primers and adhesives are meant to adhere to smooth surfaces, others to lightly roughened surfaces. Some will react poorly to certain types of cleaners or solvents.

2) It is a good idea to cover bare metal with a coat of a primer product, to hide old graffiti and make the paint stick better. Primer products may be clear or colored. If the primer product is clear, you might want to make your first paint layer a bright white to make your colors brighter. If you have a choice of colored primers, choose the brightest white available.

3) Remove all stickers, oil, grease, dirt, loose rust, and loose paint from all surfaces of the box by using a wire brush, hot soapy water and a mild solvent such as mineral spirits. Tightly adhered rust or paint can usually remain and be painted over.

4) Wash the surface with hot soapy water after using mineral spirits, then rinse thoroughly with plain water.

5) Manually dry the surface of the box and allow to thoroughly air-dry, then just before priming, use a non-shedding tack cloth to thoroughly remove all dust that has settled since drying.

6) Perform additional surface preparation as directed by the manufacturer’s instructions for your selected primer product.

7) Apply your paint system’s primer product according to the manufacturer’s instructions to create a smooth surface that will hold the first paint layer.

8) If your chosen paint system does not have a primer associated with the line, Zinsser’s Bulls Eye 1-2-3 is a high-quality, multi-surface, water-based primer that is easily obtained and compatible with most paint choices. [http://www.rustoleum.com/product-catalog/consumer-brands/zinsser/primer-sealers/bulls-eye-1-2-3-water-base-primer](http://www.rustoleum.com/product-catalog/consumer-brands/zinsser/primer-sealers/bulls-eye-1-2-3-water-base-primer)

Paint materials and color choices

1) **Do not use hobby-grade enamel paints (“model paints”) or “rust-guard” enamel paints from the home or hardware store.**

2) **Do not use hardware-store-type aerosol paints (Krylon, Rustoleum or similar).** If you want to apply paint using an aerosol technique, use an airbrush applicator with the paint products recommended below; check with the manufacturer’s instructions first to ensure they can be safely aerosolized.

3) When selecting paints, look for the words “commercial” or “industrial,” as these will last longer.

4) For your own personal health and safety during paint application, look for products labeled “low VOC” or “green.” Some labeling might include the words “Green Seal” or
“Green Guard”—these are voluntary environmental certification programs that manufacturers can participate in.

5) **Do not choose gloss finish paints**—remember, you will be adding a clearcoat that can add shine if you want. Use low-sheen, eggshell, or satin finish paints.

6) **Automotive-grade paints** of the type used for artistic designs on cars can be used, but with extreme caution; they are usually highly toxic and must be applied under specific safety conditions.

7) **High-quality, water-soluble artist-grade acrylic paints** of the type used for exterior murals are good choices. Check with the manufacturer for recommended products for priming and clearcoating—often this information is on their website in the form of technical documents. Preferred brands and lines are as follows:
   - **NovaColor**: [http://www.novacolorpaint.com](http://www.novacolorpaint.com)
   - **Golden Artist Colors**: [http://www.goldenpaints.com](http://www.goldenpaints.com)
   - **Liquitex Acrylic Paints**: [http://www.liquitex.com/US/](http://www.liquitex.com/US/) (note: do not use Liquitex spray paints or acrylic markers, as they do not last well for this type of application)

8) A long-lasting, yet cost-effective type of paint for use on traffic signal boxes is **“premium” exterior grade waterborne 100% acrylic latex paint**. *Interior-grade latex house paints are not recommended.* Preferred brands and lines are as follows:
     (note that this is listed as “self-priming”—check with manufacturer before using a separate primer over bare metal)
     (note that this is listed as “self-priming in most situations”—check with manufacturer before using a separate primer)

9) Use factory- or store-blended paints color-matched to your design rather than trying to save money by buying premixed basic colors and further mixing your own from them. Pre-blended colors will last longer and will remain consistent if you need to repaint. Bright primary colors will fade faster even with a UV-filtering clearcoat; try to avoid basing your design on these colors. Understand that colors will not fade evenly, so if you use bright colors anywhere, assume they will fade first and finalize your design using a faded version of your brights.

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Site and painting techniques

1) Do not block sidewalks, crosswalks or traffic lanes while painting your signal box. If necessary, the Arts Council can help you apply for a sidewalk or lane closing permit if working safely will require it. The fee for such permits will likely be waived if you work through us; otherwise you will incur a fine for encroaching on the public right of way without permission.

2) Use traffic cones and/or caution tape to block off your working area.

3) Cover the space surrounding your work area with two layers of a dropcloth.

4) Use a protective facemask to screen out fumes, and consider using eye protection as well.

5) Use low-tack masking tape to mask off areas that must remain unpainted.

6) **Do not block or cover vents, keyholes, or light sensors.** These are necessary to make the signal control box work as intended. If you are using vinyl wraps, convey this to your vendor/installer (although they probably already know).

7) **If using aerosol techniques:** do not direct paint upward around the vent area. Avoid paint entering the box and damaging the sensitive electronics used to control the traffic signals.

8) Apply paint to a minimum 1.5 mil dry thickness per coat (a “mil” is a thousandth of an inch).

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9) Allow paint to dry thoroughly between coats or layers unless you are blending wet-in-wet for a particular effect.

10) Clean up spills while still wet and easy to remove: this will save power-washing of dry spilled paint later.

11) Do not dump excess paint, paint residue or paint-water into the city sewer system or into the grass or soil around the box. Remove your paint waste and dispose of properly; consult the following for locations:


12) Give any remaining clearcoat and wax product to the neighborhood leader for use in maintaining the box. Keep your paints in case the neighborhood asks you to repaint.

**Clearcoating**

1) **Try to use a varnish or clearcoat product that is made specifically for use with your selected paint product.** Use the manufacturer’s website to help you decide which clearcoat product you will use: often there will be several choices. If there is no product in the line, ask your paint manufacturer for recommendations.

2) Use a clearcoat marked as “anti-UV,” “UV filtering,” or “UV inhibiting.” This will slow— but not prevent—fading of your paint layers. About 90% of the original color intensity will persist for the expected 3-5 year life of the painting. Check product information for testing data and expected life.

3) Do not use a clearcoat product that will inhibit the later adhesion of your sacrificial wax coating. If you keep to the same product line for paint, clearcoat, and wax you will most likely be fine. (example: Genesis Coatings, [http://www.genesiscoatings.com](http://www.genesiscoatings.com) does not make paints but makes a clearcoat product called GCP1000 that has some graffiti-resistant properties and is compatible with their Graffiti Melt sacrificial wax coating; however, it has no UV inhibiting properties and cannot be used alone as a non-sacrificial coating, as it is water-based and will soon wear off)

4) If you have to use different product lines for paint and the later coatings, use an isolating layer for your paint (like a matte or gloss medium—let it dry thoroughly), then use the clearcoat recommended for use under your sacrificial coating product, making sure it will not dissolve your isolating layer.

**Sacrificial wax coating**

1) Sacrificial wax coatings are generally matte- or satin-finished: do not expect your finished box art to be super-glossy. Check product information for gloss level.

2) When choosing a product, first look to see if your paint manufacturer has one in its line that is specially made to work with their paint products. If not, ask them for a recommendation.

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3) Look for the following in a sacrificial coating: pH between 7 and 8.5; non-color-changing; nonflammable; EPA and OSHA compliant; nontoxic and should not require any special containment or disposal procedures. Look for a product life of at least 5 years before natural degradation/yellowing and a shelf life of minimum 12 months. Additional UV protection is a plus.

4) Sacrificial wax products, along with their graffiti, can be removed either with a chemical made to dissolve the product or via careful pressure-washing with hot water; some can be removed by only one or the other. Try to minimize the use of chemicals when removing the wax product and check whether the chemical necessary to remove the wax coating is compatible with your clearcoat layer. Remember that this removal will most likely be done by community volunteers; make things easy for them!

5) Recommended sacrificial wax products are: (remember to read all application instructions and product information prior to purchasing, and check compatibility with your paint manufacturer)

   o **Genesis Graffiti Melt Coating** (to remove graffiti + coating from painted TSBs, use Genesis Eaze Away Remover, or hot pressure washing)  
     Caveat: this coating has a pH of 9.3 and must be used over BOTH an isolating layer of gloss medium AND an appropriate clearcoat to avoid damage of paint layer(s). Note that the paint and clearcoat needs to cure for 30 days before applying this coating. This coating is to be brushed or sprayed on, *not rolled*.

   o **Prosoco Defacer Eraser Sacrificial Coating SC-1** (to remove graffiti + coating, use Prosoco Defacer Eraser Graffiti Wipes or Prosoco Sure-Klean Fast Acting Stripper, or hot pressure washing)  
     [http://www.prosoco.com/Products/fdd2a6c9-ca89-43ae-a726-40b5f4c3bba5](http://www.prosoco.com/Products/fdd2a6c9-ca89-43ae-a726-40b5f4c3bba5)  
     Caveats: this coating has a pH of 9.5 - 10 and must be used over BOTH an isolating layer of gloss medium AND an appropriate clearcoat to avoid damage of paint layer(s). Protect from rain for 2 hours after application. Do not use on horizontal surfaces like the top of the TSB. Must be sprayed on, *not brushed or rolled*. Up to 4 coats may be necessary: under certain circumstances this product may enhance “graffiti shadow” and 1 or 2 coats of coating may need to be removed as shadows are removed.

**MAINTENANCE**

Groups requesting boxes are required to maintain the artwork on the traffic signal boxes they have committed to paint or wrap. It is a good plan to assign neighborhood volunteers to daily monitor one box each so vandalism is caught early. If the box itself is damaged or dented, let the Arts Council know—DPW will want to replace the box and it is up to the group to decide whether or not to replace the artwork.

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Here are some products and techniques to use in the maintenance of traffic signal box art:

1) Attempt to remove the defacing material as soon as you see it, within 24 hours if possible and within 48 hours at the latest. Most materials become more difficult to remove the longer they are left on, and more vandalism is attracted if the defacement is left alone for too long. In addition, new zoning codes will result in citations and fines if graffiti is not removed within a certain time frame.

2) Wear protective clothing, facemasks, protective gloves, and eyewear when removing graffiti, stickers, or other vandalism.

3) Identify what you are trying to remove: is it marker, spray paint, adhesive? Each will require different techniques to get rid of them.

4) Start with the mildest method to remove the graffiti and then work up.

5) Begin with a manual removal using hot (140-180 F) soapy water and a Scotch-Bright non-scratch (blue) scrubby sponge, soft brush, or very fine (0000) steel wool, scrubbing very gently at first and using only as much abrasion as necessary. This will in most cases remove the wax coating (if box is painted) along with any graffiti material and you will not need to go any further—remember to stop when you reach the clearcoat layer! For wrapped boxes, this technique will not damage the overlaminate.

6) If this does not work, use the graffiti removal chemical recommended by the wax coating product manufacturer and carefully follow the manufacturer’s instructions for application. This will also remove the wax. For wrapped boxes, try So-Safe Yellow (http://www.sosafeusa.com/products/graffiti-remover/) or Graffiti Safe-wipes (http://www.graffitisafewipes.com/) at this stage; but do not let the chemical sit or it might damage the overlaminate on vinyl wrapped boxes.

7) If all the vandalism (and wax, if box is painted) is removed at this stage, dry thoroughly and then recoat with wax in the local area you just cleaned (if box is painted), applying according to the coating manufacturer’s instructions.

8) If the box is vandalized all over, do not attempt to remove just the tagging. Carefully pressure-wash the entire box with hot water and the lowest effective pressure setting to remove the wax coating with the material, then recoat the whole box with wax. The water should be directed downward, particularly around the venting, to avoid water leakage into the box that can cause an electrical short. Be careful not to strip off the clearcoat layer or any paint. Keeping the pressure setting under 1000psi will typically not damage the underlayers and will allow control of the sprayer to avoid water entering the cabinet.

9) If the material has penetrated through the wax layer and is sitting on the clearcoat layer, carefully apply denatured alcohol, Graffiti SafeWipes, or Lift-Off (or a similar product, such as So-Safe Yellow) only on the remaining material without soaking the area. Leave to penetrate for no more than 1 minute. For the denatured alcohol or Lift-Off/So-Safe, gently scrub with with Q-tips, cotton balls, paper towel, the rough side of a blue scrubby sponge or a white Magic Eraser pad. Remove material in thin layers. Wipe excess solvent off immediately with a clean, dry cloth (such as a washed cloth diaper; if you are using SafeWipes, use the corresponding AfterWipe product to remove residue) and rinse with warm soapy water or the remover chemical will penetrate the clearcoat layer. Repeat as necessary until all material is gone. If you see the paint color coming off on
your wipe or other tool, STOP and cover the box with plastic sheeting until you can contact the artist to work with you on the remaining removal.

10) If the artist’s paint has been removed, the artist must repaint and re-clearcoat the artwork. S/he may elect to re-apply the wax coating, or may allow you to do it. REAPPLICATION OF THE WAX COATING IS REQUIRED. The artist may decide to charge the neighborhood for this work.

11) If you find a wrapped box is regularly and repeatedly vandalized, consider re-wrapping the box and applying a sacrificial wax coating on top of the overlaminate to make maintenance easier.

12) If you find a painted box is regularly and repeatedly vandalized with a particular material that routinely penetrates the wax coating, you may need to remove all the wax, have the artist repair the paint, clearcoat again, and use a permanent nonsacrificial protection product such as Frog Shield, which is a heavy-duty two-part clearcoat that is UV-shielding and resists the serious chemicals necessary for major graffiti removal: (http://www.alumapanel.com/view_product.cfm?step=1&lines_ID=709&name=Frog%20Shield%20Anti%20Graffiti%20Coating) Another product is the DLS NanoTech 9H high performance coating, made for automobiles. It is very hard and high-gloss. (http://www.chosenano.com/portal_a1.php?owner_num=a1_9550&button_num=a1) Read product information carefully: the majority of these non-sacrificial products are designed for masonry and do not perform on nonporous painted surfaces. **We do not recommend using these products unless absolutely necessary**, as they are expensive, toxic to apply, can change the color of the design layer, restrict the types of chemicals that can be used to remove graffiti, over time may destroy the clearcoat protecting the paint, and will make preparing the box for the next artist extremely difficult. Please consult the Arts Council before taking this step and we will involve DPW in the decision to use these products.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Q: How much will a traffic signal box art project cost?
A: It depends on the materials you choose, how many boxes you include, and what you decide to pay your artists. For budgeting purposes, assume it will cost between $800 and $2,000 per box between materials and artist fees. $1,200 is a good per-box budget target; increasing the artist fee will attract higher-quality artists to participate.

Q: Can nonartists design traffic signal boxes?
A: Yes, but their designs must still be pre-approved by the group’s selection panel and the Arts Council through the process outlined above.

Q: Will the Arts Council tell us what we can put on our traffic signal boxes as art?
A: No. Aside from the guidelines established in this packet, the submitting group is empowered to determine the designs that will be submitted to the Arts Council for review.

Q: Does the Arts Council understand that these may be designs by community members, and not always professional artists?
A: Yes, this is the understanding; nevertheless, there are certain minimum aesthetic and technical criteria that must be met.

Q: Could the Arts Council reject a design that we submit?
A: Yes, in theory; but in practice the Arts Council will have been sufficiently involved in the process of developing the artwork so that designs will almost always be approved. The Arts Council may also make suggestions for improvement or ask for a redesign prior to approval.

Q: Can someone other than the artist, such as a neighborhood volunteer, paint the approved design on the box under the artist’s supervision?
A: Yes. You can ask an artist to create “line work” to be painted in by community members. If this is an important part of your project please be sure to mention it on the application form where it asks you to describe your process. When it comes time to paint, ensure that volunteers sign the appropriate liability waiver. The Arts Council can give you a model waiver form.

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Q: Why do we have to get neighborhood association and adjacent property owner approval if the box is on public property?
A: The City wants to ensure that everyone with a stake in how the neighborhood looks and feels is given the opportunity to speak out before the project starts. We understand that not every design is going to please everybody, but we want to make sure that the artwork won’t be suddenly destroyed because it is offensive or incompatible with the image someone wants to present.

Q: What other approvals should we be prepared to get?
A: If the box is located in a designated historic district, the Arts Council will approach the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC) staff with the design. Since the artwork is considered temporary, it is likely that a staff review will be sufficient to allow the project to proceed. It is not anticipated that the design would need to be reviewed by the full IHPC, but just in case, if you are in a historic district please allow twelve weeks (three full months) between submission of the design to the Arts Council and the anticipated installation date.

Q: What if the completed box is hit by a car or otherwise physically damaged?
A: Unfortunately, the artwork would be damaged as well and the box will need to be replaced by the city. The required artist agreement explicitly exempts the City of Indianapolis from any liability for this kind of damage to the artwork. It is up to the sponsoring group whether or not to commission the artist or vinyl wrap vendor to recreate the design on the new box.

Q: What if DPW moves the box to another location—are we still responsible for maintaining it?
A: If it remains within the same neighborhood, yes; if moved outside the neighborhood, then DPW will release you from your agreement to maintain it. If the box must be moved out of the neighborhood, DPW will likely paint over the artwork with a neutral color; the MOU the group signs with DPW indicates their understanding of this potential circumstance, as does the agreement the artist signs with the group.
Arts Council Public Art Selection Committee (PASC):

- **Robert Chester**, Curator, Crispus Attucks Museum (Indianapolis Public Schools)
- **LaShawnda Crowe Storm**, artist and community activist
- **Holliday Day**, Emeritus Curator of Contemporary Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art
- **Vance Farrow**, artist and Associate Professor of Foundation Studies, Herron School of Art / IUPUI
- **JoAnn Green**, landscape architect and principal at LandStory
- **Kyle Herrington**, Director of Exhibitions and Artist Services, Indianapolis Art Center
- **Laura Holzman**, Associate Professor and Public Scholar of Curatorial Practices and Visual Art, IUPUI
- **Wil Marquez**, urban designer and principal at w/purpose
- **Jennifer Complo McNutt**, Curator of Contemporary Art, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art
- **William Potter**, artist and Associate Professor of Foundation Studies, Herron School of Art / IUPUI
- **Mark Ruschman**, Curator of Fine Art, Indiana State Museum
- **Dee Schaad**, artist and Emeritus Professor of Art, University of Indianapolis
- **Carlos Sosa**, graphic designer and President/CEO, The Sosa Group

There are also three qualified community volunteers who have been approved by the Arts Council to assist the PASC with certain types of selection processes, including traffic signal control box art projects. A current list and contact information is available upon request.

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