

# Cornell Rouge National Urban Park Gateway Study Final Report

Development Services Committee  
January 27, 2020

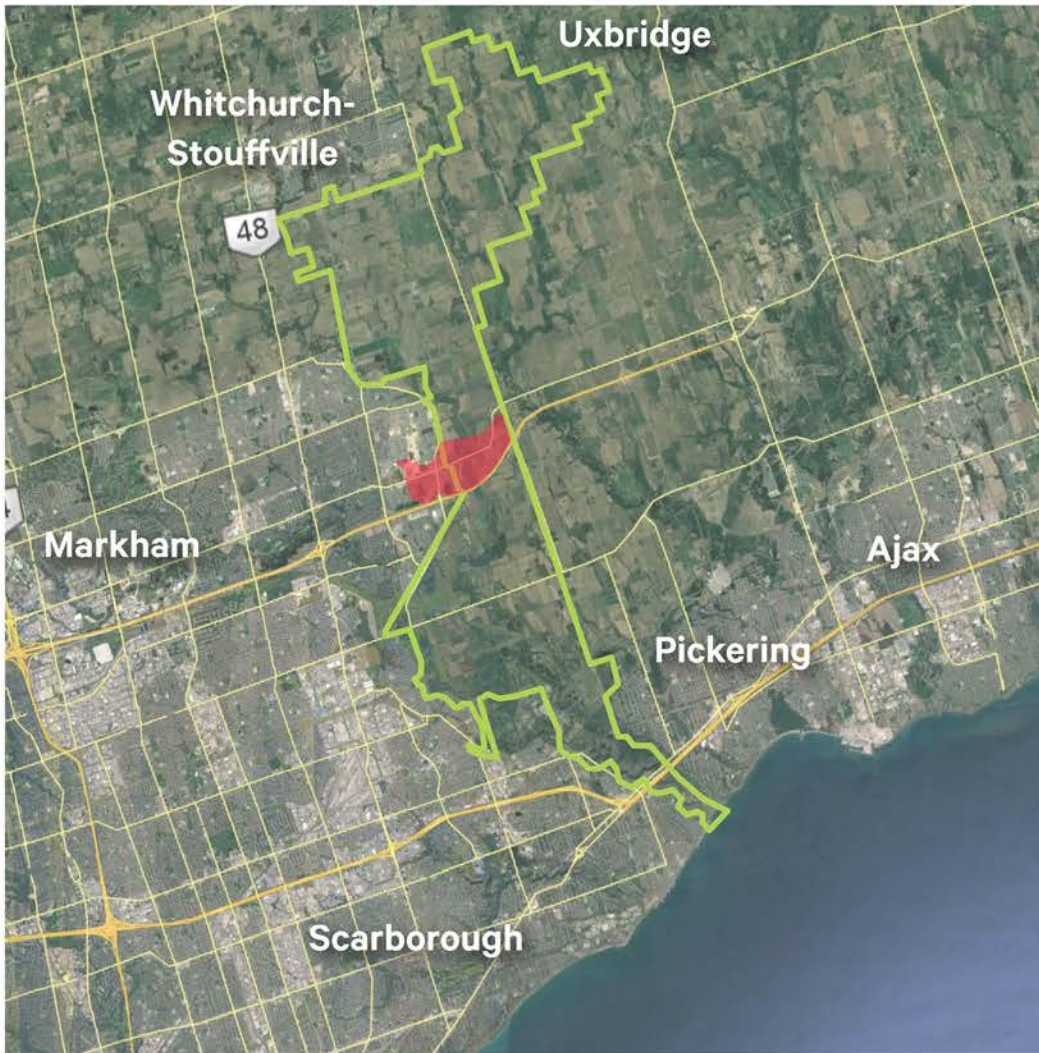


# Presentation Highlights

- **Background and Vision (Staff)**
- **Cornell RNUP Gateway Highlights (SvN)**
  - Reesor Road Improvements
  - Highway 7 Improvements
  - Cornell Centre Pedestrian Realm
  - Interface to RNUP
  - RNUP
- **Implementation (Staff)**
- **Staff Report Recommendations (Staff)**



# Study Area in the Context of the Park



## Legend

-  Study Area
-  Rouge National Urban Park

# Video: Study Area





# Cornell RNUP Gateway Study

The purpose of the study is to prepare a Gateway Streetscape Concept Plan and Implementation Framework to create a **highly articulated public realm** that functions as a gateway into the Rouge National Urban Park.

The gateway is envisioned to **seamlessly connect urban public spaces** along Highway 7 and the Cornell community with park facilities of the Rouge National Urban Park, including potential visitor opportunities extending to the park's east limits and the Hamlet of Locust Hill.



# Different Types of Gateways

## Qualities of a Gateway:

- A transition from one place to another
- Strong sense of arrival
- Consider cultural, historical, geological, ecological aspects of the overall site
- Can include architecture, landscape, earthwork, plantings, structures, signage or public art



Iconic



Landscape



Built Form

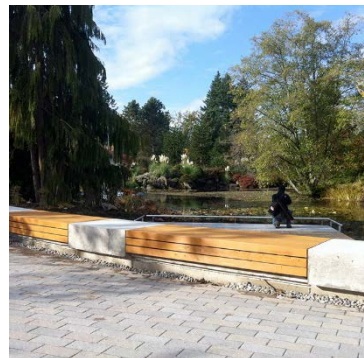




# Gateways can *Create an Experience*

## Vision for the Cornell RNUP Gateway

- Great public and private place
- Memorable
- A legacy for generations to come
- Beautiful architecture
- Public art
- Accessible and linked to community
- Comfortable, attractive and safe
- A destination with activities (social, recreation and respite)
- Inspirational
- Educational
- Provides tourism, employment and business opportunities



# Cornell RNUP Gateway Highlights



# Study Area Context

## Highly Urban Cornell Centre

- rapid transit corridor
- key development area
- mid and high-rise buildings
- regional employment centre
- 17,000 – 18,000 pop
- 9,000 units
- 14,500 – 15,500 jobs



## Transition Gateway

- entrance to the RNUP
- RNUP Visitor Centre
- visual transition
- Pedestrian/cycling connections
- reduce road speeds
- streetscape improvements

### Cornell RNUP Gateway Study



## Rural/Natural RNUP

- Canada's only national urban park
- 7910 ha (23 times the size of central park)
- Spans 4 municipalities and connects Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario
- 1700 species of plants, animals and fungi
- Valleylands, wetlands, agriculture



# Applying the Gateway Principles

**VISION**

## Urban Community



### Cornell

Vibrant, sustainable, stable residential community that is well-served by beautiful parks and retail services within walking distance;  
Connected parks and natural heritage system;  
Continued development of the mixed-use health care campus centred on the Markham-Stouffville Hospital

## Urban Hub



### Cornell Centre

High-density mixed-use centre; Cornell Transit Hub and terminus for Bus Rapid Transit;  
Pedestrian promenade and ground-floor retail along Highway 7;  
Urban seating and gathering spaces;  
Placemaking through incorporation of cultural heritage resources, architectural design and public art;  
Park-supportive uses such as hotels, restaurants, entertainment, retail and cultural establishments;  
Connected parks and natural heritage system;  
Transition of building height and setbacks to protect views into the RNUP

## Urban-Park Transition



### Reesor Road / Highway 7 Intersection

Pedestrian bridge over Highway 7 as the iconic landmark of the Gateway;  
Protected view corridors from Cornell to RNUP;  
Protection of Reesor Road as a rural countryside road;  
Scenic countryside route preserved on Reesor Road through streetscape design and adjacent landscaping;  
Placemaking through incorporation of cultural heritage resources, architectural design and public art;  
Active transportation (east-west) connections between Cornell and RNUP

## Park Hub



### Rouge National Urban Park Welcome Area

Construction and operation of the primary welcome area in Markham;  
World-class visitor experiences and park-based activities;  
Educational and interpretive areas that highlight the natural, cultural and agricultural heritage of RNUP;  
Starting point for trail systems that connect throughout RNUP and neighbouring municipalities

## Park Community



### Locust Hill Hamlet and RNUP Agricultural Lands

Preservation and celebration of cultural heritage landscapes and rural/agricultural lifestyle;  
Reduced traffic speeds through the hamlet and improved access to existing properties;  
Improved landscaping, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure;  
Small-scale, park-supportive uses such as B&Bs, restaurants, retail and artisan studios;  
Future GO Rail and York Region Transit service

**OVERARCHING  
PRINCIPLES**

**Creating a Network of Inspirational Public Open Spaces  
Providing Transit and Active Transportation Connections  
Celebrating our Natural, Cultural and Agricultural Heritage**



# Gateway Vision

## The Pedestrian Promenade

### Improve Environmental Sustainability

- Increase tree canopy and adopt a planting scheme that highlights colour and texture
- Street design to complement adjacent Park and other open spaces
- Incorporate greening infrastructure and stormwater management strategies

### Create Attractive and Vibrant Public Spaces

- Design spaces that encourage gathering and social interaction
- Include space for public art and street furniture
- Provide a network of continuous sidewalks
- Provide safe cycling infrastructure
- Prioritize ground-floor retail and tourist-related uses along Highway 7
- Provide building designs that frame the street with interesting architectural design, massing and facades

## The Park

### Enhance Connections

- Enhance east-west connections to the park
- Create a safe crossing for Highway 7
- Integrate streetscape design with the Welcome Area
- Encourage uses and programs to activate and support the Park

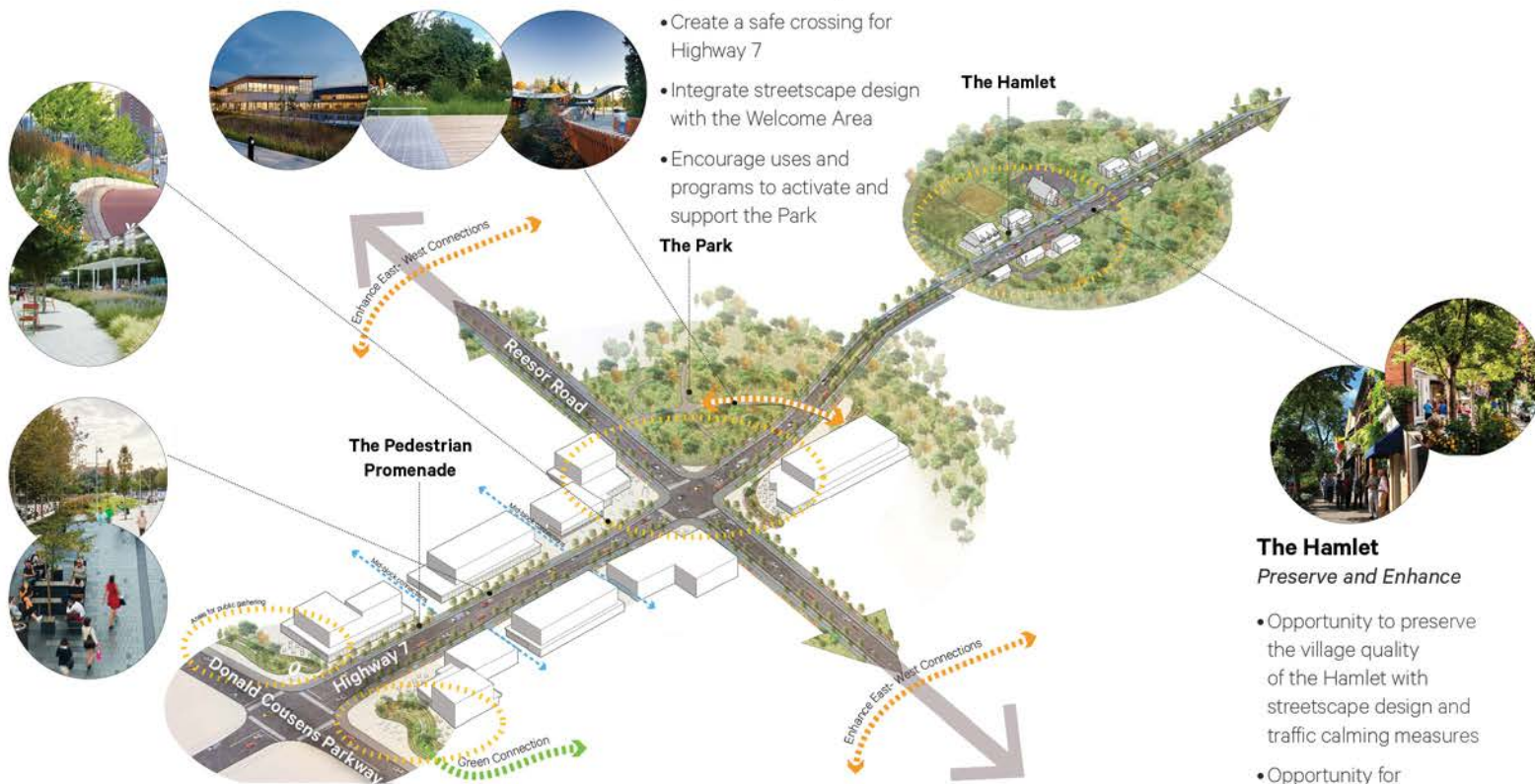
## The Park

## The Hamlet

## The Hamlet

### Preserve and Enhance

- Opportunity to preserve the village quality of the Hamlet with streetscape design and traffic calming measures
- Opportunity for adaptive re-use for commercial use



*Creating a unique, celebratory and visionary space*

# Reesor Road Improvements



Looking north, south of Highway 7



# Highway 7 Improvements



Looking east at Reesor Road

# Highway 7 Improvements / Locust Hill Hamlet



West

East



Potential laybys in  
Locust Hill for school  
bus parking



Separated multi-use  
pathway on north side  
through Locust Hill



Trees in the boulevard  
and central median and  
signage to announce  
gateway from the east



# Cornell Centre Pedestrian Realm



West

East



Outdoor plaza  
with street  
furniture



Strong integration  
of building with  
landscape plaza



Safe crossings  
for cyclists and  
pedestrians



Trees in custom  
grates



Seating  
integrated with  
planter



Water feature  
integrated with  
plaza space



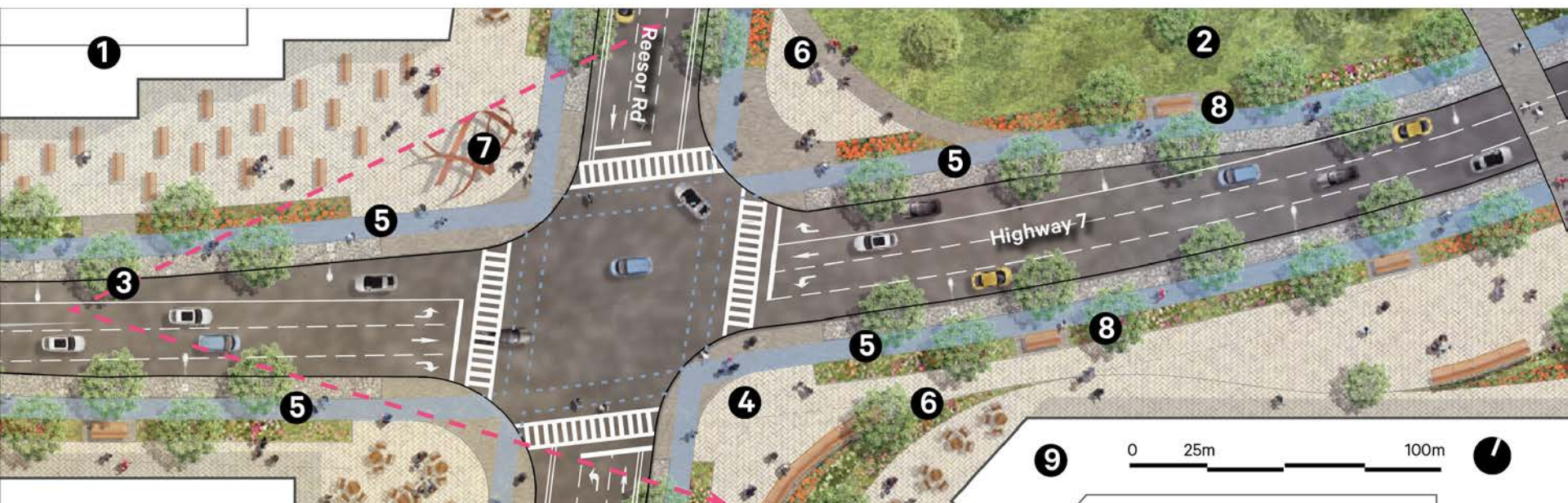
Opportunity  
for Privately-  
Owned Publicly  
Accessible  
Spaces (POPS)



Mid-block  
pedestrian  
connections



# Rouge National Urban Park Interface



Urban uses west



Park uses east



Protected  
viewshed into  
RNUP



Signalized  
intersection



Multi-use  
pathway in all  
directions



Protected  
heritage  
building & Cairn



Public Art



Signage



RNUP Visitor  
Area with  
Parking



# Rouge National Urban Park





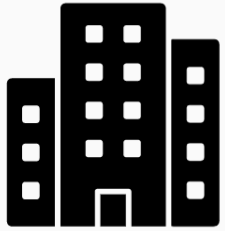
# Input and Consultation

- Landowner engagement at Markham Sub-Committee
- One-on-one meetings with Cornell landowners, Locust Hill residents, Ministry of Transportation, Parks Canada
- Open house/public information meeting (April 2019)
- Final Report landowner and agency circulation





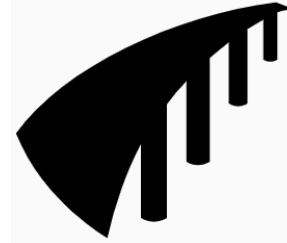
# Input Received - Key Messages & Challenges



Differing views on the ability to implement a strong public realm in the Gateway corridor within employment-designated lands



Locust Hill residents have expressed an interest in obtaining additional local municipal and utility services



Pedestrian bridge is the strong iconic feature anchoring the Gateway vision - partnership process and international competition may be needed to fund and implement this infrastructure



Utility mitigation preferred to address hydro infrastructure



Infrastructure Ontario lands strategically located to contribute to the Gateway – further engagement needed to align vision and priorities for land development



Engagement with MTO and Region on road improvements and traffic calming needed to implement the streetscape vision



**Canada**  
Regular engagement with Parks Canada would be beneficial to continue to explore tourism opportunities

# Key Priorities for Major Stakeholders



Incorporate appropriate gateway policies in the Cornell Centre Secondary Plan

Work with landowners to determine appropriate land uses, built form and urban design for lands east of Donald Cousens Parkway

Engage utilities to assess management of utility infrastructure (overhead utilities)

Work with York Region and MTO to advance streetscape improvements along Highway 7 and Reesor Road



Work in partnership with City to ensure trail connectivity and capitalize on tourism opportunities

Work in partnership with the City, Region and MTO to secure any road right-of-ways to address Reesor Road and Highway 7 improvements

Work in partnership with the City and other stakeholders on the bridge implementation and funding program

Implement Welcome Area and work with City to ensure design can accommodate the longer term vision for the pedestrian/cycling bridge

## Landowners



Work with City to determine appropriate land uses, built form and urban design for lands east of Donald Cousens Pkwy

Engage Infrastructure Ontario in site design exercise to address specific gateway design elements (interface with RNUP, Hwy 7 viewshed, Reesor Rd landscaping)

Work with the City to implement the pedestrian promenade and enhanced vision for the Highway 7 streetscape

Address technology and municipal service improvements in Locust Hill concurrent with streetscape improvements



# Implementation and Staff Report Recommendations

- Multi-faceted implementation program required
- Need support and buy-in of all stakeholders (Cornell Centre landowners, Locust Hill Hamlet residents, Infrastructure Ontario, York Region, Ministry of Transportation, Parks Canada and City of Markham)
- 10 Year implementation program recommended
- Staff Recommendations (DSC Staff Report)
  - Study be endorsed as a guiding framework
  - Initiate a block planning and land use exercise to determine appropriate land use, built form and streetscape design
  - Create a working group with transportation agencies to review opportunities to advance streetscape improvements along Highway 7 and Reesor Road and explore a multi-year design, funding and implementation strategy for a pedestrian access bridge over Highway 7
  - Work with senior staff at Parks Canada on tourism opportunities

Thank You