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Subject Title: Public Art Master Plan Status Update

Purpose:

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide an overview of the implementation progress of the City Council approved Making Our Markham: Markham’s Public Art Master Plan 2020-2024 and Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-2024. Below is a summary of key achievements and upcoming projects.

Background:

Approved in late 2019, Making Our Markham: Markham’s Public Art Master Plan 2020-2024 is the blueprint for a Public Art Program that celebrates the cultural diversity of Markham, fosters Markham’s role as a high-tech capital of Canada, promotes an engaged, thriving, and vibrant City, and contributes to the building of complete communities. Implementation of the Public Art Master Plan will distinguish Markham as a municipal leader in cultural development, celebration, and engagement.

Approved on February 24, 2020, the Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-2024 directs the development and execution of a successful public art program from 2020 to 2024 including prioritizing potential sites and opportunities for new public art projects in Markham, and identifying best practices for the administration and implementation of public art projects.

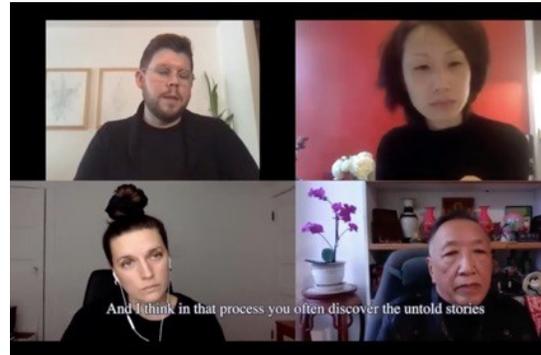
Key Accomplishments to Date

1. International Public Art Summit: Becoming Public Art

Unfolding from October 13 through December 8, 2020, “Becoming Public Art: Working Models and Case Studies for Art in Public” was a nine-week virtual summit co-curated by Markham’s Public Art Curator Yan Wu and Principal of ART+PUBLIC UnLtd Rebecca Carbin. Conceived in the context of the City’s recently approved *Public Art Master Plan 2020-2024*, the summit aimed to develop resources for those interested in the practice of contemporary public art.



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Designed to address issues that relate to the development of public art in Markham, the summit covered topics including: Collaborative Process; A Civic Role for Artists, Art and Urban Planning; Accessibility, Placemaking and Public Art; Site-Specificity and Public Art; Temporary Programming; The Digital Turn in Public Art; What is a Public Art Master Plan?; Public Art and City Planning; Public Art on Campus, and Public Art in Transit.

Initially planned as a three-day in-person event—including indoor presentations and discussions, outdoor guided public art tours, temporary installation, performance, and screening—in June 2020, due to the impact of COVID, the summit had to reconfigure itself swiftly and creatively into an online format featuring nine weekly live webinars combined with bi-weekly publication of written interviews and a constantly updated archival website.

In a series of online lectures, panel discussions, and interviews, an esteemed international group of 46 professionals (artists, architects, curators, fabricators, planners, and administrators) presented a broad range of perspectives that shape public art making today. The case studies discussed art works and programs in cities including Toronto, New York, Calgary, Hamburg, Michigan, Ottawa, Vancouver, Bennington, and Oslo. Councillor McAlpine, Councillor Ho, Councillor Rea, Mayor Scarpitti, and the Commissioner of Development Services, the Commissioner of Corporate Services, the Director of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship, the Managers of the Varley Art Gallery, and the Markham Museum each opened a live session of the summit, delivering a welcome on behalf of the City of Markham.

The summit was very well received by the public: out of the 3,491 registrations, 1,446 people attended the weekly live sessions on Zoom. Throughout the summit, the Public Art Program developed a mailing list with 800 followers and each newsletter produced for the summit has achieved over 50% opening rate.

The entire summit is archived and continues to be available at the project website: <https://yourvoicemarkham.ca/becoming-public-art>. The contents there have been used as research and teaching resources in at least 5 institutions: the University of Toronto, York University, OCAD University, Concordia University, the Rochester Institute of Technology in the US and the University of Münster in Germany. Colleagues at the Edmonton Arts Council and Toronto Art Council have used the summit for the purpose of professional development and team building. In

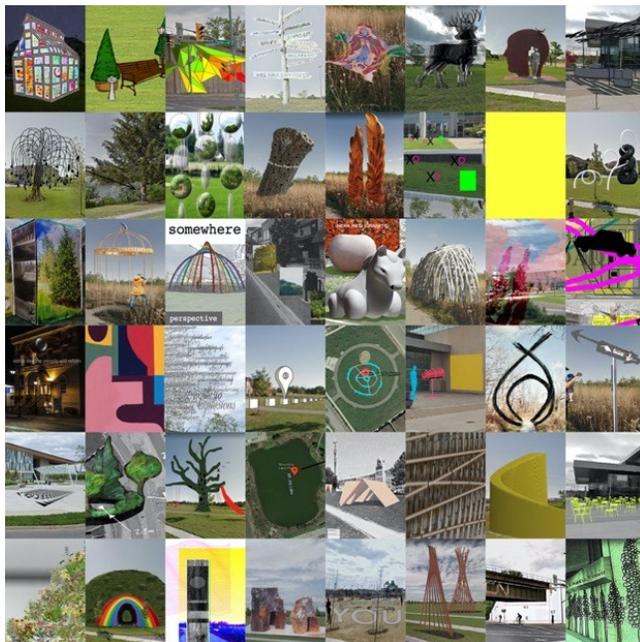
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In addition, we have received congratulation notes from the City of Munich, the Toronto Biennale of Art, the City of Oshawa, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, and more.

2. Online Public Art Competition and Workshops

Over the summer of 2020, Markham Public Art and the Varley Art Gallery of Markham successfully launched a digital initiative titled “Online”. It consisted of two components: a three-part webinar series focusing on the key aspects of public art production titled “Homework”, and an online competition for speculative public art proposals titled “Delimit”.

The intention of this online program was twofold. One was to provide the public with an online opportunity to participate in learning more about public art during the lockdown caused by COVID. Secondly, it served as a test platform in preparation for the production of the international public art summit later that fall. Out of 830 registrations, 567 people attended the webinars. A total of 48 proposals were submitted to the online competition. A jury consisting of artists, curators, architects, planners, and designers selected top 10 proposals.



Recordings of the “Homework” webinars can be found at:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnTCoRMOnclAwaQ7R2KplxtbUFheGIDs>

Top 10 proposals are presented on the Varley Art Gallery’s Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/varleyartgallery/>

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3. Temporary Public Art Installation by Native Art Department International

Created by artist collective Native Art Department International (NADI), Double Gazebo (Markham) is a temporary public artwork newly commissioned by the City of Markham’s Public Art Program and presented in partnership with the Varley Art Gallery of Markham. Now on view through November 28, 2021 at the outdoor courtyard of the Varley Art Gallery of Markham.



In parallel with the physical installation, NADI has also programmed a series of online activations titled “Walk East for Sun Rise Walk West for Sunset”. These five-part activations —With ARs, With Artists, With Movement, With Sound, With Star Knowledge—have been and will be launched on the project website on the first day of each month from July through November.

Project site: <https://yourvoicemarkham.ca/doublegazebo>

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4. New Acquisitions for the Public Art Circulation Collection

Fourteen new works were acquired for the Public Art Circulation Collection. These works will be on display in the Civic Centre. All of the works have a connection to Markham and have been created by artists of significant profile who work locally and internationally. This ongoing acquisitions program is designed to create a collection of works of appropriate stature for installation in the offices of senior staff and Councillors at the City of Markham.



- Artist: Geoffrey James, *Markham, Ontario*, 2010
Geoffrey James is a Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of the Gershon Iskowitz Prize and the Governor-General's Prize in Media and Visual Arts. He was the City of Toronto's first Photo Laureate.
- Artist: Xiaojing Yan, *Naturally Natural*, 2016-2019.
Her exhibition at Varley in 2017 2018 OAG (Ontario Association of Art Galleries) Exhibition Installation and Design Award.
- Artist: Esmaa Mohamoud, *Deeper the Wounded, Deeper the Roots*, 2019.
Recently moved to Markham, Esmaa Mohamoud is one of the most important and promising black artists of her generation.
- 11 prints by indigenous artists from the Dorset Fine Arts cooperative.

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Work in Progress

- **Markham Pan Am Centre Public Art Commission**

The Pan Am Centre public art project was identified as the first major commission in the *Implementation Plan* of the *Public Art Master Plan 2020-2024*. According to the *Implementation Plan*, the objective is to commission “a visually prominent, large-scale artwork to be seen from the highway as an icon of Markham, as well as to assist in making the Pan Am Plaza more inviting. Community members will be engaged in the development of the artist brief in order to determine priorities and parameters for the site.” Based on further study and site visits, consultation with local user groups, and internal discussion with the public art interdepartmental working group, three locations for public art opportunities have been identified. These are: the piazza located at south-east of the building, the east building façade at the corner of Enterprise and Main Street Unionville, and the west building façade facing the future York University campus. Given the architectural nature of the locations, the commission will be divided into two parts with a separate process.

The overall commissioning budget outlined in the *Implementation Plan* is \$850,000. That amount, drawn from the public art reserve fund, will cover the design, supply, fabrication, and installation of the artworks for all three identified locations. The budget for preliminary research and the survey required to prepare the design brief, fees for the external consultant who will lead the community engagement process, and all the costs involved in the international competition, will be funded by the 2021 Public Art budget.

- **Digital Public Art Program - Rail Underpass at Denison Street and Kennedy Road**

Markham’s Public Art Program and Public Realm Section with support from the Engineering Department are planning to jointly propose a third-party scope request for the Metrolinx underpass projects at Denison Street and Kennedy Road. The request will be to prepare the two underpasses at Denison Street and Kennedy Road for future lighting/digital-screen based public art projects. The artworks will be commissioned and installed on completion of the underpass construction. The project will afford the opportunity to work with York University students in an ongoing relationship. So far, lighting specialists at Mulvey & Banani Lighting Inc. have completed a feasibility study to assess the required technical infrastructure for the project. Currently the project is waiting for Metrolinx’s advice on next steps.

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- **York University: Curriculum development and Experiential Learning Opportunities**
The Public Art Program is currently in active conversation with the curriculum working group for the York University's new Markham campus about ways to engage students in various aspects of public art curatorial research, and to build these activities into the curriculum.

What to Expect in 2022

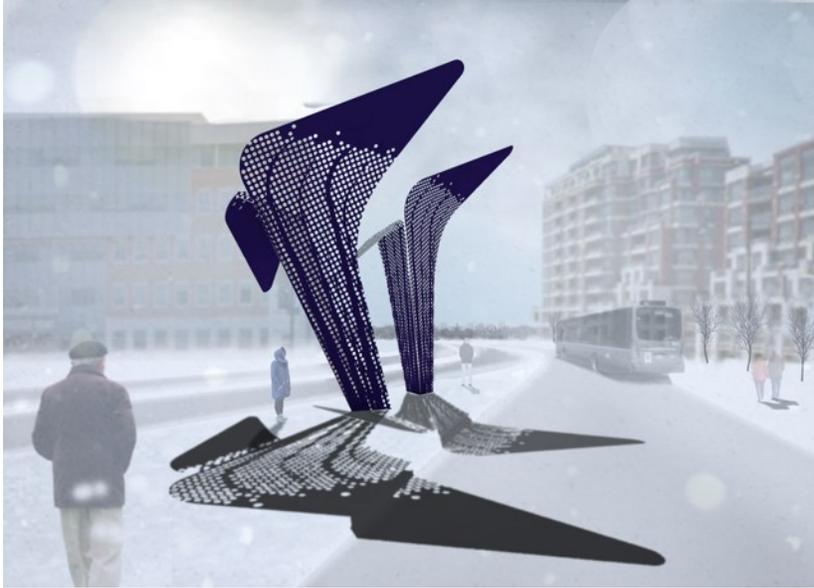
- **“Top Garden” Installation and Unveiling**



Facilitated by the Sustainability and Asset Management team, the components of the public art sculpture “Top Garden”, designed by GUILD, have now been transferred to the workshop of Toronto based fabricator Streamliner. The artwork will be completed and installed at the Aaniin Community Centre by Fall 2022.

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“Living Lights” Installation and Unveiling



The work is now at the final stage of fabrication. It will be completed and installed at downtown Markham (at Enterprise east of Warden) in spring/summer 2022.

- **Rouge Trail Seasonal Public Art Projects**

Over the course of 2022, a series of four commissioned temporary public artworks will be unveiled at four chosen locations along the City’s extensive trail systems, one in each season (spring, summer, fall, and winter), with various durations. Some work might be seasonal, some work might last up to 2 years, depending on the durability of the materials the artist chooses to work with. The Public Art Program is currently reviewing potential sites with inputs from the City’s Public Realm and Parks Departments. In addition to the Rouge Valley Trail and Lake to Lake Trail, the Berczy Park North and South are also being considered.

The project would celebrate the trail system and natural environment, promoting a walkable city for local residents and visitors, and provide a learning platform to improve our understanding and knowledge of land history, local vegetation, natural habitats, and indigenous culture.

- **"Our Park": A Community Art in the Park Summer Project Grant**

"Our Park" is envisioned to be an annual, open competition that engages Markham's local arts community and addresses underserved areas in the City. The grant will support one project by a local emerging artist/artist group or student group to be realized in one selected, existing park, located in the neighbourhood, that by summer 2022 does not yet have any public art investment. The location will be selected in consultation with the Departments of Parks or Operations who will also oversee the work’s installation and maintenance. Members of local community and arts organizations will be included in

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the selection jury. The grant amount will be \$25,000. The remaining \$5,000 is to cover the selection jury, meetings, admin expenses, project assistance, and promotion. The project is modelled after Toronto Arts Council's Animating Toronto Parks grant.

Distributed To:	Mayor and Council, CAO Andy Taylor, Commissioner Arvin Prasad
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Approved By:	Arvin Prasad, Commissioner, Development Services Commission

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