



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: May 16, 2022

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**SUBJECT:** Markham Public Art 2022 Work Plan and Activities  
**PREPARED BY:** Niamh O’Laoghaire, Manager, Varley Art Gallery, ext. 3273

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT the Markham Public Art 2022 Work Plan be approved; and,
2. THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Development Services Committee on the 2022 work plan and activities with respect to Markham’s Public Art Program.

**BACKGROUND:**

Markham's Public Art Program was first initiated in 2003 and formalized in 2012 when two public art policies (municipal and private sector) were approved by City Council. Since 2013, five permanent, major public art works in the city have been commissioned through the public art program. They are:

- *Cloudflower* by Douglas Walker at Cornell Community Centre and Library
- *Gambrel Journey* by kipjones at Markham Museum
- *Quarry* by Mary Anne Barkhouse at Toogood Pond Park
- *Monument to William Berczy* by Marlene Hilton Moore at Berczy Square
- *Monument to Benjamin Thorne* by Les Drysdale at Thornhill Community Centre and Library.

In addition, the program facilitated community art initiatives in collaboration with the City’s Public Realm unit such as the Henderson Bridge mural projects, a Pan Am student art project, and has managed contributions by local community members. The program also manages a circulating indoor collection mostly on display throughout the Civic Centre.

**Markham’s Public Art Master Plan and Implementation Plan**

In November 2019, *Making Our Markham: Markham’s Public Art Master Plan 2020-24* (attachment one) was approved by City Council. In February 2020, Council approved Markham’s *Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-2024* with revised governance model (attachment two). Through these plans Markham’s Public Art Program has three primary objectives:

- to inspire people to live, work, visit and invest in Markham;
- to celebrate the City's diverse cultures and heritage from multiple points of view; and,
- to connect residents to Markham's built and natural environment.

The seven recommendations of the Master Plan and the Implementation Plan direct the development and implementation of a successful public art program. They prioritize potential sites and opportunities for new public art and identify best practices to administer and implement public art projects. Both the Markham Public Art Plan and Implementation Plan encompass a degree of flexibility. This is to allow Public Art Staff to work closely with the Interdepartmental Working Group and take advantage of opportunities as they arise through the normal course of City planning and development.

## **MARKHAM PUBLIC ART 2022 ACTIVITIES AND WORK PLAN**

This report on Markham Public Art's list of activities and work plan is divided into three sections:

1. Major Projects to be Completed in 2022
2. Public Art Implementation Plan Projects Currently in Progress
3. Public Art Implementation Plan Projects in the Planning Stage

### **1. Major Projects to be Completed in 2022**

These projects predate the Public Art Master Plan and Implementation Plan.

#### *Top Garden by Guild at Aaniin Community Centre and Library.*

*Top Garden* is a large-scale, multi-component, interactive public artwork, commissioned, as part of the South/East Markham construction project now known as the Aaniin Community Centre. In accordance with the City's Public Art Policy, the artwork was selected through a two-phase international competition by a selection committee made up of four arts professionals and a representative of Perkins + Will, the architectural firm that designed the building. The commission was awarded to the design collective Guild in 2014. The project is managed jointly by Public Art and Sustainability and Asset Management staff.

Made up of sculptural forms inspired by toy spinning tops derived from various cultures, the work will be situated in front of the main entrance of the Aaniin Community Centre, integrating with the proposed landscape treatment, and reflecting the geometry, colours, and architecture of the site. The garden of sculptural works will allow for both direct community engagement and the use of the spaces in between them. Spinning tops can be found in many cultures, including the 'bambaram' or 'latto' gaming tops of India and Pakistan, the 'koma' of Japan, or the 'diabolo' juggling top of China. Transformed for the sculpture garden, they are a way for the community to appropriate the public space into their imagination and to find a place for creative, social, or contemplative activity. Some of the works are stationary and can be used for seating, while others can be turned slowly. The circular motion and axial arrangement of each piece recalls basic actions of nature, the earth, and social arrangements, whether they are part of a political structure, or common aspirations and dreams. The garden of top figures creates an environment that ties the cosmic to the everyday rituals in a manner that allows reflection and open

interaction. Motion is further enhanced at night through shifting colours and projected patterns on the ground from internal lighting fixtures.

The project, managed as part of the larger Aaniin construction project was beset by a series of delays. These culminated with the work's fabricator, MAF Industries, scaling down their operations due to COVID and exiting the project. The extant parts and remaining production were transferred to Toronto-based metalwork studio Streamliner. The artwork is now at the final stage of fabrication. The required foundations are in place on site. The work will be delivered and installed in two batches. The small tops will arrive over the summer starting from June, the large tops in early fall. The whole project is planned for final completion by October 2022.

*Living Light* by Jill Anholt at Downtown Markham

Jill Anholt's *Living Light* is a major public artwork to be installed on the north side of Enterprise Boulevard, east of Rouge Valley Drive, adjacent to the VIVA rapid way. The project was funded through the public art contribution made by the Remington Group. In accordance with the City's Public Art Policy, the artwork was selected through a two-phase international competition by a selection committee made up of four arts professionals, one representative of the Remington Group, and one representative of the Markham Public Art Advisory Committee. The commission was awarded to Jill Anholt in 2017.

*Living Light* is an iconically-scaled contemporary artwork that reflects the environmental values and ambitions of the Markham community and its natural surroundings. The project comprises two pieces, each element consisting of laser cut and fabricated metal plates with integrated grids of solar cells that reach upwards and outwards towards the sunlight. The work will create a luminous visual effect both day and night. During the day, light will interact with the metal perforations to create dancing shadow patterns across the ground, to be enjoyed by pedestrians and by residents in nearby towers looking down from above. At night, the sculptures will glow from within using LEDs powered by energy collected from the sun's energy during the day.

Inspired by the macro- and micro-structures of the rare and endangered Blue Lupin flower found in the Rouge River valley, each of the two elements, like the plant itself, is designed to lift, reach, and expand in response to the optimal sun angles in Markham. The works will be oriented dynamically on the site to appear differently from every vantage point and will be embedded seamlessly into a natural landscaping of local river rocks and native grasses.

*Living Light* is a dynamic, bold, and iconic sculpture that coalesces the history and future ambitions of Markham into an awe-inspiring display of accumulated energy that marks the entrance to downtown and welcomes people into the downtown area.

The work was completed to schedule by the artist in 2018. However, final production and installation of this major project were delayed due to the additional land required by the work's foundation. In 2021, the Remington Group and the City reached an agreement and transferred the required parcel of land to the City. The artwork is now at the very final

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stage of fabrication by LaFontaine Ironwerks Inc., the supplier also responsible for the work's installation. The construction and final delivery will be in two parts: the foundation will be installed in May/June and the artwork will be installed in June/July. Public Art Curator is currently working on coordination of the final construction. The project will reach final completion over the summer of 2022.

## **2. Public Art Implementation Plan Projects Currently in Progress**

*Façade*, a Public Art Platform Co-presented with the Art Gallery of York University

**Public Art Implementation Plan Project 3:** Digital/Photo-based Art Platform

**Site Category:** Key Civic Sites, Gateways and Heritage.

**Timing:** On schedule

The location of the Markham Pan Am Centre strategically intersects with the past, present, and future developments in Markham. It is located at the south end of Main Street Unionville, one of the city's most celebrated historic neighbourhoods, and at the east end of Markham Centre, a vibrant, intensive, mixed used downtown. On the adjacent lot to its west, York University is building its new Markham campus that is scheduled to open in 2023.

As the opening of York University's new campus in Markham approaches, Markham Public Art has teamed up with the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) to develop a two-year temporary public art program on the west façade of the Pan Am Centre. This public art platform for large-scale photo-based murals, is entitled *Façade*. It will present four new commissioned works, each by one of four artists.

The works will explore the identity of Markham and the role of public art from the perspective of a learning institution. Each work will be curated by one member of a curatorial team, and will be on display for six months. The four-member curatorial team consists of: Jennifer Papararo, Director/Curator, AGYU; Clara Halpern, Assistant Curator, AGYU, Mariam Zulfiqar, Director, Artangel, UK; and Yan Wu, Markham's Public Art Curator.

Each of the four iterations/commissions will be accompanied by community outreach and engagement programs developed in collaboration with York University's School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design.

The *Façade* project allows Markham Public Art to reach the following goals:

1. Create a contemporary dynamic, public art platform in downtown Markham;
2. Strengthen ties with York University as a whole;
3. Leverage the curatorial expertise of the AGYU;
4. Build further capacity for engagement with the diverse communities of Markham and the new community on the Markham York University Campus; and,

5. Contribute to the shaping of a public art corridor along Enterprise Boulevard, where one can encounter Remington Group's public art initiative in Downtown Markham and where artist Jill Anholt's *Living Light*, will be installed in 2022.

The required infrastructure for *Façade* will be in place by the end of summer 2022. The first iteration of the platform will be launched in late fall, 2022. The project will run from late fall 2022 to end of 2024.

#### 'Our Park': Community Project Grant

#### **Public Art Implementation Plan Project 4: Across Ward Seasonal Artwork(s)**

**Site Category:** "Parks and Trails"

**Timing:** originally scheduled for 2021 and 2023, due to Covid now 2023.

Markham Public Art in collaboration with York Region Arts Council (YRAC) is working to launch the pilot project for a program entitled "Our Park": Community Art Project Grant. The objective of "Our Park" is to support a performance-based temporary project by a local Markham artist, artist group or arts organization. Following an open call to artists, a winning project will be selected by a panel of relevant professionals. The winning project will then be realized in a park in Markham in spring of 2023.

In consultation with City staff on the Interdepartmental Working Group including Parks and Public Realm, Denison Park has been identified as an optimal site for the pilot project. Markham Public Art will provide the project's funding and overall direction. YRAC will oversee the day-to-day administration, communication and financial management relating to the project, along with the project's production, implementation, and final report. If successful, "Our Park" may become an on-going grant program for Markham's local arts community, offered on an annual or biennial basis.

Modelled after the "Animating Toronto Parks" grants program offered by the Toronto Arts Council, "Our Park" aims to provide funding to Markham-based professional artists, arts organizations, artist collectives, and non-profit organizations to create and present free arts programming in selected parks located in Markham. For the purposes of this program, "arts programming" may include the presentation of dance, literary arts, music, theatre, visual and media arts, community-engaged arts, Indigenous arts, and other fields of artistic practice. The selection of parks will prioritize areas in Markham that have less public art investment.

"Our Park" will provide a rare opportunity for Markham based artists/arts organizations to create and produce a new body of work to be presented in public spaces. The program encourages community building, enjoyment of local parks, and offers arts events for residents and tourists of all ages. The goal of the pilot project is threefold:

1. To initiate and test a working model and administrative process that can be adopted as an on-going, sustainable program;

2. To shape the official launch of the program through embedded community engagement activities that will invite local residents and community groups for feedback and suggestions; and,
3. To develop the capacity of both Markham Public Art and YRAC to diversify and expand their respective program delivery models in order to better serve the Markham community.

### **3. Public Art Implementation Plan Projects in the Planning Stage**

In 2021 Markham Public Art staff began detailed work on the first major project scheduled in the Public Art Implementation Plan, a major commission to be located in the piazza at the south side of the Pan Am Centre.

With the approval of the Interdepartmental Working Group and the Markham Public Art Advisory Committee, the Public Art Curator worked closely with consulting firm ART+PUBLIC UnLtd to design a three-tiered, multi-pronged engagement approach to ensure a range of Markham community members were reached, including project stakeholders, citizens, staff, developers and arts workers. The approach included stakeholder interviews, Virtual Visioning Workshops, and a Digital Survey.

However, with the launch of the long-awaited Main Street Unionville Reconstruction Project, it was determined that Public Art staff should redirect their attention to the identified streetscape project for that community. This was to ensure that public art projects in this neighbourhood would be fully integrated into the reconstruction project in a timely and effective manner, ensuring the streetscape would avoid further disruption to the infrastructure at a later date.

#### Main Street Unionville Public Art

##### **Public Art Implementation Plan Project 2: Main Street Unionville Streetscape**

**Category:** “Streetscapes and Transit”

**Timing:** Originally scheduled to begin in 2021, but revised to 2022 due to delays in the Main Street Unionville Streetscape restructuring project.

Public Art staff are currently working with the City’s Heritage and Engineering departments as well as their external design consultant, to identify public art opportunities for Main Street Unionville, including specific potential sites and relevant public art types. Once both the sites and the public art types have been established, the applicable commissioning method(s) will become apparent. Appropriate community engagement methods will then be determined and rolled out. The development of the public art program will coincide with the implementation schedule of the Main Street Unionville Streetscape Master Plan and the design details of that plan as they unfold.

#### Rouge River Seasonal Public Art Program

##### **Public Art Implementation Plan Project 7: Rouge River Trails, Markham Centre**

**Category:** “Parks and Trails”

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**Timing:** On schedule for 2022.

Starting from the fall of 2022, Markham Public Art will launch a series of seasonal public art projects along the Rouge River trail in Markham. The projects will explore different aspects of Rouge River eco-system and the idea of urban wilderness. Researchers and knowledge holders of the subject matter will be invited to participate in the development of the projects.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The 2022 Public Art Implementation Plan projects and activities outlined in this report are funded from the dedicated Public Art Reserve fund which as of May 2022 stands at \$4.89 million, accumulated through Section 37. Funding in the amount of \$250,000 for 2022 activities has already been approved through the Capital Project Request process. No further funding is required.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

The 2022 Public Art Implementation Plan will be managed by the Public Art Curator, a part time position funded through the annual capital budget process, overseen by the Manager of the Varley Art Gallery.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Endorsement of the 2022 Public Art Implementation Plan work plan is in alignment with the City's *Making Our Markham: Public Art Master Plan 2020-24*. It is also in alignment with the *Gateway Master Plan*; *Integrated Leisure Master Plan*; *Culture Plan*; *Public Realm Strategy* and the City's strategic plan *Building Markham's Future Together, 2020-2023*. Goal two of *Building Markham's Future Together*, "Support arts, culture, recreation and sport to enrich the fabric of our communities" includes the following action item: "Implement the Public Art Master Plan".

### **BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

- Development Services Commission: Department of Economic Growth, Culture & Entrepreneurship; Department of Engineering, Department of Planning & Urban Design.
- Community Services Commission: Department of Operations (Division of Parks, Horticulture & Forestry; Division of Business, Fleet & Public Realm), Department of Recreation Services (Division of Pan Am Centre)
- Corporate Services Commission: Department of Financial Services, Department of Legislative Services & Communications, Department of Sustainability & Asset Management.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

Chris Rickett  
Director, Economic Growth  
Culture and Entrepreneurship

Arvin Prasad  
Commissioner,  
Development Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

One: *Making Our Markham: Public Art Master Plan, 2020-24*

Two: *Markham Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-24*