



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: June 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Main Street Unionville Public Art Program
PREPARED BY: Niamh O’Laoghaire, Manager, Varley Art Gallery, ext. 3273

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report entitled Main Street Unionville Public Art Program be received; and
2. THAT the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program be approved;
3. THAT the budget of \$562,650 for the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program be released from the Public Art Reserve Fund; and,
4. 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 seek approval for the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program. Main Street Unionville is identified in *Making Our Markham: Markham’s Public Art Master Plan 2020-24* (Attachment #1) as a featured site under the category of Key Civic Sites, Gateways, and Heritage Areas, and is proposed as the second major project in the *Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-2024* (Attachment #2). Completion of the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program is a key step in the successful delivery of Markham’s Public Art Master Plan.

Approval and execution of the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program will provide a vital contribution to the exciting revitalization of the neighbourhood as a whole. The Main Street Unionville Public Art Program will add a dynamic mix of integrated and permanent contemporary public art, which will assimilate into and complement the existing architecture and streetscape of this important Heritage district. The program will speak to all of the communities of Markham, make connections between Main Street Unionville and Markham’s significant natural environment, and it will connect the rich past, exciting present, and prosperous future developments of the area as a whole.

The Main Street Unionville Public Art Program will be managed by the Public Art Curator who reports through the Manager of the Varley Art Gallery to the Director of Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship in the Development Services Commission.

BACKGROUND:**Markham's Public Art Master Plan and Implementation Plan**

In November 2019, *Making Our Markham: Markham's Public Art Master Plan 2020-24* was approved by City Council. In February 2020, Council approved Markham's *Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-2024*. 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.

Based on the feedback provided by internal and external stakeholders during its development, the Public Art Master Plan lists Main Street Unionville under the category of "Key Civic Sites, Gateways and Heritage Areas." Accordingly, the Implementation Plan recommends public art for that site.

Alignment with the Main Street Unionville Revitalization Project

In March 8, 2022, Council endorsed the Main Street Unionville Commercial Core Streetscape Master Plan Study and the capital budget for the Main Street Unionville Revitalization Project. Extending from the railway tracks on Main Street Unionville north to Carlton Road, the revitalization project encompasses repaving the street and boulevards, re-siting parking areas, enhanced street lighting and the planting of 14 new trees, among other items. It also provides for upgrades to the adjacent East Lane. Preliminary work for the project has begun and upgrades to the East Lane will commence in fall 2023. The bulk of work on Main Street Unionville proper is scheduled for 2024.

Aligning public art commissions with the overall Main Street Unionville revitalization construction schedule ensures a streamlined, effective and financially prudent process. Therefore, on May 16, 2022, City Council recommended that Markham's public art staff direct their attention to a Public Art Program for Main Street Unionville and that its implementation coincide with the restructuring project.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ENDORSEMENT**May 26, 2022 Walk Through**

On May 26, 2022, a walk was organized along Main Street Unionville. Participants included the Mayor of Markham, the Ward 3 Councillor, City staff from Engineering, and Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship, along with local stakeholders including members of the Unionville BIA. The purpose was to understand the overall site and the public art opportunities it afforded, along with the related complexities of each

possible location (easements, utility placement, drainage issues, etc.) in order to create a shortlist of feasible sites.

ART+ PUBLIC Consultations Fall 2022

External consultants ART+PUBLIC UnLtd were contracted to develop and implement a community engagement process in late summer and fall of 2022. Along with desk research and a site visit, their process comprised a sequence of one-on-one interviews, and two community engagement workshops. The purpose of these sessions was to:

- Present findings based on research;
- Share an approach for public art in Unionville; and,
- Facilitate a discussion around the approach, production process, and siting opportunities to gain consensus moving forward.

Art+Public UnLtd compiled a final report (Attachment #3) reflecting the findings of the engagement activities and summarizing community aspirations for Main Street Unionville Public Art. The report distills the direction for Main Street Unionville Public Art as follows:

“A dynamic and mixed program featuring integrated public art, permanent installations and temporary programming that are thematically linked. The program will make connections along Main Street Unionville and to adjacent sites of interest.”

Art + Public UnLtd also heard “overwhelming support” for the inclusion of temporary public art, leading to their final conclusion that the Main Street Public Art Program should combine a mix of Permanent and Integrated Public Art (70%) and Temporary Public Art (30%).

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Main Street Unionville Temporary Public Art

The temporary component of Public Art on Main Street Unionville will be scheduled periodically when appropriate and as opportunities arise. The budget for temporary public art will vary depending on the nature of the activation. Funding will come from the Public Art annual programming budget and will leverage other events and activities in the area as they arise. A temporary activation for Main Street Unionville is currently being planned. Titled *Lost and Found*, it is a collaborative project by artists Holly Ward and Kevin Schmidt, consisting of a series of constructed situations, which will take place along the Rouge River Trail in Markham over the spring and summer of 2023, and will culminate in an exhibition at the Varley Art Gallery in January - April, 2024.

Main Street Unionville Permanent and Integrated Public Art

Locations along the length of Main Street Unionville from the railway north to Carlton Road and the environs were considered for permanent and integrated public art. Several sites were eliminated for logistical reasons, including unsuitable terrain or substructures,

proximity to easements and utilities, etc. A shortlist of eight primary locations was given further consideration, as outlined on the table below. Four of these were eliminated, due variously to an onerous application process, possible accessibility issues or falling outside the scope of the Revitalization Project as a whole.

Sites, South to North	Assessment	Result
Station Lane and Main Street, south west corner	Within 30 feet/10 metres of train tracks, requiring an onerous approval process with Metrolinx	Eliminated
Tree grates, 15 on east side located from approx #147 to #205 Main Street	New infrastructure, available for integrated art	Retained
Plaza between #177 and #185 on East side of Main Street	One of few open locations available on Main Street, located centrally on the north-south axis. Viable for free standing or integrated art	Retained
Stairs from plaza to East Lane parking lot	Possible AODA issues if add surface colour/decorative elements to stairs	Eliminated
Embankment from plaza to East Lane	Available, could be site for integrated art garden	Retained
Walkway from base of stairs through parking lot to East Lane trailhead	Available, could be site for integrated art via graphic applied to surface	Retained
Crosby Memorial, south end	Outside scope of Revitalization Project. Public art could be added at a later date	Eliminated
Varley Art Gallery, courtyard	Outside scope of Revitalization Project. Close to existing public art, <i>Quarry</i> by Mary Anne Barkhouse and site of temporary public art activations	Eliminated

Following the community consultation process and discussions with staff of the City's Engineering Department and CIMA, the engineering firm tasked with creating the Main Street Unionville design, the public art sites and types for Main Street Unionville were finalized. The Main Street Unionville Public Art Program will focus on the following locations and components:

- Fifteen metal grates, each 5 feet x 5 feet, for the new trees to be planted on the east side of Main Street Unionville from approximately #147 up to #205;
- A permanent or integrated art object in the small plaza between #177 and #185 on the east side of Main Street Unionville;
- A "garden" planted on the embankment on either side of the stairs leading from the small plaza to the parking lot; and,
- A walkway leading from the base of the stairs across the East Lane parking lot and continuing towards the adjacent trail head.

Each of these integrated elements will be significant in itself, but in combination will add up to a cumulative experience greater than its parts alone. They will create numerous individual points of interest to be discovered while exploring the street. They will celebrate the area's history and topography, and contribute to wayfinding, while beautifying the length of the thoroughfare. At the same time, they will connect Main Street Unionville with the natural environment through the plaza, garden and walkway to the trail head. Altogether, they will produce a dynamic and contemporary program of public art while remaining sensitive to the existing built environment of Unionville's Heritage district. In this way they will meet the goals of the City's Public Art Master Plan:

- Inspire people to live, work, visit and invest in Markham;
- Celebrate the city's diverse cultures and heritage from multiple points of view; and,
- Connect residents to Markham's built and natural environment.

From a practical point of view this approach will also ensure that the public art program will align efficiently with the Unionville restructuring project as a whole. The approach outlined here was approved by the Unionville Subcommittee at its May 2, 2023 meeting.

Further Community Endorsement

The approach and program outlined above were presented by Culture staff to members of the community on April 19 (in person), April 27 (virtually) and May 1 (in person), at Main Street Unionville Restructuring Meetings organized by the City's Department of Engineering. The community response to the proposed Main Street Unionville Public Art Program at these meetings was overwhelmingly positive.

The Main Street Unionville Public Art Program was presented to the Markham Public Art Advisory Committee (MPAAC) at its May 3, 2023 meeting, where the project was unanimously endorsed.

Project Budget

The Main Street Unionville Art Program cost breakdown is as follows:

Project Breakdown	Cost
Running 3 Commissions / competitions: promotion, panels, honoraria, etc.	\$40,000
Tree grates and plaza component: artist's fee, fabrication and installation	\$275,000
Embankment garden: artist's fee and implementation	\$90,000
East Lane walkway: artist's fee and implementation	\$60,000
Subtotal 1	\$465,000
Contingency 10%	\$46,500
Subtotal 2	\$511,500
Maintenance (one time) 10%	\$51,150
Grand Total	\$562,650

Therefore, with this report, staff request approval of the \$562,650 budget for the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program. The fund will be drawn from the Public Art Acquisitions Reserve. As of May 2023, \$4.8 million has been accumulated in the Public Art Acquisitions Reserve, which can be mobilized through the *Public Art Implementation Plan* that outlines a roadmap for the next five years (2020-2024).

Proposed Project Timeline

Upon Council approval of this report, staff anticipate the timeline below:

2023	July	Launch of call to artists for various components
	September	Receipt of artists' submissions
	October	Selection of artists
	November	Results announced/artists commissioned
	December	Detailed design work begins
2024	March	Final design approval
	April	Fabrication of required components
	May	Embankment garden planted
	Sept-Dec.	Installation of tree grates; plaza component and East Lane walkway design

Conclusion

Approval of the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program will support a renewed Vision for a thriving and vibrant City. Public Art will highlight the city's unique characteristics and create new experiences through which local residents and visitors can engage with each other. The commission will enable the City of Markham to realize an exciting, multipart public art landscape that will: inspire people to live in, visit and invest in Markham; celebrate the diverse cultures and heritage in Markham from multiple points of view; and connect residents to Markham's built and natural environment.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Main Street Unionville Public Art Program will be funded from the dedicated Public Art Reserve fund which, as of May 2023, stands at \$4.8 million, accumulated through Section 37 and development agreements. The Main Street Unionville project requires the release of \$562,650 from this fund in order to set up a PO for the project and to begin the commissioning process. This amount includes a fund for the ongoing maintenance and repair of the Main Street Unionville Public Art Program.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

The Markham Pan Am Centre commission will be managed by the Public Art Curator, a part time position funded through the Varley Art Gallery operating budget.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Endorsement of Markham's Main Street Unionville Public Art Program is in alignment with the City's *Making Our Markham: Public Art Master Plan 2020-24* and its *Implementation Plan*. 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).
- 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:

- Attachment #1: *Making Our Markham: Public Art Master Plan, 2020-24*
- Attachment #2: *Markham Public Art Implementation Plan 2020-24*
- Attachment #3: *Main Street Unionville Community Engagement Report*