



MEMORANDUM



TO: Heritage Markham Committee

FROM: Regan Hutcheson, Manager-Heritage Planning

DATE: September 11, 2024

SUBJECT: Public Art Projects for Main Street Unionville 2024-25
Tree Guards and Tree Grates

Project: Public Art Projects – Main Street Unionville Streetscape Project 2024-25

Background:

Heritage Markham August 14 Meeting

- This matter was originally considered on August 14, 2024. The Committee discussed Project 1 (Fencing, Tree Guards and Tree Grates) and Project 2 (Rouge Connection Pathway) and passed the following recommendation:
 - *“That Heritage Markham defers the consideration of the Staircase Fencing Art Project and the Tree Guard/Tree Grate Art Project to the September Heritage Markham Committee meeting.*

That Heritage Markham has the following comments from a heritage perspective regarding the Heritage Permit in support of the Public Art projects identified for the Main Street Unionville Streetscape:

No objection to Rouge Connection Pathway Art Project conceptually, but that a final proposed design be brought back before Heritage Markham”.

- The full Extract from the August meeting is attached as Appendix ‘C’. Heritage Markham’s concerns generally included 1) whether the proposed tree guards/grates were appropriate and complementary to the village-like character of historic Unionville, 2) the colour and type of material being proposed including its potential staining of the new ground pavers, and 3) whether the average person would have any understanding of the messaging provided by the art pieces.
- Yan Wu, Public Art Curator, Niamh O’Laoghaire, Manager, Art Gallery and Nester Kruger, the artist for Project 1 will be in attendance to discuss potential refinements to Project 1. No additional material has been provided for the agenda package.

Initiation of a Public Art Project

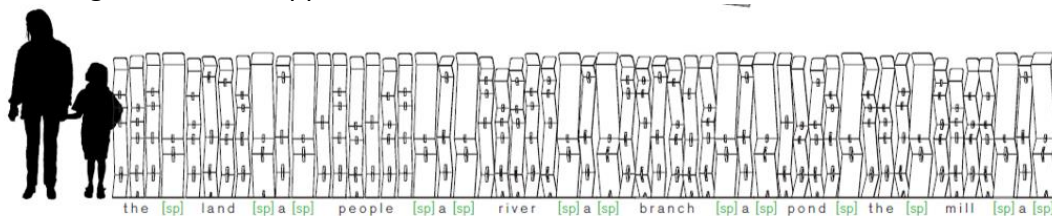
- Currently, there is no public art within the streetscape right-of-way on Main Street within the Unionville Heritage Conservation District (the “District”).
- In May 2022, City Council recommended that Markham’s public art staff direct their attention to a Public Art Program for Main Street Unionville to coincide with the Main Street Unionville Streetscape Renewal Project.

- A process was developed to solicit potential public art projects (67 artists applied). Nine artists were asked to produce detailed proposals and after community consultation, the Selection Panel identified two projects for further consideration and implementation.

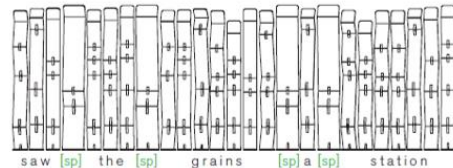
Project Details

Project 1 – Fencing/Tree Guards/Tree Grates (Nestor Krugor)

- **Description by Artist** – “a set of 26 unique zig-zag forms that have been designed to represent each letter in the roman alphabet. These letterforms are then used in a specific sequence to create a list of objects (nouns) related to the history and geography of Unionville and a set of actions (verbs) identifying experiences of transformation and movement. The goal was to create a public artwork with a rhythmic and organic appearance that simultaneously encoded a list of words within the forms that when decoded functioned as a type of poem of the village”.
- See image below and Appendix ‘A’ for further illustrative material.



These views of the fence show the placement of the text and the different rotations of the base, which were employed to create a more organic relationship with the different sculptural elements and the site. The text is read left to right when facing the fence from the street.

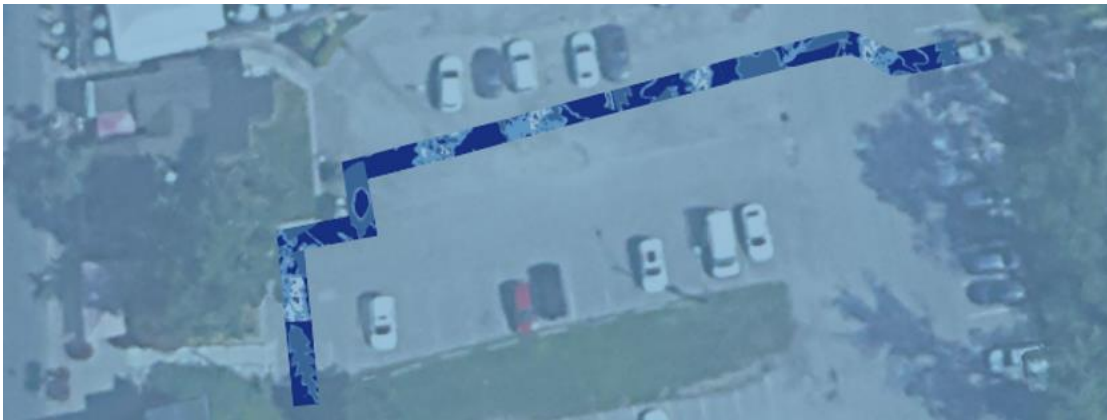


- **Selection Jury Comments:**
 - “Nestor Kruger's proposal has been praised for its modern concept with a heritage touch, thoughtful design, and exceptional research into Unionville's rich history. His work, "Little Creatures," includes a functional fence, tree guards, and grates that celebrate Unionville's commitment to preserving its past while embracing its future. The proposal introduces dynamic elements into static structures, creating a rhythmic system that breathes along with nature and the community. Kruger's use of folded steel letters from the Roman alphabet, articulated through binary language, offers an innovative approach that connects Unionville's history to its future. The design also provides a great opportunity for interaction, especially with young visitors. While ensuring the design meets safety standards, Kruger's proposal is seen as a unique and captivating artwork that will attract art lovers to Unionville, much like Richard Serra's "Shift" in King City”.
- **Material:** The proposed material is COR-TEN steel. This material is chosen to match the standard tree grates and guards to be installed, which will be cast iron and are not part of this art project. The budget for this public art commission cannot support cast iron, so COR-TEN steel is the closest matching alternative. According to public art staff, its rust colour will remain consistent throughout its lifetime, and it is smooth to the touch.

- Location: the tree grate/tree guard art project will involve 13 tree locations (see mapping in Appendix 'A'. The trees are all on the south side of Main Street. The fence installation would be at the top of the stairway that leads to the parking lot.

Project 2 – Rouge Connection Pathway (Patrick Cruz)

- Description by Artist – “Linking Unionville’s heritage district and the Rouge River, the conceptual wayfinding path mimics the sinuous flow of the riparian corridor and the reflection of a blue sky, drawing the foliage of the nearby valley trail up toward Main Street through a magnified abstracted pattern.... It is my hope that Stars Hollow will encourage viewers to slow down and create connections to the river and natural surroundings, and stimulate rumination of the settler and Indigenous histories that continue to story Unionville. The proximity of the Main Street stands as an emblem of today’s human domain while the more-than-human presence of the river and the forest remind us of our place within an ancient and thriving ecosystem. Through this piece, I offer a channel where these histories can be in conversation”.



- Selection Jury Comments:
 - “Patrick Cruz's work has garnered admiration for its playful, insightful, and visually interesting qualities. His proposal, "Stars Hollow," designed for the Rouge Pathway, beautifully evokes the mystery and wonder of nature. By collaborating with nature, Cruz transformed natural forms into images using cyanotype and water from the Rouge River, resulting in bold and compelling patterns for the pathway. His sophisticated use of natural elements sourced from the vicinity of the connecting path reflects a deep respect for the current natural environment while considering Markham's technological present and future. Although his design is well put together, some concerns were raised about the color palette blending with the sky over the parking lot. Overall, Cruz's work promises strong community engagement and encourages viewers to closely observe the natural elements in the landscape”.
- Material: The chosen material is DecoMark® markings, which are durable, interconnected, preformed thermoplastic surface signage and logo markings suitable for application on asphalt and concrete pavement substrates. TrafficScapesTM products, including DecoMark®, are functional pavement markings that are used to enhance streetscapes,

promote safety awareness, and calm traffic. According to public art staff, this material does not become slippery when wet and is a perfectly safe choice.

- Location: From the base of the staircase leading to the valleyland green space on the east side of East Lane.

Policy Direction

Relevant City policy documents related to heritage and public art were reviewed (see below).

Markham Official Plan (2014)

6.1.7 Public Art

- 6.1.7.1 To develop and adopt a public art policy for municipal projects and private sector developments.
- 6.1.7.6 To promote the provision of public art in: a) highly visible and publicly accessible areas to promote a sense of place; and b) the design of buildings and/or sites in: i. new communities or areas undergoing redevelopment; and ii. Regional Centres and key development areas.

4.5 Cultural Heritage Resources

- **4.5.4.3** To require the activities of all municipal departments to respect the importance of Markham's cultural heritage resources, and support the objectives and policies, where feasible, through their by-laws, programs and works.
- **4.5.5.1** To enhance the environs of cultural heritage resources as part of capital works and maintenance projects through such means as tree planting, landscaping, street improvements, buried utilities, and the provision of street furniture, lighting, signage and other streetscape components, that are consistent or compatible with the character of the cultural heritage resource.

Unionville Heritage Conservation District Plan

- **3.1 Overall Goal** – To ensure the retention and conservation of the District's heritage resources and to guide change so that it contributes to and does not detract from, the District's architectural, historical and contextual character.
- **3.2.2 Landscape/ Streetscape** –
 - To encourage the introduction of, as well as conservation of, historic landscape treatments in both the public and private realm.
 - To introduce landscape, streetscape and infra-structure improvements that will enhance the heritage character of the District.
- No specific reference to public art or tree grates and guards. The Plan does recommend a heritage friendly family of street furniture coordinated in terms of design with existing materials.
- **5.8 Trees and Vegetation Policies (e) and (g)**
 - Trees should be planted at appropriate locations to avoid screening architecturally significant building facades and important views;
 - Where practical, a limited number of trees should be reintroduced into the commercial corer area to help soften the streetscape.

Main Street Unionville Community Vision Plan (2015)

- High level vision document

- No specific direction on public art, or tree grates and guards
- Plan does note that street furniture that is comprised of coordinated elements can send a clear message of order and a district that is a “higher order” destination.

Unionville Commercial Core Pattern Book – Village Design and Architectural Guidelines (2018)

- The Pattern Book provides a guide to assist property owners, architects, builders and city staff in understanding the design principles that will create development compatible with the character of the Unionville Main street commercial core area. Streetscape guidelines are not provided.
- **2.4.5 Private open Space/ Shared outdoor amenity areas**
 - 3. Site elements should be well-designed and high-quality with durable and attractive materials and detailing, and may include paving materials and stair treatments, railings and decorative features, pedestrian- scale lighting, wayfinding systems, public art, and site furniture (benches, garbage and recycling containers, bike racks).

Main Street Unionville Commercial Core Streetscape Master Plan 2020-21

- Public Art staff were consulted during the study and indicated a desire to explore public art opportunities within the boundaries of this project. The Markham’s Public Art Master Plan identifies certain areas within the streetscape study area as public art site types such as the Varley Art Gallery Courtyard and Main Street Unionville (Site Category 1- Key Existing City Sites, Gateways and Heritage Areas), Stiver Mill Garden (Site Category 3 – Community Parks and Trails) and the Main Street Unionville Streetscape (Site Category 4 – Streetscape and Transit).

- **6.1.2 Potential Public Art Locations**

Various location opportunities exist for the incorporation of public art installation. These include:

Fred Varley Art Gallery courtyard
Crosby Arena
Kathleen Gormley McKay Art Centre
City owned property at 185 Main Street
Unionville Bandstand
Station Lane/Train Station
Recycling Depot

These opportunities involve publicly owned properties and are not within the public right-of-way. There would appear to be minimal opportunities along the streetscape.

- **6.2 Streetscape Components and Elements**

- Each component or element typically found on a streetscape was reviewed by considering the existing conditions, guidance from the Heritage District Plan, guidance from the Community Vision Plan, feedback from community consultation and staff comments.
- General direction was that all streetscape furnishings should be black in colour for consistency as part of a coordinated design approach.
- Public Art

- Main Street Unionville has been identified in the Public Art Master Plan as a location for Site 1 and Site 4 public art installations.
 - Some potential locations have been identified.
 - Opportunities to introduce public art should be explored with the Interdepartmental Public Art Working Group during the Detailed Design Stage of the streetscape project so that it can be accommodated in these streetscape improvements.
- Tree Grates
 - Black tree grates are suggested.
 - Tree Guards
 - Black tree guards are suggested.

Status/ Staff Comment

- Heritage Staff has reviewed the proposed public art projects against the current heritage-related policies adopted by Council. The objective was to ensure that the projects do not detrimentally affect the District's architectural, historical, and contextual character (the reason for which the area was originally protected and why it is a major destination for locals and visitors).
- **Project 2 – Rouge Connection Pathway.** Due to its limited visibility within the valley area, this project is not anticipated to negatively affect the heritage character of the District. Heritage Staff does suggest that Operations staff confirm that the final treatment does not introduce a slip hazard.
- **Project 2-** Heritage Markham had no objection conceptually subject to further consultation on final design/colours.
- **Project 1 – Metal Fencing at Staircase.** The metal fencing is a stand-alone art piece that would appear to have minimal impact on the heritage streetscape and character of the District due to its location. Heritage Staff does suggest the material be reviewed to ensure that there is no safety issue if individuals come into contact with the Cor-Ten steel used for the art piece. There is some concern that the use of this material will result in minor staining of the ground pavers over time.
- **Project 1 – Tree Guards and Grates.**
 - The proposed tree grates would not appear to negatively impact the character of the District, however there is the concern related to staining of the adjacent boulevard pavers over time.
 - Heritage staff is challenged by the introduction of the tree guards using the same metal vertical pieces as the staircase fencing. This treatment would involve 13 tree locations along the street. The concern is that this approach would appear to negatively impact the village-like, heritage character of the Heritage District's commercial core area. The Master Plan document for the streetscape envisioned the street tree infrastructure to be a simple black metal treatment to complement the heritage character of the District and coordinate with the other streetscape infrastructure such as bike poles, historic streetlighting, waste/recycling containers and furniture.
 - Also of concern is that there will be design inconsistency within the area with some trees having the Art treatment and other having the standard guards and grates.

- Although not specifically a heritage impact, there is also a safety concern related to potential pedestrian interaction with the vertical elements of the tree guards, the ease of tree replacement if necessary, and concern related to staining of the ground new pavers.
- Project 1 – Heritage Markham referred consideration of this project to the September meeting.

Suggested Recommendation for Heritage Markham

That Heritage Markham has no objection from a heritage perspective to the Heritage Permit in support of Public Art Project 1 (Fencing and Tree Grate/Guards) identified for the Main Street Unionville Streetscape

Or

That Heritage Markham has the following comments from a heritage perspective regarding the Heritage Permit in support of Public Art Project 1 (Fencing and Tree Grate/Guards) identified for the Main Street Unionville Streetscape:

- No objection to the Staircase Fencing Art Project
- Objection to the Tree Guard/Tree Grate Art Project as it will negatively impact the heritage character of the streetscape.

Appendices

Appendix 'A' – Art Project 1 – Fencing/Tree Guards and Grates

Appendix 'B' – Art Project 2 – Rouge Connection Pathway

Appendix 'C' – Heritage Markham Extract – August 14, 2024

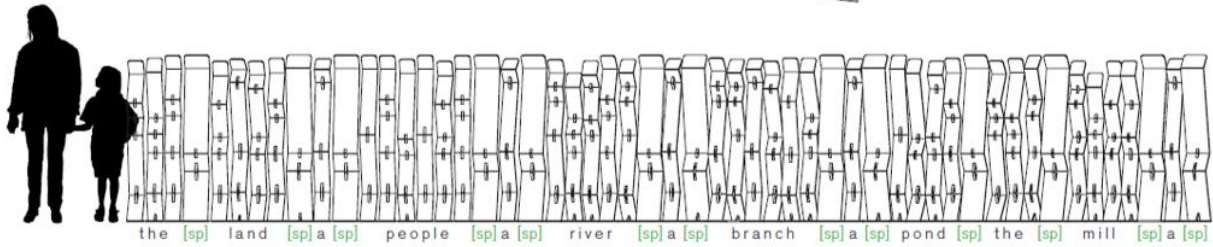
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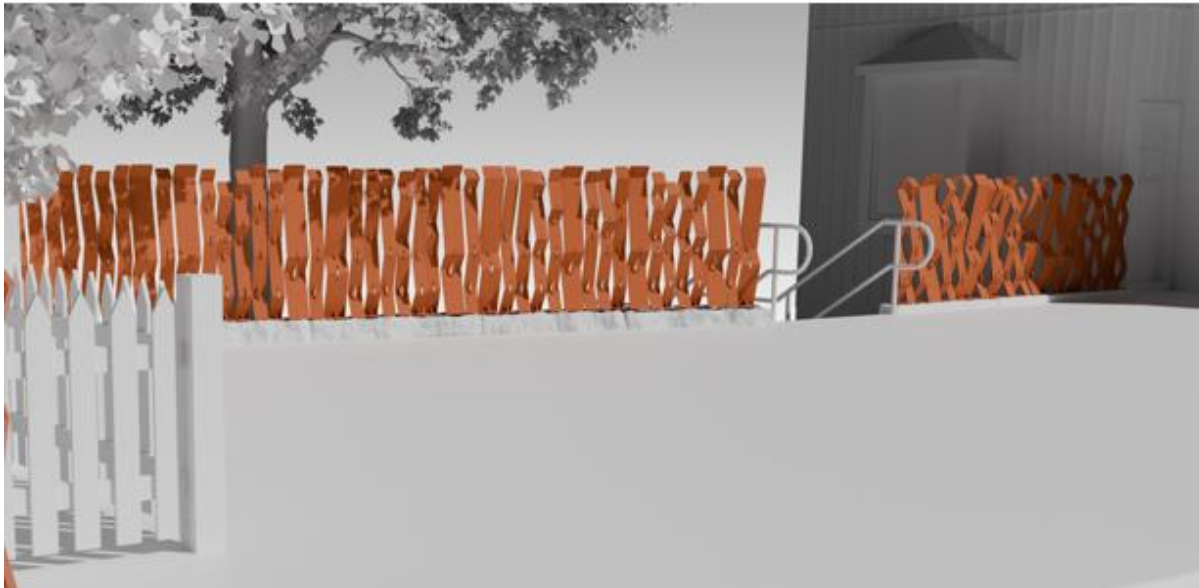
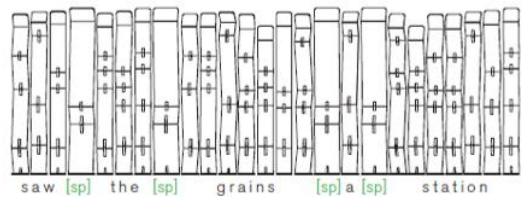
APPENDIX 'A'

Art Project 1 – Fencing/Tree Guards and Grates

Fencing Art Project



These views of the fence show the placement of the text and the different rotations of the base, which were employed to create a more organic relationship with the different sculptural elements and the site. The text is read left to right when facing the fence from the street.



Artist Rendition - Looking east from Main Street

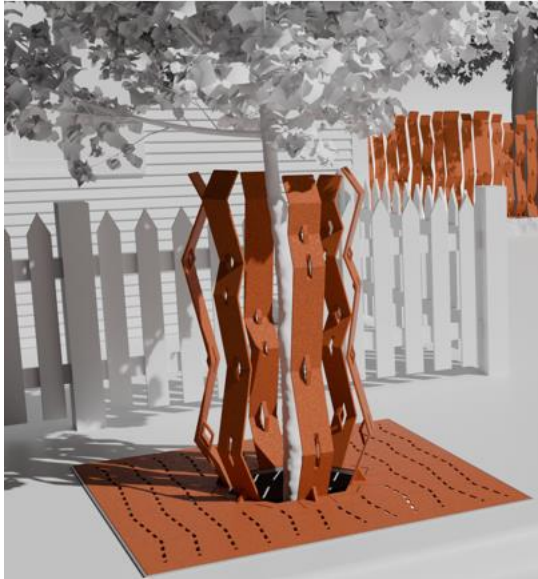


Artist Rendition - Looking east from Main Street



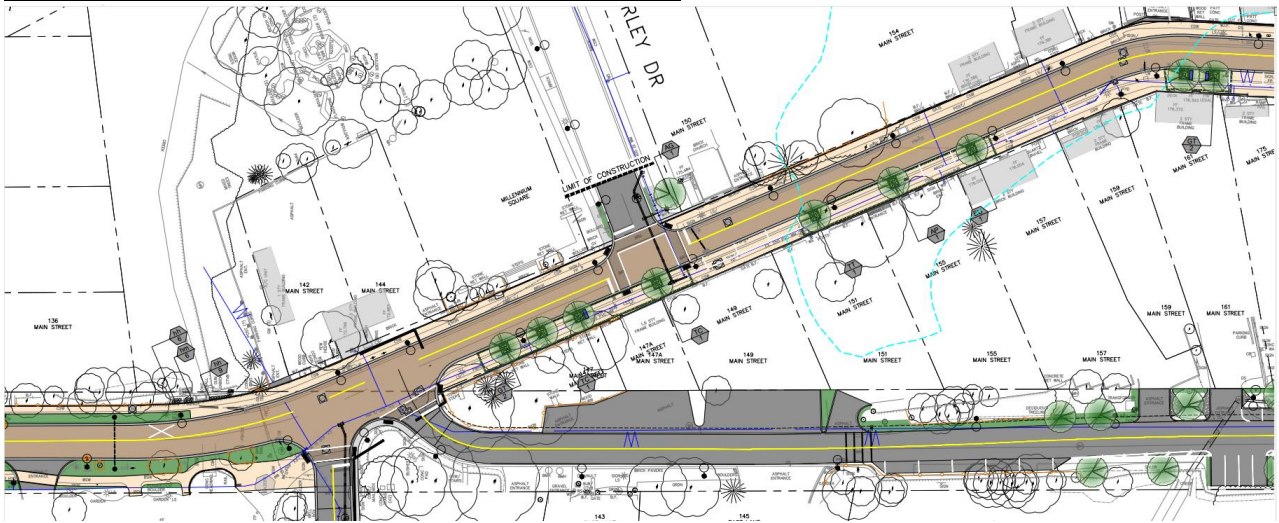
Artist Rendition - Looking west from Staircase

Tree Guards and Grates Art Project

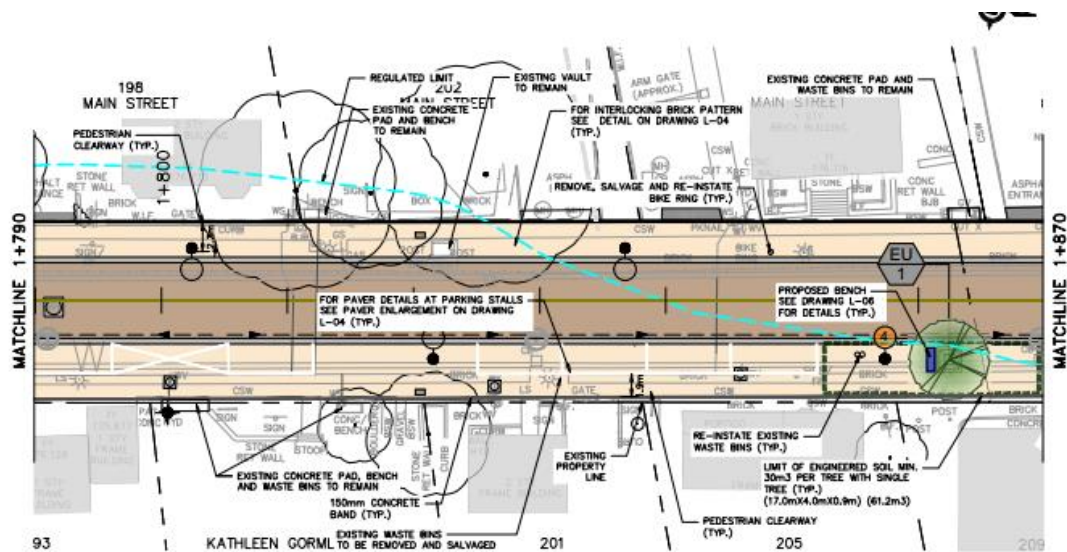
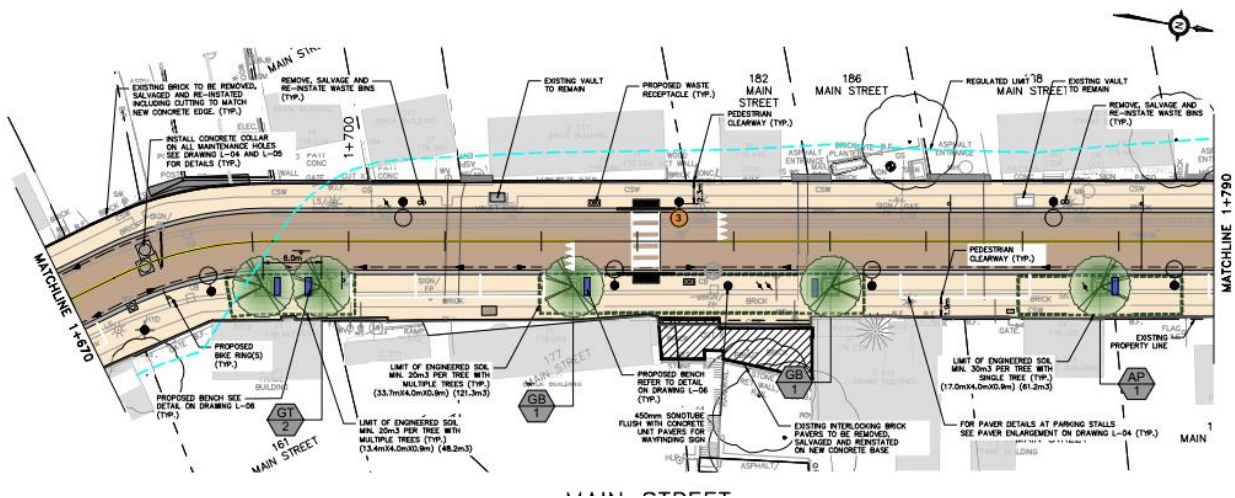
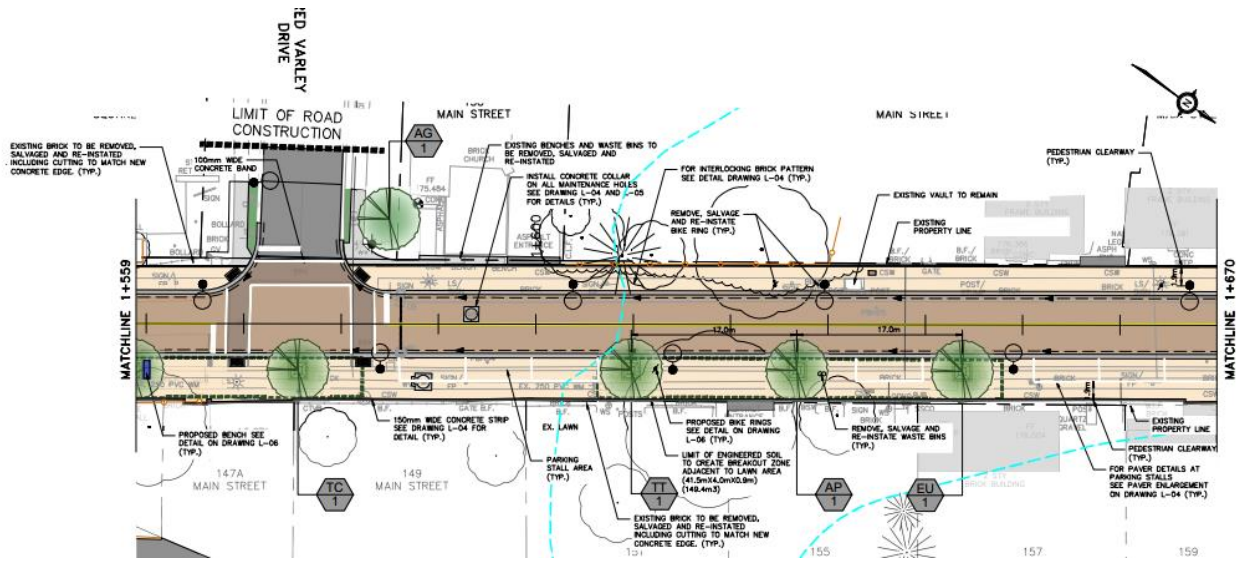


Artist Rendering

Tree Locations – 13 from Victoria Ave to Carlton Road From Railway Tracks to Bend in Main Street



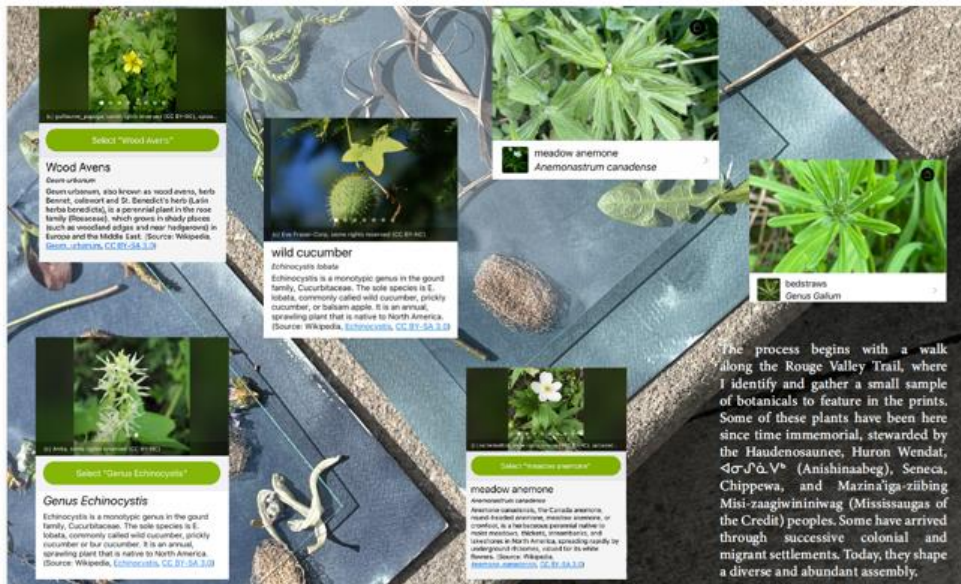
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Art Project 2 – Rouge Connection Pathway



Starting from the lower staircase and moving eastward to opening to the valleylands



Inspiration Images

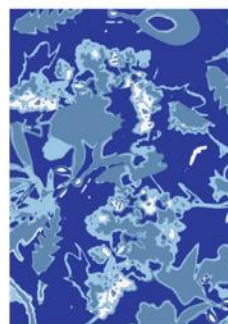
Process



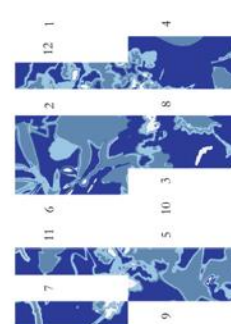
Three selected cyanotype prints
are scanned...



...digitally manipulated...



...re-coloured, collaged, and tiled
to produce an abstracted pattern...



...and then segmented and composed along the path's course.

Appendix 'C'
Extract

HERITAGE MARKHAM
EXTRACT

Date: August 15, 2024

To: R. Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning
Y. Wu, Public Art Coordinator

EXTRACT CONTAINING ITEM #4.1 OF THE EIGHTH HERITAGE MARKHAM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 14, 2024

4. PART TWO - DEPUTATIONS

4.1 PUBLIC ART PROJECTS FOR MAIN STREET UNIONVILLE 2024-25 (16.11)

File Numbers:

n/a

Regan Hutcheson, Manager, Heritage Planning introduced this item as related to a heritage permit application for the Public Art Projects on Main Street Unionville and welcomed Yan Wu to deliver a presentation.

Yan Wu, Public Art Coordinator, provided an overview of the Public Art Projects that are proposed to be installed on Main Street Unionville as part of the overall streetscape restoration project. Ms. Wu reviewed the extensive process undertaken to date concerning the selection of public art submissions and the work provided by the jury to select the preferred projects. She presented conceptual drawings and artistic interpretations of the Staircase Fencing, Tree Guard/Tree Grate, and the Rouge Connection Pathway Art Projects.

The Committee expressed concerns with the overall look of the Staircase Fencing and Tree Guard/Tree Grate proposals as members felt it did not complement the heritage character of the street and the would negatively affect the overall Heritage District. The Committee expressed concern with the proposed use of COR-TEN steel as it has a limited range of colour options and is out of character with Main Street, especially the manner in which it was proposed for use as tree guards. Ms. Yan advised that the drawings provided by the artist are conceptual and the feedback from the Committee will be helpful to consider revisions to ensure the community is satisfied.

The Committee expressed further concerns with the future year-round maintenance of the proposed installation and the possibility of it staining the new pedestrian pavers over time. Ms. Yan advised that the COR-TEN steel was selected for its lower cost and durability but noted that there is budget allocated

for future maintenance if needed. Ms. Yan added there is the possibility of minor discoloration over time however the installation of the material is done in a way to ensure any wash off is redirected away from the boulevard pavers.

The Committee requested that further consideration be made to help pedestrians understand the meaning behind the installations. Ms. Yan confirmed that dynamic panels and interactive elements will be installed to help decipher the code of the artwork.

The Committee requested this item be deferred to provide time for Public Art Staff to work with the artist to explore alternate colour options for the COR-TEN steel and revisions to the overall look of the tree guard/tree grate to better reflect the heritage character of the street. The Ward Councillor suggested using the standard tree guard/tree gate used by the City as a starting point for the discussion.

Regarding the Rouge Connection Pathway Art Project, the Committee enquired if the final colour treatment may change from the blue that was depicted on the illustrations and requested that Ms. Wu return to a future Heritage Markham meeting to share the final proposed design of this component of the Art Project..

Recommendations:

That Heritage Markham defers the consideration of the Staircase Fencing Art Project and the Tree Guard/Tree Grate Art Project to the September Heritage Markham Committee meeting.

That Heritage Markham has the following comments from a heritage perspective regarding the Heritage Permit in support of the Public Art projects identified for the Main Street Unionville Streetscape:

- No objection to Rouge Connection Pathway Art Project conceptually, but that a final proposed design be brought back before Heritage Markham.

Carried