24 Aluminum composite panels mounted to existing concrete retaining wall
Approx. Area: 842 sq ft
THE JAMES STREET SOUTH PUBLIC ART MURAL PROJECT

APPENDIX B - SITE, HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The T.H. & B. Railway

The James Street South public art mural site has been in close proximity to a railway station for over 100 years and has a rich history associated with The Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway (TH&B). The site was originally at grade, a site where the trains crossed James Street South before the grade separation and creation of the railway bridge.

TH&B operated from 1895 to 1990 and linked the Canadian Pacific Railway with American rail lines. The original train station used to be on north east corner of James Street South and Hunter Street with the railway tracks at street level. In 1931, the underpass was built in order for the rail line to run under Hunter Street and not impeded the car and pedestrian travel of the residents of the Durand neighbourhood. The line continued to run at grade with a rail yard through the working class Corktown neighbourhood.

In 1933, T.H. & B. Railway opened a new “modern” station on the south side of the underpass and the original T.H. & B. Railway station was demolished. The design of this new station drew inspiration from a machine-age style that found beauty in the speed, efficiency, and streamlining of cars and trains.

TH&B was bought by Canadian Pacific Rail in 1987 and the station was closed in 1990. The building was later restored and the Hamilton GO Centre opened in 1996.

The Durand neighbourhood

One of the four original neighbourhoods of the City of Hamilton, Durand occupies the southwest quadrant of its historic core. The largely residential neighbourhood is bounded on three sides by important thoroughfares (Queen Street South, Main Street West and James Street South) and by the face of the Niagara Escarpment at its south end.

Durand’s natural topography set the course for its development and evolution. Prior to Hamilton’s founding, Indigenous communities inhabiting the region established a network of pathways, parts of which cut across what became Durand, its higher ground providing safe passage through the surrounding marshy landscape. When a town was subsequently established, this topography drew its elites, who established picturesque estates within Durand’s present boundaries, alongside a small number of farms. Although the area changed considerably over time, it has continued to be perceived as a refuge from the downtown core, in part because of its topography and the richness of its built environment.

At the same time, Durand is very much an inner-city neighbourhood, its layered urban form reflecting every major era of Hamilton’s urban development and serving as a microcosm of the city. Towards the Escarpment, Durand features mansions in revivalist styles on large lots; while its north end has the highest number of late-modern highrise residential towers within the downtown core, which sit cheek by jowl adjacent to older, small-scale residential development. Between these areas, dense late 19th and early 20th century housing has been maintained, adapted and frequently subdivided to meet the changing needs of Hamilton’s residents. Very little commercial and institutional development has taken place in Durand, except along its north and east boundaries, which are on the border of Hamilton’s downtown core. Since its origins, the neighbourhood’s north end has been home to important civic institutions, a pattern that was reinforced with the construction of City Hall in 1958 on Main Street West. A similar pattern is evident on James Street South, an early transportation route that became a vector for main street and institutional development, as the downtown core expanded southward.

Throughout its history, Durand has been home to a highly diverse community and varied residential enclaves. It was during the 1970s that its identity as a neighbourhood coalesced, when members of its community joined together to call for a more community-based approach to urban planning and stewardship of Hamilton’s cultural heritage. These actions set a new course for neighbourhood planning and heritage conservation across the city. They also resulted in public amenities, such as Durand Park, and a creative approach to contextual urban development within the neighbourhood.

The Corktown neighbourhood

Bound by James Street South to the west, Main Street East to the north, Wellington Street South to the east and the Niagara Escarpment to the south, Corktown is one of the original four Hamilton neighbourhoods. Home to the Hamilton GO Station, St. Joseph’s Hospital, and the pub district of Augusta and Young Streets, Corktown is a true downtown community. Multi-floor dwellings of the neighbourhood are responsible for much of Hamilton’s skyline; however, among these high rises are Victorian-era residences that help Corktown retain its old world nuances, serving as a reminder of Hamilton’s early Irish settlers that lived here and worked on the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Railway (TH&B).

http://www.corktownhamilton.ca/

City of Hamilton Tourism and Culture Division
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