

CENTURY STREET PARKETTE PUBLIC ART PROJECT



FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Dates: May 11, 20, 27 and 28, June 26

Location: Conference Calls, Video Conferences, e-mail feedback

Time: various as noted

Attendees

May 11, 2020 3pm zoom conference:

Rachel Braithwaite - Barton Village BIA

Sue Carr - 541 Bakery

Brenda Duke - GALA neighbourhood

May 11, 2020 7pm zoom conference:

Tara Bursey - local artist, curator, educator + programmer

Ingrid Mayrhofer - local artist, Red Tree Collective

May 20, 2020 2pm zoom conference:

Maureen Sweeney - Cathedral Highschool, Arts Department Head

Mario Rallo - Cathedral High School Student Council Community Rep

Cyanne Pyle - Cathedral High School Grade 12 Student

Mary-Kate Sandajama - Cathedral High School Student Council Rep

May 27, 2020 3pm zoom conference:

Treasa Levasseur – Local Musician

Mike Miller – Community Member

Ryan Pagliaro - Cathedral Highschool alumni, local Intern Architect

May 28, 2020: 2pm conference call:

Nellie Pieluck – Community Member

E-mail feedback (based on the presentation) received from:

Terry Mote – Community Member

June 26, 2020: 2pm conference call

Nathan Muir - Indigenous Youth Advisor, NYAWEH Cathedral

City Staff

Meredith Plant

Ken Coit

City of Hamilton, Placemaking, Public Art and Projects

Manager, City of Hamilton, Placemaking, Public Art and Projects

Purpose

These groups were brought together to review plans for a public art competition for Century Street Parkette and to advise on specific goals and themes that submitting artists will use for the basis of their proposed art work. While the focus group discussion is typically conducted as one group meeting held in person, separate discussions took place for this focus group due to physical distancing requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Background

Ken Coit and Meredith Plant gave a presentation outlining the project background, public art process and context.

It was noted that Public Art at Century Street Parkette has been made possible due to continued Investments in Ward 3 Parks and Playgrounds. Direct investments in Ward 3 community public spaces, parks, and playgrounds had been identified through extensive neighbourhood engagement as well as through City of Hamilton strategic priorities. The redevelopment of the former parking lot into Century Street Parkette was seen as an opportunity to undertake a public art process. A motion was brought forward to council in 2018 which saw funding approved for a public art process to plan, select, fabricate and install a work of Public Art in Century Street Parkette.

Community input in the form of student input from the neighbouring Cathedral Highschool, the direct neighbourhood, as well as other community engagement as deemed appropriate by way of the public art process was clearly articulated in the motion to council.

The public art project has an overall budget of \$150,000. The site for the art work is to be within the new Century Street Parkette located in a parcel of City owned land bordered by Wentworth St N, Wilson St N, and Century St.

A brief review of the history of the area was provided, historic use of the site noting the site had past use by the (Hamilton Radial Electric Railway).

Discussion

Members of the focus group were asked to address the following question as part of a general discussion

What unique and meaningful stories, qualities and characteristics of the GALA neighbourhood, and Century Street Parkette do you think artists should be asked to reflect in proposals for public art in the Parkette?

The following responses were provided:

- stories of the history of the site
- heritage - with context of site (interpretive plaque will be included)
- include description of history in call to artists
- important that meaning of the art is clear, connections through community, City art to reflect and complement existing neighbourhood art - what qualities? authentic edgy spirit? yes, like the expressiveness of the existing temporary art pieces
- formal traditional piece? could permanent art push the formal style of the park, or complement the formal style

- the proud history/heritage of the park site should be reflected
- tell the stories of the people in the community through the art
- sense of community - proud community, continue to build strength
- HSR - should be broader in range than HSR/transit? specific train related (object) art takes away from the people and stories of community, multicultural (Westinghouse communication) stories of the resiliency of the people and workers specifically
- School - users of the space, highschool students hanging out etc. (will connect with student council)
- gathering space potential, neighbourhood daytime use, functional or interactive piece, interesting seating, etc fascinating benches, tell the story of the community
- lighting? artistic examples of lighting, lighting the piece through solar, interactive artistic lighting piece
- conceptually accessible, important as the first permanent public art piece in ward 3
- building the story through outreach for the art piece
- benches, functional piece, history of changing uses, discourage students from gathering in too large a group to avoid neighbour conflict
- input from the other park on Century street to see if there are existing concerns/use patterns
- seating is important
- Cathedral - glee club, CFL connection, bike racks needed? cycling staff (look into this), safety for bikes being stolen?
- Cathy Weaver school, mission services, wentworth baptist (for sale?), connection, Rotary, Cathy Weaver connection, Weaver core
- hoover factory, multiculturalism, art on Barton St, cultural history piece, (dominion glass, HSR, electrical rail, waves of immigration, transit and neighbourhood repair)
- use the arts piece as educational potential, goal, tool for understanding the community (history, stories of workers, textile trades) - educational story
- mapping in the group, series of art pieces to share the history/stories, artists can be creative in how to express the goals
- aboriginal history of the site? reasons for this site to be inclusive of indigenous themes, King Street configuration indigenous trail, would be a good location for the story through downtown core, review with Shelly (look into specific stories that may need to be reflected) pre-colonial time
- GALA has a strong presence of indigenous community - BD can follow up with community for contacts
- Powell Park indigenous art piece? to keep in mind with indigenous strategy development (scope \$ etc)
- noisy site, concerns, visibility of the piece? form, integrated art, stand alone piece, school view
- noisy site, impacts on enjoyment of the site, how to make the site more hospitable, what would make you stay?
- created sanctuary or barrier, for privacy
- duality of railway - history of the rail, compelling but redundant? not as unique to the City
- how to play with this?
- LRT? teeth ripped out, in transition, not as positive, trauma, dev't and promises made and broken
- investment opportunity - cultural history
- positive initiative, clean ally's, rejuvenation, sanctuary, involve neighbours in art piece?

- king - Ashley and Wentworth - greek diaspora - Community stories
- Cathy weaver - inclusive and welcome, cultural diversity and school diversity, more community contribution to the piece
- untold and modest history of the site, remains a piece of the site history
- parking lot modules, could be an interesting basis for a work, subdivision of site, City blocks (archeology of the past site use, breakdown)
- pluralism, in site form, methodology of the work
- living sculpture - plant materials
- formal vs vertical style disruption in the space
- precedent example: community collaboration with professional artist Reinhard Reitzenstein neighbourhood youth at Winona Dr. and Vaughan Road, a similar busy and noisy triangle parkette – inspired a suggestion for the form, or vehicle of the work to be raised above the ground, i.e. a billboard, columns or other such structure that resonates with the park design rather than competing with it, as well as the incorporation of imagery contributed by the community
- thematic? Pre-colonial, land first, moving forward through history, education aspect, value of the neighbourhood (to showcase and instill the stories are told) honour history of the site in context of the City
- larger themes, labour history, Woodland park is major site of labour history, see and understand and contribute to the history of the site, billboard formal wall, mural wall series aspect, David Hind piece at the RBG, native plant material, regenerative, understood quickly
- how will the community benefit? what would they like, need, prioritize functional pieces, benches and usable items
- space to dream and wander and have diverse experiences, duality of access to the site and the art piece
- youth to be directly involved, community involvement, inclusive in the creative process, art education component, collaboration/consultation, theme community and education, communication and community pride
- Dave Hind successful work, defining community art, strong potential for success in the theme for Century Street Parkette
- positive framework - community can buy in through process
- Maria Public school trustee - reach out for Cathy Weaver, or consult directly
- benches, murals, series,
- railway track incorporated (educational)
- HSR ground stories and commemoration, streetcar
- stories of the Mills and buildings
- bridge between east and west, mountain and downtown, connector (celebrate being central!)
- seating students to use the park at lunch, etc.
- other uses - walk by the park to get to the bus, interactive would be cool on the way to and from school
- railroad interactive and educational
- use park to sit and draw for art class, functional space, outdoor class for art and drama
- benches and seats, more people to be and sit outside, break from the school and being locked inside, a place that feels like home (outdoors)
- - goals and themes? tough neighbourhood, misconception - enduring neighbourhood, strength of character, reflect the positives of the neighbourhood

- proud story, break the stereotypes, show the reality, a place for community to be proud of, park and art to reflect this
- connectivity, cathedral students, cathy wever students and neighbourhood, how to speak to everyone through art
- history of the school, education on the development of school and 25th anniversary of school
- connectivity, neighbourhood together, diversity, everyone included and welcome in the parkette, ages, races, genders, sit down and be one
- unfair reputation, change that to reflect resiliency of the community
- misconception of neighbourhood and school, actually safe, nice and diverse, strong community, stop the misconception, education for those passing through
- include the physical history and cultural history of the area, waves of immigration, defining the neighbourhood, understand the history and story of the neighbourhood
- HSR story, educational
- Indigenous program, Nathan (coordinator) Mr. Taylor (teacher) Melissa Button
- cultural history, pre colonial as well
- park as a gathering place/classroom, concert space? use for the school
- Fall - out for consultation on the website (touch base with Maureen and Matt to include students)
- Jury members, would love student reps (interested)
- final thoughts? tie the community together, commonalities, showcase those
- connect everyone with this place
- area represents community and tight knit bonds, showcase that unique aspect of the community
- GALA mission, inclusivity, respect, unique place
- cultural history part of call, pre colonial history
- glee club at Cathedral (national champions) young and diverse, spirit!!! incorporate theme of glee, celebration through sound, performing artists and musicians in the neighbourhood
- as school lets out, very diverse community and families, school, reflect and be accessible for all diversity, concern with use of dominant language on pieces
- art for arts sake or interactive? Interactive!!
- belongs to all members, young and old, can engage with
- performance in space
- noisy?
- quietude? can art create reflective sonic space?
- proud neighbourhood, showcase the positive in the strong community, negate the "bad rap" showcase the real greatness
- historic low resources, can put chip on people, make them more creative and stronger, can make your own space/ showcase resourcefulness of community
- contrast of new places/ mixed with grass roots businesses and community members, blending and mixing
- transition as a theme - evolution, mixing of old and new use, community
- past use of parking lot? history, fights back in the day, litter, meet up in the parking lot, changed since then
- pretty quiet recently, what qualities of the neighbourhood - family, kids running around and new kids running around, hockey down the street, bball nets, active with neighbourhood kids and students
- interactive would be good

- concerns about vandalism? specific concerns? adopt a park (other park down the street, picnic table, no ball playing sign), used a bit by community, homeless people using the space, wire stripping?
- resilience as theme- challenge to imagine interactive, resilient art piece, vandalism as art for youth, graffiti culture (meaning for the community creates buy in)
- West side of park (mural or legal wall along fence edge)
- graffiti on fences in neighbourhood? not lately, pretty good
- wentworth baptist, down the street, extensive history of that site, history of workers (various groups of new)
- telling the story of the neighbourhood in a new way
- functional piece? sit or lock bikes? place to gather, share experience together
- human element causes the space to vibrate, human and people are the heart
- operate when people in the space, or not, day, night, impact? place to feel welcomed in, and wish to gather and spend time together
- stoned up the parking lot for a number of years, open and accessible with the park space
- Proud neighbourhood
- Railway/industrial history
- People oriented
- Walking
- Would prefer a traditional art work or a functional work.
- Students using the parkette – from Cathedral
- Welcoming
- Families and kids using the park
- Pride in the neighbourhood
- Telling the history but for today not just looking back
- Indigenous perspective, many voices and nations, resided on the land, changes
- Inclusion - how to include multiple perspectives
- discovery/transition - open themes that can be responded to by all voices and perspectives
- Cathedral students, neighbours, community, "individualism", multiple stories, energy into the community, make a contribution
- Neighbourhood pride and diversity? resonates, 'resilience' community resilience, strengthen from potential doubts
- Bounce back, twice as strong, resurgence and revitalize the historic stores and businesses
- Industrial history? Pre colonial history? gather stories of how land was used, pre colonial history, show this through the art work (background to be part of the call to artists)
- Transition, Growth and Discovery - tie these ideas into the goals and themes
- from industrial to education, self enlightenment and achievement, all family histories inclusive, discovery and achievement, discover, grow and learn for the betterment of all
- open access for all, and everyone
- education and achievement, financial, stories will change over time (\$ does not equal success)
- communal table, interactive, indigenous theme, circle, nature and community, council makes the decision together, unanimous, agreement
- utmost respect for the women, clan mothers, continuity of history, sharing stories
- practice rituals from the land you are visiting

Summary

The group identified what they felt to be the most important concepts as the evening ended. These are highlighted in **green** above. Based on these concepts, public art staff has developed the following Project Goal:

That the proposed Public Art work(s) be an inclusive work that may be a functional or interactive piece(s) that reflect the proud local history and human stories of the GALA neighbourhood.

The Artist is invited to develop a proposal for artwork(s) that will address one or more of the following:

**Enhance a welcoming and people-oriented space;
Encourage education and learning;
Celebration of the evolving community; and
Reflect transition, growth or discovery.**

Next Steps

This focus group report will be posted on the City of Hamilton's Public Art website at www.hamilton.ca/publicart for public comment.

A Call for Artists, including the above project goal, a brief overview of the cultural history of the GALA neighbourhood, site constraints and technical requirements will be issued in Summer 2020.

A jury of citizens, local artists and arts professionals will short list up to six artists' proposals to be posted on the city website and displayed at a Ward 3 (GALA neighbourhood) location for public comment later this fall.

The jury will select a winning proposal based on artistic excellence, response to the competition goal, technical concerns and the public response in early 2021.



Tourism and Culture Division
Planning and Economic Development Department