



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Poet Laureate Legacy and Public Art Update

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| Date: | July 24, 2014 |
| To: | Economic Development Committee |
| From: | General Manager, Economic Development and Culture |
| Wards: | All |
| Reference Number: | |

SUMMARY

This report provides information on Toronto Poet Laureate legacy projects as requested by Economic Development Committee at its meeting held on May 21, 2014.

In addition, this report also provides information the current process for the selection and location of public art, including a sampling of current installations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. This report be received as information

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications arising from this recommendation.

DECISION HISTORY

On May 21, 2014 the Economic Development Committee requested that the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture report back on the possibility of establishing a Poet Laureate Legacy Fund and the current process for the selection and location of public art, such report to include a broad sampling of installations over the past 5 years.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.ED31.1>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In April 2001 City Council established the position of Poet Laureate and appointed Dennis Lee as the City's first poet Laureate and stated a wish that the Poet Laureate develop a legacy project for the City.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2001/agendas/council/cc010424/edp3rpt/cl016.pdf>

COMMENTS

Poet Laureate Legacies

Each Toronto Poet Laureate has left a legacy. Dennis Lee, Poet Laureate from 2001 – 2004, worked with benefactor Scott Griffin, who financed a bronze statue of renowned poet Al Purdy in Queen's Park North. The statue cost approximately \$275,000 and was not unveiled until May 2008, more than three years after Dennis Lee's term as Poet Laureate ended.

Mr. Lee also worked with Heritage Toronto to initiate the Toronto Legacy Project, which installs blue Legacy Plaques around the city to mark the homes and/or studios of Toronto painters, poets, writers and architects.

Pier Giorgio di Cicco, Toronto Poet Laureate from 2004 – 2009, dedicated a collection of essays to the city, titled *Municipal Mind: Manifestos for the Creative City*.

Toronto's third Poet Laureate, Dionne Brand (2009 – 2012), worked with Toronto Public Library to create a website (<http://www.poetryispublic.ca/>) and install lines of poetry at three library locations. Approximately \$7,000 was raised to install a poem in brass and concrete outside Cedarbrae Library in Scarborough; and to frost a poem on the glass doors of York Woods Library in North York. Additionally, hoarding panels -- bearing many poems by Canadian writers -- were installed at Toronto Reference Library during construction in 2010; the panel art was later permanently applied to street level windows facing Yonge Street. The poem on glass is expected to be installed this year, two years after the expiration of Ms. Brand's term as Poet Laureate.

Dr. Clarke's legacy dream was to see lines of poetry inscribed in subway stations. After much planning and many meetings it became apparent that funding, logistical and technical considerations would make such a legacy impossible without significant funding. For comparison's sake, the Diamond + Schmitt-designed overhaul of Museum

subway station cost approximately \$5 million and took several years to plan and construct. The station revamp was financed through a public/private partnership.

In the meantime, Dr. Clarke has been working with Arts & Culture and Parks, Forestry & Recreation to realize a poetic legacy in Ramsden Park (Ward 27) as part of a wider park overhaul scheduled for completion in 2016.

History has shown that Poets Laureate instinctively associate the idea of a legacy with a permanent, built form component. During his term Dr. Clarke has been the driver behind several ongoing activities such as the East End Poetry Festival and Beat Café on Nathan Phillips Square, but he would prefer a lasting legacy in built form.

In his presentation to the Committee on May 21st, Dr. Clarke suggested that the city establish a Legacy Fund to enable future Poets Laureate to develop and complete a lasting legacy within their three-year term of office. Dr. Clarke also suggested that a Fund of \$100,000 would be appropriate. Staff recognize that a Poet Laureate Legacy Fund would make it much easier for future Poets Laureate to have an lasting impact on the city. Staff will continue to investigate potential sources of funding for this Legacy Fund and will endeavour to try to have funding in place for the next Poet Laureate in 2016.

Public Art Update

City public art commissions are awarded through an open call process. Competitions are adjudicated by a qualified independent selection panel with professional expertise in contemporary art and knowledge of the local context. The Selection Panel for each project includes two community members and three visual arts professionals. For every project, Arts and Culture strives to ensure that one of the art professionals is also a member of the local community. Arts & Culture works with the Ward Councillor's office to identify the community members who sit on the selection panel.

The location of public art projects is governed by where the funding is coming from, such as where City capital projects are planned or where Section 37 funds are allocated to be used on city owned land as community benefit.

The following examples provide a broad sampling of current installations across the city.

North York Arts Park

The *North York Arts Park* is located in Willowdale (Ward 23) between Princess and Hillcrest Avenues. The park will act as an outdoor arts centre for both the community and visitors. The park will contain two permanent commissioned public art projects by two different artists. The park site was selected through community consultation in collaboration with the Ward Councillor's office, Parks Forestry & Recreation, and project partners the Toronto Arts Council and North York Arts. Monies for the public art commissions were identified through Section 37 contributions for public art within the ward. The final artworks are scheduled to be installed in 2015.

Mimico Creek

Mimico Creek is located in Etobicoke-Lakeshore (Ward 5) at Dundas and Islington Avenues. The site for the artwork is a triangular plaza and will act as a key gateway into the Etobicoke City Centre. The site was identified through community consultation and in collaboration with the ward Councillor's office, Public Realm, Transportation, Parks Forestry & Recreation. The project is part of the wider area Etobicoke Centre Public Space and Streetscape Plan that was approved by City Council. Money for the public art commission was identified through Section 37 contributions for public art within the ward. The final artwork is scheduled to be installed in 2015.

Dawes Crossing

Dawes Crossing is located in Scarborough (Ward 31) at the intersection of Dawes Road and Victoria Park Avenue. While the barn-like structure and its surrounding landscaping honours the area's rural past and its importance as a trade route, its many sustainable and interactive elements are meant to engage a modern community. *Dawes Crossing* provides free Wi-Fi access, and has been designed to be a public performance space with built-in power outlets powered by photo voltaic cells mounted on the roof. A twirling reflective wind turbine provides light within the structure while the roof transports rain water runoff to feed a native oak tree and small forest garden. Project was funded by City Planning Urban Design through the Dawes Road revitalization capital budget.

OKTA

Located downtown on Fort York Blvd (Ward 19) *OKTA* is an interactive sound installation by Montreal based artists Stephen Bates and Douglas Moffat. Taking June Callwood's observation of a cloud as its starting point, *OKTA* is an ephemeral sound installation where multiple points of sound are distributed across the artwork site. As clouds pass over the park, sonic moments are triggered across the installation. In meteorology, the OKTA is a unit of measure for cloud cover. Project is funded through Section 37 contributions by development near the park. Installation is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2014.

Nyctophilia

Located at Weston Road and Dennis Avenue (Ward 11), *Nyctophilia* is the creation of Canadian artists Christian Giroux of Guelph and Daniel Young, of Toronto and Berlin. The artwork consists of a series of standard 32' hydro poles, arrayed along the city property that runs the length of the adjacent building at the corner of Weston Road and Dennis Avenue. Attached to each pole are several side-mounted light brackets, each of which supports an LED area light. These lights will be customized with varying combinations of blue, white and other LED lights and will be programmed to operate at a reduced wattage to produce a modulated "cloud of light." The artists celebrate the textural and formal qualities of the proletarian hydro pole with side-mounted light fixture that is part of the Mt. Dennis working class landscape and transform it into compelling public art. Funding for the project came from Section 37 allocations in the Ward and from the Economic Development and Culture capital budget.

Joel Weeks Park

Located in Donmount Court (Ward 30), the soon-to-be-installed work for Joel Weeks Park consists of three sculptural assemblages that fuse elements of gothic architecture and Ojibway traditional design referencing the natural and cultural history of the Don River ecosystem. By Aboriginal artists Mary Ann Barkhouse and Michael Belmore, the artwork references themes of water, shoreline and forest. Project is funded through capital budget of Parks, Forestry & Recreation.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Michael H. Williams, General Manager
Economic Development and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 - Poet Laureate Legacy Fund and Public Art Update



Mimico Creek, Ward 5



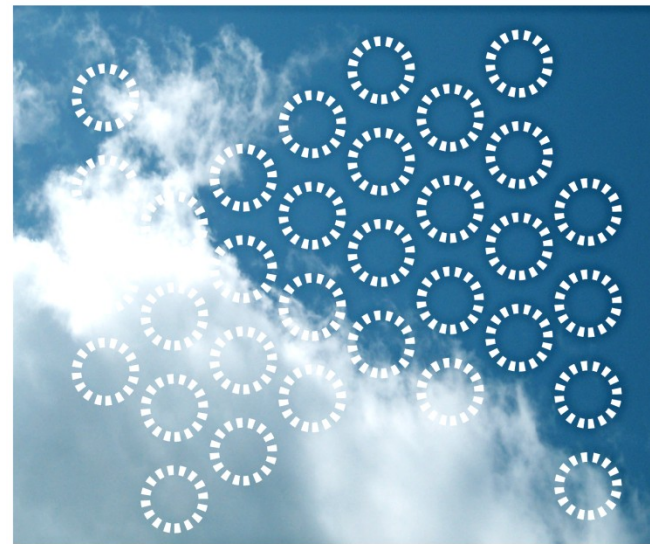
Nyctophilia, Ward 11



Dawes Crossing, Ward 31



Joel Weeks Park, Ward 30



OKTA, Ward 19