

555 Rexdale Boulevard (Block 9 of the Draft Plan of Subdivision) - Public Art Plan

Date: May 12, 2022
To: Etobicoke York Community Council
From: Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division
Ward: 1 – Etobicoke North

Planning Application Number: 18 117779 WET 02 SA

SUMMARY

The purpose of this staff report is to seek City Council approval of the Woodbine Casino Lands – Woodbine Square at 555 Rexdale Boulevard (Block 9 of the Draft Plan of Subdivision) - Public Art Plan. The Plan, which is included as Attachment 1 of this report, outlines the method by which the owner will commission public art along the privately-owned area of the site.

The Public Art Plan provides a framework and description of the commissioning of public art including: project description; history and culture of the area; public art requirement; public art objectives; public art locations; budget; selection process; jury composition and schedule.

The attached plan meets the objectives of the City's Percent for Public Art Guidelines and is supported by the Toronto Public Art Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve 555 Rexdale Boulevard (Block 9 of the Draft Plan of Subdivision) - Public Art Plan as attached (Attachment 1) to the report dated May 12, 2022 from the Director, Urban Design, City Planning.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendation in this report has no financial impact.

PROPOSAL

Woodbine Square (Block 9), is located at 555 Rexdale Boulevard and is being developed by One Toronto Gaming (Developer) in conjunction with Woodbine Entertainment Group (Owner). Woodbine Square, a multi-phase, mixed-use, non-residential development project located in Etobicoke. The development will include entertainment, retail and restaurant uses to create an urban, pedestrian-orientated setting to compliment the new expanded Gaming District and the existing Woodbine Racetrack Grandstand.

North of the site is Rexdale Boulevard, and a future new road called Dance Smartly Boulevard. Queens Plate Drive is located to the east, and the existing Woodbine Racetrack Grandstand is located to the south. The planned GO Transit Station that will be built near the site will help drive tourism and visitors to the area.

Further north of the site is the Etobicoke Creek area, known as Aadoobiigok in Anishinaabemowin, which translates to "Place of the Black Alders"; , and the Humber River, originally named "Cobechenonk", an Indigenous term of the Anishinaabe which means "leave the canoes and go back". The Woodbine Racetrack and the new Woodbine Square development is located within an existing diverse community with a large mix of backgrounds, cultures and languages spoken. Background information on the history, geography and social aspects of the area will be provided to the artist for information.

The potential artist(s) will be provided with three possible public art locations as identified in the Public Art Plan, and will select at least one of these locations for the commission. The proposed areas are as follows:

- Location 1: Northeast of the site along Queens Plate Drive is a natural gateway to the development and the adjacent Woodbine Casino expansion development (Block 10 of the Draft Plan of Subdivision) to the east. Through the public art program for Block 10, a proposed artwork on the east side will provide an opportunity to complement the west side of Queens Plate Drive in Block 9. Details on Public Art Plan for Block 10 can be found here: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ey/bgrd/backgroundfile-145162.pdf>
- Location 2: The location on the southwest of the site will be along the private east-west street and adjacent to the walking ring, which, in addition to its principal use for viewing the horses on live race days, the space will be used as a public outdoor amphitheater and active public space.
- Location 3: Public art opportunities along Dance Smartly Boulevard at the north and along Queens Plate Drive spanning north and south along the eastern edge of the

site. These art opportunities provide for large-scale integrated artworks that maybe commissioned by one or multiple artists and would animate both Dance Smartly Boulevard as well as Queens Plate Drive.

DECISION BACKGROUND

In 2017, Woodbine Entertainment Group (WEG) submitted two applications to amend the former City of Etobicoke Zoning Code to permit expanded gaming on the Woodbine Racetrack lands: one for the existing grandstand building; and one for a new Gaming District to be located to the northeast of the existing grandstand. These applications proposed amendments to existing site specific Zoning By-law to add live table gaming as a permitted use at 555 Rexdale Boulevard. City Council on April 24, 2018 adopted the staff report entitled 555 Rexdale Boulevard – Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivision Applications - Final Report and enacted Zoning By-laws. The decision document can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EY29.2>

The Draft Plan of Subdivision established a framework for public roads and services and created development blocks for the Phase 1 lands to facilitate the development including Block 9 – the site of which this Public Art Plan will be subject to, where various commercial uses are planned. The approval of the Draft Plan of Subdivision application was appealed by a local resident. On May 8, 2019 the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) issued an Order which dismissed the appeal of the Draft Plan of Subdivision application and subsequently approved the Draft Plan of Subdivision subject to the fulfillment of conditions. The Plan of Subdivision agreement is currently in the process of being executed and registered, which would establish the future division of development blocks, parks and roads.

In February, 2018, WEG submitted a Site Plan Control application to permit the construction of five retail buildings with a total of 7,617 square metres on Block 9 of the Plan of Subdivision. One Toronto Gaming (OTG) has been retained as the operator of Block 9 and is responsible for constructing the facilities on the Block 9 lands, and ensuring the Public Art Plan as required in the Plan of Subdivision is approved and implemented. The Notice of Approval of Conditions was issued on February 9, 2022.

The site features a 'walking ring' in between the commercial buildings and the existing grandstand building, which is planned to be redesigned and serve as a celebratory circle during racing events, and to be used as open space for visitors. Various pedestrian walkways connecting visitors to the various buildings and open spaces are also proposed.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Toronto Official Plan

Public art was secured when this application was reviewed against the policies of the City of Toronto Official Plan as follows:

Chapter 3 - Building a Successful City

Section 3.1.4 Public Art

Policy 1. e) encouraging the inclusion of public art in all significant private sector developments across the City.

The City of Toronto Official Plan can be found here: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>.

COMMENTS

The proposed potential locations provide options for the artists to select from. The locations include: northeast of the site, which is a gateway to the development and adjacent Block 10 development to the east, having the opportunity to complement a forthcoming public artwork on the eastern side of Queens Plate Drive, which is still to be determined as it is in the planning and competition phase; southwest of the site, which will have prominence along the private east-west street and adjacent to the walking ring, which, in addition to its principal use for viewing the horses on live race days, the space will be used as a public outdoor amphitheater and active public space; and lastly, along Dance Smartly Boulevard, where there are opportunities for integration of public art along this future public street and along Queens Plate Drive spanning north and south along the eastern edge of the site.

The artist(s) will be selected based on a diverse range of backgrounds, including Indigenous Artists and Artists from equity-seeking communities.

The proposed public art will be highly visible on this site and the locations are supported by City Planning staff and the Toronto Public Art Commission.

An artist will be selected through the following two-stage competition process:

Stage 1: Open and Invitational Call for Credentials.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) will focus on inviting professional artists to submit their curriculum vitae. Special attention will be made towards engaging BIPOC artists and community/arts organizations that work with a diverse community.

Stage 2: Finalised Brief

The short list of artists will receive the finalised brief that will include architectural information, neighbourhood context and area history to assist the artists in their concept development. They will then prepare detailed concept submissions that will be reviewed by the jury.

The three-person jury composition will be drawn from the list of potential jury members provided in the Public Art Plan. The jury will consist of two outside art experts, with at least one of them being an Artist, while one member of the jury will either live or work in the ward. The third juror will be a member representative of the owner team. The selection process, with a majority of art experts, is in keeping with the City's Percent for Public Art Guidelines.

In accordance with City policy, City Planning continues to encourage applicants to seek artistic excellence and expertise with broad representation from the art community in the selection of artists and jury members, including representation from the Indigenous community and equity seeking groups.

The estimated budget allocation for the art, administration and maintenance is described in the Public Art Plan which is in compliance with the City's Percent for Public Art Guidelines.

This proposal is supported by City Planning staff and it was presented to the Toronto Public Art Commission at its meeting on June 23, 2021, where it also gained support.

Conclusion

The 555 Rexdale Boulevard (Block 9 of the Draft Plan of Subdivision) - Public Art Plan is in compliance with the City's objectives for the provision of public art associated with the development.

This on-site program is in accordance with the City Planning Percent for Public Art Program, and is supported by the Toronto Public Art Commission. Upon City Council's approval, the owner will commence with the artist selection process as scheduled in the attached plan.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Emilia Floro, Director Urban Design
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Public Art Plan