



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: May 25, 2022

Report Number: SRPI.22.032

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

**Subject: Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program –
Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway
Lighting Feature**

Purpose:

This staff report furthers the Yonge/Garden Gateway Feature project conceptually approved by Council in 2013. Staff now seek Council's consideration of a proposed public consultation strategy to provide input towards an ultimate design and construction of the project. This report also seeks Council's direction to apply for cost share contribution through the Region's Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program for the implementation of the Gateway Lighting Feature project.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That SRPI.22.032 be received, and that all comments be referred back to staff;
- b) That Council endorse the public consultation process outlined in staff report SRPRS.22.032 to obtain feedback with regards to an ultimate design of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature;
- c) That staff report back to Council in Q3 of 2022 with the results of the public consultation and recommendations to advance a final design of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature;
- d) That Council direct staff to apply for the Region's Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program to implement the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature project once the final design has been confirmed;
- e) That, should the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program application be approved, the Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure be authorized to execute an agreement with the Regional Municipality of York regarding the maintenance of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature; and'

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- f) That the cost of the detailed design of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature be considered as part of the 2023 capital budget process.

Contact Person:

Joanne Leung, Manager of Urban Design & Heritage, phone number 905-771-5498

Report Approval:

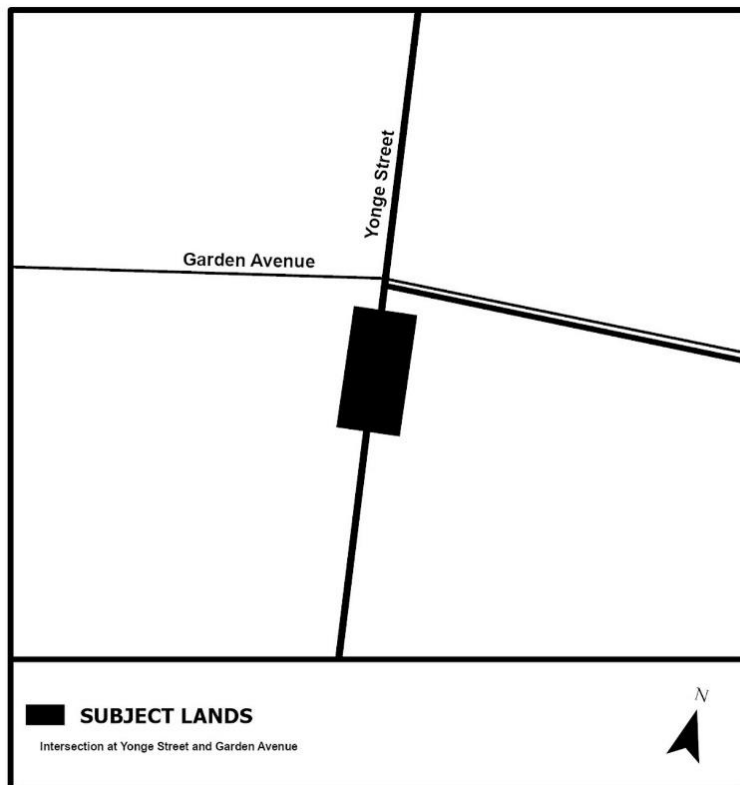
Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, Interim City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Location Map:

Below is a map displaying the location of the subject lands. Should you require an alternative format call the person listed under “Contact Person”, above.



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Background:

A Significant Opportunity to Identify Richmond Hill and Create a Sense of Arrival

As part of the Region of York's 2012 Yonge Street South Streetscape Master Plan, the opportunity was identified to design and install a gateway feature to signify the entrance to Richmond Hill.

Located at the first intersection north of Highway 7 and Yonge Street, this site denotes the northern entry to Richmond Hill on Yonge Street and will be visible from Yonge Street, the Highway 7 and 407 overpasses as well the Yonge North Subway Extension, when it is completed. A well-designed iconic feature at this location will create a striking impression on northbound visitors entering Richmond Hill from Markham, Vaughan and North York.

A prominent entry feature will not only signify arrival into Richmond Hill but also help with developing further iconography and branding to identify and promote Richmond Hill.

Few suburban municipalities around the GTA have readily identifiable civic infrastructure. The City of Toronto has utilized its City Hall as well the CN Tower and more recently the lighted "Toronto" sign in front of City Hall. Richmond Hill has, to some extent, utilized the David Dunlap Observatory's observatory dome. Additional focal points such as the gateway lighting feature can show pride in our community and assist in setting us apart from surrounding municipalities.

With confirmation of construction of the Yonge North subway extension, plans for the urban growth centre through the Provincial Transit Oriented Community Plan, as well as the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan being near completion, the time is right to move forward with a prominent gateway feature to signify entry to Richmond Hill and the community of Richmond Hill Centre.

The Yonge Street South Streetscape Master Plan (2012)

Yonge Street between Steeles Avenue and Highway 7 represents a major Regional Intensification Corridor between the City of Toronto and Richmond Hill Centre. This section of Yonge Street was identified by York Region as the South Yonge Street Corridor and it is planned to attract significantly higher densities throughout its length with integrated transit-oriented development.

In 2010, in anticipation of intensification and a future subway extension, York Region undertook the Yonge Street South Streetscape Master Plan Study with input from three municipalities (Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Markham) to guide streetscape design along Yonge Street between Steeles Avenue and Garden Avenue. The Region approved the Yonge Street South Streetscape Master Plan in 2012, and the median located at the intersection of Yonge Street and Garden Avenue was identified as the viable site for a gateway entry feature for both the City of Richmond Hill and the Region.

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Yonge/Garden Project - Phase 1 (2013)

The Y2 VivaNext Bus Rapid Transit (the “Y2”) project, identified in the Region’s 2012 capital plan, was a road reconstruction project to incorporate dedicated VivaNext bus rapid transit lanes (BRT) in the centre of Yonge Street between Highway 7 to the south and 19th Avenue to the north. In addition to creating dedicated bus lanes in the centre of Yonge Street, the Y2 road reconstruction would also allow for enhancement of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue intersection median to provide a ground-oriented base for the proposed linear gateway feature (the “Yonge/Garden Gateway project”).

On September 9, 2013, City Council approved the principle of the Yonge/Garden Gateway project which was envisioned in the form of a series of six vertical lighting elements 8 to 10 meters in height located in the Yonge Street median as shown in Diagram 1. The landscape and base area were approved by the City and Region and are shown in Diagram 2. The detailed design, manufacture and installation of the lighting elements were to be undertaken in Phase 2 of the project at a later date.

Construction on the Yonge/Garden VivaNext BRT intersection project began in 2015, with the construction of the median and streetscape infrastructure elements beginning in 2019. The entire Y2 project, including the Phase1 enhancement works, was completed in late 2021 (see Diagrams 3 and 4). The Region has in total, contributed 50% of the enhancement cost to Phase 1 of this project through the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program (MSPP).

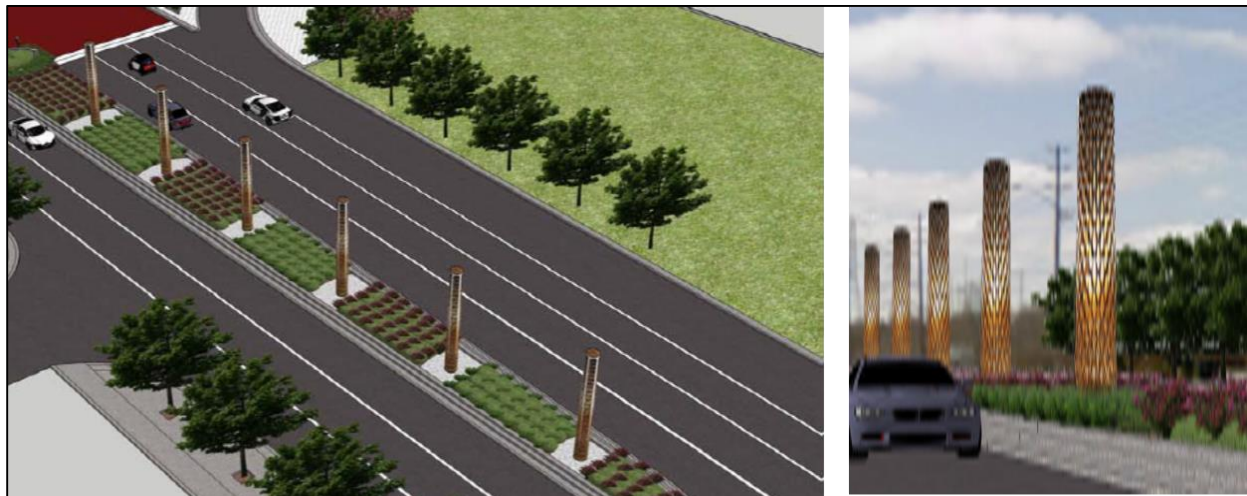


Diagram 1: Master Concept (2013): Median and Lighting Feature

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Diagram 2: Master Concept (2013): Phase 1 - Enhanced Landscape Component

In accordance with the design parameter of the vertical lighting elements envisioned by Region and City, the reconstructed Y2 Viva BRT median provides appropriate electrical conduits in anticipation of the future implementation of Phase 2.

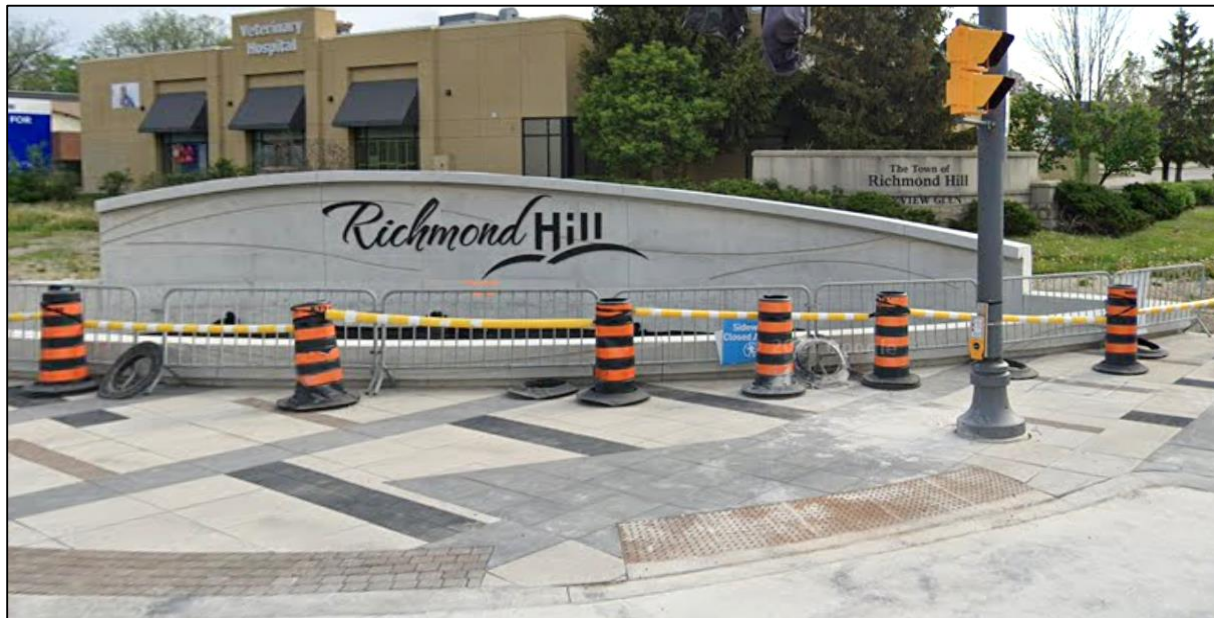


Diagram 3: Constructed N-E corner streetscape element (Google, 2021)

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Diagram 4: Constructed median base (Google, 2021).

Yonge/Garden Project - Phase 2 (2022)

Phase 2 of the Yonge/Garden Gateway project includes the detailed design, manufacture and installation of the vertical multi-unit lighting elements at the median. The current project requires a high level of design expertise and can now be implemented given the completion of the Y2 Viva BRT project in 2021. The Phase 2 project will qualify for 30% of MSPP cost share funding.

In 2019, City staff commissioned a consultant (STUDIO tla) to develop three gateway lighting concept ideas based on the 2013 master concept.

The purpose of the “design ideas” or concepts are to generate discussion and thought on what the final design might look like. While Council will be tasked with approving a final detailed design, it is highly important to solicit input from the public on what an important feature such as this will ultimately look like.

The three design ideas outlined below offer a starting point to gather input from both Council and the public to move towards an ultimate theme and design. In no way is Council tied to either of the 3 design ideas portrayed below. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any final gateway feature will have to fit within the base area in the centre median of Yonge Street as shown in Diagrams 1, 2 and 4 above.

As a starting point, the consultant utilized 3 themes upon which the design ideas could be based. Once again, any ultimate design does not have to be based on any of these themes; new themes can be considered. The themes utilized by the consultant are derived from historical, geological and vegetative references found in Richmond Hill and are described below.

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Design Idea 1

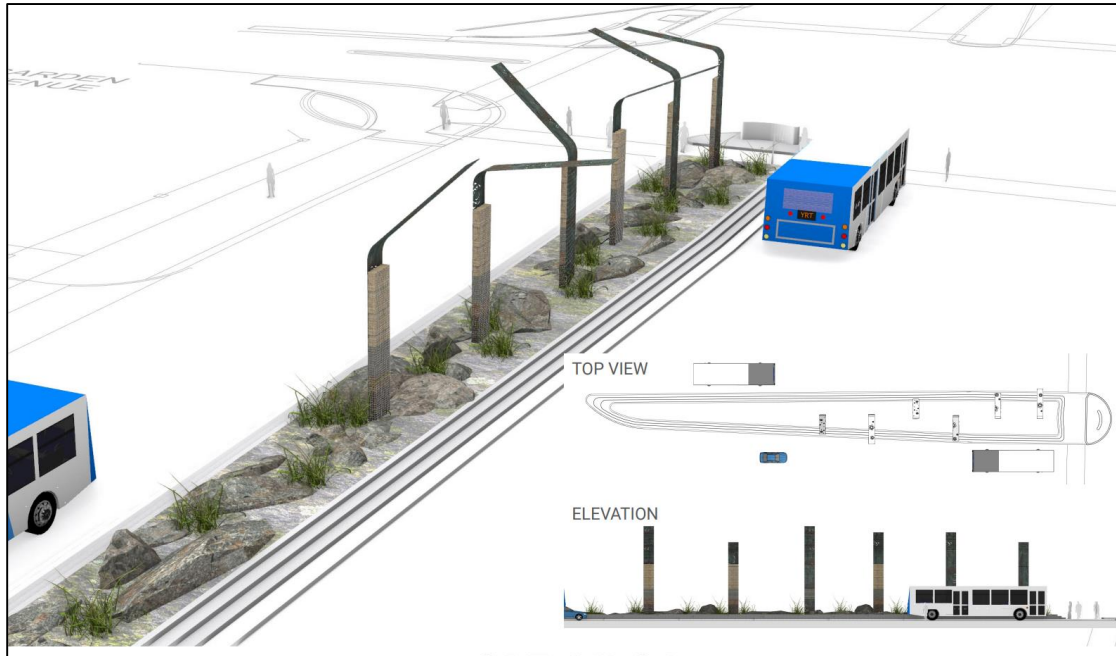


Diagram 5: Perspective and elevation for Idea 1.

Theme and inspiration Idea 1: Geological formation of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Richmond Hill's thriving rose industry in the 1900s.

In this design idea, the geological formation of the Oak Ridges Moraine associated with Richmond Hill will be captured by the use of stratified stone, locally sourced and encased in stainless steel gabion baskets. The stone columns will be supported by a metal panel on one side and constructed from stainless steel with an option to clad the surface with copper patina, which would provide an interesting colour and surface texture. Referencing the thriving rose industry in Richmond Hill in the early 1900s, the metal panel will be laser cut with shapes of roses. These cut outs would provide interesting shadowing effects during day light and night illumination.

Special lighting techniques would be applied to the base and top of the stone columns and would be orchestrated with light changes thus animating the entryway into Richmond Hill. The centre island will be redesigned to incorporate salt tolerant native plantings and natural stone outcrops. The materials used will be durable and will require minimal maintenance and constructed for longevity, and will be distinct in symbolizing the history of Richmond Hill in a contemporary way. The estimated cost for the detailed design, manufacture, and installation of this design is \$1.3 to \$1.5 million.

To view the lighting effects of this design option, please refer to Option 1 of the Attachment to this staff report.

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Design Idea 2

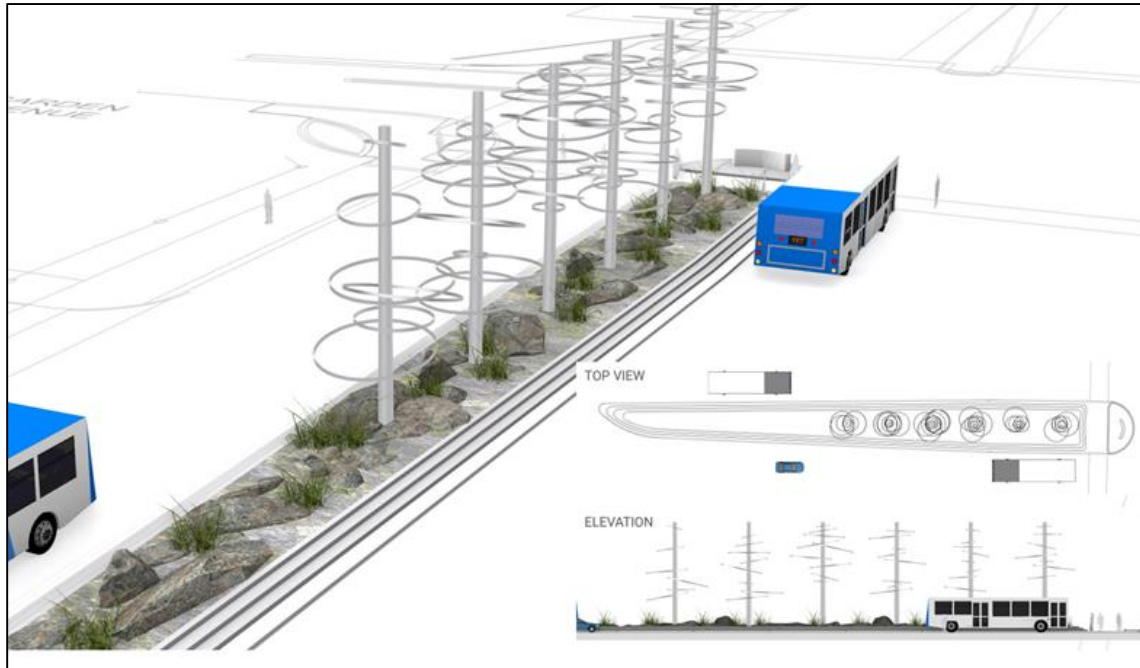


Diagram 6: Perspective and elevations for Idea 2

Theme and inspiration 2: Trees and natural vegetation in Richmond Hill expressed with circular lighting rings.

Idea 2 proposes six (6) round columns constructed in stainless steel, anodized aluminum or wood with a consistent height of 10 meters. Inspired by the trees and natural vegetation in Richmond Hill, the columns would be dressed with spiraling circular metal light rings of varying sizes and heights which would be illuminated with a colour wheel technology that can be programmed to offer a brilliant theatrical light animation. The estimated cost for the detailed design, manufacture, and installation of this option is \$1.3 to \$1.5 million.

To view the lighting effects of this design option, please refer to Option 2 of the Attachment to this staff report.

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Design Idea 3

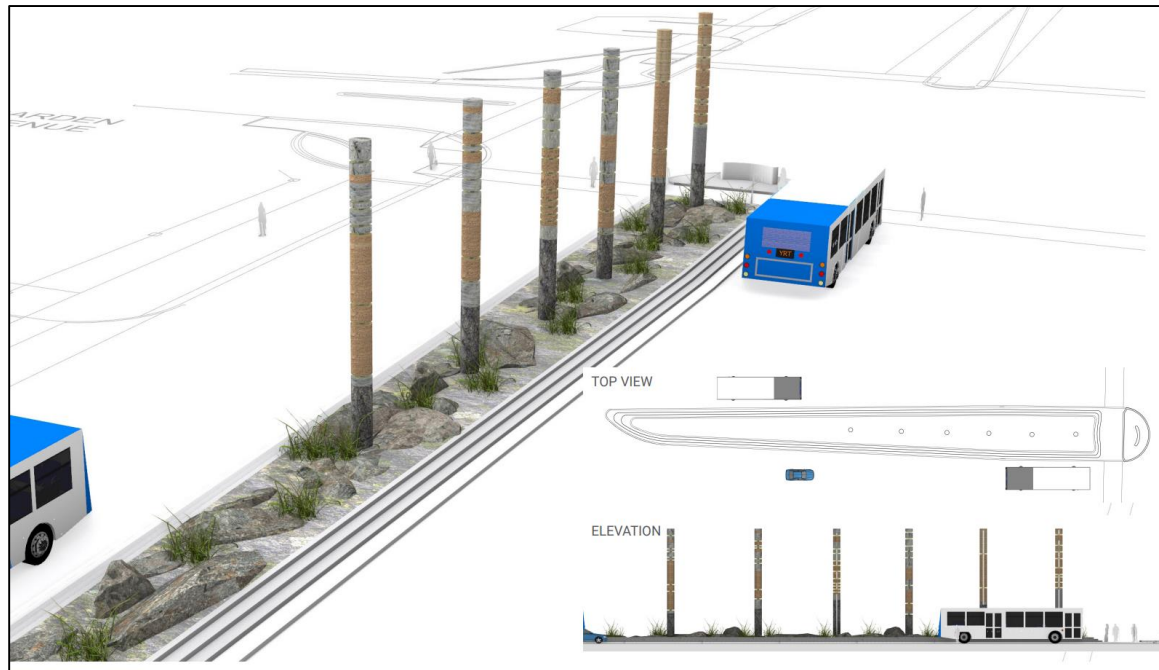


Diagram 7: Perspective and elevation for Option 3.

Theme and inspiration 3: Geological formation of the Oak Ridges Moraine and the way finding reference to “Inuksuk”.

Design Idea 3 proposes six (6) round stratified stone columns consistent in height of 10 meters. Like Design Idea 1, the stratified stone layers represent the geological formation of the Oak Ridges Moraine found in Richmond Hill. Internal light rings will separate the stratified stone layers which can be programmed for special lighting effects and announce special holidays like Canada Day. This idea is inspired by the wayfinding, manmade stone landmark created by the Inuit Civilization known as the “Inuksuk” but constructed in a minimalist setting, which would complement the contemporary architecture envisioned for Richmond Hill Centre. The estimated cost for the detailed design, manufacture, and installation of this design is \$1.5 million.

To view the lighting effects of this design option, please refer to Option 3 of the Attachment to this staff report.

Other Potential Themes

There are many other themes around which designs could be derived. These include a more modern and futuristic theme based on the emerging high density community that is planned for the area. Staff aim to gather and understand other potential design themes through public consultations.

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Public Consultation

The aim of the proposed public consultation program is to identify and develop further themes that can lead to more design ideas and ultimately a final detailed design that can be constructed and installed. To facilitate this, a public consultation program consisting of the following is proposed:

- Web-based consultation including a survey;
- Written and artistic submissions from the public; and,
- On-line open house.

The aim would be to conduct consultation during the month of June. One of the goals of the consultation would be to generate input for our consultants (STUDIO tla) to develop further thematic and design ideas for the community's comments. Staff could report back on consultation findings and further design ideas for Council's consideration in September.

At such time that a final design idea is chosen, detailed design work can begin and final budgeting and a construction schedule can be developed at that time.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Phase 2 of the Yonge/Garden Gateway Lighting Feature will be eligible for 30% cost-share contribution from the Region's Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program (MSPP). A project cost of \$1.5 million is estimated based on the current design ideas provided in this report. With this level of costing, the contribution from the Region would amount to approximately \$450,000. The remaining cost (\$1.05 million) will be considered through the 2023 and 2024 capital budget process. Total project costs will vary depending upon the ultimate chosen design. As this Gateway Feature project is associated with growth and the intensification of Yonge Street and the Richmond Hill Centre, it is eligible to utilize the Province's newly created Community Benefit Charge. Community Benefit Charges provide local municipalities to levy a fee to new development in place of the former Section 37 of the Planning Act.

Under the terms of the MSPP, local municipalities are responsible for the operation, maintenance and long-term rehabilitation of enhanced streetscape features, and therefore a maintenance agreement must be signed between the Region and the municipality. Operations staff will participate at the detailed design stage to provide feedback with regards to the maintenance requirements of the lighting elements.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

The proposed Gateway Lighting Feature aligns with the following strategic priorities: providing a strong sense of belonging by establishing the City's identity through a Gateway Lighting Feature inspired by Richmond Hill's natural, cultural history and future vision; in demonstrating fiscal responsibility by reducing the enhancement cost by 30% through the Region's cost sharing program; and by prioritizing ease of movement in the

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City through a safe and accessible network for pedestrians and active transportation forms.

Climate Change Considerations:

There is no applicable climate change considerations for the proposed gateway feature.

Conclusion:

Located at the first intersection north of Highway 7 and Yonge Street, this gateway site denotes the southern boundary of Richmond Hill on Yonge Street and will be highly visible in a number of directions. A well-designed iconic feature at this location can create a striking impression for residents and visitors alike. The proposed Gateway Lighting Feature will create a sense of arrival and identity for the city.

The aim of the proposed public consultation program is to identify and develop further themes that can lead to more design ideas and ultimately a final detailed design that can be constructed and installed. With confirmation of construction of the Yonge North subway extension, plans for the urban growth centre through the Provincial Transit Oriented Community Plan, as well as the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan being near completion, the time is right to move forward with a prominent gateway feature to signify entry to Richmond Hill and the community of Richmond Hill Centre.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Three Design Ideas

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.22.032 Yonge and Garden Lighting Feature.docx
Attachments:	- AODA - 05 09 2019 Concept Presentation_Handout_No Cost.pdf
Final Approval Date:	May 10, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - May 10, 2022 - 10:00 AM

Kelvin Kwan - May 10, 2022 - 10:03 AM

Gigi Li - May 10, 2022 - 2:51 PM

Darlene Joslin - May 10, 2022 - 3:18 PM