



## Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** April 17, 2024

**Report Number:** SRPBS.24.051

**Department:** Planning and Building Services

**Division:** Policy Planning

**Subject:** SRPBS.24.051 - Yonge/Garden Gateway Feature Project Update

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update to engage an existing Roster Vendor for the provision of professional consulting services to proceed with work to finalize the design concept of the Yonge and Garden Gateway Lighting Feature ("Gateway Feature").

### **Recommendation(s):**

- a) That Staff Report SRPBS.24.051 titled "Yonge/Garden Gateway Feature Project Update" be received, and that all comments be referred back to staff.

### **Contact Person:**

Kunal Chaudhry, Manager of Heritage & Urban Design, phone number 905-771-5562

Maria Flores, Director of Policy Planning, phone number 905-771-5438

### **Report Approval:**

**Submitted by:** Gus Galanis, Acting Commissioner of Planning and Business Services

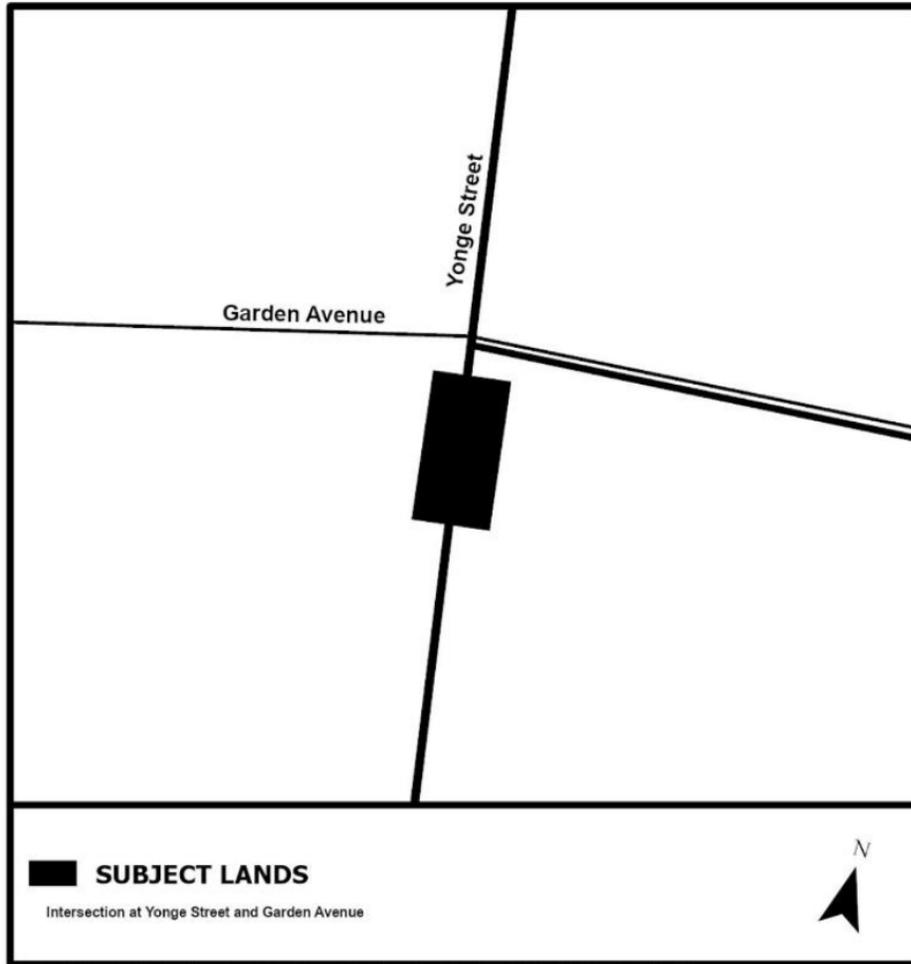
**Approved by:** Darlene Joslin, City Manager

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.

## Page 2

### Location Map:

Below is a map displaying the location of the subject lands:



### Background:

In 2012, the Region of York completed the Yonge Street South Streetscape Master Plan to guide streetscape design along Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to Garden Avenue.

In September 2013, Richmond Hill City Council (“Council”) received Staff Report SRPRS.13.156 and endorsed, in principle, an entry feature project be located at the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue intersection and to include a series of vertical lighting elements. The enhancements were directed to be constructed as part of the Y2 VivaNext Bus Rapid Transit design and build road reconstruction project (“the Y2 project”), and in support of York Region’s Yonge Street South Streetscape Master Plan.

## Page 3

Phase 1 of the project included the design and construction of various streetscape components to enhance the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue intersection, including a centre median complete with a utility connection for future vertical lighting elements. In accordance with the design parameters of the vertical lighting elements envisioned by the Region and the City, the reconstructed Y2 project median provided appropriate electrical conduits in anticipation of the future implementation of Phase 2.

Phase 2 of the project was identified to include the design of vertical lighting elements on the central median at the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue intersection and was to be initiated after the completion of the Y2 project.

In 2019, in anticipation of Phase 2, City staff commissioned a consultant to develop three gateway lighting concept ideas based on the 2013 master concept. Following completion of the Y2 project in 2021, Phase 2 was initiated to proceed with the concept design, detailed design, manufacture and installation of the vertical multi-unit lighting elements at the median.

On May 25, 2022, Council received Staff Report SRPI.22.032 and a presentation on Phase 2 of the Gateway Feature project. The report presented three design ideas prepared by the retained consultant and outlined steps to advance the Gateway Feature project conceptually approved by Council in 2013. The report also sought Council's direction to conduct public consultation towards an ultimate design and construction of the Gateway Feature.

At its meeting on May 25, 2022, Council passed a motion ("Motion") that:

- endorsed the public consultation process outlined in Staff Report SRPI.22.032 to obtain feedback with regard to an ultimate design of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature;
- directed staff to report back to Council with the results of the public consultation and recommendations to advance a final design of the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature;
- directed staff to open a competition (based on parameters to be cleared by the City's Legal Division) to Richmond Hill residents to design the Yonge Street and Garden Avenue Gateway Lighting Feature and for designs to be presented to Council; and,
- directed staff to apply for the Region's Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program to implement the Gateway Feature project once the final design has been confirmed, including authorizing the Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure to execute an agreement with the Regional Municipality of York regarding the maintenance of the feature and to consider the cost of the detailed design as part of the capital budget process.

As a response to the Motion, staff provided a memorandum to Council dated August 22, 2022, to report back on the results of an on-line survey conducted in July 2022, in which citizens provided input with respect to how the feature could represent Richmond Hill

## Page 4

and reflect the broader community's aspirations. The community's preferences captured by the survey will inform the overall aesthetic approach and final design concept for the lighting feature. The memorandum also noted that staff would report to Council with options to move forward, including the possibility of having the original consultant produce design ideas based on survey responses and conduct a second consultation to inform a final recommendation.

Accordingly, the purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update to the Gateway Feature project, and its continuation. This would include retention of the consultant hired previously in 2019 for professional design consulting services to finalize the design concept. The consultant is a Roster Vendor and will be engaged through a Roster Vendor process.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Recommendation to Retain the Original Consultant to Finalize the Concept Design with Public Input**

Further to the Motion and memorandum, staff reviewed a number of design contest methods to evolve the Gateway Feature to a finalized design concept. Through this review, staff determined that the design competition method would not be a cost-effective use of time, money and limited staff resources to advance this project. Although methods such as idea competitions, open requests for proposals, or invited competitions of artist-led teams provide novel approaches, other equally important considerations make these approaches less viable.

For example, the need to hire, coordinate and compensate external experts to administer competition processes and the need to pay required compensation of jurors and design competition participants would be cost-prohibitive. These approaches would also require Urban Design staff to delay other critical work, such as the development of technical design guides to ensure Official Plan conformity and support for streamlining the City's development review processes, by another 12 to 18 months.

Furthermore, since the Gateway Feature is also intended to be a functional piece of infrastructure, any feasible concepts would have to be based on technical expertise from licensed professionals. Preliminary concept designs developed as part of Phase 1 already factored in most technical requirements and were found to be generally reflective of what was heard through the online public survey.

Therefore, from a timing, technical needs and value-added perspective, staff concluded that it would be more cost effective to retain the original consultant to refine the preliminary concept designs based on additional public engagement and feedback. To ensure progress, given the importance of the Gateway Feature, staff recommend retaining the consultant that generated the preliminary designs to evolve the final concept based on public feedback. The justification for retaining the same consultant is attributed to the amount of work invested by the consultant to date in the undertaking

## **Page 5**

and preparation of preliminary ideas and concepts. Since this consultant is also on a pre-approved roster, additional time and money can be saved by retaining professional consulting services through a streamlined procurement process.

The completed design will be contingent on:

- incorporating the input received from the public survey already conducted;
- additional engagement with the public; and,
- required technical expertise.

### **Next Steps**

Based on public consultation feedback, staff will report back to Council on the final design concept towards the end of 2024 or early 2025. Approval for the remainder of Phase 2 to initiate detailed design and eventually construction and implementation of the Gateway Feature, will be brought forward through the capital budget process.

### **Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:**

The public consultation and finalization of the design concept will be implemented through an existing and approved capital budget. There are no direct financial implications resulting from this staff report.

### **Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:**

The proposed Gateway Feature aligns with the strategic priority of providing a strong sense of belonging by establishing the City's identity through a prominent lighting and landscape design feature inspired by Richmond Hill's natural and cultural history, and future vision.

### **Climate Change Considerations:**

Although climate change considerations are not applicable to this staff report to update Council on the process moving forward, there is potential to consider energy efficiency (which contributes to climate mitigation) as part of the Gateway Feature.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, staff is continuing to finalize the design concept of the Gateway Feature located at the first intersection north of Highway 7 and on Yonge Street while taking into account Council's previous direction to ensure public consultation. The public survey conducted in the summer of 2022 illustrates the high level of interest from residents in being actively involved in the design of this prominent lighting and landscape design feature. To ensure fiscal responsibility, timely completion of the project and engagement of the public, it is recommended that the existing design consultant be retained to finalize the design concept based on public consultation feedback. Staff anticipate bringing a final design concept forward to Council at the end of 2024 or early 2025.

## Page 6

### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPBS.24.051 Yonge Garden Gateway Feature Project Update.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 27, 2024

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

**Maria Flores - Mar 26, 2024 - 5:08 PM**

**Gus Galanis - Mar 26, 2024 - 6:25 PM**

**Darlene Joslin - Mar 27, 2024 - 8:35 AM**