

WEST HARBOUR - JAMES STREET PLAZA PUBLIC ART PROJECT



FOCUS GROUP Report

Tuesday, March 12, 2019 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Hamilton Waterfront Trust, 47 Discovery Drive, Hamilton, ON

Attendees:

Bernie Mueller	Hamilton Waterfront Trust Board of Directors
Gabriel Nicolson	North End Neighbourhood
Ed Niedzielski	Artist/North End Neighbourhood
Bassem Alshamali	Artist
Erik Hess	Landscape Architect
John Jukes	Artist/Community
Bob & Maggie Carr	North End Neighbourhood
Marianne Mokryke	Landscape Architect
Hollie Pocsai	Resident/Downtown Business Owner
Simon Frank	Artist

Staff / Advisors

Ken Coit	City of Hamilton, Program Manager Public Art & Projects
Werner Plessl	Hamilton Waterfront Trust, Executive Director
Penny Ulbinas	Hamilton Waterfront Trust, Contract Staff

1.0 Purpose

The City of Hamilton is currently undertaking a Public Art Competition to enhance the new West Harbour James Street Plaza as part of the Development on Hamilton Waterfront Piers 5,6, at the foot of James Street North.

The purpose of this focus group is to determine themes / goals for artists to address in the public art call that will be inspirational to artists and meaningful to citizens and representatives of the local community.

2.0 Background

The City of Hamilton has contracted the Hamilton Waterfront Trust to undertake the City's public art process to select an art work for the site and to work with the successful artist to implement it.

Werner Plessl provided background on Redevelopment (context) of Pier 5-7 and location for Public Art. Constraints to the site were discussed, including a large existing CSO tank under the plaza and appropriate locations for installation of future art work(s). Timelines, Budget and inspirational projects were shared with the Focus Group. This is a significant project for the West Harbour precinct and the art work budget including artist fees, fabrication, transportation to site is \$315,000.

Ken Coit made a presentation outlining the City's Public Art Program; goals and themes were presented to attendees to assist in the direction of the Call for Artists and to focus on the themes and goals the artists should reflect upon the Hamilton James Street Plaza.

3.0 Discussion

The following question was presented to the group:

What are the qualities, characteristics, and stories of James Street North and Hamilton Harbour that you think should be the theme of the public art project.

The following responses were provided:

- heritage: ice cutting on the bay
- Hamiltonian passenger boat
- meeting spot
- Functional work – shade structure
- steel
- shipping
- recreation
- fishing huts
- skating
- ice boating
- “Water”
- accessible to water
- reconnection to natural and human history
- industrial artifacts
- memory
- tugboat
- line of sight, height
- “Beacon to bring people”
- Mast Tall Ship, landmark
- Maritime
- “sense of arrival at the water front”
- Boat out of water
- Dignity of Labour, People of the North End
- Immigration
- steel plate
- return to the water

- Should be unexpected
- spider sculpture at the National Gallery
- sense of community
- boat building, big boat as landmark
- Maritime History: ships, canals, turning basin
- was an inexpensive place to live
- rusted ship on QEW out of context
- “Beacon-Navigation – draws people to the waterfront”
- “what is a beacon for the population?”
- Appropriate scale – “big enough to be a landmark”
- flavour of waterfront
- The Water: Changes, light, storm
- playful & interactive
- brings you back time & time again
- engaging
- kids - all ages
- natural history of the escarpment and the lake define the City
- something you grow to love
- tap water
- come to connect to the art work, a personal connection
- layers of history
- vistas and views
- connections
- water is a treasure
- water (clean) vs Steel (factories) / organic vs industrial
- water the organic
- symbols that reflect the heritage of the City
- “vertical”
- panorama to tell a story enter inside
- seasonal
- winter
- year round
- indigenous
- vibrant
- representative of the whole city
- video screen

4.0 Summary

After a short break the group came together and were asked to identify the common and most important concepts based on those identified. Common concepts were notes as follows:

- Connection with water “precious connectivity”
- Beacon for the City; Beacon, vista, big
- Elemental,
- Story of the City’s connection with water

- Reconnection with the water
- Heritage – Maritime/Industrial
- Nature vs Industrial Connection water to Escarpment

Based on these concepts and further discussion public art staff has developed the following Project Goal:

The public art work should be a beacon - visible along James Street North - marking the entrance to the West Harbour and recalling an aspect of the city's historic connection with water; natural, recreational and industrial (or the interrelation of these elements). The work should celebrate reconnection to the water's edge being advanced currently through the West Harbour development.

Next Steps

This focus group report will be posted on the City of Hamilton's Public Art website at www.hamilton.ca/public-art and the Hamilton Waterfront Trust website at www.hamiltonwaterfront.com/public-art/ for public comment.

A Call for Artists, including the above project goal, site constraints and technical requirements will be issued in mid-April. At the focus group's request, this call will also include the following information:

- history of the site and west harbour area
- site constraints

A jury of citizens, local artists and arts professionals will short list up to six artists' proposals to be posted on the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Waterfront Trust websites and displayed at the Hamilton Waterfront Trust office at 47 Discovery Drive, Hamilton, ON in July, 2019.

The jury will select a winning proposal based on artistic excellence, response to the competition goal, technical concerns and the public response in August, 2019.

