

CHURCHILL PARK PUBLIC ART PROJECT



FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Date: Monday, July 30, 2018

Location: Churchill Park Clubhouse

Time: 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Attendees

Madeleine Levy
Dr. Gary Warner
Dr. Nadia Rosa
Yvonne Maracle
Ken Moyle
Mary Louise Pigott
Matt Walker
Crystal Dumitru
Leora Schaefer
Tracy MacKinnon
Arthur Greenblatt
Deanne Rodrigue
Jackson Hudecki

Citizen advocate
Former Westdale Resident – McMaster University retiree
Holocaust Survivor and Educator
Indigenous artist and advocate
Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association
Churchill Park Clubhouse Committee
Artist (Sculpture)
Head of Arts at Dundas Valley Secondary School
Executive Director Facing History and Ourselves, Canada
Executive Director, Westdale Village BIA
Former Executive Director, Dundas Valley School for the Arts
Interim Director of Marketing, Sales and Visitor Experience, RBG
Special Programs Coordinator, RBG

Jen Anisef
Esther Hounsell
Ken Wheaton
Nancy Prochuk
Ken Coit

City of Hamilton, Public Art and Projects
City of Hamilton, Public Art and Projects
City of Hamilton, Landscape Architectural Services
City of Hamilton, Heritage Resource Management
Facilitator, City of Hamilton, Public Art and Projects

Purpose

This group was brought together to review plans for a public art competition for Churchill Park and to advise on specific goals and themes for the art work related to Human Rights and the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg.

Background

Ken Coit gave a presentation outlining the project background, public art process and context. It was noted that the project was identified in the Park Master Plan and approved in the City of Hamilton Public Art Master Plan (2016). The public art project has an overall budget of \$280,000. The art work is to address the larger theme of Human Rights and inspired by the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and his heroic acts, saving over 100,000 Jews from the Holocaust (not as a memorial to him as an individual nor to the Holocaust alone). The site for the art work is to be along a new path in the western section of the park, previously known as the Royal Botanical Gardens Teaching Garden.

A brief review of the history of the area was provided, noting the site was probably used as agricultural lands by the Indigenous communities that lived near Princess Point pre-European settlement, then for farming by settlers during the 19th Century. The park and surrounding Royal Botanical Gardens and McMaster lands were developed as part of the City Beautiful Movement, led by Thomas B. McQuesten and the Hamilton Parks Board in the early 20th Century. A specific mention was made of the restrictive “Ethnic Covenants” that were part of the early development of Westdale and their abolition at the end of the Second World War.

Madeleine Levy provided an overview of the story and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg as an inspiration for this project.

Discussion

Members of the focus group were asked to address the following question as part of a general discussion

Considering the UN definition of Human Rights, the legacy of figures such as Raoul Wallenberg and the context of Churchill Park, Westdale/Ainslie Wood neighbourhood and the city of Hamilton today, what themes or goals should artists reflect upon in creating a new public art work for Churchill Park? Should the work be literal, functional, and interactive?

The following responses were provided:

Wallenberg's work presaged Human Rights Laws.

Wallenberg bore witness to hate.

Wallenberg took action.

The work should be a journey towards self-awareness.

Remind the viewer to be good citizens – Courage and Conviction.

A single life can save the universe.

Romeo Dallaire – example of a Canadian Humanitarian.

Wallenberg saved 100,000 lives in 6 months.

International Humanitarian Law and intervention.

We have a responsibility to protect.

We have a responsibility to remember.

We have a responsibility to confront hate.

Remember the perils of indifference.

We have a responsibility not to be bystanders.

Freedom.

If you save one life, it is as if you saved all of humanity.

The work should speak to human solidarity.

The work should have universal resonance.

The work should resonate with other groups: Indigenous Peoples, refugees, etc.

The work should invite the viewer into what Human Rights are.

Human Rights as a call to action, calling us to question: What can I do?

The work should be interactive.

It may need to have an element to draw people into the site as the area is removed from the main park.

Don't create a (graffiti) target by making a monument to a single person.

The work should inspire school trips, lessons and programming by teachers to explore themes of Human Rights.

The project augments the sports activity on the east side of the park by providing a more passive contemplative place.

Keep the official **Human Rights** (capitalized) term in the Call to Artists.

Memory of our inhumanity so as not to repeat it.

Malala – Example of a current Human Rights leader.

Humanity – it is about how we treat each other.

Ok for the work to challenge people, make people upset.

Remember the injustice.

We are all interconnected human beings.

Wallenberg was a man with a huge heart.

Tell multiple stories – universal accessibility more important than honouring one group.

The work should start conversations.

The work should avoid sentimentality

We don't all have the financial means that Wallenberg did – how can we take action in our lives?

Use the metaphor of the path.

The work should lead to self-knowledge.

The work should be a journey – inspire to be better humans.

The work should help the viewer answer - where do I fit in?

Public art is accessible to all, at all times, over time.

Summary

The group identified what they felt to be the most important concepts as the evening ended. These are highlighted in green above. Based on these concepts, public art staff has developed the following Project Goal:

That the proposed Public Art work(s) be a hopeful interactive piece inspired by the actions and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and reflective of the universal principles of Human Rights, inviting those who engage with it to embark on a journey of self-awareness to investigate how they can act in their own lives against injustice and in support of our common humanity.

Next Steps

City Staff will work with Madeleine Levy, Dr. Nadia Rosa and the Royal Botanical Gardens in officially naming the path to be constructed in the western part of Churchill Park as the “Raoul Wallenberg Path”. Originally to be named by the City, circumstances have changed due to complexities in the ownership of the site.

This focus group report will be posted on the City of Hamilton's Public Art website at www.hamilton.ca/publicart for public comment.

A Call for Artists, including the above project goal, site constraints and technical requirements will be issued in fall 2018. At the focus group's request, this call will also include the following background information:

- History of the site
- Restrictive "Ethnic Covenants" that were part of the early development of Westdale
- Background on Raoul Wallenberg as provided by Madeleine Levy
- The United Nations, Human Rights definition

A jury of citizens, local artists and arts professionals will short list up to six artists' proposals to be posted on the city website and displayed at a Westdale location for public comment later this fall.

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



Tourism and Culture Division
Planning and Economic Development Department