



Public Realm Investment Program

Application Guide



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Part A: Program Overview

1. Forward

2023 marks a significant return to public gatherings in outdoor spaces since the COVID-19 pandemic. The importance of a high quality public realm has never been more important to our communities. People continue to visit parks, trails, plazas, streets and civic spaces.

Established in 2016, the Public Realm Investment Program (PRIP) enables Niagara Region to partner and support local municipalities on capital projects that provide public realm enhancements along 250 kilometres of Regional roads. The program focusses on enhancing areas within downtowns and community cores. The Region is offering this matching grant incentive program to our local municipalities to encourage investments in great public places for everyone.

Attractive and vibrant public spaces offer a higher quality of life to residents and visitors. The enhancement of these spaces attracts investment, sustains businesses, improves transportation options, and celebrates community identity. People seek out well-designed places that are inclusive and accessible, where they can enjoy personal comfort and that support well-being.



2. Program Purpose

The purpose of the program is to encourage investment in the urban and core area public realms along Regional roads by providing matching funding grants to local municipal partners for upgrades to currently planned capital projects. The Region's investment in these projects aims to:

- Create a sense of place by integrating architectural features, public art, street furniture, decorative paving, and generous planting through the inclusion of enhanced public realm elements in their projects, beyond the standard products and treatments
- Leverage Regional and Municipal capital funding to achieve design excellence and to provide a funding option that promotes community pride and contributes to community identity
- Respond to the unique challenges within our local municipalities by applying innovative design solutions to address the diverse needs and character of the Region's communities
- Support public realm treatments along Regional roads that include design for optimal tree health, sustainable storm water management, and resilient and beautiful landscapes; and
- Prioritize universal accessibility with a focus on pedestrian and cyclist comfort and safety by clearly defining sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle infrastructure and roadways to effectively support walking, cycling, and transit use

3. Program Funding

The PRIP provides matching funding to eligible local municipal projects that are initiated and constructed by either the local municipality or Niagara Region in collaboration with the local municipality. Minimum funding requests of \$25,000 will be considered for funding priority. Smaller projects may still be considered on a case by case basis if they meet the evaluation criteria, but may not receive funding priority. Applicants are encouraged to discuss potential projects with the PRIP Coordinator prior to submitting an application. The maximum Regional funding contribution for a single project is \$150,000. Partnerships with local associations and community groups are encouraged, however, the Region will only match the funding contribution made by the respective municipality.

Through PRIP, municipalities may apply for funding that may be applied to a wide variety of public realm enhancements and upgrades to typical project standards. This includes but is not limited to:

- Hardscape materials
- Complete streets infrastructure
- Road crossing facilities
- Street or site furniture
- Plant material
- Placemaking features

Please refer to the Glossary of Public Realm Elements at the end of this document.

4. Project Eligibility

This matching grant funding program is available to all of Niagara's local municipalities. In order for a project to be eligible, it must:

- Be located on public lands within or directly adjacent to a Regional road right-of-way; or, be located along a local street that is directly adjacent to significant recent, ongoing, or committed Regional capital investment
- Be completed by the end of the year following the award. For example, projects receiving funding in 2023 must be completed prior to the end of 2024.
- Provide a confirmed commitment to municipal funding. Municipalities must provide, at a minimum, matching funding amounts equal to the requested Regional contribution; and
- Enter into a maintenance plan between the Municipality and the Region. Maintenance of the completed project will be the responsibility of the Municipality.

Project submissions must demonstrate the public benefits of the investment for both the local municipality and the Region. Submissions must include a completed application form, and supporting documentation, outlined in the Submission Requirements section below.

Municipalities are encouraged to submit projects that deliver the greatest value for their communities (i.e. social, economic, and environmental). The Region specifically encourages the submission of projects along Regional roads that are also located within or along:

- Downtowns and community cores
- Business improvement, downtown improvement, community improvement, and merchants' association areas
- Tourism destinations areas
- Employment areas
- Places with cultural and/or natural significance, including views
- Community gateways, public buildings, and civic spaces
- Elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions
- Public parks, Parkets, and plazas
- The Regional bicycle network, multi-use paths, and the wine route
- Transit hubs and transit routes

Part B: Application Overview

1. Application Process And Schedule

Municipalities wishing to submit more than one project must make separate submissions.

Application Schedule

Step #	Description	Important Dates
Step 1	Call for Submissions Opens Applicants fill out Application form, and prepare supporting documents.	
Step 2	Submission Deadline Applications are reviewed by Region for completeness and eligibility. Additional information may be requested.	
Step 3	Submission Evaluation Complete Applications are evaluated by Region's PRIP Selection Team and prioritized.	
Step 4	Meetings with Local Municipalities Region meets with Municipalities to formalize project scope, scheduling, and project funding.	
Step 5	Funding Award Funding awarded to prioritized projects (*date is subject to project complexity and quantity of applications received).	
Step 6	Implementation Construction of project.	
Step 7	Completion Municipality submits a Project Completion Report, supporting documents and Invoices to Region for review and for processing of Regional funding.	

2. Submission Requirements

The complete application requirements listed below are for information purposes and should be consulted when preparing an application. Niagara Region will use this check list to determine the eligibility and completeness of the application. The documents listed in the table below are required in order for a submission to be considered complete:

1. Application Form

In addition to project information, the application form provides a section for the applicant to discuss how the project aligns and supports Niagara Region's policies and practices:

- Regional Official Plan
- Model Urban Design Guidelines
- Complete Streets Program
- Relates to an Environmental Assessment (if yes, then state EA)
- Relates to the Region's 10 Year Capital Forecast (if yes, then state project and year)

The application form also provides a section for the applicant to discuss how the project has support of the local municipal council:

- Local Council resolution to submit application (If applicable)
- Demonstrated compliance with local planning documents or master plans (if applicable)
- Demonstration of Municipal funding commitment (prior to project construction)
- Demonstration of Municipal maintenance agreement for project

2. Images

- Digital photographs of existing conditions of project site
- Aerial and street view photos of project site

3. Drawings

- Technical drawings of the project (e.g. plans, sections, elevations, construction details)
- Presentation drawings (i.e. coloured renderings) of the project if available

4. Cost Estimate

- Detailed and itemized cost estimate of the proposed work
- Cost estimate should be limited to capital items only. Items such as consultants fees, studies, etc. are not eligible for funding

5. Additional Supporting materials (if applicable)

- Studies/reports related to project site
- Functional, operational, or safety requirements being addressed by municipality

3. How To Apply

Complete the fillable PDF application form and submit via email with the supporting documents noted above to:

Name: **Julia van der Laan de Vries**
Landscape Architect
PRIP Coordinator

Email: **PRIP@niagararegion.ca**



Welland

Part C: Evaluation Process

Step 1: Review

Regional staff will review the applications for eligibility and completeness. Applicants may be contacted to provide additional information on the project.

The evaluation criteria in the table below is utilized by the Region to evaluate the merits of the project and to prioritize project funding. Projects must score above eighty (80) points to receive funding priority. Criteria are worth multiple points and should be addressed carefully to ensure that the benefits of projects are well-presented.

Evaluation Criteria

1.0	Pre-requisites	Yes/No
1.1	Timing: construction to commence within current program year (Note: projects may extend into following year for completion)	Y/N
1.2	Location: project must be located on public lands within or directly adjacent to a Regional road right-of-way or be proposed along a local street that is directly adjacent to significant recent, ongoing, or committed Regional capital investment.	Y/N
1.3	Funding commitment: project must have funding commitment from the local area municipality (prior to project construction)	Y/N
2.0	Location	Score
2.1	Within or in close proximity to an urban core area (e.g. downtown, community core)	4
	Within 500m (approximately five minute walk) of five points of interest*	5
	*Points of interest include, but are not limited to, tourist destinations, employment areas, transit hubs or stops, public buildings, elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, parks, publicly accessible spaces and locations with cultural and/or natural significance, including views.	
2.2	Within a community improvement, business improvement, downtown improvement, merchants association, secondary plan or district plan area	5
2.3	Along a bicycle route, multi-use path, or the wine route	4
3.0	Community Benefits and Placemaking	Score
3.1	Promotes higher use of Regional road and connectivity with other networks	4
3.2	Promotes active transportation	4
3.3	Invites people into the space, providing opportunities for social interaction	4

3.4	Promotes transit use	4
3.5	Design includes all-season use and/or day and night time use	4
3.6	Promotes universal design (e.g. for all ages and abilities)	4
3.7	Incorporates artistic elements (e.g. public art)	4

4.0 Design Goals		Score
4.1	Provides a design solution to address a prevalent negative condition or issue	4
4.2	Contributes to planned improvements and/or developments in the vicinity	4
4.3	Uses durable and sustainable materials	4
4.4	Recognizes and leverages local community character	4
4.5	Incorporates low-maintenance solutions into the design	4
4.6	Improves pedestrian comfort (provides shade, shelter from wind and rain)	2
4.7	Incorporates cultural and historical themes	2
4.8	Space is designed to be flexible (i.e. multi-purpose) in order to accommodate a variety of uses	2
5.0 Environmental Resiliency		Score
5.1	Increases the urban tree canopy	4
5.2	Includes 75 per cent or greater of drought tolerant native plants (note: no invasive species permitted)	4
5.3	Includes low impact development for stormwater management	4
5.4	Includes pollinator plants	2
5.5	Includes innovative materials, products or practices	4
5.6	Includes recycled or sustainable products	2
5.7	Uses products and materials locally sourced within Niagara	2
5.9	Includes green energy sources (e.g. solar power)	2
6.0 Community Partnerships		Score
6.1	Partnership with a local business improvement association, downtown improvement association, local community group or organization	2
6.2	Partnership with a secondary/post-secondary institution to provide skills training	2
Total (Scores greater than 80 will receive funding priority)		100

Step 3: Regional Funding Contribution Limits

The table below outlines the amount of funding provided by the Region for various public realm enhancements.

Regional Funding Contribution Table

1.0	Hardscape Material and Treatments	Funding Limit
1.1	Strategic sidewalk connections or sidewalk widening	\$30,000
1.2	Decorative concrete paving, banding and unit paving	
1.3	Decorative on-road pavement areas (i.e. lay-bys)	
1.4	Off-road trail connections to regional roads or bikeways	
1.5	Off-road multi-use trails and associated treatments	
2	Complete Streets Infrastructure	
2.1	Cycling facilities (e.g. bike lanes, bike paths, cycle tracks, painted lines)	\$25,000
2.2	Pedestrian crossing islands	
2.3	Medians	
2.4	Sidewalk extensions or bump-outs at intersections	\$15,000
2.5	*Burial of overhead utilities *Note: Regional contribution will be determined on a case-by-case basis with costing to be prepared by the respective public utilities.	\$25,000
2.6	Decorative concrete crosswalks	
2.7	Decorative painted crosswalks and intersections	\$ 8,000
3	Street/Site Furniture	
3.1	Benches and seating	\$12,000
3.2	Bicycle parking and equipment (e.g. bike racks, shelters, and repair stations)	\$10,000
3.3	Tree grates and tree guards	\$12,000
3.4	Decorative bollards	\$5,000
3.5	Low seat walls and retaining walls	\$12,000
3.6	Pedestrian shade structures	\$10,000

3.7	Refuse and recycling receptacles, media corrals	\$10,000
3.8	Drinking fountains, bottle refill stations, pet fountains	\$5,000
3.9	Transit shelters	\$10,000
3.10	Decorative metal fencing	\$10,000
3.11	Decorative light standards, pedestrian scaled lights and light bollards	\$10,000

4 Plant Material and treatments

4.1	Tree Planting (including irrigation bags)	\$25,000
4.2	Technologies to support tree planting in hard surfaces (e.g. soil cells, tree trenches)	\$30,000
4.3	Planters	\$15,000
4.4	Hanging baskets with brackets	\$5,000
4.5	Rain gardens, bio-swales and LID features	\$30,000
4.6	Planting beds (including topsoil and mulch)	\$10,000
4.7	Plant material (Min. 75% native species preferred. Drought resistant and salt tolerant plants encouraged.)	\$10,000

5 Placemaking Features

5.1	Banners and banner brackets	\$5,000
5.2	Seasonal decorations and lighting	\$8,000
5.3	Gateways features and civic markers	\$50,000
5.4	Decorative street name blades and sidewalk street name plates	\$6,000
5.5	Pedestrian information kiosks	\$15,000
5.6	Interpretive panels and signage	\$7,000
5.7	Public art (e.g. murals, sculptures, installations, etc.)	\$25,000
5.8	Vinyl wraps and anti-graffiti coatings (i.e. for utility boxes, etc.)	\$5,000
5.9	School active transportation initiatives	\$4,000
5.10	Temporary installations of placemaking elements (e.g. temporary patios, seating, sidewalk extensions within on-street parking spaces)	\$10,000
Minimum Regional matching grant contribution per project: *Note: Smaller projects may be considered on a case by case basis if they meet the evaluation criteria, but may not receive funding priority.		\$25,000
Maximum Regional matching grant contribution per project:		\$150,000

Step 3: Project Implementation

Once a project receives initial funding approval, the municipality will be advised of the amount of Regional funding available for the project. Municipal and Regional staff will work together to determine construction and installation details as they pertain to Regional infrastructure. To ensure clarity and consistency for the project, the point of contact at the Region will be the PRIP Program Coordinator. The Coordinator will provide collective comments, communication, and any necessary approvals required from Regional staff.

Once construction and installation details affecting Regional infrastructure are confirmed, a final sign-off from key stakeholders at the Region (or otherwise) will be arranged by the Coordinator. During construction, brief project updates should be provided to the Coordinator for key project milestones.

Step 4: Project Completion And Payment Process

Once the construction and/or installation of the project are complete, payment can be requested by the Municipality. The following documents should be submitted:

- Mandatory Project Completion Report
- Digital photographs (including before and after photos) of the completed project
- Other supporting materials as required

The Mandatory Project Completion Report is a summary of the project that includes important details and project successes. The Coordinator will review the Project Completion documents, and direct the Municipality to submit an invoice to the Region. A Purchase Order number (PO #) will be provided and the invoice will be paid net 30 days.

Part D: Additional Information

Design Collaboration

Regional staff are pleased to work with our municipal partners and provide assistance at various stages of the project. The expertise of the Region's urban designers and landscape architects are available upon request by the Municipality.

Withdrawal Of Application Process

If a municipality decides to withdraw from an approved PRIP funding commitment, a letter to that effect must be submitted to the Coordinator as soon as possible. Depending on the amount of forfeited funding, and if a withdrawal occurs before October 1st of the same year, the funding may be reallocated to another project through a new call for PRIP applications. At such time, Municipalities will be informed of the new call for applications and available funding.



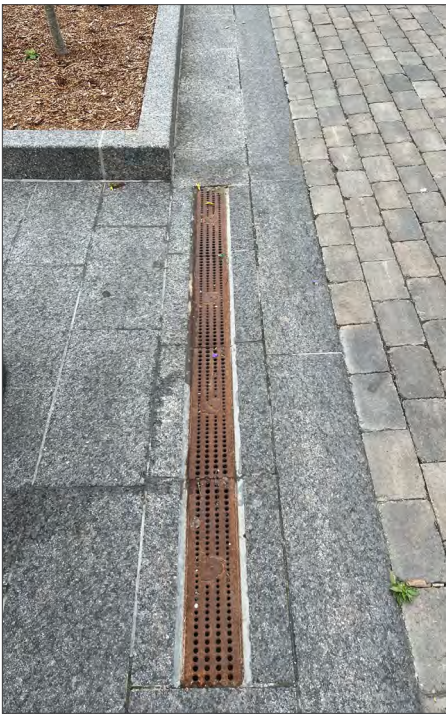
Hamilton

Glossary Of Public Realm Elements

Hardscape Materials and Treatments

Decorative paving

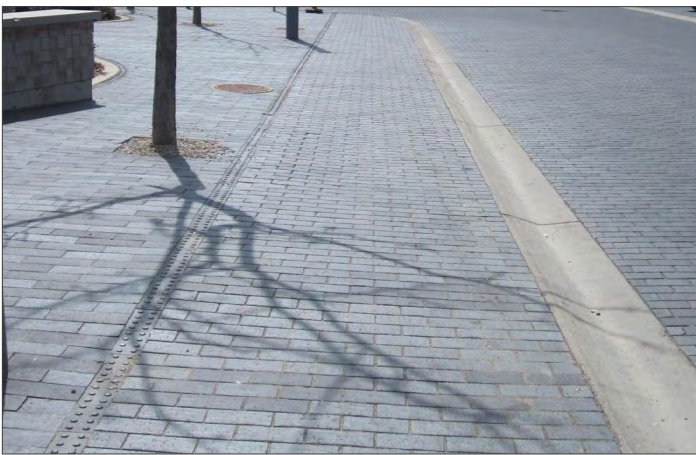
- Stone
- Concrete: unit pavers, pigmented (i.e. coloured), impressed (i.e. stamped), exposed aggregate, etching, acid staining, grinding, sandblasting or metallic tinting
- Decorative on-road paving (i.e. lay-bys)



Oakville



Smithville, West Lincoln



Guelph



London



Hamilton



Port Credit, Mississauga



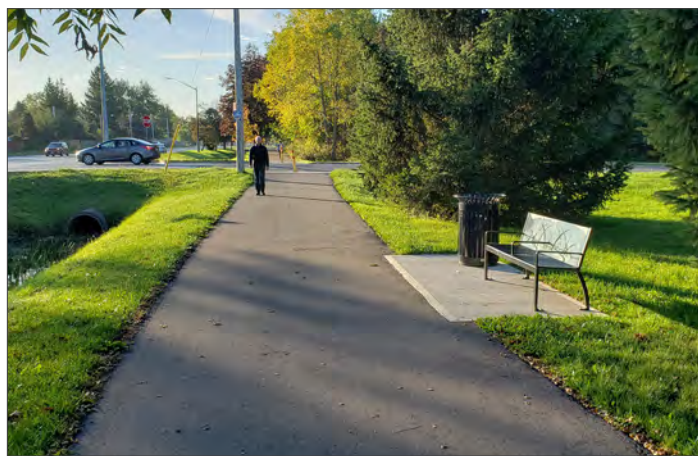
Quebec City, Quebec

Standard paving treatments

- Poured concrete sidewalks
- Asphalt pathways (e.g. multi-use paths)



Niagara Falls



Welland



Thorold

Complete Streets Infrastructure

Cycling facilities

- Bike lanes (on-road)
- Bike paths, cycle tracks (off-road)
- Painted lines and markings



Thorold



Stock Photo



Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold

Pedestrian crossing islands

- Located at signalized intersections and Roundabouts.



Niagara Falls



Stock Photo

Medians



Beamsville, Lincoln



Niagara Falls



Old Town, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Sidewalk extensions and bump-outs at intersections

- Located at intersections and ends of on-street parking
- Reduces distance for pedestrian crossings
- Provides opportunities for plant material, street furniture, and public art, etc.



Thorold



Smithville, West Lincoln



St. Catharines

Decorative concrete crosswalks

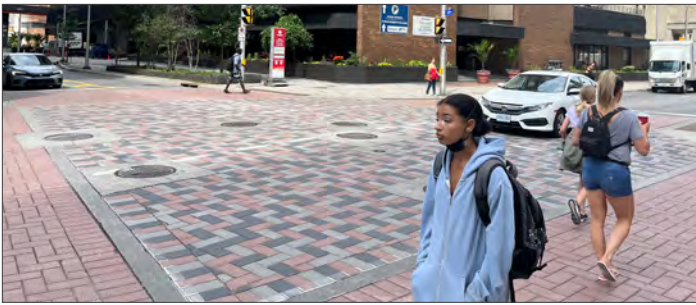
- Includes pigmented (coloured) and impressed (stamped) concrete



Waterloo



London



Ottawa

Decorative painted crosswalks

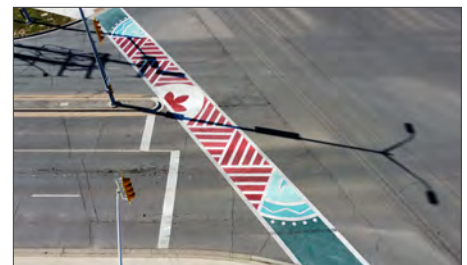
- Includes temporary installations (pilot projects) to test an increased pedestrian space and reduced curb radius



Thorold



Watkins Glen, New York



Thorold

Street and Site furniture

Benches and seating

- Can range from traditional benches to custom designs



Welland



Ottawa



Fonthill, Pelham



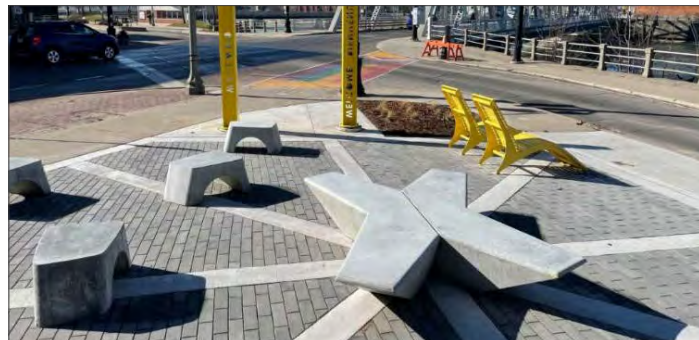
Thorold



Niagara Falls



Thorold



Welland

Bicycle parking and equipment

- Bike racks: can range from standard to customized products
- Bike shelters
- Bike repair stations



Fonthill, Pelham



Fonthill, Pelham



Stock Photo



Buffalo, New York



Fort Erie



Oakville

Bicycle shelters



Stock Photo



Toronto

Bicycle repair stations



Bike Repair Station



Bike Repair Station



Stock Photo - Bike Repair Station

Tree grates and tree guards

- For use when planting trees in hard surfaces and high pedestrian traffic areas



London



Toronto



Ottawa

Decorative bollards

- To define pedestrian space from vehicular space
- Removable bollards allow vehicles to access the space (e.g. for loading, deliveries, and during special events)



Ottawa



Stoney Creek, Hamilton



Toronto



Oakville

Low seatwalls and retaining walls

- Can range in material
- May incorporate seating and plant material



Charlotte, North Carolina



Charlotte, North Carolina



London



Guelph



Newmarket

Pedestrian shade structures



St. Catharines



Fort Erie



Thorold



New Orleans, Louisiana

Refuse and recycling receptacles and media corrals

- For handling single and multiple streams
- Media corrals can be designed to contain multiple media/newspaper boxes



Oakville



Detroit, Michigan

Drinking fountains

- Includes water bottle refill stations and pet drinking stations



Stock Photo



Stock Photo



Stock Photo

Transit shelters



Bay Beach, Fort Erie

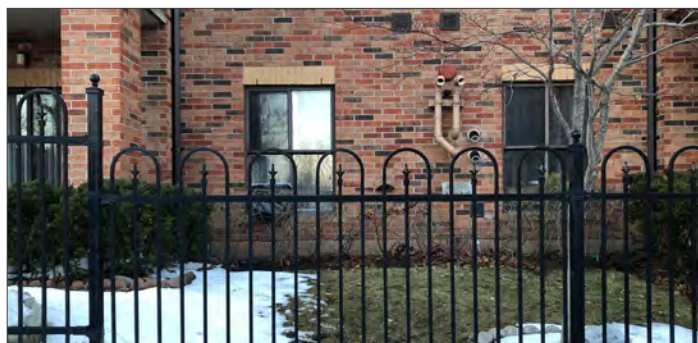


Stock Photo

Decorative metal fencing



Burlington



Burlington



Pelham, Fonhill



Halifax, Nova Scotia



Detroit, Michigan

Decorative street light standards



St. Catharines



Ottawa



Burlington



Welland

Decorative pedestrian scaled lights



Burlington



Halifax, Nova Scotia



Guelph

Light bollards



Stock Photo

Plant material and treatments

Tree planting

- Can be planted with a variety of techniques, depending on the context
- At grade: within soil cells, within a tree pit, within a planting bed or sodded boulevard
- Above-grade: in a raised planter
- Includes irrigation and watering bags to support tree establishment



Portland, Oregon



Buffalo, New York



Toronto



Smithville, West Lincoln



Waterloo

Trees in planting beds and sodded boulevards



Niagara-on-the-Lake



Hamilton

Trees in raised planters



St. Catharines



Beamsville, Lincoln



London



Port Colborne

Planters

- Self-watering planters are encouraged
- Can combine several planters together for greater impact



Hamilton



Oakville



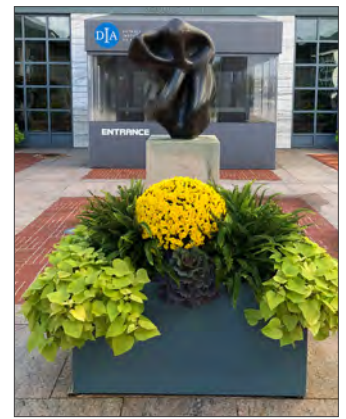
Niagara Falls



Buffalo, New York



Niagara-on-the-Lake



Detroit, Michigan



Cleveland, Ohio



Buffalo, New York

Hanging baskets and brackets



Beamsville, Lincoln



Niagara-on-the-Lake

Rain gardens and bio-swales

- Used to capture stormwater while doubling as a landscape space



Thorold



Hamilton



Portland, Oregon



Buffalo, New York

Planting beds, and plant material

- Includes topsoil, mulch and plant material



Virgil, Niagara-on-the-Lake



Thorold



Niagara-on-the-Lake



Thorold



Guelph

Placemaking Features

Banners and banner brackets

- Celebrates community identity and assists with wayfinding



Fort Erie



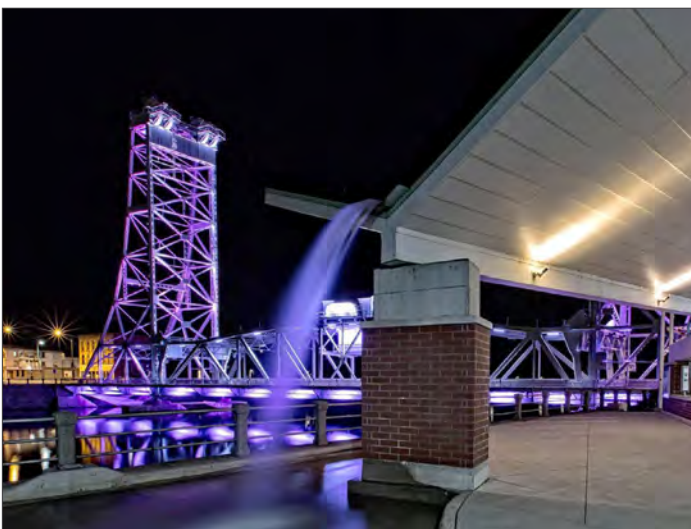
Oakville



Waterdown, Hamilton

Seasonal decorations and lighting

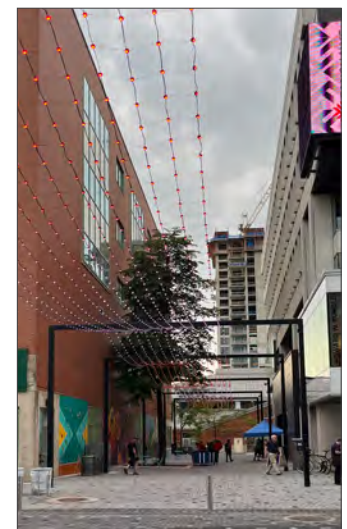
- Includes wall and pole mounted decorations, stand-alone elements, accent lighting, and audio and visual projections



Welland



Niagara-on-the-Lake



London

Gateway features

- Structures and landscape elements to celebrate downtowns, community cores, neighbourhoods, etc.
- May include lighting and plant material



Grimsby



Niagara Falls

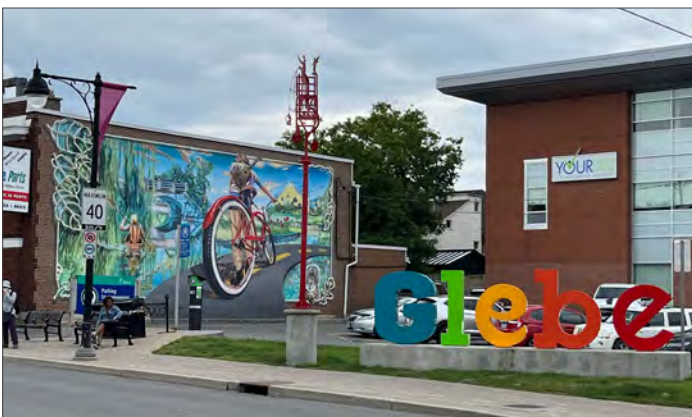
Civic markers



Thorold



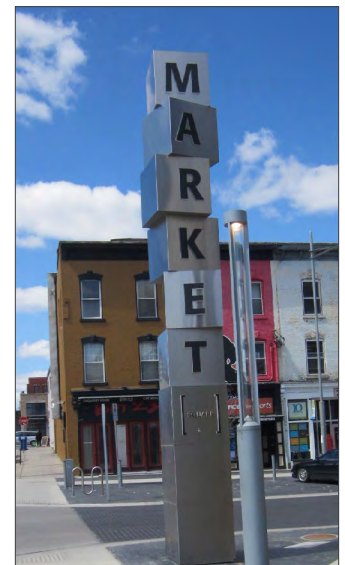
Smithville, West Lincoln



Ottawa



Welland



Guelph

Decorative street signs and name blades

- Celebrates community identity and assists with wayfinding



Smithville, West Lincoln



Calgary, Alberta



Waterdown, Hamilton



Burlington

Decorative Street Names in paving (etched or plates)

- Similar to decorative street signs, street plates installed within sidewalks celebrate community identity and assist with wayfinding



St. Catharines



Hamilton



Detroit, Michigan

Pedestrian information kiosks

- Designed as digital or print format
- Content may include maps, and current events



Oakville



Cleveland, Ohio



Buffalo, New York

Interpretive panels and signage

- For display of historical and educational information



Halifax, Nova Scotia



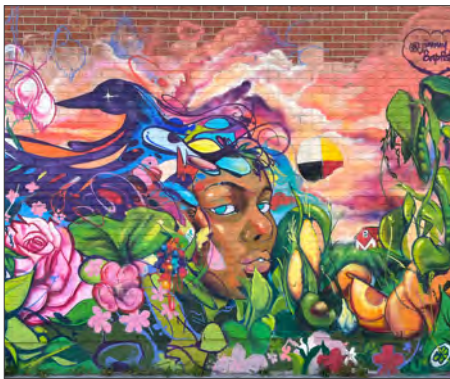
Detroit, Michigan



Cleveland, Ohio

Murals

- Located outdoors where it is visible to the public



Ottawa



Beamsville, Lincoln



Welland



Oakville

Vinyl Wraps and anti-graffiti coatings

- Wraps can be applied to utility boxes
- Anti-graffiti coating can be applied to wraps and public art



Niagara Falls



London

Sculptures and Installations

- Located outdoors where it is visible to the public
- Ranges from sculptures, sidewalk art, custom street furnishings, and audio-visual projections.



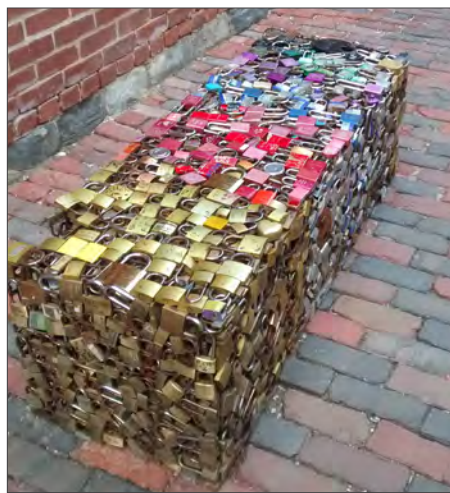
Buffalo, New York



Ottawa



Kleinberg, Vaughan



Toronto



Niagara Falls



Welland

School active transportation initiatives

- Includes walking audits, walking promotion, wayfinding, and addressing barriers to walking



Stock Photo

Temporary installations (parklets and sidewalk extensions)

- Parklets: Temporary parks, seating and programming located on an on-street parking space
- Sidewalk extensions: Temporary use of on-street parking spaces as pedestrian pathways to support use of outdoor patios



Grimsby



Halifax, Nova Scotia



Niagara  Region

Public Realm Investment Program Application Guide

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