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(ASHLEY BRUZAS)

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Mural brings new life to east Danforth

'Pods Through Time' looks at past, present and future of the community

By Ashley Bruzas
November 8th, 2016

A mosaic mural that stretches along the Coxwell Laneway will elevate the quality and experience for people who take transit, park their car or simply take a shortcut through, organizers say.

On Oct. 19, members of the public, art community and transportation agencies that contributed to the consultation and development of the project gathered in the Green P lot behind Coxwell station.

“This mural began as an idea several years ago and it got folded into a bigger project with many partners who are talking about how to make our public spaces more beautiful, accessible, safe and attractive,” said Janet Davis, city councillor for Beaches-East York.



Ward 31 councillor Janet Davis is joined by the group of artists and volunteers who worked on the mosaic mural project. (ASHLEY BRUZAS)

The project was the brainchild of the Danforth East Community Association (DECA), which came up with the idea of a charrette — a chance for the community to come together and share their ideas about what would make this public space better. It later became part of the City of Toronto’s StART (StreetARToronto) program, which works to add beauty and character to neighbourhoods while counteracting graffiti vandalism.

“This is one of the 17 projects that we’re undertaking this year as part of our street art

partnership program,” said Elyse Parker, director of the public realm unit at StART. “It is one of our street art programs for transportation services.” The mural would not have been possible without Cindy Rozeboom, managing director of East End Arts, who worked with the creators and volunteers under the watch of artist Cristina Delago.

“When I first met the team, I knew this was going to work out, even through we only had four weeks to complete this project,” Delago said. “But they worked really hard and didn’t mind the heat, coming out on weekends or staying the extra hours.”



Artist Cristina Delago shares insight on the project and how the design was determined.

The title of the mosaic is 'Pods Through Time.' After studying the history of the wall and its significance to the area, the three sections helped determine the design.

Each apex contains pods that are bursting with seeds that indicate whether they come from the past, present, or future. In the past, the pods are organized to represent the historical background of East York, including the Brick Works, Coxwell trolleys and stables and the former Toronto East General Hospital.



On the present apex of the mural, one of the pods depicts historical elements of East York. (ASHLEY BRUZAS)

“The wall of the present has pods that have seeds of different sizes which represent our diversity in this community,” Delago says. “And the last wall represents the future, showing pods that are bursting with seeds that are showing the potential for this community.”

The top border that outlines the mural includes three emblems from the East York crest, including the beaver, bulldog and white rose. While taking a parking bumper into consideration, the group decided to incorporate two quotes by Agnes Macphail, the first woman elected to parliament and a part of East York’s history.

“It’s been a pleasure for our staff to co-ordinate with the landowners, the city, the TTC and the TPA (Toronto Parking Authority),” Elyse Parker said.

“The TTC will replace the chain link fence and install an iron one, as well as signage, and Toronto Parking Authority has provided a planter and will upgrade the parking lot.”