

# Pipeline Trail – under-recognized but not for long

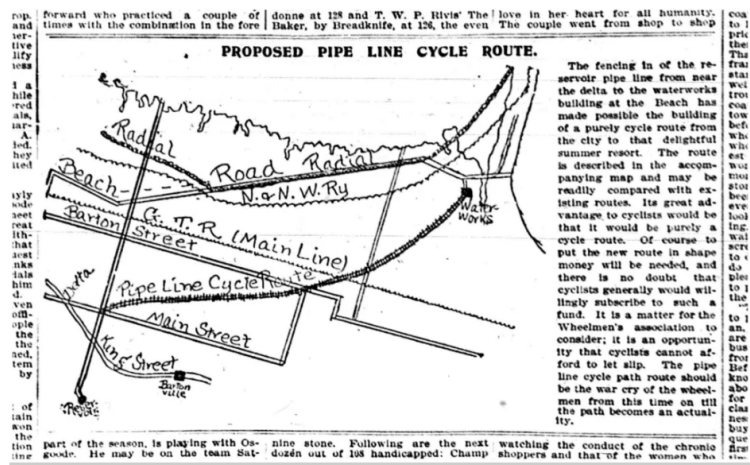
July 6, 2022 Paul Weinberg Leave a comment

I run into people all the time who have never visited the Pipeline Trail in the east end of our city – or have even heard of it.

You can't blame them because, surprisingly, there are no plaques or signs indicating where this unique bike/pedestrian corridor exists.

The trail follows a diagonal north/easterly path over a 163-year-old underground waterpipe (thus its name), that still supplies clean water to the city today. The original construction is regarded as a civil and power engineering achievement for mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Canada when cholera epidemics were killing people because only polluted water was available.

Something inspiring happened when City Hall took this trail to the next level in 1899 by formalizing it for recreational purposes in what was then still woods and fields. A gathering of local politicians, led by the Mayor of Hamilton, officially recognized it as a cycle path to the delight of the Wheelmen's Association, who made their "triumphal" ride to the waterworks and the beach at the lake.



Early map of the Pipeline Trail from [Park People](#).

This proved to be short-lived. As the city expanded in the southeast with the establishment of the steel industry and surrounding housing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the workers and their families, there was the invariable pressure on the trail which fell into dis-use.

Today, this hidden treasure looks rather forlorn and uninspiring in places as it makes its way through neighbourhoods from London Street North (near Ottawa and Main) to the Museum of Steam and Technology and Woodward Ave near the lake.

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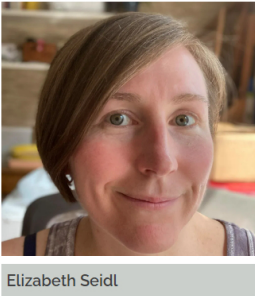
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Local streets and parked cars effectively split up the trail, thereby eliminating the contiguous route which the Wheelmen enjoyed in their day. Nonetheless, much of the Pipeline Trail is intact because of prohibitions that prevent interference with the underground water infrastructure.



Activists like Elizabeth Seidl are inspired by the hearty [Wheelmen](#) and wish to have the Pipeline Trail return to its pre-automobile origins as a beautiful path for walkers and cyclists. It is a long-term goal, fraught with plenty of barriers from the city and even some neighbours. So, she and her colleagues remain focused on more modest goals like the display of magnificent art, the planting of pollinator gardens and lobbying for more green space.

They call their latest project the Trail Mix Museum and it involves putting up murals on the fences and walls of garages and sheds on the backs of houses fronting the Pipeline Trail.



"Community art will re-introduce the conversation about the maintenance and improvements for the Pipeline Trail," says Seidl.

"It is about getting people to think about their place, improve the quality of life and put joy where they might not expect it," she continues.

A former Crown Point resident now living in St. Catherines, Seidl continues to be committed to the advancement and improvement of the cause of the Pipeline Trail, having navigated the corridors of Hamilton City Hall for the last several years.

Today, if you have a fence or wall of a garage or shed facing the Pipeline Trail, we want to talk to you, says a fellow activist and visual artist Ingrid Mayrhofer.

Four murals are already completed and ready for mounting for what the organizers call "a multi-disciplinary installation of contemporary and historical visual art, and dub poetry." The project is supported financially by the Ontario Arts Council and logistically by the City of Hamilton.





images clockwise from top left:

**Shelley Niro** "Spirit" from the series Resting with Warriors

**Delio Delgado** "untitled/giraffe"

**Dámarys Sepúlveda** "Lava II"

**Leonard Hutchinson** "Builders of Roads"

Four murals to be added to the Pipeline Trail – Image courtesy of Ingrid Mayrhofer

The new murals will join a Leonard Hutchinson woodcut print "Webster Falls" that is currently on public display on the trail covering the garage wall of the home of Bethany Osborne, another resident with a personal stake in the maintenance of the Pipeline Trail. The Hutchinson mural remains intact four years after it was put up.

"From the beginning, we noticed that people would stop and smile at the Leonard Hutchinson mural. When we are out working in the garden, neighbours stop and comment on the mural. It has become a landmark on the trail that people enjoy and contributes to a sense of community pride," she explains.

Among the new murals slated to be put up, is a second woodcut print by the same artist called: "Builder of Roads". The other artists featured include: Dámarys Sepúlveda ("Lava II"), Shelley Niro ("Spirit" from the series Resting with Warriors) and Delio Delgado "untitled/giraffe."

Homeowners who agree to have these murals placed on their properties will be given an honorarium for providing temporary space for the murals and maintaining a small garden set up next to them. "This means owners can call us if there is any vandalism or other repair issues," says Mayrhofer.



Leonard Hutchinson's Webster Falls on the Trail.

Those with properties adjacent to the Pipeline Trail and wishing to participate should contact the organizers by emailing either [pipelinetrail.hamilton@gmail.com](mailto:pipelinetrail.hamilton@gmail.com) or Bethany Osborne at [bethanyjosborne@gmail.com](mailto:bethanyjosborne@gmail.com).

Mounting the murals on the trail does not require the permission or involvement of City Hall since they are being put on private property. It is a way to avoid a lengthy bureaucratic process that proposed art projects in a public space frequently can face in seeking city approval.

But there is some point where city involvement becomes necessary. In addition to the new murals, the organizers of the current art project on the trail are also setting up an interactive street art wall at the recently restored and renovated Andrew Warburton Park on the Pipeline Trail at the intersection of Britannia Avenue and Tragina Avenue North.

The city is responsible for the construction of the wall which is expected to be completed in the summer. Artwork from visual artist Nathan Eugene Carson and dub poet Klyde Broox are featured. In addition, two panels are reserved for young people to express their own art. The healthiest artistic contribution will be one fourth

people to express their creativity. Typically, their contributions will be up for six months and then replaced by other art pieces from the same age group.

Mayrhofer and the [Red Tree Collective](#) have conducted art workshops in the neighbourhood, to attract young people and in the process get a buy-in for the community art from residents. "When youth work together on an art project, their connection is a creative one. That creative connection also draws in their families and neighbours. The artwork affirms that the youth belong, and that the neighbourhood shares a pride in belonging to a diverse community," says Mayrhofer.

At the moment Ingrid Mayrhofer, Bethany Osborne, and Elizabeth Seidl are the primary advocates for the Pipeline Trail. More residents were involved back in 2015 when there was an anticipation of change. At that time the city had put together an implementation master-plan to rejuvenate this historic corridor.

<https://www.hamilton.ca/city-planning/master-plans-class-eas/pipeline-trail-master-plan>.



The [Pipeline Trail Master Plan](#) was approved in 2015.

However, the city has put a freeze on the plan and the local Ward 4 city councillor has not been available to talk about the issue, says Seidl.

"Yeah, I am a little bit disappointed that (the proposed rejuvenation plan) hasn't happened," she explains.

What Seidl likes about the 2015 city master plan is that it viewed the Pipeline Trail in its entirety as a continuous pathway for walkers and cyclists in a car-oriented city. The document calls for more gardens, trees, community art, historical signage and safe connections via cross walks on the local streets to return the path to some form of continuity.

What may have led to the 2015 master plan being put on the back burner, was the concern among some residents that they would end up losing portions of their properties that were originally built into the trail on city land. These encroachments today involve a backyard, side yard, a patio, a shed or deck, according to a 2020 city public works report. A third of the 150 residential properties, along the Pipeline trail, "have some kind of encroachment or safety issue."

The city is handling the encroachments on a case-by-case basis. One example involves a house on the trail where a small triangular piece of land is owned by the city. I spoke to the homeowner who wishes to remain anonymous.

## *Hello, Pipeline Trail Neighbours!*

Would you like to be part of an outdoor art museum?  
We are looking for buildings that face the trail - a shed, garage or other enclosure. We offer to clean it, remove graffiti, paint it and install a mural-size reproduction of work by a professional artist.

As part of our ongoing collaboration in East Hamilton, Red Tree Artists' Collective, The Hamilton Dialogues and

Pipeline Trail Hamilton are excited to present the project "Trail Mix Museum," a multi-disciplinary installation of contemporary and historical visual art, and dub poetry. To learn more about this exciting new project visit <https://redtreecollective.org/trail-mix-museum-2/> or scan the QR code below:

*Get in touch*

Email [pipelinetrail.hamilton@gmail.com](mailto:pipelinetrail.hamilton@gmail.com)  
Text or call (647) 995-7586



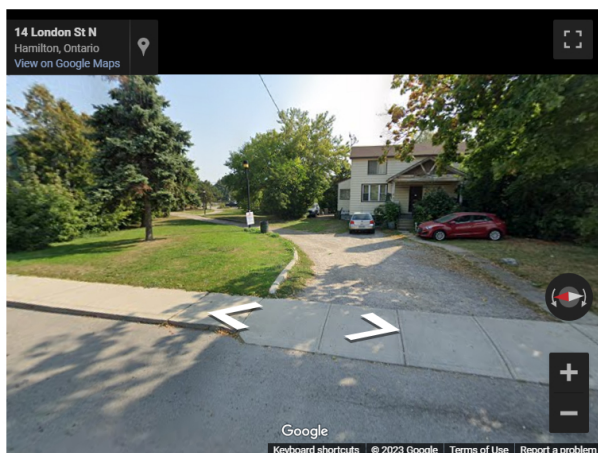
"This easement has been associated with the property for a number of decades and so it was grandfathered into our purchase of the land. The payment for the lease of the easement is included in a yearly fee that is charged to our tax bill," they explained.

How the city is dealing with the industrial properties which also block the path of the trail is less clear.

In place of the plan, the City of Hamilton has embarked upon incremental improvements which include the building of the Geraldine Copps Parkette next to the Tim Hortons outlet on Kenilworth Ave.

In addition, a new section of the Pipeline Trail will be constructed between Brampton St. and Grace Ave. in what is now an open area. "This project requires fencing adjustments to re-establish the city's property lines before construction can commence. That work is ongoing in 2022," says Emily Trotta, a City of Hamilton spokesperson.

Trotta also reports that funding by the city has been approved for "a landmark parkette" at the southerly entrance of the Pipeline Trail which now consists of a Dairy Queen and a parking lot near the London Street N./Ottawa/Main intersection. (Approximately where the politicians and the Wheelmen gathered in 1899). "The upcoming design process for the parkette will include public consultation, however, the timing of this is dependent on coordination with other city projects in the area," says Trotta.



An interpretive signage describing the history of the pipeline is also being contemplated for the landmark parkette.

What still bothers Seidl is the slow pace of trail improvements. "Public consultations by the city with residents have not yet begun for (the landmark parkette), that I am aware of," she says.

Seidl also cites the absence of any signage on the separated sections of the trail, starting from Main and Ottawa that inform passersby that they are on the Pipeline Trail, along with a bit of historical context. Every time you cross a local street along the trail there should be a sign announcing that this is another section of the

Pipeline Trail, adds Seidl.

"We feel it is very important. This is something that the city could have done a bit sooner. It could be a graphic or a logo, designed in a way that you need to understand (its significance)."



**About Paul Weinberg**

Paul Weinberg is a Hamilton based author and independent journalist.

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