



MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD
Jewel of the Rideau

Village of Merrickville-Wolford

Report CAO-09-2020

Date of Council Meeting: September 14, 2020
Information Report to Council

RE: Main Street Revitalization Project Update

OBJECTIVE: To provide Council with an update regarding the Main Street Revitalization Project.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Village of Merrickville-Wolford does hereby receive report CAO-09-2020, being a report providing an update with respect to the Main Street Revitalization Project, for information purposes.

BACKGROUND:

On May 14, 2018, Council received report FIN-01-2018, which advised of the Main Street Revitalization Initiative. The Village of Merrickville-Wolford had been allocated \$40,358.75. On the same date, Council passed By-law 25-2018, being a by-law to authorize entering into the Municipal Funding Agreement with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

On May 13, 2019, Council received report CAO-06-2019, being a report suggesting a potential approach to determine how best to allocate the funds, which included the suggestion to engage the community in the process. Subsequently, Council passed By-law 43-2019, being a by-law to establish the Main Street Revitalization Ad Hoc Committee and, on June 10, 2019, Paula Hurtubise, Bruce Perron, Yves Grandmaitre, Kevin Bridge and Connie Adams were appointed as committee members.

The committee created a list of projects that aligned with the criteria provided by AMO and, on September 23, 2019, provided their final report to Council (attached). The recommendation of the Committee was to proceed with a proposal to redesign the parkette at the Blockhouse area, which Council supported. On September 23, 2019, upon submission of their final report, the Committee was dissolved by By-law 53-2019.

To ensure satisfaction of time restrictions, the CAO/Clerk has taken direct responsibility for coordinating the implementation of Council's direction on this project.

ANALYSIS

Site Conditions & Design Limitations

The Committee's description of the site was an accurate portrayal of conditions. Pedestrians avoid entering the parkette and it creates an unappealing visual obstruction between the Blockhouse and the main commercial area of the Village. Several challenges have been faced by staff in implementing Council's direction including:

Multi-jurisdictional location – The site straddles Parks Canada lands including heritage designated property as well as United Counties of Leeds & Grenville (UCLG) public road allowances. There is also below and above grade infrastructure from private agencies on site particularly that of Bell Canada. Staff has taken a collaborative, consultative approach to ensure support for the project by other agencies and complies with the terms of the Village's license agreement with Parks Canada.

Seasonal restrictions on construction – Project approval was achieved on September 23, 2019 but construction after October 31st each year is highly subject to frost. Given the timing of the year that the report was received, the procurement of services, materials, design and construction was not possible by the grant deadline of March 31, 2020. However, staff were successful in acquiring an extension to October 31, 2020.

COVID-19 delays – Non-mandatory municipal construction projects were prohibited for an extensive period during the spring of 2020 by Provincial Emergency Orders and the pandemic created a significant increase in workload for the municipality. Operational process adaptation and technology was used to absorb the increased workload.

Hard landscaping is traditionally expensive and grant funding was limited – Staff engaged Jonah Robinson Landscape Construction & Home Renovation and Owen Sparey of Your Garden Gurus to generate innovative efficiencies in design and materials, and relied upon a combination of concept plans and contractor expertise to ensure an effective, hand-produced design, avoiding much more expensive CAD drawings.

Material supply limitations following the pandemic – The contractor's local experience and knowledge of available products, combined with his industry network allowed us to secure the necessary materials.

Site obstructions – The presence of a catch basin, related grading, a Bell Canada pedestal, a fire hydrant and the relative small size of the site posed constraints. Bell Canada quoted \$46,000 to relocate the pedestal, exceeding the entire project budget amount on its own. Thus, additional effort was required to adapt the design around the existing obstructions.

Site Design

Given that the site is at an extremely busy and highly visible location at a key entry point next to a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its appearance must be suitable to that of a gateway to the commercial district for tourists and other visitors to the Village to enjoy. On April 28, Council approved sole sourcing this project in Resolution R-128-20. Success design and implementation of this project has relied heavily upon the expertise, dedication and creativity of the landscape designer, Owen Sparey of Your Garden Gurus and landscape contractor, Jonah Robinson.

The site must be inviting for people to access and contribute to a memorable experience when visiting the Village, while contributing to passive security. In addition to the objectives stated by the Committee, the landscape designer was asked to incorporate features that allow for multi-purpose use of the site as a public square for community announcements and other gatherings, in addition to functioning as a meeting place and entrance to Blockhouse Park for pedestrians.

Several key features were incorporated into the design (attached) to achieve the above objectives:

Armourstone Seating / Presentation Platforms – Four large, irregular-shaped armourstone slabs will be placed at each corner of the public square area. Each slab provides increased possible seating where tourists and others can sit to discuss their itinerary for the day. Each slab also provides a potential platform for use by the Mayor and/or visiting dignitaries for public announcements or events such as the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.

Enhanced Openness – A large, open area utilizing the existing ornate lamp standard is left open to accommodate public gatherings and “open up” the view of the Blockhouse Park and the Blockhouse itself.

Operational Improvements – A minimum clearance of 5’ is being left between all features and 80mm thick pavers are being utilized to allow for efficient winter snow plowing to allow for potential year-round use.

Material Selection – Landscaping materials were chosen that, to the extent possible with new building materials, reflect the heritage of the built form of the Village. The Techo Bloc Champlain Grey pavers also include elements of warmer stone colours evident in the Blockhouse’s 1st level and other stone heritage buildings within the Village, while the grey accents the slate grey colour of the 2nd storey of the Blockhouse and blends with the colour of the armourstone seats/platforms and Techo Bloc Rocka planting bed edge stones.

Merrickville Sign - The planting beds and armourstone seating areas have been oriented to allow for the placement of a modestly-sized “Merrickville” sign (tentatively proposed and possibly incorporating the Village logo), that can be utilized by tourists as a focal point / photo opportunity location and a meeting place with a view scape of the Blockhouse and park in the background.

This will provide visitors with memories of their visit to Merrickville and the proposed sign, and the public square overall, will function as a notable meeting location for people looking to connect with each other upon their arrival to the Village. Preliminary research regarding an integrated design suggest that the order of magnitude cost to design and produce the sign could range up to approximately \$10,000. Council will be further apprised of details on this aspect at a future meeting.

Planting Choice – The proposed plantings have been specifically chosen to be hardy, native species to withstand our climate but also provide a broad array of colour throughout the seasons. Planting of bed materials is planned for the spring of 2021. Forecasted costs are likely to be within \$2,000.

Chamber Promotion Maps & Recycling/Waste Receptacles – Space for these items has been relocated closer to the high pedestrian area closest to the north-west corner of the intersection of Main Street West and Mill Street to improve exposure and convenience, thereby enhancing usage.

Given the proposed enhanced purpose for the site, Council may wish to consider a ribbon-cutting / re-opening ceremony to welcome the community to the opening of the new “Merrickville Public Square”.

One unfortunate discovery was made during project planning. The large Spruce tree immediately at the north side of the site is suffering from cytospora, a fungal disease. While trees can survive with it for years, there is no known treatment for it and it will eventually kill the tree. The eventual loss of the tree was factored into the design.

Project Scope

Parks Canada staff have reviewed the proposed design and have given it their blessing as aligned with the strategic objectives of the Rideau Canal Management Plan. The CAO/Clerk has committed that any future signage will be vetted with Parks Canada prior to installation.

The asphalt boulevard along the west side of Mill Street adjacent to the parkette and Blockhouse have been identified as also warranting landscaping improvement to improve the visual appeal of the area and create continuity in the area. The current asphalt is deteriorating, cracking and parging, and staff have initiated discussions with UCLG staff about the potential for incorporating this into the scope of the project. The estimated cost to revitalize this area as attached is approximately \$47,000 plus HST. The CAO/Clerk will continue to discuss this possibility with UCLG management staff.

BUDGET/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Village of Merrickville-Wolford was allocated \$40,358.75 for the Main Street Revitalization Initiative from AMO. Total actual cost of the design and implementation of

hard landscaping in 2020 is anticipated to be \$41,819.70 (after municipal rebate of HST). Any expenses associated with the project that are over and above this amount will be funded from the 2020 Operating budget previously allocated for sidewalk improvements adjacent to the site.

Anticipated costs for the proposed Merrickville sign and plantings will be included in the 2021 budget proposal. The cost of plantings are forecasted to be below \$2000 and the cost of the design, manufacture and installation of a sign is yet to be determined. The proposed sign design will be provided to Council prior to finalization.

LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLANS:

On January 23, 2017, the Council of the Corporation of the Village of Merrickville-Wolford passed By-Law 10-17, being a by-law to adopt the Merrickville-Wolford Strategic Plan 2017-2025.

The priorities of the strategic plan that can be linked to this report are as follows:

Ensuring efficient, effective services and civic engagement: By engaging members of the community to evaluate the criteria of the grant and potential uses for the funds received, Council was able to get feedback directly from residents and could then use such feedback to direct staff on which project(s) would provide the greatest benefit to the Village of Merrickville-Wolford.

CONCLUSION:

This report is for information purposes only to provide Council and the public with information surrounding the particulars of the new parkette near the Blockhouse.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment "A" – Main Street Revitalization Ad hoc Committee Final Report, dated September 18, 2019

Attachment "B" – Design drawings as provided by Owen Sparey of Your Garden Gurus

Respectfully submitted by:



Doug Robertson
CAO/Clerk/Director, Economic Development



Village of Merrickville – Wolford
Main Street Revitalization Initiative
Ad hoc Committee
Report to Council: September 18, 2019

OBJECTIVE: To provide Council with options for the allocation of Main Street Revitalization Initiative funding.

Mission:

To provide Council with options regarding the allocation of the Main Street Revitalization Grant in the amount of \$40,358.75, in order to ensure the funds provide maximum benefit to the Village of Merrickville-Wolford.

BACKGROUND:

On May 14, 2018, Council received report FIN-01-2018 informing Council the Village of Merrickville-Wolford was allocated \$40,358.75 from the Province for this initiative. The report indicated municipalities had until March 31, 2020 to spend the funds.

Given the critical potential benefit of this initiative for the community, Council decided to engage the community directly in the process of determining how these funds are allocated.

Council created an ad hoc committee, referred to as the "*Main Street Revitalization Initiative Ad Hoc Committee*" to advise Council regarding optimal use of these funds. In keeping with Part 9 of the Procedure By-law, the committee's purpose was to provide advice and input to Council; the Committee had no decision-making authority.

Council's authority to create the committee, is outlined in the Procedure By-law Definitions, Section 1.2, which reads:

"Ad hoc Committee" means a special purpose committee with a limited duration, appointed by Council to carry out a specific task and which is dissolved automatically upon submitting its final report to Council, unless otherwise directed by Council.

Procedure By-law Part 9 – Committees of Council, reads:

- a) *Council may, from time to time, establish Committees in response to specific issues requiring immediate or long-term attention. No Committee shall have departmental jurisdiction.*

Accordingly, Council enacted Terms of Reference, Main Street Revitalization Ad Hoc Committee Schedule "A" to By-law 43-2019

The Main Street Revitalization Ad Hoc Committee was governed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Guide to the Municipal Funding Agreement. See Report CAO-06-2019 Schedule B, regarding the Main Street Revitalization Initiative (attached); which provides specific information regarding the potential use of the funds.

OBJECTIVE:

To assist Council as follows:

- To identify projects and initiatives that fall within the parameters of the grant as outlined in Schedule "B" and Schedule "C" attached hereto and can be implemented within the timelines specified in the grant agreement; and
- To prepare a report to Council in advance of the regular Council meeting of September 23, 2019; which outlines specific options and projects the Committee agrees will best make use of the granted funds and provide recommendations to Council, including benefits and concerns associated with the recommendations.

COMPOSITION:

The committee was composed of five interested members of the community:

Ms. Connie Adams;
Mr. Kevin Bridge;
Mr. Yves Grandmaitre (Secretary);
Mrs. Paula Hurtubise (Chair);
Mr. Bruce Perron and,
Mayor Douglas Struthers (ex-officio).

ANALYSIS:

In opening, I would say that every member of the committee approached the task with enthusiasm and passion. Each contributed myriad ideas on a wide range of possible projects. Members brought their own perspectives to the opportunities this funding offered to our community as a whole, and businesses calling Merrickville-Wolford home.

The committee, in considering the objective, discussed many possible directions for the proposed revitalization, but as our work went forward there were several ideas that became the focus of the committee:

- a. repair or replace existing planters, banners, wayfaring signs; also repair and paint square posts;
- b. water-bottle filling station;
- c. add additional parking signs;
- d. permanent metal banners, similar to those found in Almonte;
- e. electric vehicle charging stations;
- f. create seating areas within Cenotaph Park with information stand on local veterans and activities;
- g. large murals of historic village streetscapes painted on private buildings (for example .. grocery store);
- h. general requirement for more seating in the village;
- i. bicycle stands, and
- j. redesign the parkette at the Block House including a stand with a map of Merrickville-Wolford with an inset of Eastons Corners, bicycle routes, walking routes, trails, amenities and shops.

Briefly, our discussions on each point were as follows:

- a. repair or replace existing planters, banners, wayfaring signs; also repair and paint square posts

The existing planters, banners and the square posts are all in need of repair or replacement. The planters are in poor condition, mismatched and many are damaged. The banners are tattered and in poor condition and the square posts that hold them are wanting of paint. It was proposed that these be repaired, placed or removed before the Village moves to introduce new elements. Further, the wayfaring signs are out of date and should be updated to include all of the current businesses.

pros: The clean-up of these decorative items greatly improve the look of the "Main Street". Updated wayfaring signs would help direct shoppers to businesses that

are not presently included among the signs. The contrary is also true, tourists would not be frustrated looking for long absent signs.

cons: Regarding replacing banners, the cost to replace the old banners with new banners is tied to the cost of renting a "cherry picker" which is about \$4000.00 for the year. The quality of the less-expensive banners leaves them suffering from rips, tears and fading.

Regarding the wayfaring signs, businesses turnover requires ongoing monitoring and updates.

b. water-bottle filling station:

A water bottle filling station would benefit both residents and cyclists passing through the village.

pros: It would reduce the number of individual cyclists from entering business and using water which would in turn reduce the water bills of those affected. It may attract cyclists to stop in Merrickville-Wolford. A water bottle filling station would be a benefit to the community at large.

cons: There would be an ongoing cost to the Municipality for the provision of water. There would be some maintenance costs regarding the upkeep and cleaning of the dispensers.

c. add additional parking signs;

There was much discussion regarding the parking situation in the Village. All of the shortfalls discussed by this committee are referenced in the Report submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Parking, Final Report. I refer Council to the aforementioned document.

d. permanent metal banners

Permanent metal banners could be created using the Municipal logo. These stylized metal banners may be painted or left steel grey. They are designed to be permanently attached to either the lamp posts or decorative posts. Examples can be found in Almonte.

pro: Negates the costs of replacing banners, as well as the cost of renting a "cherry picker". Metal banners are more sophisticated than the dollar store offering. Permanent banners remain in good condition far longer than their cloth counter-parts.

cons: There is no option for seasonal changes.

e. electric vehicle charging stations

This is a very interesting possibility for the village to consider. The charging station could be a benefit to both residents, tourists and individuals passing through our community. The cost including installation is between \$5k to \$7k. Companies do offer various billing options. The charging station would be listed on maps of EV charging stations.

pros: This is a very environmentally aware project that could be of benefit to the community as a whole and would reduce our carbon footprint. A metered poles exists at the Canal Park.

cons: If located at Cenotaph Park, permission would be required to remove and relocate the existing handicapped parking spaces.

f. general requirement for more seating in the village create clusters of seating

A requirement for more seating within the village was often cited, by many members of the committee. Seating areas, especially shaded areas allows walkers to rest and "regroup" before continuing on with their activities. One possible sight noted was the west municipal parking lot, another being Cenotaph Park.

pros: Would allow individuals and groups to rest and enjoy the village and then continue on their day. Allowing an opportunity to rest increases both their motivation and ability to continue shopping in the village. The village has many seniors and elderly individuals visiting who have a need for frequent rest stops.

cons: Require maintenance.

- g. large murals of historic village streetscapes painted on private buildings (for example .. grocery store)

Large murals now appear frequently in many tourist areas, both large and small, looking to add visual interest to their commercial area. Communities using murals, as part of their business improvement plans include the Glebe and Athens.

pros: Murals add visual interest to the commercial area. They provide both residents and visitors something new to look at and can provide a topic of conversation. A historically referenced mural, such as one of main street Merrickville from years ago also continues the village's historical story. It, in essence, adds another block of shops to look at.

cons: May need touch ups, but are estimated to last 15 to 20 years. Time is short given the need to accomplish the task prior to freeze up, but not unmanageable. May involve a selection process if more than one commercial building was interested.

- h. bicycle stands

Merrickville-Wolford is a premiere destination for cyclists. They arrive in the hundreds per day. Currently, the village has only one bicycle stand located at the post office.

pros: Would allow cyclists a place to secure their bikes.

cons: Installing permanent stands on St. Lawrence St. would interfere with pedestrian traffic and would be an obstacle for winter sidewalk maintenance. It is unlikely that stands located off the main street would see much use given the expense of some of these conveyances. Further, the stand at the post office is rarely full.

- i. redesign the parkette at the Block House including a stand with a map of Merrickville-Wolford with an inset of Eastons Corners, bicycle routes, walking routes and trails and shops

The parkette currently contains shrubberies and other vegetation, one bench, a scout plaque, the chamber map stand and a recycling stand. The shrubs encase most of the parkette obscuring the area from most passersby. The old tiles are undulating and in

need of cleaning. The recycle station appears disjointed, stuck on the end of the parkette. The parkette sits on land leased by the Municipality from Parks Canada.

pros: A comprehensive and professional redesign of the parkette would greatly improve the general appearance and utility of the area. Such a design could include: increased visibility from St. Lawrence Street, more seating, a larger, more detailed map and a more efficient approach to recycling. It would be a welcoming entrance to the village. A lovely place to sit and research destinations and amenities within the municipality. Further, it may be possible to repurpose half of the sign to a new location at Cenotaph Park. Permission from Legion previously granted, letter of permission available upon request.

cons: none noted

CONCLUSION:



Although many very good ideas arose from committee discussions, it is the Committee's decision to promote item j: the proposal to redesign the parkette. The Committee also suggests Council spend any remaining funds on item a. repair or replace existing planters, banners, wayfaring signs; also repair and paint square posts.

LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLANS:

On January 23, 2017, the Council of the Corporation of the Village of Merrickville-Wolford passed By-Law 10-17, being a by-law to adopt the Merrickville-Wolford Strategic Plan 2017-2025. The goals and priorities set out in this report are in keeping with By-Law 10-17.

This report is for information purposes only.

SOURCES:

FIN-01-2018 – Main St Initiative

Terms of Reference Main Street Revitalization Committee Schedule "A" to By-law 43-2019

AMO Guide to the Municipal Funding Agreement - Schedule B

Ad Hoc Committee on the Corporation of Merrickville-Wolford By-law No. 24 - 2010 on Signage, Survey Results

Letter from Legion granting permission to locate Chamber stand at Cenotaph Park

Ad Hoc Committee on Parking Final Report

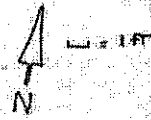
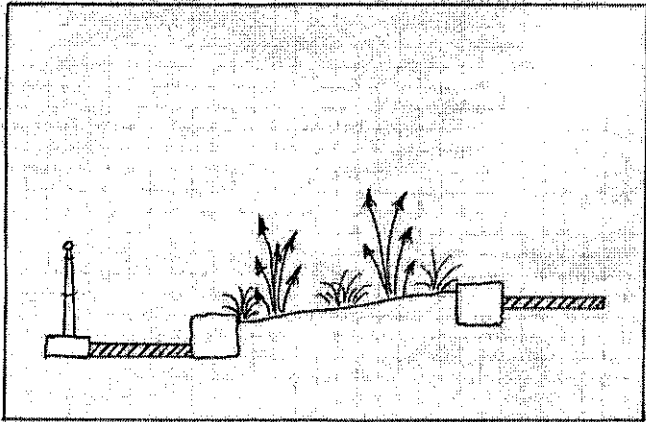
Main Street Revitalization Business-owner Survey

All of the above documents available upon request.

Submitted by:




Paula Hurtubise MA, Chair, *Main Street Revitalization Initiative Ad Hoc Committee*

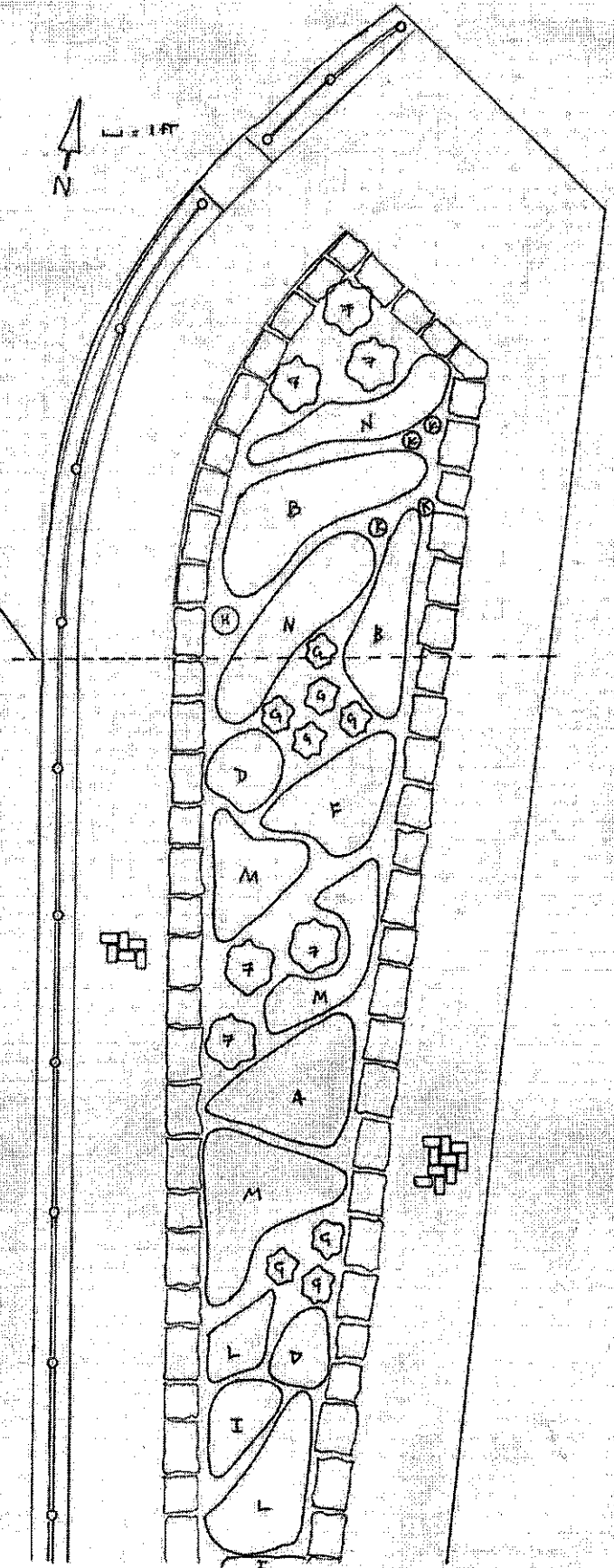
WERRICKMILE CANTARIS
MILL ST PLANTING

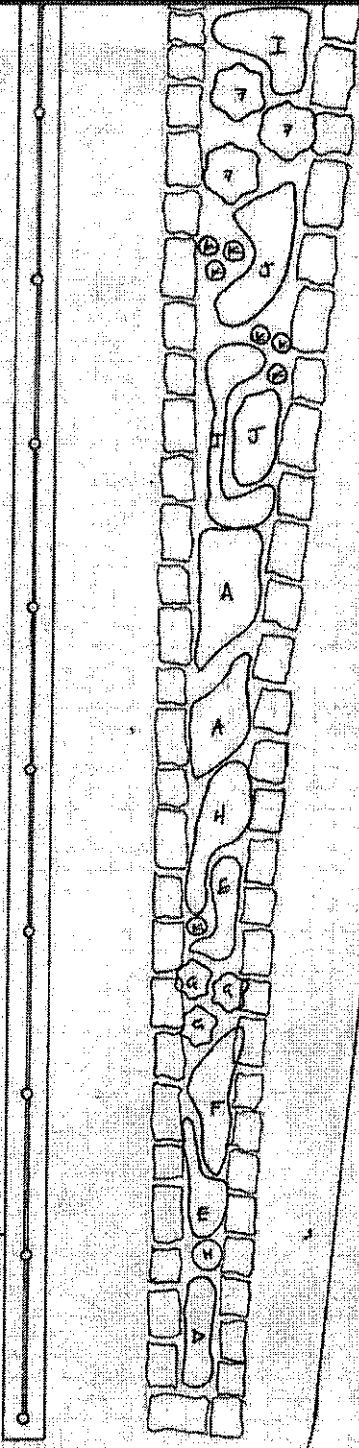


- A DUBBERIA 'GOLDENWAX'
- B MOLINA 'MOONFLOW'
- C NEPETA 'WARRIORS LEAF'
- D SELVA AFRANCA 'MARBLE'
- E CAREX TESTICHA 'PAPER-TRE'
- F ECHINACEA 'MAGNUS'
- G ANISONA 'BLUE ICE'
- H PERUNKA 'LITTLE SPIRE'
- I CALAMAGRIS 'EGYPTIAN'
- J VERONICA 'FRISANTINA'
- K ALGUM 'MILKMAW'
- L SODUM 'AUTUMNUS'
- M TIMOTHY 'SHEPHERD'
- N ASTER 'WOODS BLUE'

7 CORNUS 'ELAGANTISSIMA'

-  ARMOURSTONE
-  PAVES
-  HYDRO POLE





OPEN SPACE
YOUR GARDEN GURUS
2020