



Orfus Road Design Challenge



Maximum City & The Sterling Hall School

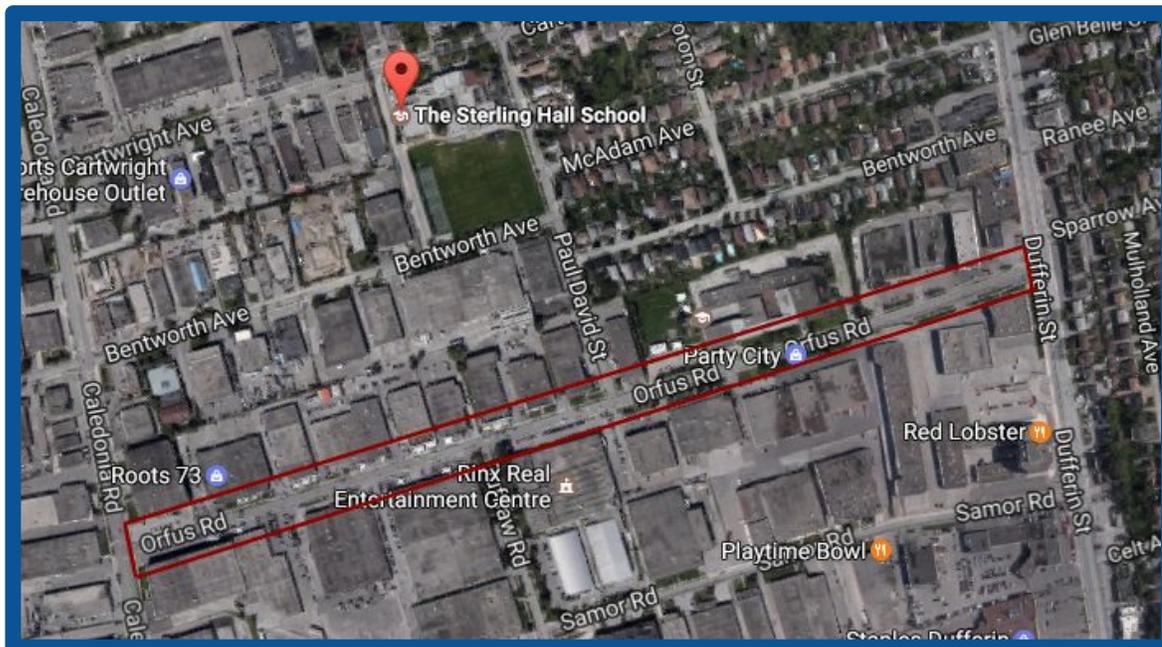
April 2017

PROJECT CONTEXT

In the 2016-2017 school year, Maximum City was engaged by The Sterling Hall School to design and deliver a design challenge with Grade 6 students and teachers.

The teaching and learning goals were for students and teachers to use the school neighbourhood as a classroom, develop a strong sense of place, be given skills, agency, and support to co-create solutions for an authentic local problem, and present their solutions to the local city councillor Josh Colle on April 25.

The **Maximum City/Sterling Hall Orfus Road Design Challenge** was designed to enhance urban and environmental awareness, while encouraging active local citizenship through collaboration, empathy, and design exercises. The challenge site was the area of Orfus Road between Caledonia Rd. and Dufferin St. Students redesigned a more vibrant and sustainable Orfus Rd. using: lessons on Complete Streets and active transportation; site visits; SWOT analyses; large-scale aerial maps; digital design tools; photography; and hands-on building & drawing materials.



SITE MAP

This Challenge encouraged students to step into the shoes of neighbourhood stakeholders, interact with their urban environment and brainstorm solutions to local problems. Orfus Road is a non-arterial interior road situated in North York, in the Yorkdale-Glen Park neighbourhood, located within Ward 15, Eglinton-Lawrence, with an industrial past that has transformed into a busy retail corridor with a mix of competing uses and modes, and is a destination retail and recreation street at particular times of the week.

Can Orfus Road be a Complete Street?



Can Orfus Road be a better street?

PROJECT PROCESS

36 Grade 6 students from the Sterling Hall School redesigned Orfus Rd., learning and applying the concept of Complete Streets and improving the street according to four themes:

1. WAYFINDING

2. MOBILITY

3. AESTHETICS & GREENSPACE

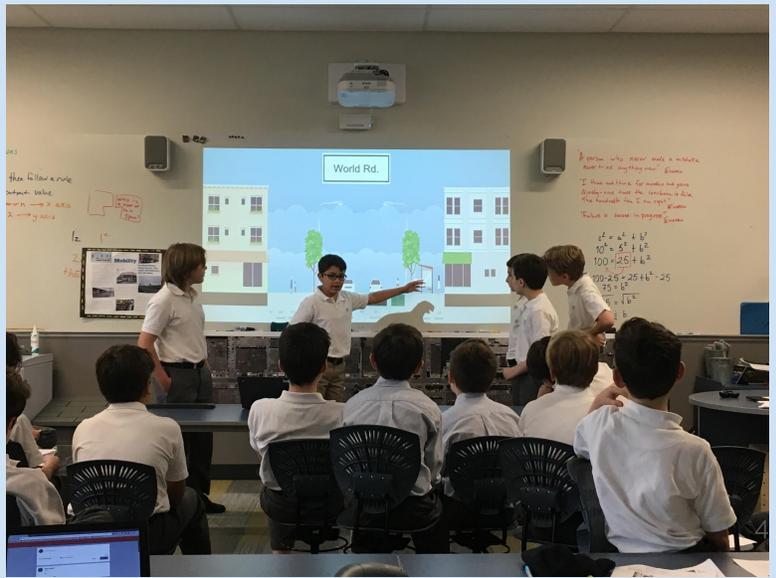
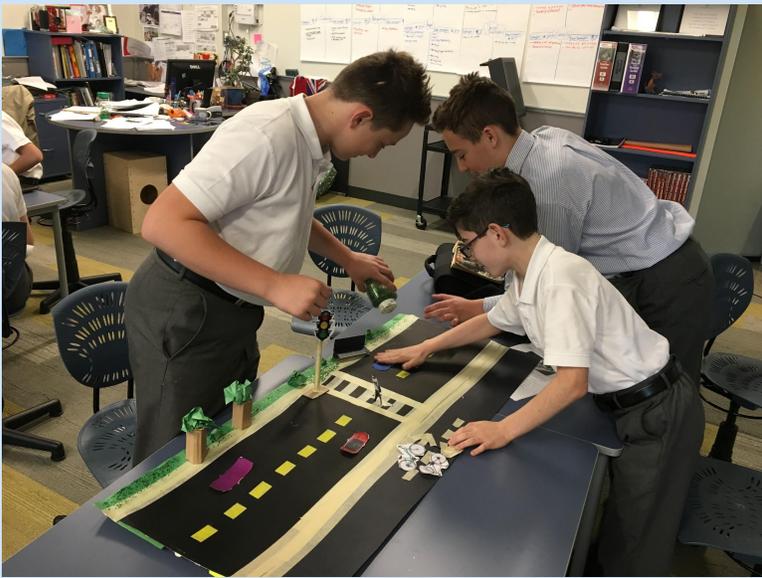
4. PROGRAMMING

Essential Questions for Themes

1. How can you improve the signs, directions, and information on the street?
2. How can you improve how people travel on the street?
3. Can the street be more appealing and greener?
4. How can space be used differently and what amenities and activities can be added or improved, especially for different times of the year?

PROJECT PROCESS

EMPATHIZE >>> DEFINE >>> BRAINSTORM >>> PROTOTYPE >>> TEST >>> REFINE >>> PITCH



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Before Maximum City Visits

- Research and Context Investigation
- Community and Professional Partner Outreach
- Curriculum Design
- Sharing Resources with Teachers and Administrators

In Between Maximum City Visits

- Project Workshopping and Research
- Model Building
- Presentation Practice

Week One with Maximum City – April 19 2017

- Introduction to Maximum City, Project Task & Complete Streets
- Group themes assigned and explained
- Asset mapping on large aerial maps
- Site walks
- SWOT analysis, Empathy Exercise, & Streetmix introduction

Week Two with Maximum City – April 25 2017

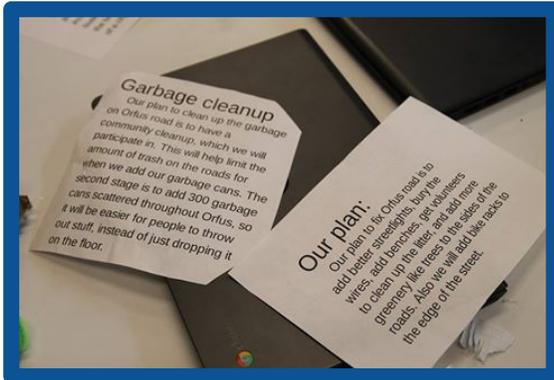
- Revitalization of St. George St. Presentation & Discussion
- Workshopping & Feedback
- Practice Presentations
- Final Presentations & Q&A with Councillor Colle, SHS staff and Maximum City staff

Students interview a hot dog vendor whose family has worked on Orfus Rd seven days a week for a decade.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

Students identified strengths, weaknesses, uses & opportunities for Orfus Road, highlighting the need for **safer**, more **enjoyable**, more **sustainable**, and more **functional** spaces & infrastructure.



"Our Plan" for Orfus Rd.



Presenting a new street model to Councillor Colle



New park with basketball court



New streetlights & an intersection for pedestrians

Students considered a variety of users & stakeholders on Orfus Road, arriving by transit, car, bike or on foot. After interviewing business owners and street vendors on their site visit and recording their own observations, student designs called for:

- More **benches**
- Better **lighting**
- More green space & **trees**,
- **Healthier** trees and better planting
- New **garbage cans** & community garbage pick-up event
- Turning parking lots into **parks**
- More frequent **transit**
- Better **signage**
- **Bike lanes** & bike racks
- New **intersection** for pedestrian traffic
- Improved & widened **sidewalks** for greater **accessibility**
- New **kid-friendly amenities** (e.g. basketball court)
- Diverse & seasonal **community events** in unused lots/spaces
- **Slower speeds** with clearly posted limits

PROJECT IMPACT

ON STUDENTS

- Students are engaged and active in the classroom & the community
- Students reported a stronger knowledge of and connection with school community compared to no or weak connection at outset
- Students feel more stewardship for their local environment
- Students learn and apply the concepts of Complete Streets
- Students are the creators of relevant local solutions & present solutions to an authentic audience including decision makers
- Students begin the design process with empathy and put themselves in shoes of neighbourhood stakeholders
- Students build on character strengths: *Hope // Social Intelligence // Curiosity // Perspective // Creativity*

TEACHERS

“Because the project was **meaningful**, well presented, short term and different from what we usually do, **the students were completely engaged...**

Continuing to touch base once in awhile with follow up projects & information would help **keep the project alive....**

It was a great reminder of many things:

- 1. real world application of learning,**
- 2. raising the bar to an adult like level,**
- 3. giving students a voice and choice.”**

Suzanne Lagacey
SHS Arts Teacher



“I think it has provided a real-life example of **the importance of having a variety of perspectives** when tackling a project/issue (ex. talking to existing business owners)...

[It's] Good for these boys to **really experience the community** of their school, not just their North Toronto neighborhood.”

Laura Medcalf
SHS English & Social Science Teacher

NEXT STEPS

May 2017

Sharing project report & ideas with Councillor Colle's office

Summer and Fall 2017

Meeting with Councillor Colle's office to review achievable options for impact and youth participation

Fall and Winter 2017-2018

Working with Councillor Colle's office to implement student idea(s) on Orfus Rd. Some possibilities include a new bench, more and healthier trees, better signage, or an improved garbage can

Ongoing

Encourage students to participate in local public meetings & neighbourhood events

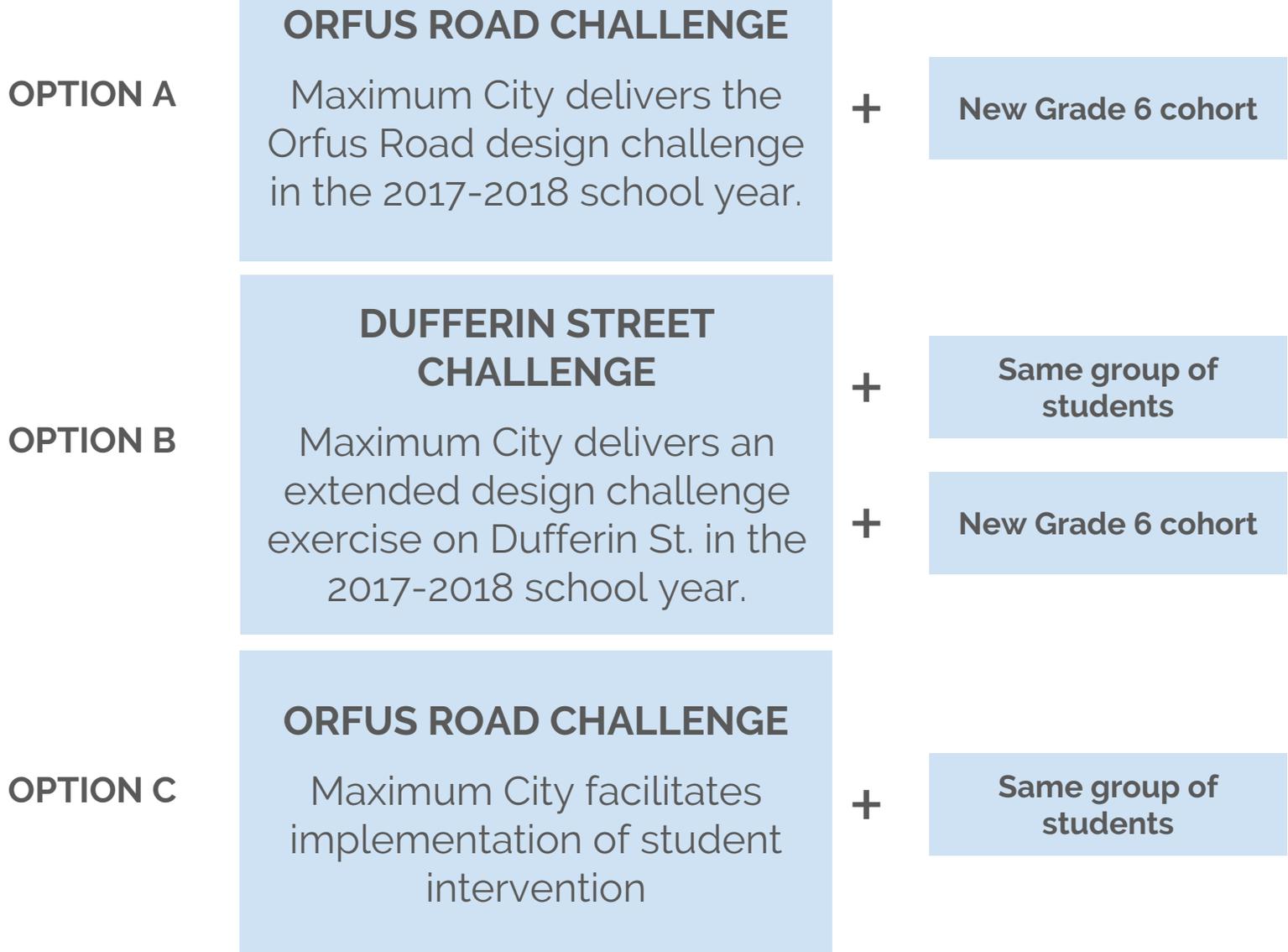


2017-2018

Community litter clean-up day (already undertaken by SHS)



OPTIONS FOR EXTENDING



Programming for either of Option A or B above would include:

Connecting students to their local environment; site walks & concept lessons; hands-on materials and digital tools; scaffolding with subject teaching goals; activities & assessments to build character strengths; activity ideas for in-between workshops; presentations to an authentic audience.

Scheduling for either of Option A or B above could include:

- Similar schedule to 2017 (2-3 full morning sessions 1 week apart with time to work on project in between visits); could take place in fall or spring
- Extended to a 2-3 week program with 3 or more Maximum City facilitated sessions.



MAXIMUM CITY

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