

## Library Square gives Aurora a sense of identity and hope: Kim



It is time to give Aurora a sense of hope and bolster its identity and move on with the redevelopment of Library Square, according to Councillor Harold Kim.

The downtown revitalization project is in the centre of the Deputy Mayor's sights as he looks ahead to a busy fall session of Council.

Currently on summer recess, Council has had an unprecedented time in an unprecedented year and, as such, Councillor Kim says some initiatives that were once on the legislative docket had been delayed to focus on key tasks at hand.

'This is really a Black Swan event, an event that rarely happens,' he says of COVID-19. 'Because of it, some of our original objectives have been pushed back, as it should, because we had to deal with this pandemic.'

There were new issues to be tackled as a result and one of the things Councillor Kim says he is particularly proud of is being a part of the Town's Business Continuity Task Force.

'I am just proud of all the stakeholders and participants who contributed,' he says. 'I was proud to get to know them over the couple of months we were together and we came out with a great strategy and marketing plan to help small businesses in Aurora.'

'We were also able to get to know more of the small businesses and larger businesses. A lot of business owners were contacting me [about] not being able to pay their rent and, indeed, I actually went knocking on these businesses' doors to see how they are surviving. Rent was the number one issue they were dealing with, so I was being proactive in trying to get some of the landlords to see what they can do to help out their tenants. I am not sure how effective that was, but I have got to build the relationship with some of these people and get to know some of the faces behind the names.'

But, not all important Council decisions made in the first six months of this year hinged on the pandemic. Council also formally adopted a ward system of governance, to be implemented for the 2022 municipal election.

While a contentious issue for some members of the public, Councillor Kim says it is a 'win' for the community.

'For people to say there was insufficient public consultation, I would refute that because we were talking about this all last term. Whether it is social media, phone calls, or email, people are still talking about this referendum from 2014, but only 32 per cent came out to vote and, out of that, 32 per cent, it was like 53 per cent that voted to keep it status quo. That is not the majority of the population, which is what is necessary.'

?When you talk to people face to face, or via email, there was an overwhelming desire to have the ward system.?

Councillor Kim says there are people who like the option of having all seven members of Council respond to their concerns ? rather than just the Mayor, who represents the Town as a whole, and their Ward Councillor who represents the interests of just their elected area ? but says communications won't change once a ward system is in place.

?There is a misconception that if there is a ward system that the other six members of Council other than your Ward Councillor is not going to be engaged,? he says. ?A Ward Councillor just means they are your representatives to answer any questions you have about your ward or anything going on in the whole Town. It just means you have a dedicated person. We will all be voting on what happens in [all the wards], so I think it is a win-win.?

Another ?win? for the Town, from Councillor Kim's perspective, will be moving forward with Library Square. For him, Library Square ?represents a vision and a hope for the future.?

?People think that because of COVID we need to stop, but no. We don't stop, we continue to move forward on the vision for Aurora because if people talk about financial reasons to stop, very few people are against Library Square. For them it is more about timing. If we wait another year, two years, or three, the project just gets more expensive.

?When we look at the Armoury, we had a lot of people refute the construction of the Armoury and the usage of the Armoury. ?We need to have various groups use the facilities for this and that' but I don't think anyone refutes or is displeased about the Armoury in its current form now. When people think of Aurora, they will think about Niagara College and the Culinary Institute that has made their mark here. In the same way, when people say, ?Why should we visit Aurora for the day?' We have Library Square, we have all the stuff that is going on. It is going to be another character piece for Aurora.?

Councillor Kim supports the Town's recent purchase of the buildings immediately north of the Aurora Public Library to be a part of the overall vision for Library Square, so the Town can partner with builders and/or developers to create something with ?a vision that aligns with our vision.?

In addition to focusing on Library Square this fall, Councillor Kim is mulling multiple motions to represent the diversity that now calls Aurora home. One such motion will include additions to the O Canada mural at the southeast corner of Yonge and Wellington to better reflect the people who built this country.

?I notice there is not one person from a racialized group represented on that wall, so I thought to myself, is it truly that no one from a racialized group contributed to the development and the building of our country?? he says. ?I suspect not, but I can think of several people off the top of my head who contributed mightily towards the building of our country. So, why are all the faces of mainly European descent?

?I know there is one Indigenous person [depicted on the mural] but I think we have to have the conversation of adding a couple of more figures there. We talked about murals in the past and I think murals and anything of visual consequence is important to people's psyche because it means we're an accepting community and it gives you that sense of affirmation and confirmation that you live in a Town where you're accepted, appreciated and loved.?

Next Week: Councillor John Gallo

**By Brock Weir**