

Accessibility concerns are being addressed at Library Square: CAO

By Brock Weir

The number of accessible parking spaces in the latest plans for Library Square has climbed from two to three, and planners are leaving the door open for more as designers address concerns surrounding accessibility.

In recent weeks, members of Aurora's Accessibility Committee have raised alarm bells over the number of accessible parking spots planned for the redevelopment of the space between the Church Street School and the Aurora Public Library into a focal point from the community. The number of parking spots, however, was not the only sticking point. Members also raised issues with the distance of accessible parking spots from the Library's main entrance off Church Street.

The concerns raised by Committee chair Tyler Barker and Committee member James Hoyes, as featured in *The Auroran* last month, prompted a response from Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny.

In his letter, Mr. Nadorozny said staff are continuing to work on ensuring these concerns are addressed, citing the redevelopment is expected to have a total of 19 spots available for persons with accessibility issues.

While he conceded that the three spaces planned to be closest to the Library are five metres further away from where they currently stand, the new spaces will include a canopy to protect individuals using mobility devices from the elements.

These concerns are nevertheless being watched closely by Council members, who raised the issue of accessibility once again at this summer's Council meeting.

We have been having questions about accessibility parking and accessible design of Library Square and I wanted to get an update because this is still evolving," said Councillor Harold Kim, who accompanied Mr. Barker on a site visit last month.

In response, Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, told Council that there are additional opportunities for accessible parking elsewhere on site.

"The most recent Library Square plan that Council saw identified two accessible spaces just south of that north lane," said Mr. Ramunno, referring to plans to create an access point onto Library Square from Yonge Street directly to the north of the Aurora Public Library building, space currently occupied by a footpath and a small amphitheatre. "I had a discussion with the architect and there is a possibility without changing the design much by including three in that general location just to the west of the drop off and pickup area. We also did identify that those ten parking spaces that were parallel along that north lane on the north side of the Library could be identified as accessible or special need spaces.

"We mentioned that even though they didn't really show up on that design concept, the plan, there are seven parking spaces on-street, Yonge Street, in front of the library and that's another opportunity to identify all or some of those accessible spaces as well. There is a ramp at the Yonge Street entrance of the Library, so when we bring a final plan back to Council what you will see is more than just those three spaces in front of the Library, there can be additional spaces designated along the laneway and on Yonge Street."

There is an additional opportunity, he said, of bringing the three identified parking spaces closer to the front entrance of the Library, as suggested by the Accessibility Advisory Committee members, but this has significant challenges.

"It is problematic with respect to working at grade we're now encroaching on the bowl of Library Square itself because we have to get a pedestrian walkway from the north parking lot down," Mr. Ramunno continued. "I think the best option is to have the design of those spaces in that location as configured on the latest plan that Council saw, but there is also the possibility of designating additional spaces along the laneway and on Yonge Street."