

28-day celebration will herald opening of Aurora Town Square



The date is yet-to-be-determined, but when the Town of Aurora celebrates the grand opening of its Town Square redevelopment in Aurora's historic downtown core, it will signal the start of a 28-day artistic extravaganza.

The grand opening program was recently outlined at Council by Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, who said the events will include offerings not only from the Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre, and Aurora Museum & Archives, the three "cultural partners" that will call Town Square home, but from across the community as well.

"We've all attended grand openings, whether they are businesses in Town, new Town facilities, gorgeous parks and trails; we're all familiar with the protocols [of] ribbon cuttings, greetings, tours, and sometimes treats. Aurora Town Square's grand opening is going to be the most memorable and emotional grand opening to date."

One of the hallmarks of the four-week celebration will be a "Grand Opening Spotlight Series" which will feature "hands-on immersive experiences focused on the expansive and specialized functional features and components of Town Square," said Ms. Ware.

"The community events within the Spotlight Series will be fulsome and diverse, presented by our governance partners, local cultural groups, and by the Town's Culture and Events teams. Not only will you literally get to feel Town Square come alive and its organic energy, but you will be enriched by the showcase of local and regional talent. York Region is full of talent and Town Square provides the perfect platform for a variety of talents, as well as attracting talent that would not have otherwise been possible to experience in Aurora."

The Spotlight Series, she added, will underscore the vision for Town Square as "a cultural destination within York Region, enabling visitors and residents to escape the fast-paced city life and be truly immersed in cultural experiences."

"For our physiological nature to thrive and to evolve, immersive cultural experiences are essential. The emotional, physical and cognitive escape they provide enables our minds and body to relax, reflect, and to become more creative beings. All of the experiences planned are curated for all demographics with specific multigenerational programming as the audience will get to experience firsthand a sampling of exquisite cultural programming that is possible, delivered by the Town, residency partners and community partners."

Among the elements of the Showcase Series will be the inauguration of a Candlelight Concert Series kicked off by the Aurora Community Band, "a completely different musical escape" which will be both enchanting and mesmerizing, buskers trained by Cirque Du Soleil, and a silent dance party, a growing trend emerging from Europe where participants dance to music heard through

their respective headphones.

Additional elements include culinary experiences through a Taste of Aurora campaign, facilitated in partnership with the Downtown BIA, art exhibitions, and performances in Town Square's new black box theatre.

"Our residents, not only of Aurora but also York Region residents, can have the Big City cultural experiences in our truly charming community," said Ware.

Following her presentation, plans for the grand opening were received warmly by Council and although staff could not provide an exact date on when this might kick-off, Ware said she hoped everything would align for the annual Aurora Art Show & Sale, an event that is a mainstay of the Town's events calendar for the month of May.

"We're really focused on under-promising and over-delivering," said Ware, when asked by Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland for an idea on the dates.

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said the opening of Aurora Town Square will showcase that "Aurora is a place to come to instead of a place to come from."

"I think it is high time we started to do that, particularly with our second track construction and GO," he said. "We're at the right place at the right time and we have the right people doing it."

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: "This is 28 days of programming events; it is not just a one-day affair. 28 days of action in our Downtown. It is about bringing people to Aurora, it is about attracting new people to come and see what our Town is all about, and what makes our Town the special place that it is."

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter