

Decision on George Street Public School site expected this fall

By Brock Weir

A decision on the future of the George Street Public School location is due this fall as the York Region District School Board continues to lay the groundwork for the school's merger with Aurora Senior Public School.

George Street, which currently educates Aurora students from Kindergarten through Grade 3, is due to merge with the nearby Aurora Senior Public School on Wellington Street West by September 2015.

The two schools have shared a principal and much of the administration for several years and, according to Licinio Miguelo of the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) not only was the plan for a merger well-received, it actually came from the school council.

"We have gone out and done some consultation with the community and we have got some really good response about consolidating [the schools]," he says. "It is not technically a closure. There has been community consultation and we have had positive reaction to bringing this together under one building."

"[The YRDSB] went to speak to the school about the implementation of full-day kindergarten and [the school council] suggested why not explore renovating Aurora Senior and housing all the students in one location so it is easier for students to make that transition."

The YRDSB plans on discussing options for the site over the summer months with the determination of the future of the site expected in the autumn.

According to a report by the YRDSB, if the Board opts not to use George Street for regular day school purposes, the next steps would be determining whether the board would have any use for the building at all, ranging from administrative use to special programs. If that is a no, the property would then be deemed surplus, other school boards would be notified, and the conversation would then turn to Town Hall.

In the meantime, plans are underway for future renovations at Aurora Senior Public School to accommodate the George Street students.

Numbers released by the Region have shown fluctuating enrolment at George Street since 2011, with a slow but steady decline since 2011. Low enrolment presents staffing and class planning challenges for the school, added the board.

George Street Public School dedicates one classroom as a childcare centre through Upper Canada Childcare.

George Street, and nearby neighbourhoods on Kennedy Street, Hillview Road, and Tyler Street, have recently seen significant redevelopment both on the residential site, as well as pending work on the former site of Collis Leather.