

Library Square design, Cultural Centre expansion up for decision this week

By Brock Weir

The last Council meeting of 2017 approved a preliminary concept for Library Square, and the first formal meeting of 2018 could bring about the next stage in the process.

Council is set to review and approve a revised conceptual design for Library Square this week, a new iteration of the 'lower square' design approved by Council in December which addresses many of the parking concerns previously identified at the table.

Revisions to the previously proposed design will allow for improved connections straight through the site from Yonge Street to Victoria Street and allow for additional on-site parking, both traditional and barrier-free parking.

If the concept is approved as recommended this week, it could also clarify how the Church Street School 'home' to both the Aurora Cultural Centre and the Aurora Museum & Archives will be incorporated into the site through expansion.

'At the Council meeting held December 12, Council endorsed the lowered square option as the preferred option for the design of Library Square,' said Fausto Filipetto, Senior Policy Planner, in his report to Council this week. 'Council also asked staff to examine the acquisition of a small portion of the property to the north to allow for additional parallel parking spaces and improved connection through the site from Yonge Street to Victoria Street.'

'The amount of parking identified in the revised concept is 92 spaces, excluding on-street parking. By comparison, the Lower Square concept that was endorsed by Council on December 12 included between 84 and 90 parking spaces. Staff believe that the revised concept enhances both parking and access to the property and is recommended for Council approval.'

As for the expansion of the historic Church Street School, there are two options on the table.

The first allocates a further \$325,000 to retrofit the building to provide a connection to the lowered square, while a second option of \$1.09 million to expand the building as proposed.

'If Council intends to proceed with the expansion of the Church Street School it is recommended that the design of the square and the Church Street School expansion proceed concurrently,' said Mr. Filipetto.

If approved, this winter will bring about more discussions with the landowners to the north on potential land acquisition. This land is currently occupied by a low-rise plaza featuring two professional offices. Continued work on site plan drawings, including engineering and landscape work, are also in the offing, as is further discussions with the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Public Library and other stakeholders on the expansion of the Church Street School.

Later targets set for the spring and summer include programming and detailed design work for the Church Street School expansion and further reports on the project's budget.

'The Cultural Centre building design includes two discrete components,' said David Leinster of the Planning Partnership in their submission to Council. 'The first is the retrofit of the Centre to connect it with the square. The second is the design of the 12,000 square foot two-storey addition. Neither of these building changes were anticipated at the time of the proposal submission. We request consideration for additional fees for these extra architectural services.'

Should Council move towards just a renovation of the Church Street School building, a renovation, new stair link and ramp to Library Square could run to \$1.725 million, excluding HST. A more fulsome expansion of the Cultural Centre, clocking in at \$9.48 million, could include an atrium and connection to the existing historic building along with the expansion space itself.