

Library Square site plans set to move forward ? Hydro Funds to be considered

By Brock Weir

The future of Library Square could take a significant step forward this week, inching towards the preparation of site plans for the long-gestating Victoria Street project.

Council is set to award a contract to The Planning Partnership next week which would task the company, which played a leading role in the development of the Aurora Promenade Plan, with coming up with a site plan for the wide swath of land currently occupied by the former Aurora Public Library and Aurora Seniors' Centre.

Earlier this year, Council approved the demolition of the two buildings, and this is the next step forward.

Last winter, Council signed off on developing a concept plan for the wider Cultural Precinct. In addition to the Library Square lands, the Cultural Precinct concept is extended to include the current Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre, Victoria Hall, Town Park and the historic Aurora Armoury, as well as the various places of worship in the Downtown Core.

?This decision was made taking into consideration public input obtained from the vast public consultation which occurred as part of the Council-endorsed public consultation strategy,? said Fausto Filippetto, Senior Policy Planner for the Town of Aurora, in his report before this week's General Committee meeting. ?Fotenn Planning + Design prepared two alternative revisions of the Library Square Concept Plans which were presented to Council on May 16, 2017. At that meeting, Council received the revised concept plans and directed staff to move forward with the procurement process for design services in planning the next stages for Library Square.?

Among the suggestions outlined in Fotenn's second stab at concept plans included extensions to the historic Church Street School and Victoria Hall buildings, additional parking spaces between the two landmarks, and a reconfiguration of existing parking at the Aurora Public Library.

According to the report, staff put out an RFP for the design process on July 13.

With a cut-off for bids set at August 8, there were four proposals submitted.

They were evaluated on experience and qualifications of the firm and project team members, the understanding, approach and methodology towards the project, and value added services, all adding up to 85 possible points. The Planning Partnership checked most of the boxes, scoring 82.5 and coming in as ?the least expensive of the three firms that passed the final stage,? clocking in at \$132,635.

Previously, Council approved \$500,000 for the demolition of the buildings and detailed design services from Council's Discretionary Reserve Fund.

This week, however, Council will also be considering a notification to the public of its intent to use a portion of the Town's Hydro Reserves, a fund started from the proceeds of Aurora Hydro which is now sitting at approximately \$35 million, for the further development of the Cultural Precinct.

Under the terms of the Hydro Fund, public notification must be made when the Town plans to dip into the account to fund significant projects and that time might soon be here.

?Staff expect the issue of allocating principal portions from the Aurora Hydro Sale Investment Reserve Fund will arise this fall or early winter,? says Town Treasurer Dan Elliott. ?Council has discussed the development of the Cultural Precinct Plan over the last couple of years. During those discussions, it was noted that funding for the implementation of such plans would likely require the use of some of the hydro funds.

?It is unclear when Council will be in a position to consider accessing the hydro funds. In addition, its decision may become time sensitive. To avoid forcing Council to be delayed in making potentially time sensitive decisions, staff recommend providing notice to comply with the bylaw at this time. Such notice will seek those persons who are interested in this topic to register with the Clerk's Office to be subsequently notified directly of the meeting date where funds may be allocated once the date is set.

?Although the timing [is unclear] it is possible that such discussions may become time sensitive. The public requirement of the existing bylaw could delay decisions as much as 45 or 50 days depending on publication dates and meeting calendar dates. To avoid time sensitivities, staff recommend giving the required public notice now of Council's intent to consider such allocations. Such notice will solicit those interested in following or delegating to Council on this issue to register with the Clerk.?