

Move over, Library Square: 'Aurora Town Square' is new name for downtown project

Church Street Square: Canned.

Constellation Square: Fizzled.

Aurora Junction: Questioned.

There could only be one, and 'Aurora Town Square' is now the official name for the downtown revitalization project which has, for the past four decades, been known as Library Square.

Council formalized the decision last week on a vote of 5 to 2, with Councillors John Gallo and Rachel Gilliland voting against the motion.

'This is a long time coming, a long history behind this square,' said Councillor Sandra Humfries, who formalized an amendment to include the name of the Town in the final branding. 'We started calling this 'Town Square' for a very long time and at one point jokingly 'The Piazza' in 2010 when some of us were first elected. I have heard many, many comments [and] feedback that Town Square sounds old, doesn't sound 'with it', but for me, a 'Town Square' means a place of gathering, a place to go, a place where everything happens. I think this is the best name for our Square; it is going to be incredible, it is going to be full of life, and that is the name I think is best suited.'

The majority of Council ultimately agreed with her, but the final choice may not have been as 'with it' as Councillor Gilliland envisioned.

Councillor Gilliland, who previously said the short list of names presented to Council was 'basic,' reiterated her position, and expressed disappointment that a 'tournament' style process to engage the public on the best name for the \$60 million project wasn't actively considered.

'We had some emails back around some of the questions [raised] at the last GC (General Committee meeting) about whether or not we could do a call for renaming and some of the implications around whether or not we were to wait and I didn't get an answer back,' she said. 'I am not sure that was even presented tonight, but it was a tournament-style presentation where a couple of names would be presented [for] the general public [to] vote on one of these two names and it would be like a process of elimination. I thought it was a pretty neat idea to expedite it a little bit and I still like the idea of having 'other' in there and whether or not it was staff would consider to put in a pool of process of elimination of the two. You could do that in just a few weeks. I thought it was a great way to have the public engaged or at least feel like they have been part of the naming process.'

While the public did have a say in the shortlist presented to Council, Councillor Gilliland argued that that round of public consultation took place before the final vision for Library Square was voted on by Council last year and the four ultimate options did not fully reflect the project that is now under construction.

As far as that round of public consultation went, she pointed out that much of it took place over PlaceSpeak, the Town's now-defunct online engagement platform and the new portal, Engage Aurora, provides a better opportunity to reach residents.

Also among her concerns were the timing of the re-brand, particularly as it relates to securing corporate sponsorship for the development.

'I wasn't sold on the idea that they couldn't go ahead and start marketing this now without having a specific name,' she contended. 'I think they are more than capable of selling the vision and the dream of what it is and encompass the way it is presented and

maybe there is some opportunity within that with the name selection. Obviously, we are going to think about naming the Square, which I didn't even think was an option because as far as I was concerned that wasn't an option. Needless to say, I don't believe that the name will slow anything down and whether or not people will donate to the place.

?I would love the opportunity to at least have a hand in this tournament to take place and give the public that opportunity. I think it is a great way to move things up and who knows, maybe it will end up being Town Square, but at least we can say we did reach out to the public and give them that opportunity.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter