

No need for a second Library location, say residents

By Brock Weir

There is no need for a second branch of the Aurora Public Library to meet the needs of a growing population, according to a study carried out by the Town and the Library.

Although a second satellite branch has been floated for many years, particularly to serve the growing number of neighbourhoods in northeast Aurora, surveys conducted by consultants Monteith + Brown and Libraries and Transition, indicate this is not a priority for residents, who say they are well served by the current location at Yonge and Church.

The current library plays a unifying role in the community and its central location allows it to serve the entire Town in a cost-effective manner, says the study, which is due to be presented at Council this week. Although northeast Aurora has been talked about as a potential location for a library branch, the public consultation program did not identify a compelling need for a second service point in the Town. Through the telephone survey, 94 per cent of Library users indicated that the current location of the Library meets the needs of their household and 82 per cent of non-users indicated that the current location is convenient. 33 per cent of library users (and 23 per cent of non-users) stated the Library should establish a second library location to service the growing areas in the Town. There is no evidence to suggest that the downtown library location is a major deterrent for residents of northeast Aurora or other parts of town.

That being said, the current configuration of the Library is insufficient to meet these needs, but a bit of retooling can make it much more efficient to serve the community.

The Library is approximately 36,400 square feet, not including space dedicated to meeting rooms, the front lobby and café, washrooms and other amenities. Reconfiguring these spaces will allow an expansion of space within the building, which lies on a site with little opportunity to expand outward. Such options include reducing the size of the existing circulation desk, culling duplicate book titles to free up space on shelves, and reducing public workstations.

Of greater concern to the majority of participants in the study is the parking situation surrounding the Aurora Public Library. The study indicates revisiting the issue of Library Square, a long-delayed process to make a decision on the fate of the old public library building on Victoria Street, and the adjacent former location of the local seniors' centre, might be worth a second look. It is a timely recommendation, coming on the heels of a notice of motion before Council this week from Councillor John Abel urging the establishment of an ad-hoc committee to steer a decision on Library Square once and for all.

Parking is of general concern to the majority of participants, both in terms of the number of parking spaces available and the internal traffic circulation of the lot, notes the study. Some participants pointed out that users of the Aurora Cultural Centre park their vehicles in the Library's parking lot, exacerbating the parking problem.

Through the telephone survey, 40 per cent of users indicated that parking concerns stop them or their household members from visiting the Library as often as they would like. Despite these challenges, and the impact on Library usage, this issue is not unique to the Library and must be addressed collectively by other tenants/users within Library Square, such as the Town, the Aurora Cultural Centre, churches, downtown merchants and residents.