

## Programming plans begin to take shape at Aurora Town Square

Community groups that will soon call Aurora Town Square home are beginning to find their respective places within the downtown revitalization process.

Last week, the Aurora Cultural Centre lent its support to a Town Square governance update presented to Council.

The latest update includes a draft policy outlining how space will be permitted within the Town Square buildings to ensure that space is allocated fairly and transparently.

The draft policy provides clear rules on how space will be allocated for the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Aurora Public Library, other cultural groups, existing user groups and Town-run programs. It also looks at grandfathering rights and making sure that groups that had regular use of pre-existing space will once again have first crack at them when the development fully opens.

"The policy establishes a ranking that prioritizes the allocation of space and how to address conflicting requests when they arise," said Phil Rose, Project Manager for Town Square, in his report to Council.

The priority order is the Town of Aurora (including the Aurora Museum & Archives), the Aurora Cultural Centre and the Aurora Public Library (APL), "Cultural Partners" as defined through the Town Square development process, Aurora-based not-for-profit groups, local school boards, Aurora-based commercial groups, and other groups or individuals.

The policy notes that in the case of a conflict between the Cultural Centre and the Library, priority will be given to the Cultural Centre on space at 22 Church Street and first priority would be given to the Library for space adjacent to APL.

"We know it is the Town that determines what moves forward and we will work with how the facility is built," said Suzanne Haines, Executive Director for the Aurora Cultural Centre, of the overall governance model. "I see the hybrid governance model as a leadership opportunity in the arts community and industry. What has evolved is a way to take the best skills available and through collective discussion and consideration build a model that is unique and strong.

"I am excited about the proposed programming and value the roles we each play in making Aurora Town Square a success."

While Ms. Haines and Cultural Centre Board Chair Eric Acker spoke in favour of staff's recommendations, similar delegations were not brought forward at the meeting from other partners, including the APL. Council sought assurances that they too were on the same page.

"We have had a lot of conversations with Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Library, and he has had some higher-level conversations with our CAO and his Board," said Mr. Rose. "In those conversations, we have come up with a general consensus that both the Magna and Lebovic rooms (meeting spaces within the APL building) for 2022 meet their needs for this year.

"We have had great conversations [in] a collaborative nature. Those discussions have been welcome and we have made a lot of progress with our conversations with the Library, just as we have with the Cultural Centre."

Additional questions included just which community groups would be considered grandfathered in under this policy.

"For an example, if the Cultural Centre in the past had used Brevik Hall or the Red and Blue Galleries (at the Church Street School) as their original dedicated space, we would be looking at offering that to them," said Robin McDougall, Director of Community Services. "If there was another pressure or need for that space, it would be honoured if that's what they had in the past."

Although Council did not request any changes to the policy itself at last week's Committee meeting, they did ask for the policy to

come back directly to them for final approval rather than to CAO Doug Nadorozny under delegated authority.

?We often talk about Council's responsibility to implement, develop and approve policies,? said Councillor Michael Thompson. ?It is staff that drive the direction out of those policies. My preference is?to see the final draft policy, myself.?

Added Councillor Kim, ?This is a policy document for the biggest project the Town has seen, so I think it is reasonable for us to receive that.?

Staff noted a formal policy could come back to Council for final review and implementation as early as next month.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter