

'Town Square' could be Council's preferred name for Library Square

It has been dubbed 'Library Square' for nearly 40 years, but the \$60 million downtown revitalization project could be officially re-named 'Town Square' as early as the end of the month.

Town Square was one of four contenders to be presented to Council, sitting at the Committee level last week, following public consultation. Other candidates included Church Street Square, Constellation Square, and Aurora Junction.

A final decision could be ratified as early as June 29.

Through a public poll, Town Square came out on top with over 800 votes, according to Library Square project manager Phil Rose.

While Council members have given 'Town Square' a tentative go-ahead, it wasn't without question, with some lawmakers saying the name was 'basic' and there might be better options out there.

'In 2018, when we had gone to the public with Place Speak, the concept of what was envisioned for Library Square and designs were pretty much in its infancy, a completely different take,' said Councillor Rachel Gilliland. 'Things have evolved and changed so much since then, but now that plans are in place and we have a fulsome understanding of what it's supposed to represent, perhaps going to the public and getting [input] that maybe internally we never thought of? it is a really, really big project and it would behove me to go back to the public and get some more feedback.

'I really feel we can do better. I find [the name] very basic and not overly special, but that is my opinion. I like the idea of going to the public and getting some names. I don't really see it as a rush.'

From the perspective of Mr. Rose, however, there were some time-sensitive elements, not the least of which was having a name in place sooner rather than later to help with capital fundraising, including securing donors and sponsors to complete the project.

'We want to be able to say, 'You're giving money to?' whatever the name of the facility is, rather than you're giving money for a facility that has yet to be named,' said Mr. Rose. 'It does give us an advantage if we have a name for a facility when we seek sponsors.'

One of the options on the table is the idea of a name for the entire facility, he said.

'For example, if we have a prospective sponsor?if we were to give that out as a naming right, it would combine nicely with the final name for this facility. We would love to be able to have a name that can go out with a bit more confidence, but at the same time, it is not something that would put the brakes on the capital campaign.'

Councillor Michael Thompson said he was 'comfortable' going back out to the public for further potential names as long as it didn't hinder the capital campaign, as did Councillor Gilliland who contended there was enough information on the table to push forward with fundraising.

'You're selling the idea, the concept of the design, I think we have plenty of design, concept and inspiration [put forward] to get potential people to philanthropically donate, if that is the model we're going for,' she said. 'I just don't see that that is a challenge.'

But, regardless of the capital campaign, the 'Town Square' name had its supporters, including Councillors Sandra Humfryes and Wendy Gaertner, with the latter stating the proposed name just missed the mark and should include the word 'Aurora'.

'I think we want this to be a destination, and by calling it just 'Town Square' it could be anywhere in North America,' said Councillor Gaertner. 'I think 'Aurora' needs to be in there somewhere.'

Town Square was also the preferred option for Mayor Tom Mrakas, although he expressed similar sentiments to Councillor Gaertner's.

'Aurora Town Square speaks to exactly what it is and the majority of the public picked it. They like it,' he said. '[They can say] 'See you at AT Square' or 'See you at ATS.' I think it is catchy, it speaks to what it is, it speaks to the fact we are a Town and we're small with big city amenities. I think it is all wrapped in there. I think if we were to change it to anything but 'Library Square' that is probably the only name I would be okay moving to.'

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter