

Victoria Hall renovations soon to get Committee review



Slated renovations to historic Victoria Hall are set to be reviewed by Aurora's Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) next week.

The renovation program, which was approved by Council this past winter, will include the removal and replacement of the current addition on the back of the building dating to the 1970s to improve accessibility, the construction of an accessible ramp and stairs to the rear of the structure, the relocation of washroom facilities, removing the existing drop ceiling to open a cathedral ceiling concept, restoration of bricks and masonry, and the construction of a new floor structure.

‘The intent of the capital project is to refurbish Victoria Hall and enable the adaptive reuse of the site,’ said Adam Robb, Manager of Policy Planning and Heritage for the Town of Aurora, in a report set to come before HAC on Monday. ‘The Heritage Impact Assessment ultimately concludes that the proposals conserves the cultural heritage value of the site and represents a minimal and acceptable impact.’

The Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared by consultants from Giaimo, states the proposed work, particularly the planned one-storey glass addition and accessibility improvements, will ‘support the continued viable use of the heritage building while conserving its identified heritage attributes.’

The Assessment notes the brick masonry is in generally good condition, but there has been deterioration at the site of buttresses, around the existing windows, and around the main entrance archway. There is also loss of mortar in certain areas, while the existing rubblestone foundation may need repointing.

Existing woodwork was found to be in good condition overall.

‘The proposal retains the historic building while introducing new work in a contemporary architectural language,’ say Consultants. ‘The primary entrance is proposed through the new addition rather than through the historic exit on Mosley Street. The historic Mosley Street entrance is shown as an exit in the current plan. The scheme illustrates a new entrance addition as a lightweight, transparent volume set against the existing buff brick heritage building. The addition appears to be predominantly glazed, with a flat roof and narrow-profile framing, allowing the existing form, brickwork, and steep gable of Victoria Hall to remain visually legible behind it. The new work reads as clearly contemporary and distinguishable from the historic structure. Overall, the current proposal seeks to support the long-term use of Victoria Hall while maintaining the existing heritage building as the defining built form on the site.’

‘The proposed development represents minimal to minor and acceptable impact on the designated heritage resource,’ the report concludes. ‘Victoria Hall will be retained in situ, and its cultural heritage value will continue to be expressed through the conservation of its historic form, buff brick masonry, pointed openings, buttresses, roof profile, datestone, and other identified heritage attributes. While the proposal includes a new glazed entrance addition and accessibility upgrades, these interventions can be

accommodated in a manner that remains compatible with the heritage resource. The proposed work also creates an opportunity to address existing areas of deterioration through appropriate restoration and rehabilitation work, including masonry repair, removal of unsympathetic paving, repair of wood elements, and selective restoration of the north entrance where feasible.?

Renovations to Victoria Hall were approved by Council at its February meeting in a session that proved contentious.

Originally earmarked for \$500,000 in the 2026 Budget, costs subsequently rose, resulting in an approved budget of \$2.182 million.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter