

REPORT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING DATE: MARCH 10, 2015

FROM: Commissioner of Community Development
Commissioner of Community Services

PD-022-15

DATE: February 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Downtown Cultural Hub Update

LOCATION: Downtown Oakville

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report dated February 23, 2015, from the Commissioners of Community Development and Community Services, entitled *Downtown Cultural Hub Update*, be received; and
2. That \$300,000 be added to the Oakville Arena Rehabilitation and Seniors Centre capital project, funded from the capital reserve, and that the scope of the project be expanded to include the design of a new fire station on the Oakville Arena site in conjunction with the Arena design project.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- In July, 2014, Council endorsed a vision, objectives and evaluation framework for the Downtown Plan, and next steps towards realizing a Downtown Cultural Hub.
- Staff, with input from the Downtown focus group, are undertaking an analysis of the themes identified in July 2014 and developing a preliminary series of options for new cultural facilities.
- Both a new build option and a renovate option will be considered throughout the analysis.
- Public consultation on an overall master plan is anticipated in late April/early May.
- The master plan will include the sequencing of potential build out through a phasing plan, however the timing will be considered in the fall of 2015, in context of the town's long term capital forecast.
- The master plan will also include a further analysis of capital and operating costs and revenue potential.

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- The downtown fire station site has been identified as an opportunity to bring people and jobs to the downtowns, accordingly, staff is recommending that the design of a new fire station on the Oakville Arena site continue to be pursued and that additional funding be added to the Oakville Arena design budget to allow for the fire station design work to be undertaken.

BACKGROUND:

On July 7, 2014, Council endorsed a vision, objectives and an evaluation framework for the Downtown Cultural Hub Study and the Downtown Transportation and Streetscape Study. The staff report presented to Council identified a number of themes to inform the arrangement of cultural facilities within the downtown in order to meet the future needs of our community. A number of next steps were identified as part of that report, and the purpose of this report is to provide an update on the study and to identify the anticipated public consultation and further next steps.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

As part of the July staff report, four themes in addition to the status quo were presented to Council based on the findings from a number of technical studies and the input from an extensive public consultation program. The next step in the study is to evaluate these themes based on their achievement of the following five objectives:

- To contribute to a successful economically vibrant downtown
- To create a cultural focus for the town in the downtown
- To provide facilities and infrastructure that meet existing and future needs
- To protect and enhance the natural environment and cultural heritage of the downtown
- To develop solutions that are financially sustainable.

Staff, with the continued assistance of a focus group made up of community, business and cultural stakeholders, is undertaking a preliminary assessment of the themes presented in the July 2014 staff report. What has become increasingly apparent through this analysis is that there are key assumptions that significantly impact the performance of each of the themes. These assumptions are:

- The existing theatre cannot be temporarily closed or go dark.
- A preference that the library and galleries not go dark.
- Phased-in construction is critical to minimize disruption to downtown businesses, meet cash flow requirements and manage town resources to implement the projects.

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In considering these assumptions, staff's preliminary analysis indicates that a centralized model would be challenged in addressing these key requirements. In order to locate the facilities on the Centennial Square site all facilities would need to find alternative locations while construction is underway. Alternative temporary locations would be expensive and it would not be physically possible to relocate all theatre functions to meet community needs. There are also significant limitations on the town to ensure sufficient cash flow and resourcing to enable the construction of all cultural facilities on the Centennial Square site.

In reviewing the boutique option, staff's preliminary analysis indicates that the reduction of cultural elements downtown would not be beneficial to the vibrancy of the downtown as it reduces the cultural activities and visitors downtown and for that reason this theme should not be considered further.

Accordingly, the preliminary analysis indicates that a dispersed theme best meets the five objectives set out in the Downtown Plan. During our consultation last April, there was also considerable support for this theme. Under this theme staff will be looking at various options, one group of options will be for a new build of the cultural facilities, the second will be to carry forward a renovate option which would entail the renovation of the cultural facilities in situ with the objective that the renovations accommodate, to the extent possible, the cultural demands identified and summarized in the July report.

With the preliminary preference for a dispersed theme, staff has begun to identify, under a new build option, how the various cultural elements could be dispersed throughout the downtown. Given the size of the larger regional distinctive or edge city theatre it would need to be located on the Centennial Square site. The former post office site could support varied options as follows:

- Studio theatre and galleries
- Library and galleries
- Library only
- Galleries only

Staff will be continuing to review these options which assume that the former post office site would be home to a new building while retaining the significant heritage elements of the former post office building.

In order to fully understand the potential on the former post office site, we also have underway a number of studies, firstly a refinement of the space needs of the library which embraces the new digital concept which will also review the opportunities for synergies and shared spaces. Secondly, staff is undertaking an analysis of innovation space -- what it would consist of, how it could be used and what would be

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the space demands. This analysis will enable the team to refine space requirements in order to test fit various options on the former post office site. To date the space needs of the library and the galleries would not be possible in the existing post office building, therefore staff will be exploring an option which retains the heritage elements within a new building. For the renovate option, staff will be exploring what can be accommodated in a retrofitted building. The study team will continue to consult with heritage staff and the Heritage Committee.

Also underway is an evaluation of the building footprint potential on the former post office site. With the proximity of the Sixteen Mile Creek to the north of Randall Street, we have retained a consultant who will be evaluating the geotechnical issues for this site and the area along this northern edge of the downtown. This work is being undertaken in consultation with Conservation Halton.

The study team is planning a public open house/workshop in April/May in which staff will be seeking community input on the following elements of an overall master plan:

- The themed approach to the organization of cultural elements within the downtown
- The preferred option for the placement of the main cultural elements within the downtown as a new build option
- The preferred renovate option
- The general phasing order for construction of new cultural facilities

The master plan for the downtown will entail a longer term build of 10 to 20 years, accordingly at this public session staff will not be seeking input on the actual type of theatre (regional distinctive vs edge city) or the type of library (flagship vs specialized). The space needs of cultural elements being potentially located at the former post office site will be more clearly defined to ensure a fit on the site. Community discussion on the types of facilities will need to occur closer to their construction timetable to ensure we have the most accurate information on demand requirements. For the purposes of the master plan, either type of theatre or library could be accommodated in the space designed.

Consideration of phasing or sequencing of the cultural facilities has become a critical element of the overall study. Staff is exploring how to accommodate the facilities with as minimal a disruption to the downtown businesses and the cultural facilities as possible. In addition, the implementation of a riverfront park at Centennial Square as early as possible is being explored in hopes of being able to celebrate an accomplishment within a sesquicentennial timeframe.

Following the consultation, staff will refine a high level summary of the capital and operating costs as well as the potential revenue sources in addition to refining the

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master plan based on the input. This costing analysis together with the sequencing of projects will then be available to be considered in context of the town's long term capital forecast to be discussed in the fall of 2015.

In July of 2015, staff will be reporting to Council on a Downtown Master Plan for cultural facilities as well as incorporating the Streetscape Master Plan for Council's consideration. While the plan will include a recommended sequencing of the various cultural elements, the actual timing of the construction will be defined through the capital budgeting process.

Fire Hall Site

Throughout the Downtown Cultural Hub Study, the fire station site has been identified as a valuable site that could be better used to accommodate a place for live, work or stay within the downtown enhancing its overall vibrancy. There is not a requirement from a fire safety perspective that the station be located within the downtown. Fire staff has confirmed that a location on the Oakville Arena site will meet required response times. Town staff had explored co-locating the fire station on the Oakville Arena site during the conceptual feasibility study for the arena site and these plans were available for the public consultation. Staff is recommending that this concept continue to be explored through the preliminary design work to begin on the Oakville Arena site. The design work for the Oakville Arena is expected to begin upon approval of the 2015 budget. As such it is recommended that \$300,000 be added to the design budget in order to facilitate this work being undertaken.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Staff will be providing an update on the Downtown Cultural Hub Study to the over 1,600 people on our mailing list. Further meetings with the Downtown Plan focus group as well as with the various interested stakeholder groups will be proceeding in the coming months prior to the larger public consultation open house/workshop planned for late April/early May.

(B) FINANCIAL

There are significant capital and operating costs associated with the renovation or rebuild of the downtown cultural facilities. This report has no direct impact, however the conclusions of this study in July of 2015 will inform the town's long term capital forecast.

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It is recommended that the 2015 capital budget be amended to include the design of a fire station on the Oakville Arena site. The design work will be funded through a transfer from the capital reserve.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

A team of staff from several departments within the Community Development, Community Services and Corporate Services Commissions has provided on-going input on this study as well as the Downtown Transportation and Streetscape Study. This study will be informed by, and inform, several other studies that are currently underway at the town. In addition to the Downtown Transportation and Streetscape Study, key studies that are being coordinated with the Downtown Cultural Hub Study are the Parking Garage Feasibility Study led by Engineering and Construction, Downtown Retail Strategies led by Economic Development, Cultural Master Plan led by Recreation and Culture, Special Events Program led by Recreation and Culture, Library Strategic Plan led by Library Services and the town's Official Plan Review led by Planning Services.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- enhance our social environment
- enhance our natural environment
- economic development
- continuously improve our programs and services
- be innovative in everything we do
- always act as a team
- be valued/celebrated for outstanding service
- be the most livable town in Canada

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

The Downtown Cultural Hub Study speaks directly to enhancing our four pillars of sustainability – social, economic, environment or cultural aspects of our community.

Submitted by:

Jane Clohecy
Commissioner of Community Development

Colleen Bell
Commissioner of Community Services