

REPORT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING DATE: JULY 7, 2014

FROM: Community Services Commission, Community Development Commission, Recreation and Culture Department

DATE: June 20, 2014

SUBJECT: **Downtown Plan - Downtown Cultural Hub Study**

LOCATION: Downtown Oakville

WARD: Town wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the next steps as outlined in this report titled Downtown Plan-Downtown Cultural Hub Study from the Community Services Commission, Community Development Commission and the Recreation and Culture Department dated June 20, 2014 be endorsed.

KEY FACTS:

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

- In June 2012, Council received a report from the CAO indicating that staff was initiating at Downtown Cultural Hub Study in order to define a redevelopment plan for the Centennial Square site, the former post office site and other assets of town owned properties in the downtown. It was expected that the outcomes of the study will provide the town with a preferred redevelopment strategy to be considered in the context of the objectives of the Cultural Plan, the Downtown Strategic Plan and Livable Oakville.
- In October 2013 Council endorsed the initiation of Phase 2 of the Downtown Cultural Hub to begin to outline detailed program requirements, market and financial implications and procurement strategies as well as a community engagement program.
- There are three reports that will be considered at the July 7, 2014 Planning and Development Council; the overarching Downtown Plan Report; and two companion reports, the Downtown Cultural Hub and the Downtown Transportation and Streetscape Study. This Downtown Cultural Hub (DCH) Report summarizes the findings, opportunities and challenges to be considered moving forward to the next phase of development.

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- The intent of the Downtown Cultural Hub initiative is to identify potential cultural opportunities and investments that could contribute to the realization of the Downtown Plan's vision and objectives. The vision of the Plan is "to create an attractive, active, animated and vibrant downtown where people come together to live, work, shop, meet and engage. It will be the cultural, social and economic heart of our community where citizens and visitors can celebrate and experience the natural setting, heritage, culture and the arts".
- This report sets out the Town of Oakville's objectives for a DCH in Oakville, details the components of that hub and establishes their relation to the wider downtown.
- There are four key components to the DCH study
 - Cultural Facility Needs
 - Engineering Parameters
 - Building and Design
 - Business and Financial Plan
- A needs assessment has been completed as part of this phase of work which has concluded that the Town can support additional cultural facilities including additional theatre space, consolidation of Oakville Galleries and changes in the delivery of the library facilities to meet future patron needs.
- It was also identified that the Centennial Square site offers excellent open space opportunities to celebrate the riverfront space and reconnect it to Oakville's downtown.
- Several themes for the Cultural Hub, combining different types of cultural facilities and utilizing different downtown locations, are examined and assessed in terms of their provision of required cultural spaces and their fit in the downtown. The capital and operating costs have also been reviewed.
- The report recommends a future course of action and next steps for the Town and others to advance the realization of the hub.

BACKGROUND:

On June, 6 2012, Council received a report from the CAO indicating that staff was initiating a Downtown Cultural Hub Study in order to define a redevelopment plan for the Centennial Square site, the former post office site and other assets of town owned properties in the downtown. It was expected that the outcomes of the study will provide the town with a preferred redevelopment strategy to be considered in the context of the objectives of the Cultural Plan, the Downtown Strategic plan and Livable Oakville. On October 21, 2013 Council endorsed the initiation of Phase 2 of the Downtown Cultural Hub to begin to outline detailed program requirements, market and financial implications and procurement strategies as well as a community engagement program.

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There are three reports that will be considered at the July 7, 2014 Planning and Development Council; the overarching Downtown Report; and two companion reports, the Downtown Cultural Hub and the Downtown Transportation and Streetscape Study. This Downtown Cultural Hub (DCH) Report summarizes the findings, opportunities and challenges to be considered moving forward to the next phase of development.

The Downtown Cultural Hub Study was undertaken in response to several recommendations from a number of recent planning documents including the Downtown Oakville Action Plan, Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library Master Plan, the Cultural Plan, and the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts Strategic Business Plan. All of these plans speak to the significant role that culture plays in creating and supporting a strong, vibrant and viable community and specifically to the importance and value of culture to Oakville.

Culture creates a sense of place while contributing to the economic health of a community. A cultural hub in downtown Oakville would contribute to those outcomes and help to achieve its vision for culture - to be a community where culture inspires, engages and thrives.

For the purposes of this study, a Cultural Hub is defined as an area that houses a number of cultural activities, venues and creative industries including art galleries theatres and performing art centres, cafes and museums. By intentionally clustering these activities together or within a defined geographic zone, a catalyzing effect can be created, drawing other cultural activities and businesses to locate in or near that zone.

There are four key components to the DCH. Each component is comprised of a number of studies and reviews:

1. Cultural Facility Needs
This component of the study addresses cultural facility and program needs. This analysis is critical as it identifies options for appropriate scope, size and operating feasibility of the proposed facilities.
2. Engineering Parameters
This component of the study examines the development potential and constraints of the Centennial Square site, the Post office site and the Fire Hall site.
3. Building and Design
The Building and Design component translates the cultural facility needs into development options or themes that best support a vibrant downtown in the spaces available.
4. Business and Financial Plan

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The Business and Financial Plan projects operating and capital costs and revenue opportunities for the development themes and examines both the risks and opportunities of each.

The following provides more detail on each of these components

Cultural Facility Needs

The Cultural Facility Needs assessment looked at a broad range of cultural venues and activities including theatres, galleries, library, outdoor program and event spaces as well as other potential cultural amenities such as digital media spaces.

Each of the proposed cultural facilities has been the subject of a detailed needs assessment and full reports are attached as appendices to the Downtown Oakville Cultural Hub report prepared by Urban Strategies. See Appendix A.

1. Cultural and Performing Arts Spaces

In 2011, the town undertook a strategic business planning process for the theatre. That study concluded, among other things, that given the OCPA's limitations and its high level of utilization, a retrofit was overdue and that the town should undertake a full needs assessment and feasibility study to determine the size, scope and type of facility needed to meet future needs.

In December 2013, the town retained the firm of Webb Management Services Incorporated to undertake a full needs assessment and feasibility study for the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (OCPA) to determine the size, scope and type of facility needed to meet future needs

In addition to assessing current and future performing arts space needs, the study reviewed current forces and trends in the cultural sector, conducted a market and demand analysis for the theatre and considered other ancillary amenities such as event, education, programming, artist-in-residence and meeting spaces. The study also examined synergies and opportunities for partnerships with other cultural amenities within the Hub.

2. Library Review

The most recent review of the library system was conducted in 2012, as part of the Parks, Recreation and Library Facilities Master Plan 2012 which identified a need for increased library services and programs to meet Oakville's growth projections and indicated that the existing library buildings are incapable of satisfying this need or providing for the space to accommodate current and future trends in use.

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To address these issues, ward99 architects were retained to look at best practices in facility and programming, review of the physical design for the whole library system, community input and the development of sustainable options going forward.

3. Galleries Strategic Plan

The Oakville Galleries independently retained Reich & Petch in 2009 to assess the Galleries operation, growth potential and suitability of current facilities. This report recommended that the Oakville Galleries co-locate its services under one roof in a central unified facility. In 2012, the town and an Galleries co-contracted Consulting Matrix to test this recommendation with a feasibility study and business plan.

Engineering Parameters

In order to better understand the development potential of the Centennial Square, former Post Office and Fire Station site in Downtown Oakville, the Town retained AMEC Environment & Infrastructure to undertake and an assessment of the scope of environmental, geotechnical and archaeological issues.

Building and Design

Urban Strategies Inc. (USI) and N. Barry Lyon Consultants (NBLC) in association with Culture Capital were retained by the town to conduct detailed analysis and project development options for the DCH. This work was informed by the three studies noted above.

Business and Financial Plan

As part of the detailed analysis and project development options for the DCH conducted by Urban Strategies Inc. (USI) and N. Barry Lyon Consultants (NBLC) a thorough analysis of the financial implications of the development was undertaken.

Each of the options has been the subject of a preliminary financial analysis to examine the capital and operating costs, operating revenues, funding potential and development and market risks associated with each concept from inception to the projected period of stabilization. In addition, a phasing strategy for each concept has been considered to ensure continuity of the downtown's cultural offer.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

The intent of the Downtown Cultural Hub initiative is to identify potential cultural opportunities and investments that could contribute to the realization of the Downtown Plan's vision and objectives. The vision of the Plan is "to create an attractive, active, animated and vibrant downtown where people come together to

live, work, shop, meet and engage. It will be the cultural, social and economic heart of our community where citizens and visitors can celebrate and experience the natural setting, heritage, culture and the arts”.

The Plan sets out five objectives to achieve this vision.

1. To contribute to a successful economically vibrant downtown
2. To create a cultural focus for the Town and the Downtown the downtown area
3. To provide facilities that meet existing and future needs
4. To protect and enhance the natural environmental and historic importance of the downtown
5. To develop solutions that are financially sustainable

The analysis in the DCH studies and extensive public input have shaped the creation of broad themes for the cultural hub and specific options for the key indoor and outdoor facilities (theatre, library, gallery, riverfront park, public event spaces).

Study Findings

Cultural Facility Needs Findings

The following is a brief summary of the findings and recommendations of the three cultural facility needs studies.

1. Cultural and Performing Arts Spaces

The needs assessment and analysis undertaken for the cultural and performing arts spaces, both indoor and outdoor, led to several conclusions and recommendations.

Indoor Performing Arts Spaces

The overall characteristics of the market along with input from existing and potential markets, suggest that Oakville and the surrounding area have good capacity and propensity to support additional cultural programming from an audience standpoint. Research on audience trends indicates that future Oakville facilities should provide opportunities for social interaction should be flexible to accommodate different programming types and formats and should incorporate media and technology capability.

While many local arts groups are satisfied with the current condition, availability, features and level of service at the OCPA, they feel limited by its availability, size, technical capabilities and lack of flexible and support spaces. Groups identified unmet demand for three types of spaces:

- Smaller capacity flexible spaces;
- Higher quality mid-size multi use performance space (up to 750 seats); and
- Acoustically excellent performance facilities.

The study concludes that there is a need for new and higher quality performance spaces providing local and regional arts groups with access to larger capacity, better technology and different physical resources that allow them to develop and expand their artistic endeavors. Three possible development models are put forward for consideration.

a) The Edge City Performing Arts Centre

This model is a traditional edge city performing arts centre much like other facilities located in Burlington, Brampton, Richmond Hill and Markham. The centerpiece should be a multipurpose performing space that is larger than the OCPA in a range of 600 – 700 seats but it should be developed to a higher level of quality and flexibility that is distinctive from other performing arts centres. The facility should also include a smaller, more flexible black box or studio theatre to serve Oakville's community theatre groups as well as flexible education / rehearsal space.

b) The Regionally Distinctive Arts Centre

The regionally distinctive model differentiates new Oakville facilities from other regional spaces in terms of capacity, quality and distinctiveness. It also more directly supports meeting and event activity. The facility would have more specialized space and should include a concert hall and flexible courtyard theatre along with quality meeting and event space. The larger hall should have capacity for 700 -800, would be principally oriented to music but could also accommodate dance and other performance. There are only two concert halls of this nature in southwestern Ontario, Koerner Hall in Toronto and the proposed facility in St. Catharines. The second performance space should be a 300 – 350 seats courtyard theatre suited specifically to dramatic theatre.

c) The Boutique Performing Arts Centre

This model is similar to the typical but flexible edge city performing arts centre but in this case, the venues would be developed in separate locations to create a smaller and more boutique facility in the downtown (courtyard theatre) and the larger venue (600 – 700 seats) elsewhere in Oakville. The placement of the smaller theatre in downtown is to complement the boutique nature of the retail businesses currently in operation there- small and exclusive.

Outdoor Facilities

This study also suggested a need for new outdoor facilities that would allow Oakville to continue to expand and develop signature public events and public art programs that are regionally unique, creating reputation and

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visibility for Oakville as a regional cultural destination. The recommended outdoor spaces include:

- a) **Larger Public Square**
 A large open air public square is recommended to better host some of Oakville's many community festivals, concerts, exhibits and other community events such as art fairs and farmer's markets.
- b) **Small Amphitheatre**
 Oakville lacks outdoor spaces with proper infrastructure to host live performance. The study recommends that the Hub include a small amphitheatre with capacity for 250 – 350 and a stage for more intimate music and spoken work performance.
- c) **Infrastructure for Temporary Use**
 The study suggests that the town work to develop physical infrastructure that encourages the use of outdoor public spaces for distinctive cultural events and festivals. This might include electrical access, water access, storage, built in speakers and equipment packages

Other Cultural Amenities and Considerations

Finally, the study also commented on other cultural amenities that would support and enhance the cultural hub.

- a) **Digital Media Centre**
 Trends in audience participation indicate rising interest in and participation in music production, film production / editing, graphics, game development, digital photography and more. This along with a gap in such spaces suggests there is potential for the development of digital media programs and facilities. This would provide Oakville with a new type of community arts centre based on new technologies that provide new opportunities for artists of all ages to explore and express their creativity. It could also be regionally distinctive. Digital media centres lend themselves well to partnerships with education institutions and libraries.
- b) **Artist-in-Residence Programs**
 An important part of the cultural hub will be its ability to connect with public with artists. All partners – Library, Performing Arts Centre and Galleries should consider the development of artist-in-residence programs providing space and tools that allow artists to create while the public can watch or experience a work-in-progress.
- c) **Partnerships and Synergies**
 There are many opportunities for synergies between and partnerships with the three key hub components – Performing Arts Centre, Library and

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Galleries – particularly if all three occupy the same site. In addition to the two noted above (digital media and artist-in-residence) there are many opportunities for collaborative and mutually supportive programming, exhibits and presentations that should be explored.

2. Library

The Library Needs Assessment identifies two development options for consideration:

a) The Flagship Library

The Flagship refers to the ultimate facility that provides “everything for everyone”. It is a destination space that would draw people from all over Oakville. This model includes the following attributes: centre for collaboration and digital hub, a variety of external spaces that are an extension of interior spaces (e.g. reading gardens), spaces that are accessible, flexible and versatile in design that can evolve with changing public tastes, distinct spaces for different age groups, maker and community spaces. People would go there to spend time, and collaborate with others in the community.

b) The Specialized Library

The specialized library is a smaller and distinctive space that specializes in a type of programming or function and may cater to a specific demographic (e.g. children). Its focus would be on programming and spaces that would be attractive to the local community and act as a destination within the downtown. There would be special spaces and programs not found in other library branches in Oakville. The attributes would include: centre for collaboration and digital hub, spaces that are accessible, flexible and versatile in design that can evolve with changing public tastes, distinctive spaces that are “people centric”, and spaces that can support a limited but focused library program and can be used by community groups.

3. Galleries

The Galleries’ business plan report recommends a new facility for Oakville Galleries of approximately 20,000 to 25,000 square feet, identifying sufficient support among local and regional audiences for such a facility, especially if located in downtown Oakville. Based on the market research and comparative analysis exercises conducted, a preliminary facility plan was included in this report, which provides for expanded exhibition galleries, increased educational and programming space, improved storage facilities for the Galleries’ permanent collection, and expanded event rental space, among other improvements. The report further underscored the benefits of a new

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facility meeting the Department of Canadian Heritage Class A museum standards, which the Galleries' current facilities do not. It is noted that a new facility would be of benefit not only to the Galleries' visitors, but multiple constituencies and community groups through indoor gathering and meeting spaces. The Galleries' current draw to audiences outside of Oakville was also highlighted, with continued visitorship from regional and national audiences likely to contribute positively to the cultural and economic vitality of downtown Oakville.

The report lays out revenue and expense projections for a facility of this profile, concluding that such a facility would be operationally sustainable in a downtown Oakville location.

Engineering Parameters- Study Findings

The archaeological and environmental reports both indicate further work needs to be undertaken at later stages of the project. Given the location on the banks of a major river and an historic transportation route there is the potential for archeological resources and prior to any construction or grading, further work will need to be undertaken. Additionally the environmental assessment indicated that a phase 2 study will need to be undertaken later in the study to fully assess any potential soil contamination. Neither of these studies have flagged substantive issues that would defer the continuation of the work.

The geotechnical study completed by AMEC assisted in identifying the stable top of bank. The DCH team worked closely with Conservation Halton staff throughout this project given that all the DCH sites fall within the regulation limit of Conservation Halton. Conservation Halton approved site specific policies and principles for the Centennial Square and the Fire Hall site on May 22, 2014. These policies aid in defining the development limits. Further engineering work will also need to be completed as we move to the later stages of the project.

Development Themes

The above noted studies and the input received through the consultation process collectively shaped the themes that emerged. Several themes were developed with four emerging as the most viable and worthy of further examination. See Appendix DA – Downtown Oakville Cultural Hub – Detailed Analysis and Project Development.

It should be noted that there can be many variations on these themes and that modules from one can be placed in another. This exercise will take place as part of the detailed evaluation of the themes during the next phase of the plan.

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Status Quo

For comparative purposes, the study explored a scenario where the existing cultural facilities at Centennial Square are maintained largely in their current conditions. While a modest expansion of the OCPA is proposed to meet federal and provincial accessibility requirements, no other programmatic or building changes are anticipated for the OCPA or the Library.

As per the recommendation of the Parks, Recreation and Library Facilities Master Plan, the Centennial pool will be demolished and relocated to the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital Lands as part of the proposed South Central Community Centre. To support the long-term maintenance of the existing cultural facilities and to enable other improvements within the downtown, the Post Office and Fire Hall sites are projected to be sold.

Theme 1: Adapt Existing Facilities

Theme 1 suggests that the existing OCPA and Library are retained and expanded to improve overall program functions. The existing main stage of the OCPA is retained and its accessibility and back of house deficiencies are remedied. A new studio theatre is built to the south of the theatre sharing a new lobby space on the Navy St. Frontage. This option would fit the “Edge City” model however on a modified scale as the main hall cannot be increased in size to accommodate additional seating.

At the Library, a new Navy St. Frontage addition is developed and the library's existing lower floors decommissioned. To help extend the cultural program offer into the downtown, the Oakville Galleries are relocated to the former Post Office site.

In this theme residential uses are proposed for both the Post Office and the Fire Hall sites. The Post Office building would also include two storeys of residential development above the Oakville Galleries. At the Fire Hall site a mid-size residential building fronting Randall and Navy St. is anticipated; a development form common to all options. The total height of the building would be 12 storeys.

Theme 2 – Centralized Hub at Centennial Square

Theme 2 considers a complete redevelopment of the Centennial Square site. The current OCPA and Library buildings will be demolished and replaced with higher quality facilities that would meet existing and future needs. The OCPA will be relocated on the southern end of the site and will feature a high quality music and dance concert hall. This option fits the “Regionally Distinctive” model.

The new Library will be positioned on the northern end of the site and will become a landmark building fitting the “Flagship” model. The Gallery becomes part of the new theatre complex.

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At the Centennial Square site, a new residential / office is introduced alongside the Library. The building includes a six storey podium with office development at the base and eight storeys residential development. This theme also converts the former Post Office into a mix of office and residential space. At the Fire Hall site residential uses are proposed at the same scale as in Theme1.

Theme 3 – Dispersed Hub in the Downtown

Theme 3 suggests a somewhat dispersed cultural development model. The Centennial Square site is the home to a multi –purpose theatre and the new Library, with the new studio theatre and Galleries sharing the Post Office site.

The dispersal of the cultural facilities allows for the development of a new residential building adjacent to the new Library on the Randall St. frontage. The building includes a six storey podium with office development at the base and two storeys residential development above for a total of eight storeys over a portion of the site. At the Fire Hall, residential uses are proposed at the same scale as Theme 1.

Theme 4 – Boutique Culture

Theme 4 suggests that only one stage – a small courtyard theatre – be built in the downtown cultural hub with another larger stage to be located closer to the QEW/ GO station. The new boutique theatre would be developed on the southern end of Centennial Square alongside the Galleries.

In this theme the Library moves to the Post Office site, freeing up the northern portion of Centennial Square for residential redevelopment.

A new residential/office building will occupy the entire north end of the site. The building includes a six storey podium with office development at the base and two storeys of residential development above for a total of eight storeys over a portion of the site. At the Fire Hall site residential uses are proposed at the same scale as Theme1.

Public Consultation

As outlined in the Downtown Plan report on this agenda, extensive consultation was undertaken on all components of the project. In addition to the overall project consultation, each sub study conducted a focused stakeholder consultation specific to the subject matter. The following summarizes the responses and themes for each of the project components.

Cultural Facilities Consultation

Webb Management Services Incorporated conducted in-depth consultation with the cultural community using a variety of methods including focus groups and small

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group interviews with the many cultural groups and organizations in the town. In addition a survey was conducted with OCPA audience members.

Overall, the majority of constituents are enthusiastic about the idea of culture in downtown Oakville. 89% of survey respondents support the idea of a downtown cultural hub as well as programming to serve all community segments. Most respondents believe that above all, arts and culture activity should support local artists, should facilitate social interaction and should support new artists. They also think it should support Oakville's regional distinctiveness.

With respect to types of activities, respondents indicated that theatre and community festivals are the most needed types of cultural activities.

OCPA audiences are generally satisfied with their experience at the OCPA and there are few barriers to participation. Audiences are least satisfied with parking and concessions.

Finally, there is consensus that current outdoor facilities in downtown are insufficient and there is a desire to take advantage of the landscape and river to create better outdoor performance facilities.

Library Consultation

Ward99 Architects conducted stakeholder interviews with the library team. An online survey was promoted to all active cardholders through the town and library websites, social media accounts and hard copies were also distributed at every branch. Over 2,000 surveys were completed. Over 70% of the respondents indicated that a flagship library should be considered a key element in the revitalization of the downtown. Respondents were most interested in the following amenities: quiet reading space, café/coffee shop, exterior reading/gathering spaces, community/meeting spaces and space for collections. Library users are very interested in the expansion of the digital offerings (e-books, videos, music), a more current collection, access to technology, interactive workshop and maker spaces, quiet study areas and collaborative group spaces, expanded partnerships with outside organizations. Over 80% indicated strong support for access to technology and ability to use their own devices in the space.

Galleries Consultation

As part of their research, Consulting Matrix conducted an online survey, a series of roundtable discussions with key stakeholders, and interviews with the Galleries' staff and Board. Through this process, there was considerable enthusiasm demonstrated for a new facility for the Galleries. In all methods of consultation, residents consistently noted their pride in the organization, but felt the Galleries' current

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locations mean too few people know about the organization or its programs. Among those surveyed, more than 70% of Oakville residents indicated a preference for the Galleries to be located more centrally in the Town. Respondents noted that a downtown location would increase their likelihood of not only attending exhibitions, but also participating in children's and adult educational programming, as well as lectures, screenings and other special events

Development Themes Consultation

Two series of workshops were held to receive input on the potential development options. In the first one, the consultants' recommendations on specific facility needs were presented and participants were asked to comment on their preferences and potential placement options. This input informed the development of a preliminary set of development themes. These themes were presented at the second workshop for more comment. The following are the general comments that emerged during these consultations.

Improved Cultural Facilities

The existing cultural facilities in downtown are highly valued but they must be renewed and reinvented to serve the needs of existing and future users. In particular, multiple and flexible spaces that accommodate a range of different uses were highlighted as an important feature that should be considered for modernized or new cultural buildings in the downtown.

Connecting the Downtown to its Surroundings

Downtown's beauty is reflected in its proximity to Lake Ontario and Sixteen Mile Creek and in its historical character. Workshop participants identified a need to consider linkages to the waterfront and the whole heritage district. High quality open spaces that showcase the Sixteen Mile Creek riverfront and support active and passive uses were identified as an important element.

Attracting Visitors to Downtown

Downtown residents are tremendously proud of the unique places of interest already available in downtown. However, many residents and businesses have expressed a need for a more diverse range of activities and facilities that attract a greater number of visitors to downtown.

Supporting Uses

New cultural spaces in the downtown should be supported by a range of complementary uses. Participants agreed that the establishment of the cultural hub will provide an opportunity to introduce more housing, and potentially office space that would encourage new employment opportunities in the downtown. These, along with the cultural facilities would help support the existing restaurant and retail offering.

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Urban Design

A number of participants expressed a desire for compelling new buildings that enhance the image of the downtown and activity on surrounding streets. Potential new indoor and outdoor facilities introduced as part of the hub should be at the forefront of design quality and should maximize public access to the riverfront.

Festivals, Events and Programming

Participants expressed a desire for more festivals, outdoor events and programming as part of the cultural offering, to attract new visitors and to support the downtown merchants.

Dispersement of Cultural Facilities

While many supported having all cultural facilities clustered on Centennial Square, a significant number also supported the dispersement of cultural venues throughout the downtown. This facility placement would encourage visitors to walk through the downtown to different cultural destinations bringing more vibrancy and activity to the downtown.

Financial Implications

Each of the themes underwent a cost analysis including order of magnitude capital costs, revenue opportunities through land sales and operating costs. Capital costs include construction costs, parking costs, FF&E and soft costs. On the revenue site, for options where buildings would be demolished and replaced, the existing town budgeted maintenance items become redundant resulting in avoidance of capital expenditures. This cost avoidance has been treated as revenue in the analysis.

It should be noted that while there may be other revenue opportunities such as federal and/ or provincial infrastructure funding sponsorship, naming rights etc., for the purposes of this analysis, no revenue from these potential sources have been assumed.

It is important to note that while the inclusion of space for the Oakville Galleries forms an important cultural component of the DCH options, the capital cost of this facility is beyond the purview of the town. The costs for new gallery spaces would have to be funded independently and would not be incurred as a town cost.

The table below outlines order of magnitude capital and annual town subsidy costs for each theme.

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Table 1: Capital Costs and Subsidy Requirements

	Status Quo	Theme 1 Adapt Existing	Theme 2 Centralized Hub	Theme 3 Dispersed Hub	Theme 4 Boutique
Capital Costs	\$32.39 - \$38.70m	\$74.33 - \$92.62m	\$100.83 - \$126.69m	\$100.90 - \$12.78m	\$102.92 - \$12.38
Annual Subsidy	\$1.95m	\$3.27m	\$3.27m	\$3.37	\$2.95

Residential and Office Development Options - Planning Rationale

The potential to create additional residential and employment uses within the downtown was explored through this study. In each of the themes the potential development of the Fire Hall, Centennial Square or Post Office included an element of residential and office development. Staff had requested that USI undertake a planning assessment in the context of the entire Downtown and assess what would be an appropriate height at these edge locations. At present, the town policies would permit a maximum of 4 storeys. The assessment undertaken by USI noted the following:

- Mid and high rise buildings surround the downtown – on both the east and west sides of the downtown, at the edges, the building height are between 5 to 12 storeys. These buildings establish a context within which a 12 storey building on the Fire Hall site and an 8 storey building on the Centennial Square is appropriate. In addition, these sites have an historical and built form significantly different from most of the downtown which are appropriately a maximum of 4 storeys.
- Centennial Square and the Fire Hall site are underutilized and well positioned to support intensification – these two sites are unique locations bordered by the Sixteen Mile creek at the edge of downtown. They offer the opportunity to support additional residential or office uses improving the existing conditions in downtown.
- The two sites should be designated as sites for bonusing – given the significance of the cultural facilities to be created and the two gateway locations these sites provide consideration should be given to identifying specific bonusing areas similar to other growth areas.

Planning staff are undertaking the five year review of the Livable Oakville Plan and as part of this work plan a review of the growth areas will be underway. Town staff recommend that the work completed through this study be referred to the five year review as a background study. The town study will review these recommendations in context of the town as whole and the context of the policies for the other growth areas.

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Next Steps

The next steps in the Downtown Cultural Hub process involve a thorough evaluation of the development themes based on the evaluation framework noted above.

The specific action steps that will be undertaken are:

1. Development of evaluation criteria for each of the five objectives contained in the Downtown Plan Evaluation Framework.

Over the next few months, staff will be developing evaluation criteria that will be used to analyze each development theme for its effectiveness in addressing the objectives.

2. Evaluation of Theme-based Options

Staff will apply the Downtown Plan evaluation criteria to analyze each development theme. This evaluation will include but not be limited to:

- Analysis of the market, operating and capital cost risks associated with each of the themes;
- Careful review of the performance and operating characteristics of each of the themes with respect to future management, marketing and risk minimization capacity;

3. Develop public consultation plan for the next phase of work in 2015.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the findings will be presented to the public for further comment and consideration. A consultation strategy that includes workshops, on-line and social media opportunities for input will be developed to support this work.

4. Development of Preferred Option

The development of the preferred option will be shaped by the evaluation of all of the options and public input. Further work will be conducted to define the plan, identify specific facility projects, potential funding opportunities for each project and confirm geotechnical and environmental constraints.

Considerations include:

- Refinement of the preferred procurement and implementation process;
- Assessment of funding potential at federal and provincial government levels;
- Assessment of philanthropic funding potential;

In addition, staff will continue to work with the BIA, downtown merchants and landowners to ensure maximization of the benefits of the Cultural Hub and coordination with the implementation of the streetscape improvements; Staff will also continue to liaise with Conservation Halton regarding the implementation of conservation policies on Cultural Hub site planning;

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5. Implementation Strategy Defined

Given the scale of this type of project an implementation strategy will need to be assessed early in the process in order to ensure that implementation is feasible both in terms of financial feasibility, construction capability, phasing of cultural facilities and implications to the downtown.

6. Development of a Business Plan for the Preferred Option

A detailed business plan and operating pro-forma will be developed for the cultural facilities in the preferred option to fully understand the operating implications including risks and opportunities.

7. Refer the Planning Rationale to the Planning Department to be considered as part of the Five Year Official Plan Review

A planning rationale was conducted by USI to look at height considerations for new residential and commercial developments for specific sites within the downtown. The findings will be considered by Planning staff when conducting the Five-Year Official Plan Review in order to inform the potential building heights within the downtown. This work will need to have been completed in order to finalize the business plan.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Extensive public consultation has been undertaken throughout the development of project. Consultation included stakeholder interviews, surveys, workshops, ideas forum and open houses.

(B) FINANCIAL

There are sufficient funds in the project budget to complete the next steps as outlined in the report.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The Downtown Cultural Hub has been a collaborative project involving several departments including Recreation and Culture, Parks and Open Space, Planning Services, Development Engineering, Finance, and economic Development.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

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- Be accountable in everything we do
- Be innovative in everything we do
- Enhance our cultural environment
- Enhance our social environment
- Enhance our natural environment
- Enhance our economic environment
- Continuously improve our programs and services
- Be fiscally sustainable

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

The Downtown Oakville Cultural Hub project addresses all four pillars of sustainability by creating a cultural hub that supports the economic viability of downtown Oakville, meets current and future cultural needs and enhances Oakville as a cultural community, provides opportunities for social interaction and developments and promotes the riverfront

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Downtown Oakville Cultural Hub – Detailed Analysis and Project Development

Prepared by:

Submitted by:

On behalf of the DCH Project Team

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Commissioner, Community Development

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