



Town of Aurora
Special Council Report No. PDS19-020

Subject: **Library Square – Planning Policy - Conformity Report**
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Department: Planning and Development Services
Date: March 21, 2019

Recommendation

- 1. That Report PDS19-020 be received for information.**

Executive Summary

As the Town continues to refine the Library Square plan towards its final form, Staff have had the opportunity to review the detailed plans against relevant provincial and local policies, and objectives for the Aurora Promenade. Further to previous Planning reports on Library Square, this report speaks to the policy context of the development and discusses those findings.

This report can be summarized as follows:

- Library Square design concept consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conforms to the Growth Plan;
- Library Square design and planned programming for the building expansion and square will achieve many Official Plan policies and objectives;
- Library Square revitalization project will be an integral component in encouraging public heritage appreciation;
- Staff will continue to ensure the Library Square final design meets the policy intent of the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan;
- Staff will continue to ensure the vision and objectives of the Aurora Promenade Urban Design Strategy are applied to the final design of Library Square;
- The redevelopment of Library Square represents an opportunity to continue to explore parking options and strategies for the site and the Downtown area; and
- Library Square lands represent a key opportunity for improvement and redevelopment within the Promenade Community Improvement Area.

Background

In June 2018, Council approved the design for Library Square. Staff and consultants for Library Square have been refining the design based on site conditions, feedback from the public and cultural partners, and preliminary designs for the 22 Church Street expansion. The most recent plans propose a 2,975 square metre addition to the Church Street School. The addition includes community programming space (program room, performing arts studio, and a multi-purpose studio visual arts room), as well as a 192-250 seat performance hall. The design concept also proposes re-purposing the parking lot between the Library and the Church Street School House into a 2700 square metre urban plaza with outdoor programmable space ('the Square').

Analysis

As the Town continues to refine the Library Square plan toward its final form, Planning Staff have had the opportunity to review detailed plans against relevant provincial and local policies and objectives. Planning Staff's comments are summarized below:

Library Square design concept consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conforms to the Growth Plan

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) directs that long-term economic prosperity be supported by encouraging a sense of place, enhancing the vitality of downtowns, promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning, as well as conserving features that help define character, including built heritage resources. The PPS also encourages healthy, active communities by promoting safe streets that meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interactive and community connectivity.

Sections 1.7.1 and 2.0 of the PPS encourages the wise use and management of heritage resources, which in turn promotes long-term prosperity and social well-being through economic, environmental and social benefits for the community. The PPS recognizes official plans as the most important vehicle for implementing the policies in the PPS, and that comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning is best achieved through official plans.

The Growth Plan builds upon the policy foundation provided by the PPS and provides more specific land use planning policies to address issues facing the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. The Growth Plan establishes a land use planning framework that supports the achievement of a number of objectives, including the creation of complete

communities. The policies of the Growth Plan take precedence over the policies of the PPS to the extent of any conflict, except where the relevant legislation provides otherwise.

The 2017 Growth Plan promotes well-designed communities with high quality built form and an attractive and vibrant public realm. Site design and urban standards will help achieve these attractive and vibrant places to support walking, cycling and transit use. The Growth Plan recognizes important cultural heritage resources contributing to a sense of identity and attracting investment. Growth can put pressure on these resources and as such, the Growth Plan directs that cultural heritage resources be protected and maximized so that communities continue to be attractive places to live.

Policy 5.1 of the Growth Plan states that where a municipality must decide on a planning matter before its official plan has been amended to conform with this Plan, or before other applicable planning instruments have been updated accordingly, it must still consider the impact of its decision as it relates to the policies of the Growth Plan, which require comprehensive municipal implementation.

Planning Staff have reviewed the proposed development for consistency with the PPS and for conformity to the Growth Plan. Staff have determined that the design concept is consistent with the PPS and conforms to the Growth Plan. The proposal would support many policy objectives of the PPS and Growth Plan, including directing new growth to the built up areas of the community through intensification, that public services be co-located in community hubs that are broadly accessible, and heritage resources be protected.

Library Square design and planned programming for the building expansion and square will achieve many Official Plan policies and objectives

Regional Centres and Corridors are a focal point of commerce, business and cultural activities in the Region. The York Region Official Plan (YROP) directs local municipalities to support the development of Corridors by encouraging attractive, compact community design. This segment of Yonge Street is identified as a Regional Corridor in 'Map 1: Regional Structure' in the YROP. The Library Square site is also identified as an 'Urban Area'.

An important objective of the YROP is the creation of high-quality, sustainable communities, as well as vibrant and sustainable urban areas. Policy 5.2.8 of the YROP promotes the highest standard of urban design, which:

- a. provides pedestrian scale, safety, comfort, accessibility and connectivity;
- b. complements the character of existing areas and fosters each community's unique sense of place;
- c. promotes sustainable and attractive buildings that minimize energy use;
- d. promotes landscaping, public spaces and streetscapes;
- e. ensures compatibility with and transition to surrounding land uses;
- f. emphasizes walkability and accessibility through strategic building placement and orientation; and,
- h. creates well-defined, centrally-located urban public spaces.

The YROP (Policy 5.3) directs that development in intensification areas provide well-designed public open spaces that create attractive and vibrant places; support walking, cycling and transit for everyday activities; achieve an appropriate transition of built form to adjacent areas; and that intensification enhance the planned urban structure. City-building creates communities that are compact, well-designed and lively, are served by transit, and have exciting opportunities to live, work, and play. Another objective of the YROP is to achieve an urban, integrated and connected system of Regional Centres and Corridors.

Staff have reviewed the design concept and are satisfied that it meets the intent of the policies of the YROP, notably with respect to the provision of a compact pedestrian scaled and attractive building that promotes landscaping, public spaces and streetscapes, and that is compatible with, and transitions to, surrounding land uses. Staff will continue to work with the consultant team to ensure that the final design of the building expansion and square, parking area, as well as the design of the Victoria Street and Church Street streetscape, continue to meet the policy intent of the YROP.

Town of Aurora Official Plan

A fundamental principle of the Town of Aurora Official Plan (TAOP) is promoting design excellence through high-quality buildings, and well-designed and functioning streetscapes. As the Town grows, the value of its public realm – its streets and publicly accessible spaces – as well as the design of infill development in creating a vibrant and livable urban environment, becomes more and more important. Appropriate transition, as well as the integration between existing and new development and connected open spaces, help define places and the spaces in between.

TAOP policy 4.0 'Ensuring Design Excellence' recognizes the importance of high quality urban design and architecture as an essential part of Town-building. Policy 4.2 encourages parking in the Historic Core to locate at the rear of buildings and screened to ensure the amenity of adjacent areas. Similarly, TAOP Policy 4.4 recognizes public art as an important component of the public realm in contributing to an overall sense of place and community, as well as improving and enhancing the built environment.

Community services and facilities (CS&F) are publically accessible, non-profit facilities whereby the Town and its agencies deliver programs and services that help build healthy, strong and complete communities and are designed for all stages of life. CS&F contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of the Town, are vital in supporting a successful, functioning and vibrant downtown, and often serve as neighbourhood focal points and gathering spaces.

Staff have reviewed the design concept and are satisfied that its design and the programming planned for the expansion, as well as the Square itself, will help the Town achieve a number of its Official Plan policies and objectives. Staff will continue to work with the consultant team to ensure that the final design and programming of the building expansion and square, as well as the design of the Victoria Street and Church Street streetscapes, continue to meet the policy intent of the TAOP.

Library Square revitalization project will be an integral component in encouraging public heritage appreciation

The subject property, known as the Aurora Cultural Centre or "Church Street School", is designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (By-law 2390-80), listed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places, and recognized under Easement to the Ontario Heritage Trust. The Church Street School was constructed in 1885-86 and is one of the finest remaining examples of a High Victorian designed public school in Ontario.

Preserving heritage resources like the Church Street School enhances the diversity, beauty and richness of the built environment. Under section 13.1 of the Town's Official Plan, it is an objective to promote the conservation of heritage resources for the enjoyment of existing and future generations, and to promote public awareness of Aurora's cultural heritage. The Library Square Project aligns with these objectives by encouraging the heritage conservation of 22 Church Street and revitalizing the site as a hub for cultural activity and community celebration.

Similarly, policy 11.3.2(f) of the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan directs that, when the design of a development includes a cultural heritage resource, the Town shall encourage the compatible use of the significant cultural heritage building, while not adversely affecting the character of the building or surrounding area. A Heritage Impact Assessment was produced for the addition to 22 Church Street, and it determined that there will be minimal to no impact on the character-defining elements of the heritage resource. This will be achieved through the sympathetic placement, massing and materiality of the addition. Furthermore, the proposed uses for the site will encourage greater public appreciation of the heritage building.

Being a building of high heritage significance, the exterior and scenic character of the property are also protected by an Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) conservation easement. The OHT was circulated the plans and elevations for the proposed addition, and gave their initial support for the project and design on January 23, 2019. The Ontario Heritage Trust, as an important development partner, will continue to be consulted with on finishing details or minor amendments.

Staff believe the addition will rehabilitate the site and conserve the cultural heritage value of the building by having minimal to no impact on the character-defining elements of the property. As part of the Library Square revitalization project, the addition will be an integral component in making the downtown a 'destination', encouraging public heritage appreciation, and providing community and cultural space for visitors and residents of Aurora alike.

Staff will continue to ensure the Library Square final design meets the policy intent of the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan

The Promenade, wherein the Town's historic core and downtown is located, plays a critical role in achieving the Town's long-term growth objectives. The Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan (APSP) envisions the Promenade evolving over time into a vibrant place to live, shop, work and play. Key objectives of the Aurora Promenade include:

- Conserving, protecting and reinforcing its neighbourhoods, streetscapes and significant buildings;
- Creating a mixed-use urban environment in creating a vibrant economic, cultural and social environment that supports arts, culture and diversity and that encourages pedestrian activity;
- Promoting beautiful civic spaces, great streets and inspiring architecture that is inviting and attracts residents and new businesses while enhancing the vitality of retail uses; and

- Promoting complete and livable neighbourhoods of different ages and socio-economic status.

The Library Square site is located within the APSP area, are designated 'Aurora Promenade Commercial,' and form part of the Aurora Promenade's Downtown. Entertainment and cultural venues, recreational uses, as well as Urban Squares, are encouraged in the Promenade's Downtown. Urban squares are envisioned as being predominantly hardscaped in nature, framed by animated uses, and serving high pedestrian traffic areas. In addition to providing for entertainment, cultural and recreation uses in the Square, the existing parking lot between the Cultural Centre and the Library will be repurposed as an urban plaza that can be used as outdoor program space for all seasons.

The Secondary Plan directs that, in the Downtown, the scale and character of new structures be carefully regulated and controlled to enhance the pedestrian experience. The Secondary Plan also envisions buildings in this area having a minimum height of two storeys and maximum of five storeys, and designed to contribute to street level vibrancy. The proposed addition will be a maximum height of three storeys, which provides transition to, and 'fits', with the existing two-three storey built form context.

Schedule 'B3 – Streetscape' of the Secondary Plan identifies an east-west midblock pedestrian in the block bound by Mosley Street to the north, Church Street to the south, Yonge Street to the west and Victoria Street to the east. The concept design includes a laneway connecting Yonge Street to Victoria Street. The laneway will be landscaped and accessible to pedestrians, cyclists as well as vehicles. This laneway implements the Secondary Plan vision for a mid-block pedestrian connection in the Cultural Precinct.

Both Victoria Street and Church Street are identified as 'Civic/Special Streets' (Schedule B3). Civic/Special Streetscapes are streets that provide visual and physical links to major cultural and civic landmarks and destinations in The Aurora Promenade.

Staff have reviewed the design concept and are satisfied that the design of the building, square and parking areas, as well as its open spaces and streetscape, will help the Town achieve a number of its city-building objectives. Staff will continue to work with the consultant team to ensure that the final building design, parking area, and the Victoria Street and Church Street streetscape design, meets the policy intent in the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan.

Staff will continue to ensure the vision and objectives of the Aurora Promenade Urban Design Strategy are applied to the final design of Library Square

Aurora Promenade Urban Design Strategy

The Urban Design Strategy (the 'Strategy') for the Aurora Promenade is intended to guide and manage growth through the revitalization of the Promenade area and improvements to the public realm. The Urban Design Strategy is premised on a number of objectives, which include:

- Protecting and enhancing the Promenade's heritage core;
- Reinforcing and enhancing a Cultural Precinct and leveraging opportunities in this area;
- Creating new vibrant, transit-oriented focus areas;
- Creating a pedestrian friendly environment with great streets;
- Facing and Framing Major Open Spaces; and
- Creating a 'Green Lattice' of interconnected parks and open spaces.

The site also forms part of the larger 'Old Town' and is identified as a Focus Area – the Cultural Precinct - in the Strategy. The Cultural Precinct area focuses on the lands bounded by Yonge Street to the west, Larmont Street to the east, Church Street and Metcalf Street to the south and Mosley Street to the north. The Cultural Precinct includes the Aurora Public Library and the Church Street School Cultural Centre.

Objectives for the Old Town Character Area include:

- Reinforcing and leveraging the 'main street' look and feel and the intact heritage resources of the Historic Downtown;
- Providing transition in scale and use from Yonge and Wellington Street to the adjacent residential neighbourhoods;
- Enhancing the streetscape of Yonge, Wellington and neighbourhood streets;
- Encouraging new mid-block pedestrian connections in the Cultural Precinct; and
- Reinforcing the Cultural Precinct with additional cultural facilities, wayfinding and enhanced streetscapes.

Objectives for Cultural Precinct Focus Area include:

- Development should occur based on a comprehensive plan to ensure compatibility;

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- Development must be sympathetic and compatible with heritage built form character;
- The streetscape should be enhanced to create an inviting pedestrian environment.

The manner in which open spaces are designed, programmed and interface with surrounding streets and land uses is crucial to their capacity to attract a broad spectrum of users and to ensure they are places where people feel safe and comfortable. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a strategy that advocates the design of the built environment to reduce the incidence and fear of crime. Staff will work with the consultant to ensure that principles that build on CPTED are applied to the design of publicly accessible spaces on the site, including the Square, pathways, indoor spaces that accessible after hours such as washrooms, and the parking lot.

As noted above, Victoria Street and Church Street are identified as 'Civic/Special Streets' in the Secondary Plan. The design direction in the Strategy for these streets is for the quality of the streetscape and street walls reinforce their civic importance. Streetscape characteristics in the design of these streets, which implements the objective, could include:

- Distinctive paving along sidewalks, at crosswalks and across the roadway;
- Unique lighting, signage, banners and furnishings;
- Continuous street trees, flower beds and landscape features; and
- On-street parking where possible.

The proposed addition to the Church Street school proposes to animate the street by including active uses at grade. Additionally, the landscape design of the Victoria Street amenity area (crush space), and the portion of the Square fronting Church Street, proposes high-quality landscape treatment, including permeable pavers, trees and ground cover planting materials. Given that the plans for both private and public spaces on the site are evolving, Staff will continue to work with the consultant to ensure that the objectives for these Special Streets are achieved.

The redevelopment of Library Square represents an opportunity to continue to explore parking options and strategies for the site and the Downtown area

The Strategy's public realm framework map (p. 24) identifies a potential public parking facility on the block that includes Library Square. The Strategy highlights the importance of comprehensively balancing the supply of parking in the Downtown with

redevelopment, and recommends a special approach to parking that takes into account a variety of strategies to mitigate traffic demand. Some of the parking strategies put forward in the Strategy, which builds on a 2007 Downtown Core Parking Study by MMM, include:

- the provision of higher-order transit and improved cycling and pedestrian routes;
- cash-in-lieu of parking or reduced parking requirements for new development;
- partnering with developers to provide parking underground, or with civic and institutional uses to share parking facilities.

In addition to good urban design, the above approaches can help mitigate the visual unsightliness of large surface parking lots or monolithic parking structures. Planning Staff believe that the redevelopment of Library Square represents an opportunity to continue to explore parking options and strategies for the site and the Downtown area.

Library Square lands represent a key opportunity for improvement and redevelopment within the Promenade Community Improvement Area

Consistent with Community Improvement policies (Section 15.2.13) in the Aurora Official Plan, Section 11.17(d) of the Secondary Plan provides that all lands within the Aurora Promenade be identified as a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA). The site is located within the Aurora Promenade Community Improvement Area. The subject lands represent a key opportunity for improvement and redevelopment within the CIPA.

Advisory Committee Review

Accessibility Committee

As noted in the June 2018 report, both the Heritage and Accessibility Committee were consulted on the proposed project. As there have been revisions to the concept plan since the Committees last provided comments, the latest versions of the plans will return to each committee for comment before it goes to tender. The plans have also been circulated to the Town's Accessibility Advisor for review comment. Staff have received comments from the Accessibility Advisor and shared those comments with The Planning Partnership for consideration in refining the design drawings.

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Heritage Committee

The Heritage Permit Application (HPA-19-03) to approve the addition to the Part IV designated 22 Church Street was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Committee on March 5, 2019. As part of this application, a Heritage Impact Assessment was produced by ERA Architects, a firm that specializes in heritage consulting. The Heritage Impact Assessment outlined that there will be minimal to no impact on the character-defining elements of the heritage resource, through the sympathetic placement, massing and materiality of the addition. Furthermore, the Ontario Heritage Trust, who has a Heritage Conservation Easement over the property, has also provided their initial support for the project and design.

Ensuring design excellence, promoting responsible growth management, providing appropriate community facilities, and conserving cultural heritage resources are all objectives of the Town of Aurora Official Plan. As part of the Library Square Project, the addition to 22 Church Street will meet these objectives and has the support of the Heritage Advisory Committee and Staff.

Should further changes to the design of Library Square be proposed that alter character defining elements of the site, further input may be required from the HAC and OHT.

Legal Considerations

Provincial Plans are intended to be read in their entirety and relevant policies are to be applied to each situation. The policies of the Plans represent minimum standards. Council may go beyond these minimum standards to address matters of local importance, unless doing so would conflict with any policies of the Plans.

The policies of the Growth Plan take precedence over the policies of the PPS to the extent of any conflict, except where the relevant legislation provides otherwise. All decisions of Council that affect a planning matter shall conform with the Growth Plan. Comments, submissions or advice affecting a planning matter that are provided by Council shall also conform with the Growth Plan.

Financial Implications

None.

Communications Considerations

The plans for Library Square are premised on a significant amount of public consultation, including with stakeholders and Town partners. In addition to a webpage on the Town's website dedicated to Library Square, communication staff have prepared an internal and external communication strategy to address the effective communication of this initiative.

Link to Strategic Plan

The development of Library Square supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure;
- Celebrating and promoting our culture;
- Encourage an active and healthy lifestyle; and
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Enabling a diverse, creative and resilient economy in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Promoting economic opportunities that facilitate the growth of Aurora as a desirable place to do business.

Conclusions

Ensuring design excellence, promoting responsible growth management, providing appropriate community facilities, and conserving cultural heritage resources are all objectives of the PPS, Growth Plan, the Region and Town of Aurora Official Plan, as well as the Aurora Promenade, for which the addition to 22 Church Street, the Square and associated open space, supports. Staff will continue to work with the consultant to ensure the final design continues to meet these policies and objectives.

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Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

General Committee Report No. PBS17-066 – Award of Contract for Library Square Site Plan, September 5, 2017;

General Committee Report No. PBS17-096 – Preferred Design for Library Square, December 5, 2017;

General Committee Report No. PBS17-100 – Preferred Design for Library Square – Additional Information, December 12, 2017;

General Committee Report No. PDS18-014 – Updated Design for Library Square, January 30, 2018; and

General Committee Report No. PDS18-076 – Library Square, June 19, 2018.

Pre-submission Review

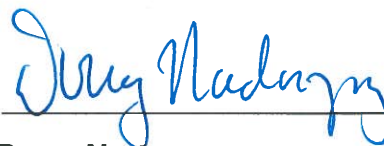
Reviewed by the Chief Administrative Officer, Acting Director of Planning Development Services and Legal Services.

Departmental Approval



**Lawrence Kuk, MCIP, RPP
Acting Director
Planning and Development Services**

Approved for Agenda



**Doug Nadorozny
Chief Administrative Officer**