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Town of Aurora
Council Report
No. CMS23-034

Subject: Aurora Town Square Grand Opening

Prepared by: Phil Rose, Manager of Cultural Services

Department: Community Services

Date: September 25, 2023

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS23-034 be received for information.

Executive Summary

- Aurora Town Square's Grand Opening will provide weeks of programming for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Background

Staff have worked with various groups and individuals to plan for Town Square's Grand Opening, which is anticipated to take place in Spring 2024.

Analysis

Aurora Town Square's Grand Opening will provide weeks of programming for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The Aurora Town Square Grand Opening will build excitement in the community by offering visitors the opportunity to learn about the building's design, functionality and programming opportunities.

Kicking off with a VIP evening of live entertainment provided by the Norman Dance Company, accompanied by a "taste of the downtown", attendees will enjoy delicious food prepared by some of Aurora's downtown restaurants. This will provide significant

cultural entertainment and support local businesses, an important mandate for Town Square.

Grand Opening festivities will also include a variety of both indoor and outdoor entertainment and events. All programs planned for the Grand Opening will provide a window into future experiences at Town Square, such as mini hands-on workshops offered by the Aurora Cultural Centre, Town staff, and others.

Local community organizations and Cultural Partners, such as Pinetree Potters' Guild and Marquee Theatrical Productions will provide a sneak peek of some of the exciting programming they will be providing at Town Square. Marquee will be putting on an exciting Pantomime show, which will be the first of many shows they plan to stage at Town Square. Community members will also have a chance to view and try out pottery making with the Pine Tree Potters' Guild and learn more about the important work they do in the community.

Local musical talent, both beloved and up-and-coming, will grace the Performance Hall stage with a series of live concerts. This contributes to Town Square's important objectives of supporting local talent, artists and businesses. Attendees will get a glimpse at the new Candlelight Concert Series with a duo of concerts offered by the Aurora Community Band. The York Chamber Ensemble will also perform a classical music concert, the first of many to take place at Town Square.

Celebrations will also include an indoor Farmers' Market, bringing the artisans and local vendors to the community during the "off season", demonstrating the programming potential of Town Square.

Indigenous artists and performers will be a significant piece of the Grand Opening, ensuring that programming is diverse, inclusive, and reflects all members of the Aurora community, a crucial goal for Town Square. A new mural painted by an Indigenous artist will be unveiled in the Museum's exhibition space. The mural reflects the Museum's commitment to broaden its understanding of the historical record by creating space for different forms of knowledge and storytelling. The objective of the mural is to help ensure that Indigenous histories, worldviews, and ways of knowing are included in spaces where the history and ongoing narrative of Aurora is being presented. Visitors will also have a chance to explore the new Museum collection storage area and learn about how this new climate-controlled space will ensure the long term vitality of Aurora's material culture.

Programming will include a multitude of additional experiences, such as film screenings and talks hosted by the Aurora Film Circuit, poetry and spoken word events presented by local youth, as well as literary and experiential programming by Aurora Public Library.

As a key partner in Town Square, the Aurora Cultural Centre (ACC) will provide exciting visual and performing arts experiences throughout the Grand Opening. For example, in preparation for the Grand Opening, Town staff are working with ACC and Oddside Arts (formerly Black Speculative Arts Movement) to create a series of interactive banners to be displayed throughout Town Square. The banners will feature an augmented reality component to engage viewers. To design the panels, a select group of local high school art students will collaborate with Oddside Arts and the ACC's Gallery Manager during a virtual workshop held in late Fall 2023. The project will be a valuable learning experience for participating students, growing the capacity of our local arts community.

Staff will continue to explore additional opportunities for the Grand Opening and work with as many community groups and individuals as possible to ensure broad participation throughout Aurora and York Region.

To ensure that the community can participate in as many Grand Opening activities as possible, and instill excitement for continued participation, all Grand Opening events and programs will be offered at low or no cost.

Advisory Committee Review

None.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

The budget for the Town Square Grand Opening is estimated to be approximately \$100,000. It is recommended that this cost be fully funded from past ATS operating budget savings that have been collected within the tax rate stabilization reserve. This event's cost and its offsetting tax rate stabilization reserve funding source will be included in the Town's proposed 2024 operating budget for Council's review and approval.

Communications Considerations

The 2023-2024 Town Square Marketing and Communications Strategy is the foundation upon which all current and future marketing efforts will be built. It leverages Town Square branding that was implemented in 2021, ensures alignment across Town of Aurora and Town Square communications, and creates long-lasting recognition amongst all target audiences.

A Grand Opening Communication Strategy will be created as part of the Town Square Marketing and Communications Strategy. The Grand Opening Strategy will highlight this pivotal time in Aurora's history through a blend of traditional and digital mediums, ensuring widespread visibility and engagement across target audiences. The Grand Opening Strategy aims to not only set the tone for the opening of Town Square, but how the community will feel about it for years to come.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

Aurora Town 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
- 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

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

Slated for Spring 2024, Aurora Town Square's Grand Opening celebrations will showcase local and regional talent, feature Town partners and Aurora-based cultural groups, provide visitors with a chance to explore the new spaces, try out various programs, and foster the love of arts, culture and heritage in an accessible and inclusive manner.

Attachments

Aurora Town Square – Grand Opening Presentation

Previous Reports

No previous reports.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on August 31, 2023

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer