



100 John West Way
Aurora, Ontario
L4G 6J1
(905) 727-3123
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora
Council Report
No. CMS23-036

Subject: Aurora Town Square – Heritage, Programming & Special Events

Prepared by: Phillip Rose, Manager of Cultural Services

Department: Community Services

Date: September 25, 2023

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS23-036 be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the programs, performances and special events planned for Aurora Town Square.

- As co-located organizations, the Town, the Aurora Cultural Centre, and Aurora Public Library will be the main programmers at Town Square.
- The versatility of Town Square will allow for various programs to find a home in a space that supports their intention and specialization.
- The Performance Hall will be the perfect setting for an array of new and exciting experiences for the Aurora community.
- Heritage programming will expand with new workshops and seasonal programs that will make the Museum more accessible to the community.
- A variety of Town Special Events are being considered for Town Square.

Background

In June 2020, Council approved the Not-for-Profit/Municipal Hybrid Model as the governance model for the future operation of Town Square. Shortly thereafter, staff formed a Collaborative Programming Working Group that included Town, Aurora

Cultural Centre, and Aurora Public Library staff. The purpose of the working group was to:

- Build consensus regarding the types of programs to be offered at Town Square and which organization(s) is best suited to deliver them.
- Agree upon guiding principles that will create a framework for program and service delivery within Town Square.
- Work collaboratively to create a programming and performance schedule for the first 1-2 years of operation.

The working group continues to meet as needed and will continue to do so once Town Square is open to ensure the public is receiving the optimal programming mix.

Analysis

As co-located organizations, the Town, the Aurora Cultural Centre, and Aurora Public Library will be the main programmers at Town Square.

The Town, Aurora Cultural Centre (ACC) and Aurora Public Library (APL) work collaboratively to ensure the public receives a range of complementary programs geared to various skill levels and life experiences.

ACC will continue to provide the following types of programs:

- Performing Arts (Music, Theatre, etc.)
- Visual/Fine Arts (Gallery Exhibitions/Tours, Painting & Drawing and Photography Classes, etc.)
- Curriculum-based/Curriculum-enhanced arts programming
- Crafts (Textiles, Glass, Jewellery Classes)
- Camps
- Community Events

Whereas the ACC previously hosted performing arts and visual arts programs in Brevik Hall and the basement Activity Room respectively, the majority of these programs will be relocated to the new Performance Hall and Visual Arts Studio, which are custom-built spaces with larger capacities and greater amenities.

The ACC develops accessible/community-focused programs geared to beginners, right up to pre-professionals and professionals. They serve an audience from 18 months to adults and have extensive experience hosting professional live performances and

professional visual arts programs and exhibitions. They also develop year-round education programs that complement their performing arts and visual arts streams.

APL will continue to provide the following types of programs in their home space, but may relocate or expand certain programs to Town Square:

- Adult Learning
- Literary Arts (Fiction, Non-fiction, Poetry, Storytelling)
- Electronic Arts (New Media, Digital & Animation)
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math)
- Crafts
- Community Events

APL offers nearly 1,900 programs annually that focus on providing individuals with skills to navigate everyday life. APL's goal is to enhance the experience of residents of all ages in a way that is complementary/adjunct to more advanced programs offered by other stakeholders (i.e., to create excitement for ongoing learning). Many of their programs are not designed for a specific skill level but are meant to be experiential and open to people of all skill levels and life experiences.

The versatility of Town Square will allow for various Town programs to find a home in a space that supports their intention and specialization.

Town Recreation dance, music and theatre programs will be offered in the Performing Arts Dance Studio where participants will enjoy sprung floors, ballet barres and mirrored walls.

Town Square will present opportunities for the Town to work with local organizations and businesses to provide exciting and enriching experiences. These programs will include "date nights" featuring special programming and dining opportunities, with the added feature of onsite activities to keep children safe and engaged in other areas of the facility.

Additional Town workshops will connect the community to fun and exciting arts and culture activities that will also touch on important global factors such as sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. Participants of all ages will be invited to try out current craft and DIY trends, learn about environmental sustainability while upcycle crafting and learning about how to use creativity as a form of self-care. These will be just the start of special Town-run workshops with so many more possibilities in the coming years.

The Performance Hall will be the perfect setting for an array of new and exciting experiences for the Aurora community.

The 250-seat black-box Performance Hall is equipped with LED stage lighting systems, retractable seating and reconfigurable acoustics, making it ideal for a wide range of uses. It will host live music, comedy, film screenings, speaker series, conferences, receptions, dance recitals, theatre and community events year-round, with some themes matching holidays and significant times of year, such as Black History Month in February, Indigenous Peoples Month in June and holiday time in December.

Live programming will also include candlelight concerts by the Aurora Community Band, tribute acts, and a variety of theatrical and dance experiences such as plays, pantomime, live poetry, spoken word, and cultural dance. Enhanced experiences such as dinner theatre and burlesque brunches will also be offered, to appeal to a greater audience and provide more diverse experiences. The Performance Hall and Outdoor Square will provide the ideal atmosphere to introduce activities like silent disco, where participants are provided with headphones to enjoy their very own dance party.

Audience members and program participants will embark on an entertaining journey when they attend a live performance, show or event at Town Square. The strong array of cultural programming will provide community members an opportunity to both broaden their horizons and develop connections with each other, and the material they are engaging with.

Heritage programming will expand with new workshops and seasonal programs that will make the Museum more accessible to the community.

Such programs include Coffee with the Curator where participants can visit the new visible storage space to meet with Museum staff and learn about the expansive collection under their care. This interactive program will foster an appreciation of local history and a better understanding throughout the community of museum operations.

A significant feature of Town Square programming will be education programs for the local school community. These programs will support the Ontario curriculum and be facilitated in partnership with the Museum. Themes will include aspects of Aurora's history, such as forms of communication, technology, and growth of business and the economy. Programs will also touch on additional subject matter, including diversity, public art, and modern-day issues relevant to students, such as bullying and social media. These themes will be explored through various collaborative and engaging activities. With the addition of the Performance Hall and Performing Arts Dance Studio,

students will also be able to explore learning opportunities through theatre and music. These topics will be tied to relevant curriculum points and reinforced with interactive activities.

The long-term exhibition schedule for the Aurora Room will have segments that are updated and refreshed annually to ensure that there are always new things for visitors to see, and that the curriculum connections remain up to date.

The new exhibition infrastructure in the new addition will be used in a more flexible way; the artifacts in the display cases will be rotated regularly and so will the didactic information on the picture hanging rail.

Staff anticipate that community organizations will be interested in utilizing the new exhibition infrastructure, specifically the picture hanging rail. A schedule of use is currently being drafted for future discussion.

In addition to the Town, ACC and APL, numerous other service providers, including the Town's Cultural Partners, will offer a range of programs at Town Square. These programs will include film screenings, lectures, theatre productions, concerts, specialized workshops, community events and more.

A variety of Town Special Events are being considered for Town Square.

Evolving discussions are taking place as staff evaluate special event opportunities for Town Square. The following list identifies the events that could be hosted at Town Square:

- Mayor's Levee – January
- Black History Month – February
- Arctic Adventure (Hybrid with Town Park) – Family Day Weekend, February
- Aurora Art Show & Sale – First weekend of May
- Performing Arts Festival – June
- National Indigenous History Month – June
- National Indigenous Peoples Day – June 21
- Culture Days – Mid-September to Mid-October
- National Day for Truth & Reconciliation – September 30
- Aurora's Christmas Market – December
- Menorah Lighting Ceremony – Hanukkah – December/January
- Family First Night (Hybrid with AFLC) – December 31

Recreation and Culture programs will take place seasonally at Town Square and will continue to follow the Town’s seasonal schedule.

Programs will take place in Fall, Winter and Spring sessions with summer camps being offered in July and August when children are on summer break.

The fall session will begin mid-September and run through to mid-December. The winter session will run from early January through to the end of March and Spring will begin mid-April and wrap up at the end of June.

Education programs will run throughout the school year during the school day from late September to June.

Advisory Committee Review

None.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

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. Through the Marketing and Communications Strategy – which includes a variety of communications tools, channels and tactics – the Town will inform the public about its own special events, rental opportunities, and the various the initiatives of our cultural partners.

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 can provide further direction.

Conclusions

This report provides an overview of the programming, performance and special event opportunities that will be available at Town Square.

Attachments

Aurora Town Square – Town Heritage, Programming & Special Events Presentation

Previous Reports

CMS19-009, Library Square Proposed Operating Plan, March 21, 2019

FS19-012, Library Square – Financial Strategy, March 21, 2019

CMS20-008, Library Square Governance Review, March 3, 2020

CMS20-012, Library Square Governance Review, June 16, 2020

CMS20-026, Library Square Governance Review, November 3, 2020

CMS21-022, Library Square Governance Update, June 15, 2021

CMS21-029, Aurora Town Square Governance Update, September 21, 2021

CMS22-009, Aurora Town Square Update – Agreements and IT Services, March 1, 2022

CMS22-010, Aurora Town Square Governance – Town Staffing Update 1 – March 1, 2022

CMS22-019, Aurora Town Square Space Usage and Room Permitting Policy, April 5, 2022

CMS22-029, Aurora Town Square Governance – Town Staffing Update 2, June 21, 2022

Finance Advisory Committee Memo, Aurora Town Square Budget Update, June 13, 2023

CMS23-031, Aurora Town Square Update, July 4, 2023

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