



TOWN OF AURORA
ADDITIONAL ITEMS
FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, February 13, 2014
7 p.m.
Leksand Room

- **Item 5 – Memorandum from the Manager of Long Range and Strategic Planning**
Re: Aurora Promenade Update

RECOMMENDED:

THAT the memorandum regarding Aurora Promenade Update be received for information.



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Town of Aurora
Planning and Development
Services

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 13, 2014
TO: Economic Development Advisory Committee Members
FROM: Anthony Ierullo, Manager of Long Range and Strategic Planning
RE: Aurora Promenade Update

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the memorandum be received for information.

BACKGROUND

On September 28, 2010, Council endorsed the Aurora Promenade Concept Plan - Urban Design Strategy (“the Plan”) and adopted a new Official Plan for the Town. The Plan is a strategy for the revitalization of the Yonge and Wellington corridors. The study boundaries generally extend along Yonge Street north of the railway tracks up to St Andrews Village Shopping Centre and along Wellington Street from Mill Street east to John West Way.

Vision and Guiding Principles for Downtown Revitalization

The revitalization of the downtown is guided by the Aurora Promenade Vision Statement as described in the Plan. The revitalization strategy for the Promenade is driven by the following guiding principles as articulated in the Pillars of the Vision within the Plan:

1. *Distinct Heritage and Culture:* Leverage the distinct heritage and culture of Aurora as an attraction.
2. *Vibrant Places:* Create a highly mixed-use urban environment with the necessary infrastructure and critical mass
3. *Beautiful Spaces:* Create beautiful civic spaces, streets and parks by enhancing the existing amenities and establishing new opportunities to provide a connected system of public places.
4. *Lifelong & Complete Community:* Promote a truly mixed residential community that houses people of different ages, backgrounds, lifestyles and economic status.
5. *Liveable & Stable Neighborhoods:* Ensure balanced growth and development, and the protection and stability of established residential neighborhoods.

6. *Balanced Modes of Movement*: Accommodate a broad range of choices for travel – all of which are convenient and safe.
7. *Great Design and Architecture*: Ensure that the form, scale and design of new buildings “fit in” and enhance the character, quality and appeal of the Aurora Promenade.
8. *Towards a Sustainable Town*: Promote and support sustainable development.

Town employing multi-faceted approach to revitalization

Downtown revitalization is a complex exercise that includes improvements to both the public realm and private realm as well as tourism and economic development activities. The information below provides a summary of the key revitalization initiatives underway and their contribution within each of these areas:

Public Realm Improvements

Public realm improvements include works that contribute to revitalization on public lands. The Aurora Promenade Streetscape Design and Implementation Plan proposes significant investment in the Downtown in the form of redesigned and reconstructed sidewalks, enhanced signage and street furniture and additional plantings. The project is planned in coordination with the reconstruction of the Yonge Street to improve the water and sewer infrastructure. These investments support previous and/or Regional investments in Downtown infrastructure such as the construction of the Aurora Public Library, the establishment of the Aurora Cultural Centre and the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (VIVA) on Yonge Street. The Town is also exploring options for the Town’s lands at Library Square including the creation of the Aurora Innovation Centre. EDAC has proposed a framework for the consideration of potential options that is focused on downtown revitalization. The Town is also working to improve access to available parking and acquire additional parkland where required.

Private Realm Improvements

Private realm improvements include works that contribute to revitalization on private lands. The Town of Aurora Official Plan and related Zoning By-law dictate land use within the Town. The documents have been updated (or are in the process of being updated) to promote downtown revitalization. Moreover, The Aurora Promenade Streetscape Design and Implementation Plan includes policies that guide the urban design and streetscape of proposed private sector improvements. This ensures that improvements follow a compatible design standard across the Aurora Promenade. These policies are supported by the Aurora Promenade Community Improvement Plan, which proposes municipal grants and loans to private sector land owners to implement improvements.

The Plan includes a focus on heritage preservation and celebration as a tool for downtown revitalization. This mandate is supported by investments in the Church Street School, the proposed Heritage Park concept and existing and proposed heritage conservation districts. The Aurora Promenade Concept Plan also contemplates the establishment of a Cultural Precinct, which is being considered as part of the proposed Cultural Master Plan. The preservation of cultural and heritage assets will allow for enhanced programming and tourism opportunities.

Economic Development and Tourism Activities

In addition to improvements to the built environment, the Town is also pursuing opportunities to promote economic development and tourism in the Aurora Promenade. The town is considering the adoption of an Outdoor Patio Policy that would allow local businesses to access a portion of the public right of way for the purposes of operating a commercial patio. The intent is to support local business and promote street activity within the Aurora Promenade.

The Town is also supporting the establishment of a Business Improvement Association (BIA). Following the approval of the Community Improvement Plan, staff have proposed hosting an information session to assist local businesses in evaluating options. The Town's Business Retention and Expansion program is a mechanism to receive feedback from Downtown businesses that may contribute to the refinement of planned initiatives.

Tourism activities are supported through the delivery of Town organized special events such as Concerts in the Park, Ribfest, Aurora's Borealis and Doors Open. The Town also supports partner events such as the Aurora Farmer's Market, the Aurora Street Festival and various music festivals. These activities draw visitors to the area and promote revitalization.

Summary

Downtown revitalization is a complex exercise that includes improvements to both the public realm and private realm as well as tourism and economic development activities. As described above, the Town has been implementing several initiatives that contribute to revitalization. These initiatives have been identified and recommended in the Aurora Promenade Concept Plan - Urban Design Strategy and support the overall strategy. Staff have been coordinating and phasing the various initiatives to avoid duplication, but are employing a multi-faceted approach that is focused on advancing as many potential impact projects as possible.