

Renovations to historic Church Street School approved ahead of Town Square completion

Located at the northwest corner of Church and Victoria Streets, and once used as a schoolhouse from 1886 to 1951, the historic Church Street School, a landmark known as Aurora's 'jewel' and the home of the Aurora Cultural Center, will soon begin minor renovations intended to help preserve its longevity and charm.

An estimated cost of \$173,000 was presented to Council for the refinishing and repainting of Brevik Hall, the Aurora Room, boardroom, gallery, and ancillary spaces in Church Street School - all part of the Town Square redevelopment plan.

Furthermore, a total budget of \$187,000 is set for approval for the refinishing and repainting of Aurora Museum and Archives (AMA) and the Aurora Cultural Center (ACC) administrative spaces.

Staff recommended completing the project before the opening of Aurora Town Square to mitigate the disruptions in service.

'As things progress with the capital project, there is an opportunity potentially where the contractor will be out, they'll finish their components of work in the 22 Church Street proper, which would relinquish that space potentially for the Town to do this work. So, there may be that gap,' said Robin McDougall, Director of Community Services, explaining when exactly the project may occur.

She said that if that timing doesn't work out, the goal is to complete the project prior to when the Cultural Center and Museum move back into the building.

The school has undergone a variety of repairs over the years, including many exterior brickwork and window repairs, most of which were completed starting in 2008. Further projects were approved, such as door repairs, exterior signage, and minor wood floor repairs, but then deferred since the start of the Aurora Town Square project.

The extent of the repair needed was only realized after the school spaces were emptied.

Repainting and wood floor repairs were identified as a priority back in 2020 in high traffic areas of the building.

When the AMA and ACC vacated their administrative areas during construction, it became clear that the floor tiles and carpeting needed to be replaced in both areas soon.

Other revisions were also proposed to make the spaces more functional, such as the removal of the glass partition within the Museum office area and the addition of drywall and cable drops to prepare an office space for the manager while keeping the rest of the space as open concept.

As for the ACC area, staff recommended adding a wall to separate the boardroom from the existing administrative space and removing some of the old millwork.

Once the Town Square project is complete, the plan is to conduct a Building Condition Assessment (BCA) on both existing and new construction to develop a 10-year plan for the school.

McDougall said that the BCA will later highlight the specific timing of the project.

'We anticipate them in the next few years. But I don't have a specific date,' she said.

The total recommended asset management capital for Church Street School is \$365,000. The report received by Council stated that neither of these projects were specifically included in the Town's recently approved 2023 ten-year capital plan, but that sufficient

funding availability is anticipated through included building condition assessment requirement placeholders within the plan.

By Elisa Nguyen