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King picks design for new municipal offices

Better customer experience at the heart of Project MOVE

Project MOVE is moving forward.

That was the decision made by King Township council at its May 30 meeting when it chose to build a new municipal office building at 2585 King Road instead of trying to repurpose the former Holy Name elementary school.

King Township purchased the school property almost three years ago in order to facilitate a move from its current location at 2075 King Road, a building that is bursting at the seams because of a lack of adequate room for staff and storage.

Council was presented with three options by the Project MOVE steering group and management team. The first two options included renovating and adding to the former school building. The third called for a complete demolition and construction of a new building.

Although estimated budgets for the three different options were close, council decided the demolition/new building option was the one with the most upside and fewest risks.

“Demolishing the old building and starting from scratch was estimated to only cost 3.7 per cent more than the next lowest-cost option,” said King Township mayor Steve Pellegrini. “While we’re always looking to contain costs, the potential benefits from a new building make more sense than trying to work with the older building.”

Among the benefits of building a new office:

- More cost certainty
- It will be built specifically for Township purposes, as opposed to repurposing an old school
- It will be easier to make it accessible for people with disabilities
- There will be a larger public-use gymnasium and meeting spaces
- Long building life expectancy
- May permit for a more compact footprint, leaving more room for outdoor amenities like parking

Renovating the existing building would come with more issues. Among them:

- Less cost certainty due to the risk of unknowns in the existing building
- Life expectancy would be shorter due to the current age of the building
- Much more complex routing of services and ductwork
- Demolishing only part of the building would be more expensive than a complete demolition

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Lying in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area, King Township is located within York Region, one of the fastest growing and diverse economies in Canada. More than 60 per cent of the Holland Marsh, also known as Ontario's salad bowl, lies within King Township. Though predominantly rural, most of King Township's 20,000 residents live in the communities of King City, Nobleton and Schomberg. Residents and visitors are drawn to King because of its rural lifestyle, village atmosphere and quality of life.

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“As much as we would have liked to have been able to repurpose the existing building, after we looked at it closely it became apparent the best course of action would be to start from scratch,” said King Township CAO Susan Plamondon. “A new building will result in much more cost certainty and also align well with our sustainability plan, particularly around the environmental, social-cultural and financial parts of the plan.”

The preliminary plan calls for a 43,500 square foot building at an estimated cost of \$11.33 million, just slightly more than the \$10.98 million for the next-lowest cost option of repurposing the existing building.

A key element of the project is the opportunity to provide other community services. These include a full-size public-use gymnasium and a York Regional Police substation.

“A huge component of the new building will be enhanced customer service. Although our staff do the best they can with what they have, our current office space causes many challenges in delivering excellent customer service,” said Plamondon.

Those challenges include cramped waiting areas, lack of counter space in the planning and building department and multiple customer entrances.

“We know our people want to provide an exceptional customer experience. That can be challenging with the space and layout limitations of our current offices,” said Mayor Pellegrini. “We want the new building to not only address those concerns but also be something the community will be proud of. I’m especially pleased that we will be able to provide additional community benefits with the gym and the York Regional Police substation.”

Demolition work is scheduled to start this summer with construction of the new building starting this fall. Occupancy of the new building is slated for fall of 2017.

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Media contact

Jason Ballantyne, communications officer

Phone: 905-833-4573

Cell: 416-559-5093

Email: jballantyne@king.ca