

New municipal centre is for the people

By Mark Pavilons

King's new municipal centre will serve residents for generations to come.

As crews put the finishing touches on the new facility, it's evident this will be a centrepiece of governance and community service.

The building is massive, some 46,000 square feet but it's nicely set back from King Road, snuggled into the natural surroundings of the grade. The first thing you notice is the striking glass windows that give the building its unique facade.

Staff wanted to provide as much natural light as possible and this was achieved with copious amounts of open space and glass.

“Staff wanted to give King residents what they deserve,” said Jason Ballantyne, King's communications officer.

When Township staff worked with consultants on the building's must-haves, three main features arose: space to accommodate staff and the public; as much natural light as possible, and capacity to facilitate efficient operations.

The centre has all these things, and a little bit more.

“When people come in, they will get a sense of community,” Ballantyne said.

While expansive and stunning, it's not lavish or over-the-top. It's a perfect marriage of form and function. Windows and glass are plentiful, giving the facility an open, pleasant atmosphere.

Just off of the main entrance are the council chambers, providing ample seating for roughly 200 people. As well, there's a mezzanine above to view the proceedings and the large viewing screens for presentations.

Looking straight up, residents will notice beautiful, massive wood beams that continue through to the outside of the main entrance.

Ballantyne noted the building also boasts a geothermal loop system, back-up generator and a 4,000-square-foot gymnasium for the public. The basketball nets are already installed and just off the gym are public change rooms.

“It's not just a municipal office,” he said. “It's a hub. It's their (residents) building, not our building.”

Parks, Recreation and Culture staff will be back in the building, instead of being spread out all across the township.

Ballantyne noted starting from scratch was the way to go. The former separate school had decent bones, but the ground-up construction definitely proved to be the better option.

The building is customer-friendly, and after checking in at the front desk, residents can take a short jaunt to one of several kiosks that meet their needs. Whether they're paying their taxes or have a question about permits, staff will be ready to answer the call quickly and efficiently. There are also meeting rooms where residents can discuss issues privately.

To meet the October deadline, all work is being done simultaneously, from the wiring and painting, to the installation of glass and wood.

A glass stairway to the upper level provides excellent views of the property. Most of the offices are on the second floor, for the first time providing plenty of elbow room, privacy, meeting and storage space. Again, plenty of windows make it a bright, open space.

Staff will also benefit from a lounge and small workout area.

Ballantyne said staff will definitely feel invigorated when they settle in the new digs.

The facility is remarkable, considering the budget of roughly \$13 million, especially when the revamped library and seniors centre in King City has a price tag of \$10 million. In the case of the municipal hub, the bulk of the costs are covered by the sale of the existing municipally-owned plaza.

Staff will begin the move after the October election. While the majority of the work will be done, exterior landscaping and beautification will take place next spring.

Staff already have some interesting ideas regarding outdoor features.

Ballantyne said the facility is a living embodiment of King's Sustainability vision:

“King Township is an idyllic countryside community of communities, proud of its rural, cultural and agricultural heritage. We are respected for treasuring nature, encouraging a responsible local economy, and celebrating our vibrant quality of life.”