

King Museum and property poised to be a cultural hub

By Mark Pavilons

The King Township Museum and property just west of King City could become the municipality's hub of cultural activity.

King hopes to reposition the site into a cultural and heritage focal point, a community centrepiece if you will.

The facility has been improved and expanded and the agreement with a local developer has come to an end. This allows the Township to move forward with this beautifully expanded structure.

With an expanded building comes expanding programs and services.

According to a report by Museum Curator Kathleen Fry and presented by Chris Fasciano, director of Parks, Recreation and Culture, museums across the province are changing their focus and now offer new experiences for visitors.

“The King Township Museum has done well in beginning to adapt to the operational changes, but further work toward how we stay relevant with industry trends is required,” the report said.

Currently, the Museum offers education, heritage programs, workshops and summer camps, as well as temporary art exhibits.

The future of the Museum is addressed in several Township strategic plans. The long-term vision contained in the Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan and Strategic Business Plan indicates how the Museum can transform into a vibrant gathering place, a hub that celebrates and promotes King's heritage.

Staff is proposing that the Township begins the process of expanding the experiential opportunities at the Museum and consider including performing arts in this “evolution.”

“It is important to note that the museum must continue to comprise the main component of the land ... the goal is to build on the current successes and attract additional visitors through additional programming ...

“There must be something tangible that will draw people back and bring new people in.”

The report points to expanding the number of exhibits, offering more workshops, events and art shows. Partnerships with other local organizations play a key role in all of this.

In 2013, Arts Society King was brought into the museum to share the space and staff will spent the next six months looking at “how we will move forward together.”

The King Township Historical Society is an integral part of the site and they use the museum for their meetings, etc. Discussions have already been held with KTHS and it's likely the physical archives, currently located in the King City Library, will move to the museum. This could happen as soon as this coming spring.

Staff is also looking at changing the name of the site to something “that will inclusively celebrate all of the activities that could occur through the various operations and organizations.”

Staff will look into the ramifications of such a move, ensuring it won't negatively impact any funding agreements.

The museum's progression is in keeping with the theme of the Sustainability Plan, Parks and Recreation master plan and the museum's own business plan.

“As a potential cultural hub, it be a tool to express the narratives that are the core of King Township's identity. The King Township Museum will continue to grow as an important cultural asset for King, by introducing visitors to King's rich heritage. KTM “will invite people to experience their community's strengths of foundation, and its strong relationship with history and nature.”

Physical changes are already taking place at the site and the Township is looking at securing an additional part-time staffer to help with expanding the programming needs.