
From: Sarah Douglas-Murray
Director, Community Services

Subject: Community Engagement for Pickering City Centre Design
- Summary Report
- File: A-1440

Recommendations:

1. That Report CS 35-21 regarding the Pickering City Centre community design consultation summary report be received for information; and,
 2. That the appropriate City officials be authorized to take the necessary actions as indicated in this report.
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Executive Summary: As per Report CAO 04-21 dated May 25, 2021 (Resolution #604/21), the Community Services Department and Pickering Public Library staff worked together to conduct Pickering City Centre stakeholder and community design consultation exercises. These exercises were to consider community feedback before advancing the City Centre design to working drawings for tender – after that time, design changes can be cost prohibitive. In the summer of 2021, the City of Pickering launched a robust design consultation program that invited stakeholders and the broader community to identify what services, programs and spaces, Pickering residents would like to see as part of a new City Centre.

This comprehensive design consultation and engagement program included a variety of platforms for participation:

1. LetsTalkPickering.ca was used as the landing page for community consultation, providing a central site to access the City Centre ideas board, workshop registrations and four City Centre surveys featuring the new City Centre Library design, the Youth & Seniors' Centre design, the Performing Arts Centre design, and the Public Square design. There were over 3,000 visits to LetsTalkPickering.ca.
2. Four facility specific surveys were created for each public space. Community engagement resulted in the completion of 579 surveys. The Central Library survey had 179 participants. The Seniors & Youth Centre had 144 participants. The Performing Arts Centre had 128 participants. The Public Square had 128 participants.
3. Design boards with City Centre renderings were displayed at the Central Library and George Ashe Library for five weeks. Access to hard copies of the four surveys was available and assistance was provided by library staff. Access to Let'sTalkPickering.ca was available through the Library's public computers.

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4. Virtual stakeholder workshops were held with volunteers from the City's advisory committees, the Library Board, and prospective user groups including youth, seniors, rental groups and performing arts organizations. Stakeholder workshops included a pre-recorded presentation by the architects on the City Centre facilities and a facilitated discussion, specific to each stakeholder group. There were 7 virtual stakeholder workshops held from June to August, with 43 participants.
 5. City staff facilitated three virtual workshops that were open to all residents, with 25 attendees. Virtual workshops included a pre-recorded presentation on the City Centre design by the architects and answers to the most frequently asked questions. The virtual workshops included breakout rooms so participants could ask questions and provide feedback and ideas directly to City Staff in smaller groups. Registration for the virtual workshops was available through LetsTalkPickering.ca. The workshops were held on August 12, 2021 from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm; August 12, 2021 from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm; and August 14, 2021 from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm.
 6. Dedicated Pickering City Centre webpage at pickering.ca/citycentre that featured design renderings, frequently asked questions, background documents, project history and milestones, and ways to participate in the design consultation workshops.

Community consultation and engagement opportunities were promoted on the community page, City of Pickering social media platforms, by email to community organizations, City eNewsletters, on RCC signage, and road-side signage, by media release, and sent directly to stakeholders and those who have expressed interest in the City Centre project.

The strongest and clearest message staff received about the designs of the City Centre facilities was encouraging, supportive and positive. Many comments were received about the synergies of the spaces being located together and residents had very positive comments about the bright open spaces and natural light throughout all of the facilities. The majority of the participants who engaged using the community engagement tools and platforms have expressed support that the designs for the City Centre programs, services and facilities would serve the community well.

In addition to the community consultation, CAM Consulting was contracted in the summer of 2021 to largely complete a review of the design of the Performing Arts Centre. At this stage, in the absence of an Executive Director for the Performing Arts Centre, this work was deemed to be important to ensure the facility functioned as it has been envisioned to.

Throughout the community consultation, stakeholders have identified interest in learning more about the "green" features of the buildings and Public Square. As part of the Enbridge Savings by Design program, a series of recommendations have been identified for each facility to achieve at least 15% better energy efficiency than what is prescribed in the Building Code. Council's approval to proceed to the next phase of design will enable the preparation of detailed specifications and the final selection of options to meet or exceed the energy efficiency targets.

Financial Implications: There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

Discussion: Through the consultation process, themes about the vision for City Centre emerged. For each of the four public spaces, respondents shared what they supported about the design, what areas they felt needed to be addressed, and what ideas they felt should be considered. The high-level summary for each of the four public facilities follows.

1. City Centre Library

a) Most popular design features of the City Centre Library:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Outdoor spaces	The community was very supportive of the outdoor spaces shown in the design of the level 2 balcony and rooftop terrace. The community is interested in outdoor spaces for both quiet and social activities. Both spaces will be available for booking as event spaces
Café	Support from the community was very strong for a café in the Library with 90% of respondents indicating they were likely or somewhat likely to frequent the café.
Bright spaces	The community responded positively to the renderings of bright, interiors spaces resulting from the glass façade on the north, south and east walls.
Maker Space	Support for a Maker Space remains strong with 77% in favour of access to technology and programming for children, teens and adults.
Meeting rooms and event space	The variety of bookable rooms and event spaces will meet the needs of businesses, organizations and students. 75% of survey respondents indicated an interest in booking at least one of the larger event spaces.

b) Areas to be addressed for the City Centre Library:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Welcoming spaces through furniture and finishes	The renderings showed a variety of furniture types in muted or neutral colours. The response from the community about the renderings underlined support for adding more colour to the finishes. Additionally, concerns were raised about the backless furniture (i.e. stools, benches) which can be uncomfortable for some users. Ideas for including plants throughout the building was also a common idea.
Accessibility	Consideration should be given to make the facility as accessible and inclusive as possible. The community voiced concerns about the feature staircase on the ground level

Design Feature	Feedback:
	being an unwelcoming sight for community members unable to traverse the stairs or access the benches above ground level.
Feature Staircase	The community did not show strong support for the benches built into the staircase for activities such as reading, working, or meeting up with friends. This is an area for further consultation to ensure that the staircase - a prominent feature of the facility - is an area of activity.
Quiet	Respondents voiced a strong need for quiet spaces in the building to support studying, reading and telework. The design of the enclosed Study Hall should support the library in offering “silence as a service” to the greatest extent possible.
Protection from sunlight	The second floor balcony and rooftop terrace offer multiple options for outdoor areas for short or long dwell times. Concerns raised by the community indicate that shade or coverage solutions are important. In addition, the bright, light-filled interior spaces shown in the renderings raised comments and questions about whether there will be window coverings or treatments to block UV rays.

c) Ideas for City Centre Library:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Public Art	When asked how important it is to have public art in the Library, 77% said it was important or very important.
Family-friendly amenities in the children’s area	Some ideas offered by parents and caregivers with small children included a family washroom and nursing area near the Children’s Area, racks for coats and boots, and stroller parking.
Outlets for charging devices	Many responses mentioned the use of personal devices in a variety of spaces. This highlights the need for electrical outlets throughout the building including outdoor spaces and embedded in the feature staircase.
Curbside pick-up	76% of respondents said they were interested in the library continuing to offer curbside service to pick up library materials.
Telework/work from home support	The pandemic has increased demand for telework or remote work options. 78% of participants said it is important to have access to individual workspaces to participate in virtual meetings or take a phone call at the library and 68% said they are likely to use the library to telework for a half day. Additionally, the community highlighted the importance of being able to reserve a place for telework.

2. Seniors & Youth Centre

In addition to the Community Consultation conducted in 2021, seniors and youth stakeholder groups provided extensive feedback to staff earlier in the design and planning process. Both stakeholder groups were pleased with the design of the facility and provided positive comments that earlier feedback on amenities and design features had been included.

a) Most popular design features of the Seniors & Youth Centre:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Gymnasium	Youth and seniors identified a number of highly desirable programs that would be accommodated in the gymnasium including badminton, pickleball, basketball and volleyball. It was noted that a gymnasium is a much needed amenity. Drop in and registered programs should be considered.
Multipurpose space	The multifunctional nature of the first floor program rooms was well received as well as the inclusion of kitchen space and room dividers to allow for flexibility. Programs such as guest speakers, social dances and games programs all received high ratings from survey participants.
Art program space	The specialized space provided in the art room was well received and arts and craft programs were identified as highly desirable by the youth.
Intergenerational aspect of the centre	Many community members liked that youth and seniors will be together in one facility and that the facility would be active and programmed at all times throughout the day.
Natural light & bright open spaces	The community responded positively to the natural light and bright open spaces. Positive comments were also received on the sightlines and transparency within the building.
E-gaming	The youth responded very positively towards the inclusion of an e-gaming space.

b) Areas to be addressed for the Seniors & Youth Centre:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Ground level entrance to the facility	Pavement with interlock was identified as an accessibility concern as the uneven surface can be difficult for wheelchairs and those who identify as blind or visually impaired.
Security	Residents wanted to ensure exterior lighting and a security plan is considered as part of the design of the facility. It should be noted that a security hub is planned to be housed in the Seniors & Youth Centre to support City Centre facilities and that a staffed centralized desk is planned for the main foyer of the SYC.

c) Ideas for the Seniors & Youth Centre:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Accessibility & inclusion features	Consideration should be given to make the facility as accessible and inclusive as possible. Features such as a wheelchair charging station and non-gender washrooms were suggested.
Parking	Access to parking was important particularly for seniors. Suggestions included specific parking spaces allocated for seniors, seniors rates for parking or free parking. Availability of accessible parking and drop off zones were also noted.
Intergenerational programming	Community members suggested that opportunities for intergenerational programming such as seniors teaching youth to play pickleball be considered. Potential for connections through both casual interactions and intentional activities was seen as a benefit in the SYC facility.
Sponsorship	Opportunities for sponsorships should be investigated to provide accessible programming and events within the facility.
Young adult programming	Ensure all ages are able to access the facility, with designated times to include ages outside of seniors and teens. Current teens expressed that they wanted to ensure that the facility would also have programming for young adults, as they would like opportunities for participation when the facility is built.

3. Public Square

a) Most popular design features of the Public Square:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Public Art	Survey respondents were asked about their ideas for public art in the public square. The top three features respondents would like to see in public art are: A celebration for the natural environment (89%); a water feature (86%); and public art featuring local artists (82%). Generally, the community loved opportunities for public art in the Public Square.
The Public Square concept	Respondents expressed a high level of excitement in relation to the Public Square including opportunities for performances, community use and as a gathering space.
A vibrant downtown hub	Respondents were excited about the possibility of this space to be a downtown city centre, a hub for gathering, and a way to support small, local businesses.
Opportunity for performances and events	Respondents were excited about the potential programming of this space.

b) Areas to be addressed for the Public Square:

Design Feature	Feedback:
More shade	Many respondents identified the need for more shade in the design.
Traffic, parking and public transit	There were concerns about the amount of public parking and competing programs, events and times for the public parking.
Concrete as a design material	Several respondents specifically mentioned that they would like to see an alternate materials than concrete used. Green materials and natural materials like wood were suggested.
How weather would affect the facility	There was concern about how weather (heat, sun, cold, wind) would affect the use of the space.
Green spaces, plants, flowers.	When asked which amenities they would most like to see in the public square, respondents answered: Plants, flowers and trees (88%); canopy for shade (76%); public fixed seating (75%); water feature (72%); and restaurants and shops fronting the public square (71%).

c) Ideas for the Public Square:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Skating rink	Outdoor skating rink or trail was mentioned by several people.
Children's area	Including designated play spaces for children.
Design structures	Several respondents suggested design structures like a bandstand, gazebo or other built structures that would support programming and add shade to the Public Square.

4. Performing Arts Centre**a) Most popular design features of the Performing Arts Centre:**

Design Feature	Feedback:
General design	Respondents expressed a high level of excitement and praised the design of the Performing Arts Centre
Keeping performing arts local	91% of survey respondents answered they need to go to Toronto to see performing arts. There was very strong support for a local Performing Arts facility. Survey respondents identified that the top three performances they would be most interested in seeing at the Performing Arts Centre are: a dramatic or theatrical play (90%); a touring musical (85%); and a symphony or orchestra (76%).
Community use of the space	Many respondents were excited about how the community could use the facility for groups like local choirs, local music and dance organizations, and for large meeting spaces.

Design Feature	Feedback:
Public Art	Respondents loved the concept of adding art to the Performing Arts Centre with colour, use of natural materials or green art, and supporting local artists. Feedback from participants is that they wanted to see more public art in the design.

b) Areas to be addressed for the Performing Arts Centre:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Traffic and parking	Some respondents expressed their concerns over the potential for increased traffic within the area. There were some comments about the viability of the underground parking garage and ability to access public transit. Some mobility and accessibility concerns were noted as part of this feedback.
Accessibility concerns, especially the foyer staircase	Some respondents expressed concerns with the design of the Performing Arts Centre whereby the stairs creates a barrier for individuals with mobility challenges.
Competition with Durham Live	Some respondents were concerned with the potential competition with Durham Live.
Affordability	The affordability of the public to use or attend the Performing Arts Centre was a significant concern for many respondents. A variety of programming at many price points should be offered.
Technology	Respondents felt that it was important to build technology features and infrastructure into the building design.

c) Ideas for the Performing Arts Centre:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Dedicated spaces or seating for children and families	Respondents recommended designate areas or seating for people with young children to decrease disruption during performances, or create more opportunities for people with children to attend performances.
Art gallery	Requests for a visual art space in the Performing Arts Centre or other City Centre facilities.
Add culture into the facility design	Many respondents wanted to see different cultures represented in the design and programming of the Performing Arts Centre.
Design, in general	70 respondents commented on the design features and recommended the inclusion of a center aisle on the upper and lower levels, comfortable seating with lots of leg room and a lounge area.
Accessibility	43 respondents recommended the addition of accessibility features in the Performing Arts Centre such as an elevator,

Design Feature	Feedback:
	ramps, wheelchair accessible seating, front row accessible seating for the visually impaired, and having all services on the same floor. It should be noted that many of these features are included in the design.

Consultant Review of Performing Arts Centre Design

CAM Consulting also conducted a review of the design of the Performing Arts Centre. The consultant focused on highlighting some design challenges, from an operational perspective, that the management of the facility will have to deal with post opening. A summary of the consultant observations follows:

Design Feature	Feedback:
Cloak room	The cloak room at the P1 level may be a challenge to manage access pre and post performance for patrons that are not accessing the parking garage. Mitigation measures will be investigated in the final design and/operational plans.
Entrance lobby	There is one main entrance into the main lobby and multipurpose space which shares space with the elevator and box office. Depending on the ticket check control point this could cause traffic flow issues.
Main hall lobby	First floor lobby narrows by the public washrooms which could cause a pinch point during peak times.
Orchestra Pit	The Orchestra Pit as currently designed can only accommodate 15 musicians, which can compromise its viability for use by those seeking this amenity. The Orchestra pit should be reconsidered.
Loading dock	Due to the footprint of the property, the current plan for the loading dock drive is to be flat to the loading doors and not raked down to where equipment could be loaded directly from the truck into the building. While the design includes a lift mechanism, the labour time and thus costs will increase significantly with the proposed design. Consideration should be given to raking one of the loading dock bays
Sound board	The sound technician for a musical performance will always want to sit in the house to properly balance the sound reproduction. Currently the sound board is planned to be in the cross aisle which could cause the sound technician to be disturbed by audience members walking by. Consideration should be given to alternate designs.
Continental seating	The lack of a central aisle in the planned Continental seating model may be viewed negatively by some patrons due to challenges accessing the middle section of the rows.
Maximizing seating capacity	The Theatre consultant team should look at the possibility of bringing the front row balcony forward to allow for an additional row of seating.

Design Feature	Feedback:
Office space	Office space at the facility is currently limited. Office space should be considered based on the operational plan outlined in the CAM report to ensure adequate office space for all proposed staff in an appropriate space in the facility.
Concert Hall vs multi-purpose theatre with fly	With local demand focused on music and more limited demand anticipated for theatrical functionality, an assessment of a multipurpose theatre without a fly tower could be investigated. If further investigation is undertaken consideration should be given to operational and functional efficiencies, storage implications and capital costs.

CAM Consulting also completed a review of the operating principles and draft operating budget for the Performing Arts Centre. Based on their extensive programming and presenting experience in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area market, CAM Consulting provided the following recommendations.

Programming	Feedback:
Live Presenting	Buying and presenting touring arts and entertainment programs should be a significant programming element at the Performing Arts Centre.
Community rentals	Community non-profit rentals should be a major component of the offerings at the Centre, as a primary goal of the Performing Arts Centre is the development of cultural organizations within Durham Region. Some of these organizations could be resident art organizations that would have a preferred calendar of dates. It is recommended that the resident companies should be required to qualify through an open application process.
Other rentals	The Performing Arts Centre should be available for occasional rentals, either to out-of-region non-profits seeking a new location, commercial promoters wanting to bring in events on a rental basis, or private/corporate groups wanting to use the Performing Arts Centre for events.
Community based programs and meetings	The Performing Arts Centre should host various community programs, whether they are town hall meetings, community celebrations, or commemorative events produced locally with support of local businesses.
Educational programming	The Performing Arts Centre should establish a range of educational programs, involving partnerships with area schools.
City of Pickering programming	The City should have access to the Studio Theatre on specific days of the week and times of the year to run dance and performing arts classes and camps.

Savings By Design Program

Throughout the consultation process, some of the feedback from stakeholders have identified interest in learning more about the “green” features of the buildings and Public Square. In support of the Council approved 2019-2024 Corporate Energy Management Plan, in 2019, the City enrolled this proposed development in the Enbridge Savings by Design program, which is an Incentive program to encourage the design and construction of high-performance, energy efficient buildings that are at least 15% better than the Ontario Building Code.

Two Integrated Design Process workshops were held, on December 6 and 9 in 2019, to review the design at that time, and to discuss a variety of products, building systems, and modelling alternatives that could be incorporated into the City Centre buildings to achieve the noted 15% target and to provide long-term energy savings to the City. These workshops were facilitated by Sustainable Buildings Canada and attended by City staff, Cushman & Wakefield, and representatives from the consultant team, including architects Alliance. Based on the feedback from these sessions, Sustainable Buildings Canada provided stakeholders with reports, complete with a series of recommendations to achieve at least 15% better than Code within each facility.

These recommendations consider the following aspects:

- Durability
- Constructability
- Water Efficiency
- Environmental Impact
- Health and Well-being
- Occupant Satisfaction.

Further to Council approval of report CAO 04-21, on August 23, 2021, staff met with the development managers and the building design consultants, consisting of architects, structural and mechanical engineers, building envelop specialists, and theatre consultants, to consider the design recommendations within the Sustainable Buildings Canada reports. At this meeting, the consultants advised that the 15% targets are entirely feasible and achievable. Additionally, many recommendations have been included within the mechanical systems design at the design development stage.

Recommended Next Steps:

If the City Centre projects are approved by Council to move to the next phase of design, the information presented in this report will be reviewed with the development managers and architects-Alliance to consider in the final Pickering City Centre design. It should also be noted that additional community engagement phases are recommended to continue to engage the community on the design fixtures, furniture and accessible features, as well as refine the programming plans and schematics in advance of the opening of the facilities.

With respect to the Savings By Design program, proceeding to the working drawing phase of the building design will enable the preparation of detailed specifications and the final selection of options to meet or exceed the energy efficiency targets. Options will be prioritized based on available resources, pay-back period, ease of implementation, and alignment with other performance goals such as occupant comfort. Based on feedback received from the building design consultants at this point, staff anticipate that any upfront costs derived from improved energy efficiency options will be integrated within the overall construction costs identified in the cost estimate provided by Turner & Townsend.

Prepared/Approved/Endorsed By:

Original Signed By:

Sarah Douglas-Murray
Director, Community Services

Original Signed By:

Jackie Flowers
CEO/Director of Public Libraries

Original Signed By:

Kyle Bentley, P. Eng.
Director, City Development & CBO

SDM:mc

Recommended for the consideration
of Pickering City Council

Original Signed By:

Marisa Carpino, M.A.
Chief Administrative Officer