

# Staff Report



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To	General Committee
Subject	Barrie Performing Arts Centre – Design Development Advancement
Date	December 10, 2025
Ward	All Wards
From	R. Pews, Director of Corporate Facilities
Executive Member Approval	J. Schmidt, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer
Staff Report #	FAC007-25

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## Recommendation(s):

1. That the results of the 50% Design Development phase and the Class C cost estimate for the Barrie Performing Arts Centre (PAC), as presented in Staff Report FAC007-25, be received.
2. That staff in the Corporate Facilities Department proceed with the Barrie Performing Arts Centre project as set out in Staff Report FAC007-25 and as detailed in the design documents prepared by Hariri Pontarini Architects (HPA), attached as Appendix A to Staff Report FAC007-25.
3. That a Gala Seating System be included in the project design scope and that the total requested project budget be increased by \$10M to \$85M.
4. That capital project, EN1629 - Performing Arts Centre Park, be removed from the 10-year Capital Plan with funding of \$2.8M from the Tax Capital Reserve being reallocated to the Performing Arts Centre project.
5. That staff award a single-source contract to Hariri Pontarini Architects (HPA) for the provision of full professional services for the Barrie Performing Arts Centre, from the current design stage through to construction completion, in accordance with the City's non-standard procurement process, as outlined in Staff Report FAC007-25.

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## Executive Summary:

**This report provides Council with an update on the Barrie Performing Arts Centre project, as directed by Council Motion 25-G-178 (adopted June 18, 2025).** In accordance with Council's direction, Hariri Pontarini Architects have advanced the project to the 50% Design Development stage and have completed a corresponding Class C cost estimate.

**The original PAC program budget was established at \$75 million (inclusive of hard and soft costs).** \$65 million was allocated to building costs, with a separate \$10 million allocated for site related risks such as foundations, dewatering and potential soil contamination requiring remediation. The original programmatic scope included a 600-seat performance hall, a 200-250 seat rehearsal & events studio space, along with supporting amenities such as lobby, backstage, and production spaces.

**During the schematic design phase, two additional programmatic elements were explored to enhance facility utilization and revenue generation.** HPA was tasked with assessing the feasibility of incorporating these elements into the project and their impact on the \$75 million budget.

**A. A Gala seating system in the Performance Hall.** A Gala seating system is a mechanized platform that retracts seating into the floor below, converting the space from a 600-seat configuration to a flat floor layout to maximize the building occupancy for special events.

**B. An integrated restaurant space.** An integrated restaurant may activate the downtown core and waterfront, drawing visitors and supporting local economic development.

**The Class C cost estimate confirmed that the project parameters outlined below can be delivered for \$73.3 million, within the original \$75 million budget.**

- A 600-seat Performance Hall
- A 200–250 seat Rehearsal & Events Studio
- All supporting amenities (lobby, backstage, production spaces)
- A restaurant to activate the waterfront and generate additional revenue

**The notable exclusion from the list above is the Gala seating system, estimated to cost approximately \$11.7 million.** Inclusion of the Gala system would require an increase to the total project budget from \$75 million to approximately \$85 million. The Gala system provides significant functional benefits by enabling rapid conversion of the performance hall from a traditional seated configuration to an open, standing format. This flexibility would allow the venue to host a broader range of events, including galas, concerts, and large-scale community gatherings.

**Staff were also asked to investigate the feasibility and cost impact of adding a dedicated 200m<sup>2</sup> rehearsal space to the west side of the building, which is outside the base project scope.** The potential addition was included as an optional item in the Class C cost estimate, providing Council with a clear understanding of its financial implications. Should Council decide to proceed with this expansion, the estimated cost for incorporating the new rehearsal space is \$2.5 million, covering all associated expenses from site preparation to fit-out.

**Alongside design work, comprehensive site investigations including environmental assessments, hydrogeological studies, and foundation design analysis were completed to inform the Class C cost estimate and mitigate site risks.** Stakeholder engagement was also undertaken to align the facility's design with operational needs and community expectations.

## Key Findings:

**The Barrie Performing Arts Centre project was initiated under Council Motion 24-G-223, which provided direction regarding the program parameters, site selection, and budget framework for the facility.** Specifically, Council approved the development of a performing arts centre at the former Sea Cadets site, establishing an original scope that included a 600-seat Performance Hall, a 200–250 seat Rehearsal & Events Studio, and supporting amenities such as lobby, backstage, and production spaces. The financial framework for the project was set at a \$65 million building budget, with an additional \$10 million allocated for site-related risks, including unforeseen conditions related to soil, groundwater, and environmental remediation.

**To ensure the suitability of the selected site and to mitigate potential risks, staff undertook a comprehensive program of site investigations.** These included Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments to identify any contamination or environmental hazards, a Hydrogeological Study to assess groundwater conditions and potential dewatering requirements, and a Foundation Design Analysis to determine appropriate structural solutions for the site's geotechnical profile. The findings from these studies have informed both the design and the risk management strategy for the project.

**The site investigations revealed several important considerations that have been incorporated into the design and cost estimates:**

- **Environmental Conditions:** Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments identified areas requiring soil remediation strategies, which have been factored into site preparation costs and construction sequencing.
- **Groundwater Management:** The Hydrogeological Study confirmed the presence of elevated groundwater levels, necessitating robust dewatering systems during construction and design criteria to negate the need for permanent foundation waterproofing measures. These requirements have been incorporated into the construction methodology and cost estimates.
- **Foundation Requirements:** Geotechnical analysis determined that the soil conditions require deep foundation systems to support the structure. The Foundation Design Analysis has identified appropriate structural solutions that balance performance requirements with cost efficiency.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** All site investigation findings have been reviewed in the context of applicable environmental and building regulations. Ongoing monitoring and additional studies may be required during construction to address any emerging site-related issues and to ensure full compliance with regulatory requirements.

**The design development process has been guided by these technical findings, ensuring that the facility is appropriately designed for site conditions while managing construction risks within the available budget.**

## Financial Implications:

The Class C cost estimate, prepared at the 50% Design Development stage, confirms that the core Performing Arts Centre program, inclusive of the restaurant enhancement, can be delivered within a total project cost of \$73.3 million. This figure is consistent with the previously approved combined budget of \$75 million, which comprises a \$65 million building budget and a \$10 million allocation for site-related risks. However, staff recommend the inclusion of the Gala seating system within the project scope at an estimated additional cost of \$11.7 million. As a result, the revised total project budget would increase to \$85 million to accommodate this enhancement and the associated program elements.

This proposed budget adjustment is supported by an updated funding strategy, which allocates \$85 million to the Barrie Performing Arts Centre. The funding breakdown would consist of \$82.2 million from the Performing Arts Reserve and \$2.8 million from the Tax Capital Reserve (reallocated from EN1629). Staff will seek out any potential funding opportunities at the provincial and/or federal levels, which if successful would assist in reducing the amount required from the Performing Arts Reserve. The Class C estimate, which reflects all current program elements including the Gala seating system, carries an industry-standard accuracy range of  $\pm 15\%$  to  $\pm 20\%$ . As the design advances and market conditions evolve, any significant cost variances will be reported to Council. The recommended funding strategy ensures the project remains financially viable while supporting the expanded scope and enhanced functionality of the facility.

### Summary of Cost Estimate\*

Component	Amount (CAD)
<b>Hard Costs</b>	<b>\$57,000,000.00</b>
Escalation Contingency	\$2,565,000.00
Construction Contingency	\$4,275,000.00
<b>Hard Cost Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$63,840,000.00</b>
<b>Soft Costs</b>	<b>\$8,092,660.00</b>
HST on Construction Contract	\$1,152,413.00
Soft Cost Contingency	\$277,350.00
<b>Soft Cost Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$9,522,423.00</b>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$73,300,000.00</b>
Gala Seating System	\$11,700,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$85,000,000.00</b>
Optional Component	Amount (CAD)
200 Meter Squared Rehearsal Space	\$2,500,000.00

\*Excludes legacy Barrie Central Collegiate site PAC conceptual planning costs

## Project Timeline and Milestones:

The Barrie Performing Arts Centre project has followed a structured development process, with several key milestones achieved to date and additional steps planned to ensure successful delivery. The timeline below summarizes major phases and anticipated future actions:

### Completed Milestones:

- **Council Direction (October 2024):** Council adopted Motion 24-G-223, initiating the project and approving the schematic design phase, site selection, and budget parameters.
- **Site Due Diligence (Fall 2024 – Spring 2025):** Completion of Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, Hydrogeological Study, and Foundation Design Analysis.
- **Schematic Design (Spring 2025):** Hariri Pontarini Architects completed the schematic design package, including program definition and conceptual layouts.
- **Design Development Advancement (June 2025):** Council approved advancement to 50% Design Development and authorized additional funding for detailed design and costing.
- **Class C Cost Estimate (December 2025):** Completion of the 50% Design Development phase and submission of the Class C cost estimate to Council.

### Upcoming Milestones:

- **Council Review and Direction (Fall 2025):** Council consideration of this staff report, including recommendations on scope, budget alignment, and alternatives.
- **Design Revision (Late 2025 – Early 2026):** Revise design to accommodate Council directions through Staff Report FAC007-25.
- **Final Design Development (Summer 2026):** Completion of 100% design development, construction documents and tender preparation.
- **Tender and Procurement (Fall 2026):** Issuance of tender documents, contractor selection, and award of construction contract.
- **Demolition (Winter 2026-2027):** Demolition and site clearing of existing structures.
- **Construction Start (Spring 2027):** Commencement of site works and building construction.
- **Construction Completion (Estimated Late 2029):** Substantial completion of the facility, commissioning, and occupancy.
- **Operational Impact Report (Prior to Opening):** Recreation & Culture department to submit a comprehensive operational impact report to Council, detailing staffing, budget, and programming requirements.

- **Facility Opening (Estimated Late 2029):** Official opening of the Barrie Performing Arts Centre and commencement of public programming.

This timeline is subject to Council direction, procurement outcomes, and any unforeseen site or construction issues. Staff will continue to provide updates and adjust milestones as needed to ensure project transparency and accountability.

### Alternatives:

The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

**Alternative #1 – Approve the project as currently designed with the Gala seating system removed.** Under this option, the lobby and the Rehearsal & Events Studio—with its telescopic seating—would be used to host standing events. While this approach offers some flexibility, it is not recommended as it does not provide the ability to transform the Performance Hall into a flat floor layout, limiting the building’s overall capacity for large-scale gatherings and reducing event versatility compared to the full scope with the Gala system.

**Alternative #2 – Approve the project as currently designed (including the Gala system), with the addition of the optional Rehearsal Space.** Under this alternative, Council would approve the project as currently designed, including the Gala seating system, and add the optional rehearsal space at an estimated additional cost of \$2.5 million.

This approach is not recommended, as programming for the rehearsal space is not confirmed, and therefore the return on investment cannot be assured.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live		
Community Safety		
Thriving Community	<b>x</b>	Endorsement of the Performing Arts Centre would increase economic activity by attracting visitors who support local businesses, while enhancing the city's cultural identity and vibrancy.
Infrastructure Investments	<b>x</b>	Building a Performing Arts Centre downtown stimulates infrastructure investment by encouraging upgrades to transportation, utilities, streetscapes, and public spaces to support increased activity
Responsible Governance	<b>x</b>	Building a Performing Arts Centre in the downtown demonstrates responsible governance by aligning with long-term planning goals, maximizing use of public space, and leveraging public-private partnerships to deliver community value.

## **Additional Background Information:**

The Barrie Performing Arts Centre project was initiated by Council Motion 24-G-223, which established the program, site, and budget framework, including a \$65 million building budget and a \$10 million site-risk allocation. The initial concept and program details were presented in Staff Report FAC005-24, followed by further analysis and stakeholder input in Staff Report ACC001-24.

On June 11, 2025, Staff Report FAC005-25 was submitted to Council, outlining the schematic design and recommending advancement to the Design Development phase. Subsequently, on June 18, 2025, Council adopted Motion 25-G-178, approving the schematic design, authorizing \$455,000 for design advancement, and requiring a report-back with a Class C cost estimate after the summer recess.

Comprehensive due diligence including Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, hydrogeological studies, and foundation analysis were completed to address site risks. The current cost estimate reflects the full scope as designed, including the Gala seating system and restaurant, which were added during design development and were not part of the original Council-approved program.

## **Public Consultation:**

### **Stakeholder & User Group Engagement**

**Throughout the planning and design phases, HPA and the project team have engaged with key stakeholders to ensure the facility design aligns with operational needs and community expectations.** This engagement included consultation with internal teams to understand operational requirements, venue utilization patterns, and programming needs. Input was also sought from outside user groups and other community stakeholders to ensure the design accommodates diverse user requirements and supports Barrie's cultural community. This consultation has helped inform programming elements and design decisions where feasible within the project's established parameters and budget.

**During consultations, several community organizations and third-party user groups expressed interest in becoming anchor tenants of the new performing arts centre, with requests for dedicated office space, storage, and other amenities.** The current project parameters do not accommodate dedicated tenant spaces. Should Council wish to explore anchor tenancy opportunities in the future, the following considerations would need to be addressed:

- **Space and Budget Allocation:** Additional building footprint and dedicated spaces would require budget increases beyond the current \$75 million project envelope. All available space within the current design has been optimized for efficiency and multi-use flexibility, aligning with budget limitations.
- **Rental Rate Structure:** Given the facility's location and construction costs, rental rates for dedicated tenant spaces should reflect market realities. These rates may be prohibitive for local community arts organizations, potentially limiting accessibility and the long-term viability of anchor tenancy arrangements.

- **Operational Flexibility:** Long-term lease commitments for dedicated tenant spaces could impact the facility's ability to maximize public programming, venue rentals, and adaptability to evolving community needs. The current design prioritizes flexible spaces that can be reconfigured to meet changing demands and serve the broadest range of users.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Anchor tenancy arrangements would require careful structuring to ensure both tenant viability and City fiscal responsibility over the long term. This includes considerations around lease term commitments, operating cost allocation, and the potential financial risk if tenant groups are unable to meet lease obligations or if demand fluctuates over time.

**The current design prioritizes flexible, multi-use spaces that can serve the broadest range of community users and event types.** This approach aligns with budget constraints while maximizing public benefit and operational efficiency. HPA and the project team will continue to engage with stakeholders as the project moves forward, ensuring that the facility remains responsive to community aspirations and operational best practices, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and programmatic flexibility. This stakeholder input has informed HPA's design recommendations and programming decisions throughout the schematic and design development phases.

**Prior public consultation was conducted by Mr. Marshall Green which has been highlighted in Staff Report ACC001-24.**

#### **Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:**

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation outlined in this staff report. Environmental considerations associated with construction will be addressed through permitting and subsequent design stages, consistent with prior reporting.

#### **Appendix:**

Appendix A – Barrie Performing Arts Centre, 50% Design Development Package

#### **Report Author:**

J. DeVroom, Senior Project Manager, Facilities Planning and Development

#### **File #:**

Not Applicable

#### **Pending #:**

P29/25



**Appendix A – Barrie Performing Arts Centre 50% Design Development Package**