

Fisher Auditorium & Event Centre



Summary Presentation

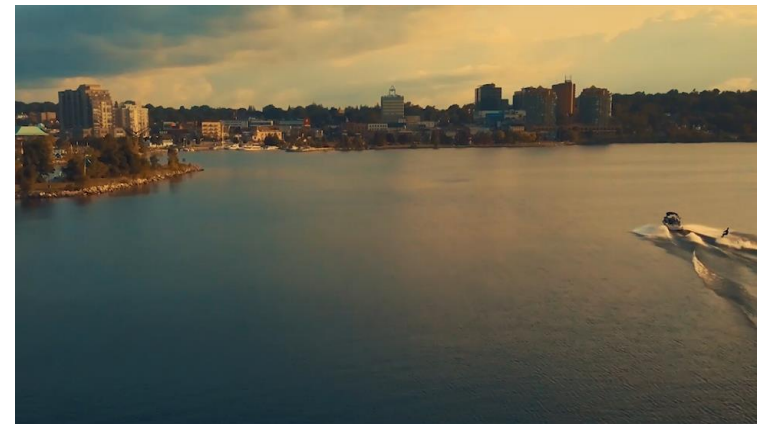


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Purpose

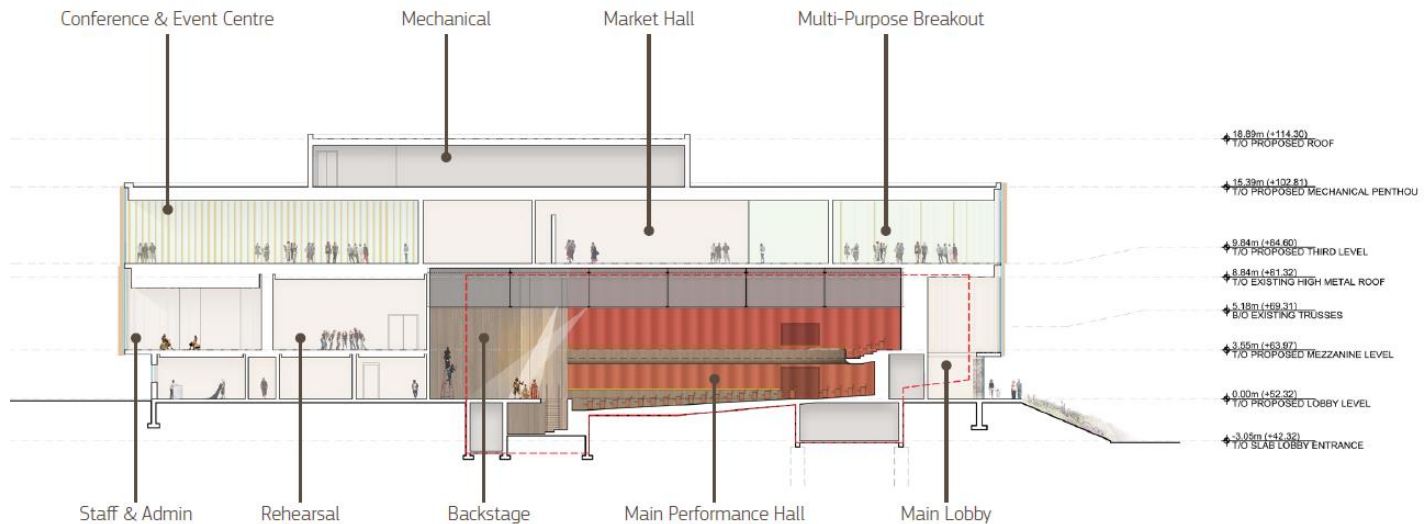
- Provide an overview of the findings to date for the design and business case of a theatre and conference centre development at the 125 Dunlop St. West W. A. Fisher Auditorium site, and a set of alternatives for consideration that include:
- A recommendation that the City should hold on the project for 12 months
 - An outline of considerations and next steps should Council determine that the City continue to move forward with the development project
 - Potential exit options should Council determine that the City should not move forward with the development project



Key Finding:

➤ The vision for a state-of-the art theatre and conference centre cannot be delivered within the current scope and budget allocation.

There are options to explore.





Why a Theatre?

> Vision

A vision for a downtown theatre/performing arts centre is longstanding. The W.A. Fisher Auditorium was located within the former Barrie Central Collegiate which was founded in 1843. It closed in 2016/2017. There is a strong resident commitment to preserving the history and role of the W. A. Fisher Auditorium in the community.

> Cultural plan

In 2006, City Council approved a plan for culture, entitled Building A Creative Future. This document references focusing arts recommendations on the downtown as a logical, creative and natural home for the arts.

> Downtown revitalization & Creative Corridor

The City does not currently have a large capacity theatre in the downtown core, relying on the lease of the Georgian Theatre to support large audience performances.

The W.A. Fisher site serves as a strategic gateway to the downtown and the western anchor to the creative corridor along Dunlop. MacLaren Art Centre is the eastern anchor

Why an Event Centre?

➤ Vision

A vision for an events/conference centre in the downtown core has existed for many years with past attempts at private development on city owned property.

➤ Tourism

As part of the Tourism Master Plan completed in 2019/2020, the project consultants identified Barrie as a market opportunity for small and medium sized conferences. Adjacent hotel would be required to make it a success.

➤ Downtown revitalization

The City does not currently have a full-service conference centre with adjacent accommodations. Such a centre in the downtown core would bring delegate spending to the downtown in terms of shopping and dining.



Previous Investigations



Cobalt Connects Phase 1, 2 & 3 Reports (2017)

Cultural nodes & capacity
Economic & social impact
Programming capacity
Operational model & governance
Public engagement
Refined design & tech review
Budget & timelines



Lett Architects Preliminary Design (2017)

LETT Architects and City staff
developed the initial floor plan and
concept design



Ferrell and Partners Conference & Meeting Market Scan (2017)

Tourism Barrie asked to provide a
study of the competitive
landscape for meeting,
conference and event facilities

Leadership Shift & Project Validation

- **Hariri Pontarini Architects (HPA)**
Further developed design renderings (2019)
- **HLT Advisory (with Floor 13)**
Barrie Conference/Events Centre Feasibility Study (2020)
- **Interkom**
Capital Project Fundraising Capacity Study (2020)
- **Novita Interpares**
Business Case and Operating Model for the Barrie Theatre (2020)
- **Floor13**
Tourism Master Plan (2019-2020)



Key Findings

Theatre/Performing Arts Centre

- A performing arts centre is needed to develop arts & culture sector, contribute to tourism development, and for complete community.
- Benchmarked with other Ontario municipal theatres, average operational costs are \$750,000 per year.
- Touring shows represent the largest revenue source for municipal theatres.
- While opportunity may exist in the future for a third-party Board to serve as operator, the City should own and operate the centre for the short-term. The City would hold facility maintenance responsibility and would ultimately be responsible for the operating fiscal.
- Recruiting a Theatre Manager early in the process is critical to maximizing fiscal potential of the operations. An effective Theatre Manager will advise on core functionality of space during project development and will need to actively book shows/programming at least one year prior to doors opening.

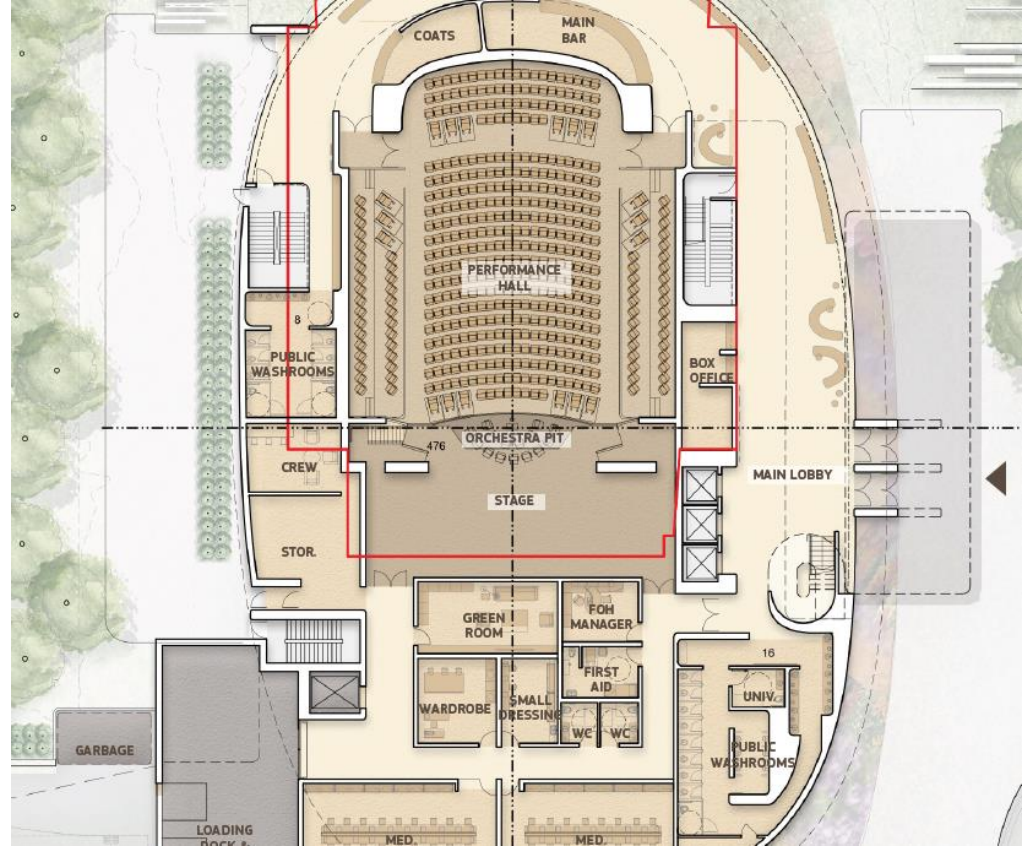


The current scope of work for a theatre and conference centre cannot be delivered under the current capital and operating investments committed to the project.

Key Findings

Proposed facility

- To execute on a 'theatre-only' option based on the current design concept completed by Hariri Pontarini Architects (HPA) has an estimated base capital cost of \$30 million.
- The consultants identified that the current design for theatre is not the most efficient use of space and does not effectively maximize relationships between spaces. This may overall hinder the venues attractiveness for touring shows, which are the key revenue driver in a performing arts space.
- Eliminating the requirement to utilize the existing foundation in its current form, will provide greater opportunity to develop a more effective, user-driven space, while honouring the history and legacy of the W.A. Fisher Auditorium through design elements.



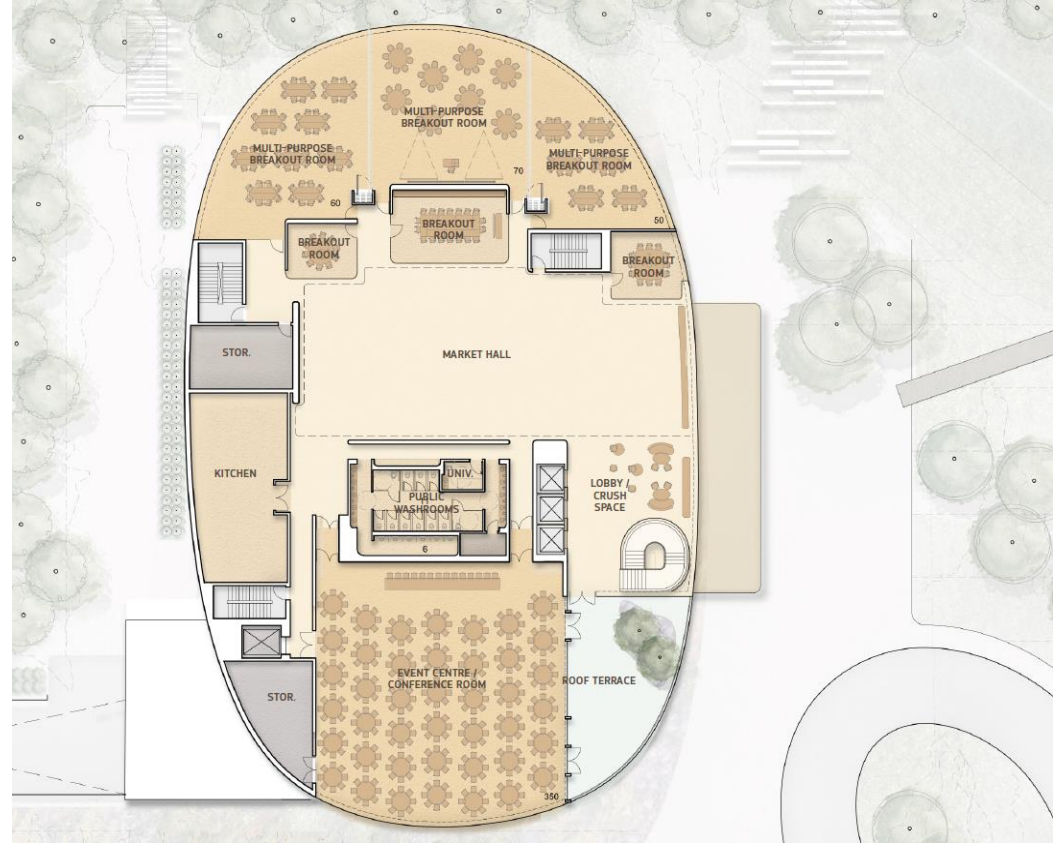
Base Capital: \$30M

Base Operating (Annual): \$750,000/yr

Key Findings

Event/conference space

- The initial LETT design provided event space but not a conference space.
- To achieve a functional conference space – additional, significant square footage is required to provide adequate meeting, break out, banquet and crush space.
- Key market is 300 – 400 delegates for a seated function. The additional square footage would accommodate larger configurations.
- City could operate the space or seek a 3rd party operator in whole or in part to the food service opportunity. Operating integration with theatre requires more analysis.
- There are few examples in the marketplace to benchmark costing. Preliminary operating cost estimates are approximately \$300,000 per year.



Base Capital: \$53M

Base Operating (Annual): \$1.05M/yr

Key Findings

Site Configuration

- The 0.85 acres fronting on the parcel were identified as potential to bring to market in support of synergistic uses.
- As part of creating a 'gateway' project and in support of open space, and controlling uses, HPA recommends the frontage is best utilized in support of open space that could be better supported by public art, passive use and access points.
- Inadequate space on the site to integrate an adjacent hotel.



*A hotel adjacent or within close proximity is **CRITICAL** to the success of a conference centre, in addition to adequate parking.*

Key Findings

Fundraising

- Initial fundraising assessment suggests that typical projects of this nature can generate 10% of project costs - pending competing campaigns and other economic factors.
- Building naming rights represents the largest percentage of fundraising potential.
- Consideration for the impact of retaining the W.A. Fisher name and where the naming is retained will need to be considered as part of the overall fundraising program and impact to donor pool and capacity.
- A complete fundraising feasibility study will need to be completed once a final concept is determined. This study will determine the assets, valuation, prospective donors and overall foundation for the fundraising campaign.
- The pursuit of Federal/Provincial funding opportunities remains an opportunity – suitable programs and priorities with other City infrastructure will need to be assessed with program applications.



Typical projects of this nature, can generate up to 10% of the capital spend.

Key Findings

Market conditions (COVID-19 Impacts)

- Live performance and meeting/conferences are likely to be the last to return to a pre-pandemic state.
- It is expected that both markets will return - the speed, conditions and long-term impacts of consumer attitudes and behaviours are not yet fully known.
- The impact of virtual meeting/event spaces and technology can provide new opportunities to configure physical space and meet market demand for hybrid and streaming technology that can bring audiences together locally and around the globe.
- ***Pre-COVID developed business plans will need to be reassessed and validated as part of the recovery process.***



Virtual spaces and technology can provide new opportunities to configure physical space and meet market demand.

Key findings

Potential Partnerships

- The Smart Centres development *advances the strategic vision for a hotel in the downtown.*
- The current hotel model proposed for the site is approximately 150 rooms to support both leisure and corporate travel. Some meeting space is contemplated in the model, but is typically less than 5,000 square feet.
- The hotel and SmartCentres team are supportive of engaging with the City to identify the market need for additional meeting facilities and associated amenities within the general scope of their operating model as part of the build out of their site plan, building floor plans and finalized programming.
- While some meeting space will be included, the overall hotel model is not inclusive of a true conference centre and is unlikely to be contemplated at this location in the future.
- A second, potential partner may also bring benefit to the project, but has had to pause planning due to business needs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The timeline for revisiting this opportunity is currently not defined.



Source: Concept Drawings – Smart Centres – 51-75 Bradford St. & 20 Checkley St., Aug. 2020

Options & Recommendations

1

Hold Project For 12 -Months

Or until market conditions improve to a status that a business case can be assessed.

2

Provide Guidance

- Confirm interest to pursue theatre and/or conference centre for the site.
- Confirm commitment to existing building structure.

3

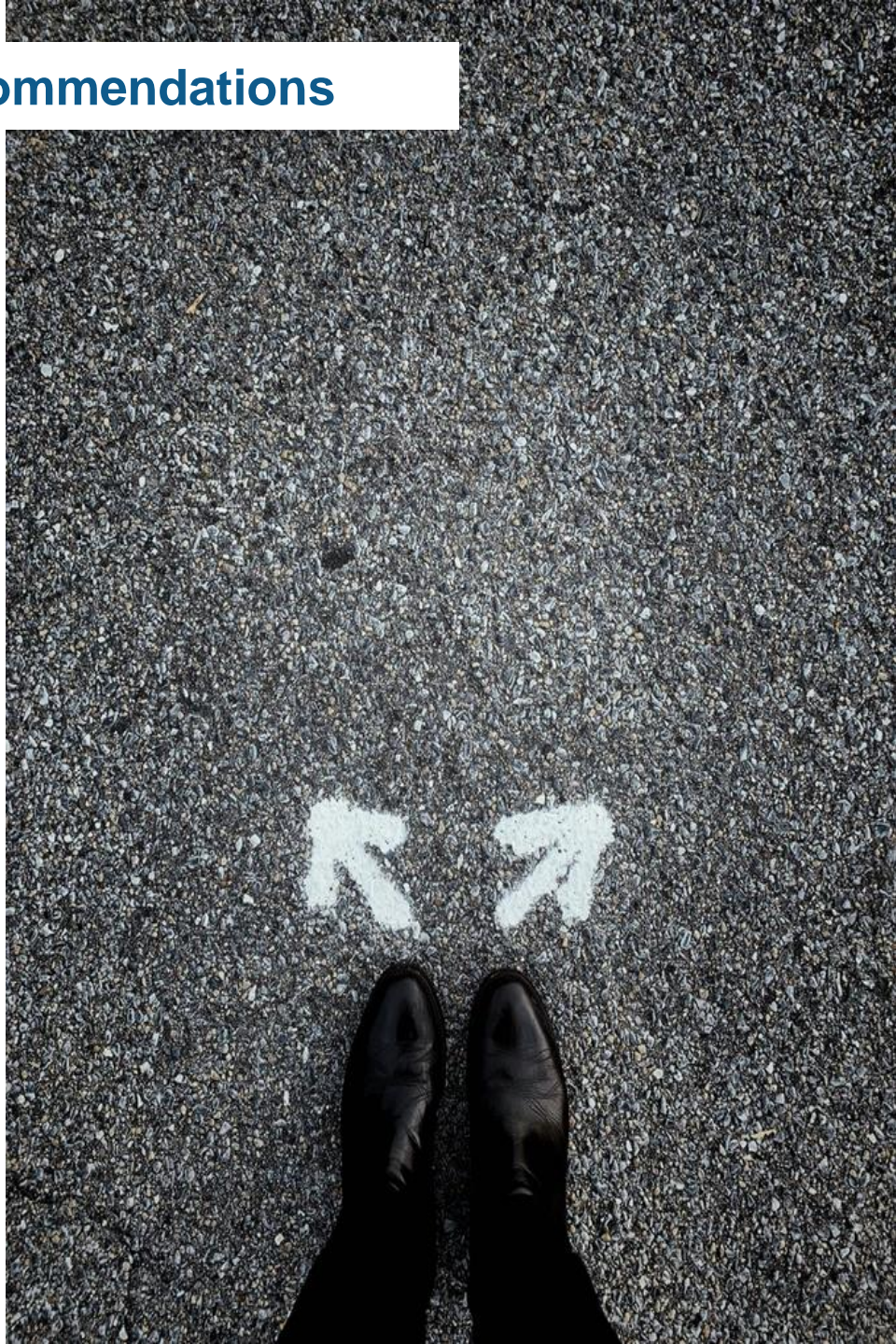
Continue to Explore Partnerships

Based upon Council's guidance and interest in a theatre and/or conference space.

4

If Exit project – Retain Site

Retain the City's investment in a strategic site and gateway to downtown for future development.





Thank you