

March 8, 2011

Architects get to work on arts centre and school projects

Just two weeks after being named prime consultant for the academic and cultural arts centre in Downtown St. Catharines, Diamond and Schmitt Architects are getting to work.

Representatives from the firm, including principal Donald Schmitt, have already conducted project initiation meetings with staff from both Brock University and the City of St. Catharines to review the history of both the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts and the Performing Arts Centre projects.

Now the architects are turning their attention to a critical first step in the design process – developing program requirements for both the centre and the school. The program requirements will examine the needs of the various users of the facilities and how these needs relate to one another.

“We’re consulting with all the stakeholders and will ask the public for input on what they want in their new performing arts complex. It’s a very important part of the design process and we look forward to this open discussion,” said Donald Schmitt.

A feasibility study conducted in 2008 by arts consultant Martin Vinik Planning for the Arts LLC, Levitt Goodman Architects Ltd. and Urban Strategies Inc. will be reviewed by the architects who will then meet with representatives from Brock and the City to develop detailed facility space requirements.

“This is the largest arts project the City of St. Catharines has ever embarked on,” said Rick Lane, director of City’s Recreation and Community Services department, “and it is imperative that our architects work with our community to ensure we get it right.”

Diamond and Schmitt met yesterday for the first time with the City’s User Group Committee, comprised of representatives from arts groups who will call the centre home. The committee will be involved in all stages of the Performing Arts Centre design process and will meet weekly with the architects.

Architects also met yesterday with Brock University to begin extensive consultations with occupants and operations stakeholders as part of the design process for the Walker School.

“We are eager to move ahead. This collaboration with the City of St. Catharines is a great moment in Brock’s history. There are academic benefits for the University, and economic benefits for the City and the broader community,” said Douglas Kneale, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities.

Public input will be sought in late spring when the architects host public design charrettes on the Performing Arts Centre. The dates will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

BACKGROUND:

The academic and cultural arts centre in Downtown St. Catharines is comprised of two complementary projects that will exist side by side: the multi-venue St. Catharines Performing Arts Centre and Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, which will relocate 500 students and faculty from Brock's main campus to the city centre.

The federal and provincial governments are providing \$36 million for the \$54-million Performing Arts Centre, while the Ontario government is contributing \$26.2 million to the Walker School, which has a construction budget of \$39.6 million.

Construction of the overall project is expected to begin by early 2012, with occupancy scheduled for early 2014.

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