

ROYAL GEORGE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OPEN HOUSE

July 16, 2025

The Shaw Festival has been actively meeting with the community to personally listen to your feedback about the plans for the new Royal George. Thank you for sharing your comments, concerns and questions with us. Together we will create a theatre our community will be proud of, now and for generations to come.

We have heard your concerns, especially about the size and appearance of the new Royal George, community impact and the planning process. We are currently working with our architect and engineering partners to update the designs to incorporate community feedback in addition to direction from the Town and the Heritage Committee. We expect to submit the revised site plan and designs in tandem in late August for review so that we can meet our fall deadlines for zoning and building application completion.

We will share regular updates with you throughout the next steps of this process. To give everyone insight into our discussions, below is a summary of the questions posed most frequently to our Executive Director and Artistic Director during the Open House tours as well as their answers.

When is construction planned to start and finish?

We are targeting construction of the new Royal George to be completed by July 2028, as required by our funding agreement with the province. We plan for the houses on the property to be brought down in the fall and the demolition of the Royal George will start in February so it can be completed before the high tourist season on Queen Street. We hope to have our first performances for the holiday season of late 2028.

Why do you say that the current drawings aren't representative of how the new Royal George will look?

The renderings were created under very tight timelines for the Town's zoning and massing committee review after we confirmed funding from the province in April. These renderings were only intended for the purposes of the zoning and massing discussions with the Town staff and Council. The design process is complex and is ongoing as we integrate the feedback from the community, including from the Community Consultation Open House. When we publish them, our designs will include rendered streetscapes, trees and gardens to give as accurate a look at the new Royal George as possible.

What can be done to make the visual height of the Royal George look smaller? What can be done to make the façade be more in keeping with the NOTL's heritage look on Queen Street and Victoria Street?

We are working with our architects, Unity Design, to look at options to reduce the visual massing and look at enhancements and aesthetics that we hope will be more in harmony with the streetscapes.

How much bigger will the fly tower be?

Plans for the new Royal George fly tower will be 5.5 feet taller than the current fly tower. The current fly tower and technical catwalks are only crawl spaces, and not accessible to our team members who might have mobility concerns. The additional height turns these crawl space into full standing height work areas. The fly tower will also be 25' feet wider to accommodate a service elevator and backstage wheelchair turning radius for mobility challenged artists or technical staff. Both changes are mandated by Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act (AODA) building code. The Tower itself moves closer to the parking lot behind Irish Design and not closer to Victoria street side and our plans are to mask the impact with trees, plantings, plantings and a green wall on the back and sides.

Is it possible to make the Rehearsal Hall smaller in size while still meeting your key goals?

We have taken this idea back to our designers and see what is possible. To rehearse a Shaw show, we need around 16' of clear height with a floor size at least the size of the stage at the Royal George, plus some storage and space for the creative team. This allows for the artists to move safely across the full space, to have height for staircases or dancing lifts, and for us to maneuver the props and set items as well as production tables.

What will happen to the trees?

Most of the trees onsite will be preserved with the exception of the old Beechwood tree on the property that is near the end of its life and will need to be taken down. There are some smaller trees we hope to move from the centre of the property to the edges

Will streets be closed during construction?

Queen Street will remain open throughout construction. Victoria Street may have occasional closures or reductions for larger deliveries, but we are working to keep those to a minimum. Our construction firm, Govan Brown has hired a traffic consultant to create a traffic plan for the duration of this project. Once developed, plans will be proactively communicated by a Community Liaison Coordinator hired by Govan Brown, and a website will be created so the community will know well in advance what to expect and when.

Will the new facility allow you to do any different types of plays?

The biggest advantages for the new Royal George are that it will be accessible for everyone, and provide places for people to connect before, during and after the performances. The new Royal George will have a small orchestra pit so we can consider doing some small musicals that are suited to a smaller venue. Or we may look at plays that require trap doors or special rigging that we aren't able to do with the current theatre.

We are continuing our outreach with the community to ensure we get everyone's thoughts on how to create the best new Royal George Theatre possible. If you have questions, feedback or would like to speak with us, please email alltogethernow@shawfest.com or visit shawfest.com/royalgeorge for more information.