

## ROYAL GEORGE COMMUNITY UPDATE

August 22, 2025

---

On August 22, the Shaw Festival hosted a virtual Community Update to share updates made to the proposed new Royal George as a result of The Shaw's community consultations and ongoing work with the Town staff, their heritage consultant and Region staff.

*Below is a summary of a few of the most asked questions and answers during the meeting:*

### **Have you reduced the size of the fly tower?**

To ensure worker accessibility, meet code requirements and not reduce our artistic capabilities onstage, we cannot reduce the size of the fly tower. To minimize the visual massing, the fly tower will be positioned away from Queen Street and Victoria Street, so most of the fly tower massing will be closer to the Irish Design building. We will also mask the fly tower with trees, plantings and a green wall on the back and sides and have lightened the colour.

We are deeply committed to making this building as accessible as possible to workers as well as audiences. As our workforce ages, many have had to leave the industry due to physical constraints. We aim to solve that in this new space for workers as well as audiences. The fly tower will only be 5.5 feet higher than the current iteration. This is because the workspace in the grid at the top of the fly tower is currently a crawl space and it needs to be full standing height work area and will include a grid floor that allows for mobility challenged workers. The fly tower needs to be wider to allow for an elevator that can take workers and their equipment all the way up to the technical levels and grid floor, so that Shaw team members with limited mobility can access and work in all areas of the building. It is also wider to improve the backstage working areas of the stage itself for allowance of mobility challenged artists, including a backstage universal washroom. Many of these changes are mandated by Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act (AODA) building code or are being done to meet best practice requirements for accessibility.

### **How will parking and bussing work at the new Royal George?**

The increase in seating is only 5% (335 to 350 seats). We would therefore not be able to serve more than 15 additional people per show to the venue at the height of the season, so traffic and parking impact is minimal. When we stop performing in the Courthouse it will also reduce Queen Street parking impact. We plan to provide several additional parking spots in Old Town at the Shaw Artists' Village. We support the idea outlined in Parks Canada's capital investment plan to add further parking spots at the Fort George site and we are exploring options to offer a shuttle service from this area to the Royal George. The vast majority of increased student events will be out of high season (November to March) and the bus drop-off outside of the current Royal George will be sufficient to allow drop-off and pickup without creating an increase in daily road traffic activity.

**Where will garbage be collected?**

Garbage will continue to be collected on Queen Street as it is now. We have planned a garbage storage area inside the building to ensure unsightly waste stays off the street as much as possible.

**What will you do to mitigate disruption from the construction?**

Our construction team will do everything they can to make construction impacts as mitigated as possible, but we acknowledge there will be disruption. The demolition and rebuild will take 30 months. We have scheduled demolition to happen in the off season and are aiming for it to be completed by May using shoring techniques that are as quiet as possible. We have begun conversations with the immediate neighbours who we feel will be most affected to explore what support we might be able to offer through the construction period.

We will primarily run daytime construction from Monday to Friday and 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.

**What will you do to mitigate the views and noise of the mechanical requirements of the theatre?**

The two HVAC units for the theatre will be placed on top of the building, hidden by the gabled roofs and set further back from the residential area. The other large piece of mechanical equipment is the generator – and we are going to have a hospital grade generator which is very quiet by definition - as minimizing noise is a requirement for our theatre acoustics as well. We will be placing the generator on the third-floor roof, hidden by the fly tower, which will also mitigate noise to the surrounding area. The generator is, by definition, not a device that is running during normal business conditions.

**Who is the Town's heritage consultant?**

For the Royal George rebuild, the Town's heritage consultant is ERA Architects, one of Canada's top heritage planning, conservation-focused architecture firms. Our architects and Shaw staff have been working collaboratively with ERA, and staff from the Town and the Region, to refine these design updates and will continue to work together throughout the planning for the new Royal George.

**Will zoning be commercial or institutional? What is the rationale for the zoning you're requesting?**

With the help of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association, and at request of Town staff, we have now requested theatre-specific zoning, and specifically nonprofit theatre

zoning, which means a theatre will be the only type of building that can be on this property in the future.

### **When will there be more renderings to see – especially of Victoria Street?**

We will have more renderings to share in a couple of weeks. As this is a construction management process, we will be continuing design discussions and renderings right up until construction begins.

### **Next Steps**

This timeline was shared during the meeting:

August 8	Refiled Zoning Amendment, Updated Designs, Heritage Impact Assessment
End of August	Intent for Site Plan to be submitted to Town
September/ October	Review and feedback by Town, Region & Heritage Committee
October TBC	Site Plan approval by Town
Late Fall	Demolition of 178 and 188 Victoria Street and site preparation for 2026 theatre demolition.
December 21	Final performance at current Royal George Theatre
Late January/early February	Demolition of Royal George begins
Early Spring	Construction begins
Late Summer 2028	Construction completed
Fall/Winter 2028	First performances at new Royal George Theatre

For more information visit [www.shawfest.com/royalgeorge](http://www.shawfest.com/royalgeorge)