

ROYAL GEORGE UPDATE – DESIGN UPDATES

August 12, 2025

Over the past month, the Shaw Festival has worked closely with the Town staff, their heritage consultant ERA Architects, and Region staff to incorporate the community's feedback into the Royal George updates and refiled its zoning and heritage impact assessment on August 8, 2025.

We've listened closely to the community and made meaningful changes to the new Royal George Theatre - especially around a heritage-reflective façade, an improved residential look on Victoria Street and some reduction in overall massing. We have found an innovative approach to preserving our history and current streetscape on Queen Street. At the suggestion of the Town's heritage consultant, we have moved toward the concept of a ghost façade where the current Royal George façade stands, the front of the new Royal George will be a true echo of how it looks today.

A ghost façade is an architectural term for a way of preserving the building's historical frontage while the rest of the structure behind it is replaced. In the Royal George Theatre design update, the original theatre's façade and illuminated entrance marquee will be re-interpreted, maintaining the scale, window openings, molding and column details. The ghost façade will be freestanding and connect to the new theatre entry through a small outdoor courtyard, covered by a continuing canopy illuminated with marquee lights.



Preliminary design rendering showing the planned façade of the Royal George Theatre. Unity Design Studio

In addition to the ghost façade honouring Queen Street's rich heritage, a few of the other feedback-driven changes include:

- **More residential look on Victoria Street:** The new designs for Victoria Street feature pitched or "gabled" roofs and the Rehearsal Hall windows have been lowered to residential height with a bay window treatment to be more harmonious with the look of

the neighbourhood. The scenic delivery bay will be obscured by a decorative, residential-style, wrought iron fence complemented by brick pillars, hedges and plantings. Extensive ornamental planting and landscaping will further enhance the residential streetscape.

- **Conservation:** We are exploring ways to conserve elements and include historic details of the properties from the current Royal George and Victoria Street buildings to integrate into the new interior designs, as art installations or commemorative installations.
- **Building Entry Accessibility:** Entry to the theatre will now be at grade (sidewalk level), eliminating the originally planned exterior ramped surface and improving accessibility to the box office. The exterior ramp has been moved to the interior of the lobby and allowing the façade to be universally accessible, while still bringing the theatre itself back above the water table further back on the site.
- **Massing Reduction:** The overall size of the building has been decreased by approximately 3,000 square feet above ground, including reducing the size of the Rehearsal Hall, the lobbies and moving the multi-purpose room on the second floor to the third floor. To reduce the visual massing, the exterior accessibility ramp has been moved inside and the Rehearsal Hall has been set five feet farther back on Victoria and away from Prideaux.



Preliminary design rendering showing the planned elevation of the Royal George Theatre on Victoria Street. Unity Design Studio

Virtual Community Update

On August 22 at 1pm, The Shaw will host a virtual community update to share these updates with the community. To register for this event or learn more about the Royal George Theatre, visit shawfest.com/royalgeorge