

Estonian Centre Project Update

Thoughtful discussion at Estonian Centre Project second community information session Feb. 21

The second of four information sessions on the proposed development of a new Estonian Centre on Madison Avenue in downtown Toronto was held on Feb. 21 at the Estonian House.

About 80 members of the Estonian community, many of whom had attended the first session on Jan. 31, came out to hear updates and ask questions of the project team.

Consultants, volunteers and representatives from the four organizations leading the project (Tartu College, Estonian House, Estonian Foundation of Canada and Estonian Credit Union) were on hand to provide information.

Estonian House board member Urve Tamberg, also a member of the Estonian Centre communications committee, started the session with remarks on her involvement with the project as well as her thoughts and experiences growing up in the Estonian community.

“We owe our thanks and appreciation to our immigrant parents and grandparents. They carved out this space for us, and the community flourished. But over the years our needs have changed, and the world has changed. Our community has evolved and we should embrace the future,” Urve said.

(Full text of Urve’s comments appears elsewhere in this publication and on the project website at www.estoniancentre.ca)



Design update:



Project architect Alar Kongats described the design drawings for the new centre and updated meeting attendees on the work that has taken place since the last community information session.

This has primarily centered around consultations with Estonian community user groups such as lasteaed (kindergarten), guides and scouts, sports groups and the folk dancers.

Also attending the sessions were representatives from the Estonian community's culinary community, who expressed keen interest in participating in the consultations at the recent special shareholder meeting of the Estonian House. Alar noted the value of every group's input as it helps inform the overall design and user groups' specific requirements, from storage to functional space.

Alar highlighted some of the more interesting outcomes from the sessions: for example, availability of parking is simply not a concern for many users including those with young children. With several parking lots in the area and more planned with neighbouring developments, plus the proximate access from four directions of subway lines, the Madison Ave. location is extremely convenient. Alar expressed appreciation for the thoughtful and useful feedback to the design team, and further noted that the process is an excellent opportunity for people to find out more about the new centre and to get in on the ground floor with its space planning.

Further meetings will take place over the next several weeks and will include arts and music groups.

One of the discussion points at the Feb. 21 meeting, prompted by a question from the audience, was around the use of the green roof, a feature of the new centre's design. Alar explained that the City of Toronto strongly encourages inclusion of green roofs, as the city has a serious issue with stormwater drainage. The Centre's green roof will not only help manage runoff but also provide an environmentally friendly feature that will include fully accessible outdoor space for private use by our community.

Another question centered around security features at the Centre. The new building will have modern security measures in place, including closed-circuit cameras and an alarm system. The glass walls featured in the design will be tempered, ensuring security. Alar also explained that other security features, such as window coverings, could be approached in a creative way to feature work of artists. This would combine

practical and aesthetic considerations and add another element of beauty to the new Centre.

Project management details:

Project Manager David Kalm went over the structural and project management aspects of developing the new Centre.

“We are making good progress every day,” David said.

- Planning documents for the new centre are being finalized for the City of Toronto and these will be reviewed concurrently by both the planning department and the Toronto Transit Commission.
- David along with co-Project Manager Rob Deutschmann, are also focused on concluding the long-term sustainability plan for the new Centre. They are working with Altus, a leading consultant, to confirm revenues, costs and overall financial viability. This is a critical part of due diligence to ensure operational and fiscal stability.
- The due diligence phase of the project continues and is nearing completion. This important phase entails confirming sources and uses of funds and resolving the legal issues including the over-arching tax-efficient legal structure and governance for the Centre.
- David reiterated details regarding the sale of the Estonian House and that a senior care provider had the strongest offer. A conditional agreement of purchase and sale has been signed with this leading owner, operator and investor in the senior living sector. The agreement provides that the Estonian House building will be leased back to the community at no rental fee beyond covering operating costs to allow for the one move to Madison Avenue.
- A capital campaign feasibility study is underway and a consultant has been hired to reach out to some members of the Estonian community. There has been a favourable response by potential benefactors. Interest has been expressed on naming rights for the centre, and one of the next steps is to identify a roster of naming opportunities for potential donors.



- A preliminary timeline shows construction of the new Centre beginning in April 2019 and that construction would take approximately 15 months.

Two more information sessions are scheduled and members of the Estonian community are encouraged to attend all the sessions as new information becomes available. A good deal of work is coming to conclusion now, and it will be shared as the results come in.

Sessions will be held at the Estonian House 7 - 8.30 p.m. on these dates:

March 14, 2018

April 4, 2018

For more information, please go to estoniancentre.ca or email to info@estoniancentre.ca

Note: In last week's issue of Eesti Elu, a projection of costs associated with the Estonian Centre was presented by a member of the Estonian community who is not involved in the development of this project. The Estonian Centre project team would like to stress that the contents of the article are not correct and are highly speculative. The article considered neither all the sources of funds nor the correct costs. The analysis generated by the Estonian Centre project team is based on quotes received and considers all the sources of funds. The project team is working with professional consultants and architects and has been provided with competitive estimates by several experienced contractors. Further, the project is working with a professional fundraising consultant to maximize fundraising potential.