

August 08, 2025

Town of Niagara on the Lake
1593 Four Mile Creek Road
P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0

Dear Aimee Alderman,

*Re: Summary of Design Updates for Application of Re-Zoning –
SHAW Festival Royal George Theatre*

Architecture for
the human spirit

Design Updates

The updated design for the new Royal George Theatre has addressed comments received from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Zoning application submission, Town and Region staff, the Town's Heritage Consultant (ERA), the Municipal Heritage Committee and feedback received from the residents of NOTL, both through the NOTL residents association (400+ member), during the Royal George Open Houses and from direct email and community meetings.

Concerns about the building massing, and both the Queen and Victoria Street facades fitting in with the street context in the Heritage District have been studied. The Shaw Festival and the Design team have reviewed all the comments and have adjusted the design to address the formal comments and the informal common concerns from the residents. The following updates have been incorporated into the Re-zoning resubmission application.

Overall Building Massing

Where possible the building setbacks have been increased to reduce the overall building massing visible on both Queen St and Victoria St. While we have

introduced a new 'ghost façade' for the Queen St elevation. We have set back the upper second floor façade 24ft from the original re-zoning application with an exterior terrace and the third floor has pushed north 9ft with a terrace as well.

A total of 1,114 square-feet has been removed from the gross floor area of the building.

Queen St Façade

The overwhelming sentiment from the residents of the NOTL is the existing Royal George façade is a part of the Heritage fabric of the main street. While the façade is not original and was built as an exterior 'stage set' to homage a Georgian style theatre with the same materials. It is a nostalgic theatrical symbol of the various theatres that have existed on that site for over a century. To better align with the scale on Queen Street, a Ghost Façade of the original Theatre's façade will be re-interpreted and constructed from durable materials. The same proportions of overall building height, window openings, moulding details and column articulation will be used. The relationship of the ghost façade to the sidewalk and property line will be similar and the reconstruction will allow the entry portal to be at grade, eliminating an exterior ramped surface and improving accessibility to the box office. An illuminated entrance marquee will be constructed with the same relationship to the original façade and provide the traditional welcome beacon through the main entry door openings. This illuminated canopy will connect the ghost façade to the new theatre vestibule.

A small exterior courtyard planted with trees and partially covered with a canopy will create an area for outdoor seating and gathering pre and post show. It will be a place to gather, rest, meet neighbors or interact with fellow visitors.

The frontages on the second and third floor will be set back a further 24ft and 9ft respectively, and the terraces facing Queen street will be fit-out with planter boxes and ornamental planting that will cascade over the slab edge, in keeping with the rich NOTL commercial and residential landscaping seen throughout the town, and softening the higher elevations.

The exterior ramp has been moved to the interior of the lobby allowing the Façade to remain uninterrupted and the main entrance universally accessible, while still bringing the theatre itself back above the water table.

Victoria St Façade

Several design elements were considered and updated to address how the new façade will integrate with the residential character of the street. To reduce the scale, the building façade was pulled back a further 5ft from Victoria St and the north side of the rehearsal hall wall reduced in overall width 5ft from the Scenic Delivery Loading Bay, moving that aspect further from the next residential property to the north.

This rehearsal hall window will be realized and as a 'bay window' on the street façade, allowing it to be animated by actors in their rehearsals in view of passersby on the sidewalk. This serves the Shaw's charitable mission to educate people on theatre and to actively engage with the wider community of tourists and residents who might walk past the hall. The scale of this element will be lowered in height 9ft, to a new height of 19ft above grade.

In keeping with the residential roof articulation, the roof of the rehearsal hall and adjacent scene dock is updated to with a 5:12 pitched roof that is in harmony with the surrounding area.

The scenic delivery dock will be behind a decorative wrought iron fence and automatic gate complete with brick pillars and plantings, making it out of view from the neighbors. Extensive ornamental planting and landscaping will further enhance the residential streetscape. A similar approach to concealing the walls of the current load-in area on the east side of the building with ivy will also be implemented on the scenic dock façade above the canopy.

Ground – Level 3 Lobbies / FOH Plan updates

The lobby spaces on each level have been reduced in overall area due to the south facing facades at each level moving to the north.

The 1:21 ramp that was previously located on the Queen St exterior has been relocated to the interior ground floor lobby. The main building entry is through the main doors of the 'ghost façade' under the cover of the exterior marquee canopy that connects to the glazed entry vestibule. The box office has been moved to the

west side of the entry vestibule and will have a service window onto the enclosed vestibule as well as an open counter serving the interior.

The second floor lobby has also significantly reduced in overall area. This has been achieved by moving the façade north and creating an outdoor balcony that will be partially concealed from the street by the 'ghost façade'. There are opportunities to incorporate a donor / art installation onto this surface visible to those on the terrace. The perimeter of the terrace will be surrounded by a continuous planter box on the outer side of the guardrail, softening it from the streetscape. The Multi-purpose room has been removed from this floor level and relocated to the third floor.

The third floor former lobby area has also reduced due to the south facing façade pushing back to the north. The same perimeter planter detail will be used around the terrace edge. This floor will be a multi-purpose space that will be used for education workshops, artistic practice, or a flexible donor, guild, or community area.

Summary

The Shaw Festival and Design Team agree the design updates that have been made, not only address the Official Re-zoning application comments, but due to the collaborative approach, has strengthened the building design. The team has listened carefully and has thoughtfully and meaningfully addressed the formal comments through an iterative design process.

We look forward to the continued collaboration with the Town of Niagara through the Re-zoning application process and future Site Plan Approval application.