

TO: Planning and Budget Committee

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DATE: April 1, 2010 for April 12, 2010

AGENDA ITEM: 5

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Project Planning Report for the renovation of the existing Town Hall at Innis College at the St. George campus of the University of Toronto

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Under the Policy on Capital Planning and Capital Projects, the Planning & Budget Committee reviews Project Planning Reports prepared for a capital project and recommends to the Academic Board approval in principle of the project.

BACKGROUND:

For more than 30 years, Town Hall has been at the core of Innis College's academic mission and has established a reputation as a premier viewing space for film festivals and civic debates in the community. Thousands of students in the three college programs, and an even greater number of people in Toronto, have benefitted from this unique venue at the University of Toronto.

After years of small-scale renovations and upgrades, Town Hall and its projection facilities are in dire need of renovation. The Cinema Studies Institute and Innis College will be unable to realize their aspirations and goals for excellence in the future unless Town Hall is brought into the twenty-first century, and plans for renovation are successful.

The vision for Town Hall is that of a dynamic venue complete with state-of-the-art equipment. It would encompass a bright and welcoming lobby for events linked to film festivals and debates, and provide appropriate wheelchair accessibility, which it currently lacks. It would also include attractive exterior signage to brand Town Hall as a venue for special events, and interior way-finding signage.

A newly renovated Town Hall, attractive, comfortable, and outfitted with the latest in projection technology, is absolutely essential for Innis College's mission to educate, engage, and enlighten its students. It is also vital to fulfill the Institute's ambition to offer the best undergraduate and graduate programs in Cinema Studies in North America. A properly outfitted Town Hall would attract top scholars and talented students to the Cinema Studies Institute.

The project to renovate Town Hall at Innis College is not new. A Project Planning Committee was first struck in the spring of 2004 to examine and make recommendations for a much larger project, including the construction of an addition.

The needs and goals of Innis College have changed in the intervening years, leading to a refocusing of attention on Town Hall and the changes required in (and adjacent to) that space: the addition of accessible seating and accessible stage access; the extension and renovation of the projection booth to allow for the addition of state-of the art projectors; lighting upgrades incorporating ease of re-lamping and maintenance; and aesthetic and functional upgrades to areas ancillary to Town Hall.

HIGHLIGHTS

This project consists of renovations and upgrades to the existing space. No new space is to be constructed.

There are five aspects to the renovation of Innis College Town Hall:

Entrance and Street Presence

None of the current entrances to Innis College and the Town Hall are obvious. Exterior recognition is key to directing patrons into the Town Hall lobby. It is proposed that the St. George entrance be clearly identified as the Town Hall entrance.

Lobby

The Town Hall Lobby is currently functional but does not provide an adequate context for the theatre itself. Moreover, the lobby area lacks highly visible signage to direct people to Town Hall. Clearly delineating this area will help to create an energy that can be carried into the theatre.

Town Hall

The current Town Hall provides 200 fixed seats, with the ability to add 50 non-fixed seats to the flat stage area when required, in 312 nasms of space. This proposal will convert three-to-four existing fixed seats into two barrier-free spaces that will accommodate those who may require the use of a wheelchair within the sloped fixed seating area. Integral to this project is modernizing and upgrading the current space. New seating, complete with fold-away tablet arms, new flooring, and general aesthetic improvements to the Hall, will create a warmer and more functional environment. Sound containment in Town Hall is an ongoing problem. Sound proofing will be provided to acoustically separate the auditorium from surrounding areas. Light leakage from adjacent areas, particularly the windows facing the northern courtyard, has also proven disruptive to screenings during daylight hours. Installing a double set of doors at the south entrance to Town Hall will eliminate the chance of light obscuring the images on the screen, poor lighting for Town Hall is also an ongoing problem that will be rectified as part of this project. New lighting will allow for easier access to the lights for maintenance and cleaning.

Projection Booth

The projection booth as it exists now is 15 nasms, which is inadequate to house the many pieces of audio-video equipment required to continue to administer Town Hall as a desirable venue for both cinematic and non-film related classes and events.

Washrooms

The existing washrooms are located beneath Town Hall stage in the basement of Innis College. The washrooms are used heavily by students, staff and faculty, in addition to the visitors to Town Hall. After regular use over the past thirty years, the fixtures, lighting and overall aesthetic finishes must be replaced. Both the male and female washrooms are in dire need of complete renovation.

FINANCIAL AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The total estimated project cost is \$3.2M. The project will proceed with implementation once funding is in place.

FUNDING SOURCES

This project has been identified by the Faculty of Arts and Science as a fund raising priority.

SCHEDULE

Governance approval: March 2010

The project will proceed once funding is in place. It is estimated that the time frame required will be:

- Consultation Selection: 6 weeks
- Schematic & Design Development: 6-8 weeks
- Contract Drawings: 6 weeks
- Tender & Award: 4 weeks
- Mobilization & Construction: 15 weeks
- Commissioning & Moving: 1 week

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning and Budget Committee recommend to the Academic Board:

- (i) That the Project Planning Report (February 2010) for the renovation of the Innis College Town Hall (312 nasm) and adjacent areas (202 nasm) on the St George campus at the University of Toronto be approved in principle,
- (ii) That the project scope as identified in the Project Planning report be approved in principle at a cost of \$3.2M subject to the receipt of funding.