



Oshawa Historical Society  
Managing  
The Oshawa Museum  
2022 Business Plan

## Introduction

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Since 1960 the Oshawa Museum (OM) has told the stories of Oshawa's history. As the only community museum in Oshawa we take great pride in showcasing the history of our city from the earliest First Nations settlements to the end of WWII. Once again the challenge of operating under measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 had a direct impact on the OM's ability to achieve certain outcomes and generate revenue. Although the museum buildings were closed to the public for part of 2021, museum staff continued to deliver programs digitally and work behind the scenes to deliver and plan inspiring exhibits and programs, to ensure collection care and attend to the multitude of tasks necessary for the operation of the museum. Our business plan is presented with the idea social distancing guidelines will remain in place until at least the end of 2021. It presents four strategic objectives representing key areas of focus for the OM in 2022 which will guide and build on our ongoing activities to develop and manage the collection, undertake research, work collaboratively with our colleagues and stakeholders, present compelling experiences to the public and plan for our future. The objectives, along with related strategies and actions outlined in the Action Plan, will ensure that the OM continues to play a central role in the cultural life of Oshawa and:

- Is visitor oriented;
- Is flexible and responsive to change
- Is accessible and engaging to diverse audiences;
- Is financially responsible;
- Is connected with the community;
- Supports the City's tourism initiative.

The four strategic objectives will help us shape the work we do in the next year to realize our mission. In practice, many of the activities and targets will meet more than one of the strategic objectives.

## **1. Mission Statement**

*The OM preserves and actively promotes awareness and appreciation of Oshawa's history for the education, enrichment and enjoyment of a diverse audience*

### **Our Values**

The OM will be guided in all its activities by the following values:

- Respect: being trustworthy, respected in the community, professional, accurate
- Pro-active outreach: being collaborative, creative, connected with community
- Inclusive: being accessible, open, welcoming, offering a safe space
- Education: being engaging, original, imaginative, diverse
- Presentation: our collection helps us to understand and connect with our City both past and present
- Diligence: being accomplished, consistent, mindful

## **2. Service Description and Client Identification**

The Oshawa Museum is:

- The only museum in Oshawa focused on the history of the community
- Comprised of three designated heritage houses and the Anniversary Drive Shed
- Supported by five regular full time staff, one part time staff, seasonal/temporary staff
- Home to 50 000 objects and photographs covering social history, science, technology, Indigenous history
- An accurate and dependable source of information on Oshawa's history.

The Oshawa Historical Society (OHS) is a not for profit charitable institution and maintains the OM as a repository for artifacts and written records of historical interest to Oshawa. The Museum is operated by an elected Board of Directors, as an external agency of the City of Oshawa. As outlined in the Constitution and By-Laws (2005) the Board is responsible for making all decisions relating to the operation of the Museum. The Board consists of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary to the Membership, Standing Committee Chairpersons and Directors at Large. Each Board position is assigned specific responsibilities as are the committees. Currently there are five regular full time positions (Executive Director, Curator, Visitor Experience Coordinator, Community Engagement Coordinator and Archivist) and one regular part-time position (Maintenance). We supplement our core staff with seasonal and temporary staff hired with employment grants, as well as interns and co-op students.

### **Our Collections**

The OHS recognizes the stewardship of the collections and structures as a public trust. We value the trust placed with us to safeguard the collection and we recognize our responsibility to strategically develop the collection for future generations. Our collection is diverse, just like Oshawa's history, and we are committed to expanding the narratives we share to be more

inclusive towards underrepresented communities and to examine our lexicon for biased or outdated terms. We care for over 50 000 artifacts and will continue to strategically manage and develop the collection as a resource for education and research.

### **Our Spaces**

The three historically designated buildings, Guy (GH), 1846, Henry (HH), 1840 and Robinson (RH), 1854 houses, as well as the Anniversary Drive Shed (2009), include public spaces, offices/workspaces, artifact storage and exhibition space. The buildings are owned by the City of Oshawa and in 2010 a 20 year occupancy license was signed between the OHS and the Corporation of the City of Oshawa. The OM promotes our spaces as an asset to the community, to engage our visitors and raise the visibility of the Museum. Future plans include the construction of a new visitor center designed to offer an elevated museum experience, enhanced collection storage and improved community spaces.

### **Our People**

The OHS has a professional, committed and highly educated staff. Our knowledge is what gives meaning to our collection and we strive to share these unique stories with the public through various means including exhibitions, podcasts, newsletters, presentations, publications, social media and our virtual collection. We will continue to promote the OM as an accurate and reliable source on the history of Oshawa and explore new ways to create and present our knowledge to the community. Our staff share their expertise with the community and colleagues through appointments on boards, publications and conference presentations.

## **3. 2021 Accomplishments by Objective**

To ensure the health and safety of our employees, volunteers and visitors and to help limit the spread of Covid-19, the Oshawa Museum canceled all in person programs and events starting on March 13, 2020. The OM continues to follow all the latest guidance from the local, provincial, and federal health authorities as well as the Corporation of the City of Oshawa and as long as requirements for social distancing remain in effect, on-site programming will continue to be impacted. Tours are available by appointment and staff have worked diligently to pivot most programs and events from in-person to virtual. During the time of the pandemic staff remained on the job providing research services, developing virtual programs, planning exhibitions, caring for the collections, planning for the future and engaging in a multitude of other tasks. Our 2021 list of accomplishments reflects the reality of conducting business during the time of a global pandemic.

### **3.1 Objective: To be vibrant and vital**

Throughout the pandemic we continued to demonstrate our relevance to the community by offering online programs to facilitate a deeper and more inclusive understanding of Oshawa's history. The OM is part of a dynamic cultural landscape in Oshawa and we make valuable contributions to the community through our programs, events, research, stewardship and service. The OM realizes the importance of generating meaningful experiences for our

community, stakeholders and the public. We continued our active role in Heritage Oshawa and the Cultural Leadership Council as well as other community groups. The OM advanced our brand profile as essential and a leader in preserving and presenting Oshawa's history.

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Released "An Oshawa Yuletide" DVD celebrating a Victorian Christmas at HH in lieu of an in-person Lamplight tour event
- OHS members received wellness check phone calls
- Launched new online store and new OM website
- Continued to promote a culture of inclusiveness and diversity by creating and sharing resources representing diverse communities including resource pages for Black History Month, Indigenous History Month and Asian History Month. In late 2021 we will launch resources celebrating the Jewish community. Social media posts also represented inclusiveness and diversity by highlighting a wide range of content
- Participated with various community partners in the successful speaker series *Culture Counts at Lunch* and *Durham Camp in a Box*.
- We created engaging and informative programming with 2 new virtual tours featuring Union Cemetery and the OM's *A Carrying Place* exhibit
- Original research and programming were shared on our social media channels and through other digital means. In 2021 we expanded our presence with a TikTok channel.

### **3.2 Objective: Relevant and meaningful collections**

The OHS collection is a significant asset for the city and as the only organization collecting the history of Oshawa, it differentiates us from our peers. Our focus is to develop and sustain the collection to the highest standards as outlined by the Operating Standards for Community Museums developed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. We are committed to telling great stories and expanding the narrative of Oshawa's history to include stories and communities that may have been marginalized in the past. To support this, staff continued to refine and develop the exhibition and collection strategy to broaden our reach, appeal to new audiences and share new stories. We continued to utilize web based tools to improve and increase access to our research, collections and publications.

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Developed presentations examining the history of slavery in Canada and the Chinese Canadian experience from a local perspective
- We partnered with The Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA) to plan an exhibit at the OM celebrating Oshawa's history with the harbour. The OM also received a Digital Museum of Canada Grant to create an online partner exhibit entitled *The Oshawa Harbour From Ship to Shore: Looking at Oshawa's Relationship with Lake Ontario*.

- Developed new online workshop analyzing objects and promoting critical thinking skills.
- Introduced a new POS system (Square) to facilitate contactless and remote payment options
- New content was created for the Discover Historic Oshawa Site
- After a one year delay due to Covid, our new feature exhibit *Leaving Home and Finding Home in Oshawa* is scheduled to open in fall 2021.
- Staff conducted a review to assess all museum programming to ensure we are responding to the needs of the community and evaluating how we deliver programs. We will launch our new program, *Do You Remember?*, featuring artifact based memory boxes for seniors, in fall 2021.

### **3.3 Objective: strong and successful**

The OM has a committed, professional staff and ongoing skills development is encouraged. Throughout the year, the OM was proud to continue partnerships and alliances with the Cultural Leadership Council, York-Durham Association of Museums and Archives, Women's Herstory Connection, Durham Region, Durham Region Area Archives Group, Durham College, and Trent University

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Successfully applied for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) through the Government of Canada
- Grants successfully applied for include Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG), Digital Capacity in CMOG Museums, Heritage Organization Development Grant, Canada Summer Jobs and Young Canada Works
- Staff provided skills and expertise to a number of boards and organizations including The Ontario Historical Society, Young Canada Works (grant adjudicator), Program Advisory Committees at Fleming College and Durham College and as an instructor in the Cultural Heritage, Conservation and Management Program at Fleming College
- OHS By-laws were revised and updated to ensure effective and efficient management and to ensure compliance with the forthcoming Ontario Not for Profit Corporations Act.
- Developed an enhanced volunteer from home program
- Achieved Safe Travels designation through Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
- Staff member was invited to sit on Oshawa Walk of Fame Nominating Committee

### **3.4 Objective: Provide adequate space and facilities**

The three historically designated buildings are the most important artifacts in our collection however, as museum buildings, they do present some challenges. The physical limitations of adapting heritage buildings to support museum functions are reflected most acutely in two areas: a serious lack of programming space and insufficient exhibit space. In 2017, after carefully

considering the 1996 Feasibility Study and the Canadian Conservation Institute's Facility Assessment, the Board of Directors decided to move forward with plans for the construction of a new purpose built museum facility to support the efficient and sustainable preservation and interpretation of the Museum's collection.

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Continued to garner support for the museum expansion project and updated senior City staff and members of Council on developments as necessary
- Staff and board members participated in the Building Museums Conference hosted by the Mid Atlantic Association of Museums
- Continued to investigate capital grants for the project

#### **4. SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)**

Strengths:

- The OM is Oshawa's only museum dedicated to the history of the city and is recognized as the definitive source on Oshawa history
- Most extensive archival and artifact collections representing Oshawa's history
- Great location in Lakeview Park to optimize on City's waterfront development plans
- Good relationship with members of Council, City staff and OHS
- Highly skilled, respected and committed staff, board and volunteers
- Flexible and responsive to change as required
- Broad thematic scope of programs that engages visitors in Oshawa's history
- Respected by the public and colleagues
- Known for our positive interactions with the public

Challenges (Weaknesses)

- Difficult to increase self-generated revenue with spatial limitations and lack of programming and exhibit space
- Hosting in-person events is difficult with Covid-19 restrictions in place
- Difficult to apply for many major grants due to lack of matching funds
- Self-generated revenue is contingent on external factors such as weather, adequate space for events and external events happening in Lakeview Park.
- Vulnerable to vandalism, environmental factors due to location
- Adapting historic homes for museum functions leads to Infrastructure challenges
- Insufficient funds for artifact purchases to address gaps in the collection
- Low public profile for the OHS and lack of awareness for heritage locally
- Poor internet service presents challenges for virtual programming

Opportunities:

- City's future plans for waterfront development
- Upcoming Oshawa 2024 celebration will bring a greater recognition for Oshawa's history
- Proposed facility expansion project to address several challenges
- Use of web based tools and more virtual programming helps us to increase profile, broaden reach and connect with our audience
- Partnerships and collaborations with post-secondary institutions and community groups maximizes the reach of the OM
- Good working relationships with Council members and senior City staff
- Location in Lakeview Park allows for maximum visibility for museum programs and events, especially during the summer months
- Participation in Cultural Leadership Council

Threats:

- Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions
- Potential cuts to operating budget from all levels of funders – Federal, Provincial and Municipal
- Reliance on employment grants means uncertain seasonal staffing levels
- Annual increase of non-discretionary, fixed costs
- Uncertainty in local economy
- Challenged to recruit volunteers, OHS members and Board members
- Increasing budget pressure from aging infrastructure and related maintenance costs
- External hosted events in Lakeview Park negatively impact museum operations during the busy summer months (Autofest, Ribfest, construction etc.)

## 5. 2022 Agency Objectives

The OHS recognizes the need for responsible action that will ensure the sustainability of Oshawa moving forward. For the 2022 budget the OHS has adopted reasonable assumptions in budget planning while balancing the reality of operating during a time of continuing pandemic. Our budget projections reflect the possibility social distancing guidelines may be in place through the winter of 2021-2022. Social distancing protocols negatively impact on-site events and programming and our ability to generate revenue. We continue to create efficiencies where possible, avoid unnecessary costs and generate revenue where applicable. The OHS believes a strong commitment to the arts and culture community contributes to the overall vision of the Oshawa Strategic Plan (OSP) and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan (ACHP) as well as the strategic plan, *Ontario Museums 2025*, from the Ontario Museum Association. We identified four strategic objectives for 2022 that contribute to all five of the OSP goals, the six strategic directions identified in the ACHP and the four themes presented in *Ontario Museums 2025*.

### 5.1 To be a dynamic and integral part of the community and cultural landscape in Oshawa

We continue to create knowledge and public information that increases the understanding of Oshawa's history. We will expand the museum experience beyond our buildings to include enhanced and virtual tour options. The OM will continue to demonstrate our importance to the community by participating with partners to broaden our audiences and community reach.

**5.2 To present relevant and meaningful exhibits, collections and content**

The OM continues to collect, exhibit and share artifacts and research representing diverse and underrepresented audiences. We remain focused on the upcoming anniversary in 2024 (100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oshawa becoming City) as an opportunity to engage the public in history and promote the OM's importance to the community.

**5.3 Continue to be resilient and flexible**

The OHS promotes a culture of good governance and oversight to support our mandate and to seek opportunities for increasing revenue and operating efficiencies. We will investigate alternate ways of connecting with the community and increasing our audience base. Succession planning will ensure the OHS is in a good position to recruit and maintain staff and board members.

**5.4 Provide inspiring and efficient spaces and facilities for museum functions, the community and our visitors**

The OHS will continue to further the case for improved spaces and amenities to support the efficient and sustainable operation of the OM.

**6. Resource Requirements**

The OHS appreciates the support from members of Oshawa City Council and City staff for the work we do and we recognize the need for responsible action that ensures the sustainability of the agency on behalf of Oshawa going forward. In 2021 we were able to keep our expenses within the approved budget amounts however our ability to generate revenue continues to be impacted due to social distancing and capacity restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The OHS applied successfully for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) which helped mitigate the loss of self generated revenue. For 2022 the OHS has produced what we feel is a responsible operating budget that controls expenses and aligns resources consistent with the direction provided by the Oshawa Strategic Plan 2020-2023 **Our Plan for Success** and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, **Culture Counts**.

The OHS is submitting a budget with a minimal request of a .4% increase (\$ 2000) in the City's contribution to the OHS. Overall we expect a 1.38% increase in operating expenses related to insurance and personnel costs however an projected increase in self generated revenue in 2022 of \$5000 over anticipated 2021 totals will absorb most of this increase.

**7. Conclusion**

The OHS gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Oshawa for the OM and our efforts to preserve and promote awareness and appreciation for the history of Oshawa. The last 18 months were challenging for the OM however by employing an innovative and flexible approach to exhibits and programming we were able to continue operations and provide services to the



community. The OM is an important part of the cultural community in Oshawa and we will continue to tell great stories, expand the historical narrative and spark interest in local history regardless of the circumstances. As the only community museum in Oshawa, the three heritage homes and the drive shed that comprise the Museum are ideally situated to tell the story of Oshawa from the earliest First Nations settlements to present times. We help communicate community identity, spark interest and engagement, enhance public knowledge and contribute value to the City.

The OM's strength is in its collections, spaces and people and our ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Oshawa residents tell us they enjoyed our online presence during the last 18 months and felt a sense of connection and pride in our collections and the three museum buildings. History organizations make their communities more attractive places in which to live, work, learn and play. With astute leadership, compelling vision, and partners and resources sufficient to the task, the OHS will continue to be a leader in the arts, culture and heritage community of Oshawa.

**The Corporation of the City of Oshawa**  
**2022 Operating Budget**  
**Oshawa Historical Society**

Description	2021 Projected Actuals	2021 Approved Budget	2022 Proposed Budget	2022-2021 Variance \$'s	2022-2021 Variance %
Personnel Costs	392,700	392,700	396,600	3,900	1.0
Program and Office Supplies	24,400	24,400	24,400	-	-
Professional Services	35,700	35,700	38,800	3,100	8.7
Maintenance and Repairs	27,700	27,700	27,700	-	-
Utilities	24,600	24,600	24,600	-	-
Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy	(160,000)		-	-	
Agency Generated Revenue	(45,000)	(45,000)	(50,000)	(5,000)	11.1
City of Oshawa Grants	(460,100)	(460,100)	(462,100)	(2,000)	0.4
<b>Total Oshawa Historical Society</b>	<b>(160,000)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	

Variance Explanations:

Personnel costs: increase in personnel costs relating to benefits etc.

Professional Services: increase in insurance costs