



— Collections. Spaces. People. —

Oshawa Historical Society **Managing the** **Oshawa Museum** **2017 Business Plan**

Introduction

The Oshawa Museum (OM) has been engaging visitors by telling the stories of Oshawa's history since 1960. As the only community museum in Oshawa we take great pride in showcasing the history of our city from the earliest native occupation to the end of WWII. This business plan presents five strategic objectives representing key areas of focus for the OM in 2017. The plan will guide and build on our ongoing activities to develop and manage the collection, undertake research, work collaboratively with our colleagues and stakeholders and present compelling experiences to the public. 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 accessible and engaging to a diverse audience;
- Is financially responsible;
- Is connected with the community;
- Supports the City's tourism initiative.

The five 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, professional, accurate, informed, dependable
- Pro-active outreach: being collaborative, creative, connected with community
- Inclusive: being accessible, open, welcoming
- 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 community museum in Oshawa
- 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 covering social history, science, technology, indigenous history
- The authoritative 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 President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary to the Membership, Standing Committee Chairpersons and Directors at Large. Each Board position is assigned specific responsibilities as are 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). Seasonal and temporary staff complement the Museum's staffing component as grants and funds are available.

Our Collections

The OHS recognizes the stewardship of the collections and structures as a public trust. We value the trust placed in us to safeguard the collection and we recognize our responsibility to strategically develop the collection for future generations. The OM preserves and actively promotes awareness and appreciation of Oshawa's history for the education, enrichment and enjoyment of a diverse audience. Our collection is diverse, just like Oshawa's history, and we care for over 50 000 artifacts ranging from a 1867 telegram sent to an Oshawa resident by Sir John A. Macdonald to a 2010 Olympic Torch. The OM will continue to strategically manage and develop the collection as a growing resource for education and research.

Our Spaces

The three historically designated buildings, Guy (GH), Henry (HH) and Robinson (RH) houses, as well as the Anniversary Drive Shed, include public space, offices/workspace, 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 Anniversary Drive Shed was opened in 2009 as an additional area of exhibition. The OM will continue to creatively use the exterior of the buildings to engage park visitors and raise the visibility of the Museum.

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 the authoritative source about the history of Oshawa and extend the ways in which our community can connect with the collection.

3. 2016 Accomplishments by Objective

3.1 Objective: Enhance Profile and Visibility

The OHS supports a strong heritage, arts, and culture community in Oshawa and we are proud of our role as cultural ambassadors for the City. The OM realizes the importance of generating meaningful experiences for our community, stakeholders and the public. We continued to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and spaces for a wide range of public services and activities. We continued to have an active role in Heritage Oshawa and the Cultural Leadership Council and continued efforts to increase our brand recognition through regular communication with the community and the use of social media. Our staff represented the OM at several professional conferences.

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Name change to Oshawa Museum
- Introduced new logos and taglines for OM and OHS
- 32% increase in Facebook followers, 60% increase in Twitter followers
- Cooperative promotion with The RMG, Parkwood and Ontario Regiment Museum
- Staff invited to present at several conferences and symposiums including the Association of Gravestone Studies Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, The Association for State and Local History in Detroit MI., the Ontario Museum Association and the Museum Educators Peer Learning Circle at The RMG.
- Staff held various positions as members or board members of Trent Durham Advisory, Heritage Oshawa, Cultural Leadership Council, Archives Association of Ontario, Abandoned Cemeteries Committee, Emerging Museum Professionals Advisory Committee for Ontario Museum Association, York-Durham Association of Museums and Archives, Durham Region Archives Group and the Trent University Alumni Association – Oshawa Chapter, Durham College LIT Program Advisory Committee
- Continued creative use of HH garden with weekly summer yoga sessions, musical performances, Canada Day songwriters showcase, Grandpa Henry's picnic

3.2 Objective: Present collections and exhibitions

The OHS collection is a significant asset and as the only organization collecting the history of the city, 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 continued to explore ways for developing tangible and intangible collections which offers greater access through our web site, permanent galleries and temporary exhibits with our partners.

We presented temporary exhibits at several locations during the year including Art in the Hall at City Hall, Oshawa General Hospital Nursing School Alumni, The RMG. Several new events held during the year focused on staff engaging more directly with the collection and were popular with visitors.

- New pop-up exhibits on Black History
- Successfully completed Oshawa Newspaper Digitization Project 1862-1930 resulting in more than 12 000 pages of Oshawa's historic newspapers available and searchable online.
- *History Hidden in Plain Sight: Masonry Exhibit* (Masonic) produced
- *Last Call: Temperance in Oshawa* exhibit in partnership with The RMG
- Monthly podcasts on variety of historical topics and artifacts
- Introduced monthly *Tea and Talk* events
- HH Parlour renewed
- Created new First Nations gallery plan for RH
- Acquired 18 items for museum and 540 items for archival collections

3.3 Objective: Engage audiences

Our visitor experience is first rate and reflected in every aspect of our programming. Our visitors have told us personal interaction with staff is one of our strengths and we continued to invest in front line visitor host training to ensure our visitors enjoy an inspiring and engaging experience. Our space will be offered for informal socializing as well as more structured activities. The OM continued to offer opportunities for volunteers to develop new skills and we expanded our O-MY program to encourage more youth interaction in programming and events. We delivered programs which inspired learning and encouraged visitors to connect with the city thereby strengthening the cultural community. Our audience became members, volunteers, supporters and advocates of the Museum.

The OM was proud to continue our partnerships and alliances with the Cultural Leadership Council, Art and History Committee, York-Durham Association of Museums and Archives, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Donald H. Wilson Secondary School, OSCC, University of Toronto, Trent University and OPL.

- Increase in youth volunteer hours and youth led programs
- Increase in adult volunteers and 14% increase in hours contributed
- New partnerships with Association for Gravestone Studies – Ontario Chapter
- Member of CLC 2017 celebration sub committee
- Member of Art and History Committee

3.4 Objective: Sound financial leadership

The OHS continued to operate the OM with sound management and financial policies designed to ensure resources are used in the most responsible and efficient way. We continued to work closely with the City of Oshawa and our cultural partners to support the delivery of current and future cultural strategies. Good governance is ensured with a strong commitment to reviewing board and organizational policies and transparency between Board and staff. All staff and board members understand their roles in relation to the OHS Business/Action Plans and we developed and revised policies as necessary to guide our work. The Board ensures our policies and operations are at the highest standards as classified by the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario. Recognizing that new challenges require new strategies, the Board of Directors approved the model of admission by donation initially introduced in 2015 on a permanent basis.

- Collection Policy updated, other policies reviewed
- Internally restricted \$10 000 to meet future building needs
- Professional development emphasis allowed staff to attend conferences including the Ontario Museum Association, Association of Canadian Archivists, American Association of State and Local History
- Continued to seek additional sources of revenue through various means
- Grants applied for and received – Young Canada Works, Community Museum Operating Grant, Canada Summer Jobs, Heritage Organization Development Grant
- Grants applied for and awaiting decision – Canada Cultural Spaces Fund for First Nations Gallery, Ontario Seniors Grant, Canada 150
- Continued co-operative retail agreement with The RMG, Canadian Automotive Museum and Parkwood

3.5 Objective: Provide adequate space and facilities

We consider the three historically designated buildings the most important artifacts in our collection however they do present some challenges with regards to the scope of programming we can offer. The physical limitations of the three heritage buildings are reflected most acutely in two areas: a severe lack of programming space which restricts the number of participants in our events and the kinds of events we can host, and a lack of suitable exhibit space to accommodate our collections and traveling exhibits. Building on the results of our 1996 Feasibility Study, the Board of Directors continued to investigate the provision of space and

facilities that are both aesthetically pleasing and effective in preserving and interpreting Museum collections and can perform these functions efficiently and sustainably.

- Applied, and was selected for, a Canada Conservation Institute Site Facility Assessment
- Attended an ArtsBuild Workshop on new facilities
- Joined the International Association of Museum facility Administrators
- Continued discussions with other museums regarding planning, implementing and completion of Museum building projects

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

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <p>Expansive artifact collection Committed, respected, professional staff Location in city park Good relationship with members of Council, City Staff and OHS Oshawa’s only community Museum Extensive expertise of staff, board and volunteers A partner in City’s waterfront development plans Broad thematic scope of programs Open service policy Respected reputation among public and peers Public interactions with staff Good cultural ambassadors for City</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p>Lack of programming space Lack of funds for matching grants Vulnerable to vandalism, environmental factors Adapting heritage buildings to Museum standards Infrastructure challenges Current economic factors Low public profile Lack of awareness for heritage locally Uncertain funding levels Seasonal staffing complement and part time hours makes it difficult to get continuity in some areas Difficult to increase self-generated revenue with space limitations</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Arts, Culture & Heritage Plan City’s plans for future harbor/waterfront development 2017 anniversary plans 60th anniversary of OHS in 2017 Use of digital media to increase profile Partnerships and links with community New exhibits Relationships with Council members and senior City staff Location in Lakeview Park Participation in Cultural Leadership Council</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>Uncertain funding levels Uncertain seasonal staffing levels Uncertain tourism markets Increase of non-discretionary, fixed costs (hydro, insurance, oil) Uncertainty in local economy Difficult to recruit volunteers, OHS members and Board members Maintenance of systems nearing the end of their lifecycle Interruption of business due to events held in Lakeview Park</p>

5. 2017 Agency Objectives

The OHS recognizes the need for responsible action that will ensure the sustainability of Oshawa in the future. A strong commitment to the arts and culture community can contribute to this overall vision by supporting creative collaboration, developing innovative ways to accomplish the Oshawa Strategic Plan (OSP) and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan (ACHP) as well as the strategic vision and action plan *Looking Ahead*, recently released by the Ontario Museum Association. We have identified five strategic objectives for 2017 that contribute to all five of the OSP goals, the six strategic directions identified in the ACHP and the four themes presented in *Looking Ahead*.

5.1 To be vibrant and vital

The OM is part of a vibrant cultural community in Oshawa. We will continue in 2017 to focus on providing meaningful experiences for our users

5.2 To present relevant and meaningful collections

The OM continues to explore alternate and relevant ways to increase public use of the collection.

5.3 To be strong and successful

The OM maintains strong relationships with our partners and other organizations and will continue to seek new relationships to strengthen and support our mandate.

5.4 To support a strong and collaborative staff

The OM has a committed, professional staff and ongoing skill development is encouraged. Staff will continue to pursue meaningful connections with academia.

5.5 Provide space and facilities that are aesthetically pleasing and effective in preserving and interpreting Museum collections.

The OHS will continue to investigate the provision of space and facilities to allow the OM to operate efficiently and sustainably.

6. Resource Requirements

The OHS appreciates the support from members of Council and City staff for the work we do. The OHS recognizes the need for responsible action that will ensure the sustainability of Oshawa going forward. With this in mind the OHS has produced a value for money, fiscally responsible and lean operating budget which we feel aligns resources consistent with the direction provided by the Oshawa Strategic Plan **Our Focus, Our Future** and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, **Culture Counts**. At \$484,300, the proposed 2017 OHS budget is up \$22, 100 or 4.7% from the 2016 approved budget of \$462,200.

Budget changes are the result of:

- a) Inflationary assumptions
- b) Increase in building maintenance and repair costs associated with maintaining 3 historic houses
- c) Increase in professional services including insurance

- d) Increase personnel costs (staff and benefits) of \$16,900. Staffing levels and compensation rates are reviewed annually. Our external review indicates our salaries are much lower than similar positions in comparable institutions. This budget line also includes unavoidable increases for benefit costs.

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 OM is an important component in the cultural landscape of the City of Oshawa. As one of the few remaining heritage districts and 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 occupation to present times. The proximity of a wide variety of recreational spaces and facilities enhances the appeal of a visit to the Museum and provides opportunities for programming and events.

Our strength lies in our collections, our spaces and our people and the connections we make. 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.