



Oshawa Historical Society **Managing the** **Oshawa Museum** **2021 Business Plan**

Introduction

Since 1960 the Oshawa Museum (OM) has engaged visitors by telling 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. This year presented a challenge for the Oshawa Museum as our ability to generate revenue was curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This business plan is presented with the idea social distancing guidelines will remain in place for at least a portion of 2021. It presents four strategic objectives representing key areas of focus for the OM in 2021 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 accessible and engaging to a diverse audience;
- 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 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 and photographs 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 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. 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/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 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 deliver an enhanced and engaging museum experience.

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 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. 2020 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 site visits since 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 of September 2020, on-site programming continues to be severely limited. Tours are available by appointment and staff have worked diligently to pivot 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 many more tasks too numerous to mention. Our 2020 list of accomplishments reflects the reality of conducting business during the time of a global pandemic.

3.1 Objective: To be vibrant and vital

We continued to demonstrate our relevance to the community by offering online programs to facilitate a deeper understanding of Oshawa's history. The OM is part of a vibrant cultural community 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 to provide opportunities for lifelong learning. 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;

- Developed a new on-site tour incorporating the latest Covid-19 protocols which includes a new audio segment and two new exhibit areas

- Participated in numerous committees including Oshawa Centennial Committee
- Produced “An Oshawa Yuletide” Christmas DVD celebrating a Victorian Christmas at HH. The DVD is scheduled for release in November 2020.
- Provided many events and programs virtually to our audiences and those of our partners.

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 to 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;

- Continued to promote a more inclusive approach to Oshawa history. Black History Month was a focus and we attended Club Carib Black History Event and spoke with over 1600 students and others about Black history and the importance of including diverse perspectives exceeding our target.
- Continued to present original research through podcasts, blog posts, newsletters and our Facebook page
- Launched Lakeview Park website celebrating 100 years.
- Launched *Discover Historic Oshawa* website
- Hosted a successful Lamplight Tour 2019, 57% increase in attendance over 2018

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, Durham Storytellers, York-Durham Association of Museums and Archives, Women’s Herstory Connection Durham Region, Durham Region Area Archives Group, Donald A.. Wilson Secondary School, Durham College, University of Toronto and Trent University

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Continued partnership with Durham College Journalism Program
- Migrated to new payroll system to increase efficiency
- Software purchased to track donations and offer online receipting
- Hosting 2 interns from the Trent University Child and Youth Services Program in Fall 2019. Students worked with our community engagement staff member to re-vamp the youth program O-MY
- Successfully applied for Community Museum Operating Grant, Heritage Organization Development Grant, Canada Summer Jobs and Young Canada Works
- Staff participated in a number of committees and boards including The Ontario Historical Society board, grant adjudicator for Young Canada Works, Program Advisory Committees at Fleming College and Durham College and as an instructor in the Cultural Heritage, Conservation and Management Program at Fleming College

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;

- Worked with City of Oshawa staff to complete an Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program grant for the OM expansion project.
- Continued to garner support for the museum expansion project and updated senior City staff and members of Council on developments as necessary

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

Strengths:

- The OM is a cultural leader in Oshawa as the city's only community museum and recognized as the authoritative source for 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
- Operating in-person events is difficult with Covid-19 restrictions
- 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 Oshawa Historical Society and lack of awareness for heritage locally

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
- Potential cuts to operating budget from all levels of funders – Federal, Provincial and Municipal
- 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 events in Lakeview Park negatively impact museum operations during the busy summer months (Autofest, Ribfest, construction etc.)

5. 2021 Agency Objectives

The OHS recognizes the need for responsible action that will ensure the sustainability of the agency on behalf of Oshawa in the future. For the 2021 budget the OHS has adopted reasonable assumptions in budget planning while balancing the reality of operating during a time of pandemic. Our budget projections reflect the possibility social distancing guidelines will be in place until at least Spring 2021. We continue to create efficiencies, avoiding unnecessary costs and generating 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 2021 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 vibrant, inclusive and vital to the community and cultural life in Oshawa

We continue to create knowledge and public information that increases the understanding of Oshawa's history. We demonstrate our importance to the community by offering on-site (where possible), online and outreach services and facilities to develop knowledge and understanding in our users.

5.2 To present relevant and meaningful collections

The OM continues to explore alternate and relevant strategies to broaden our reach, appeal to new audiences and capture diverse stories. The upcoming anniversary in 2024 (100th anniversary of Oshawa becoming City) offers an opportunity to engage the public in history and promote the OM's importance to the community.

5.3 Continue to be strong and successful

The OM cultivates strong partnerships and will continue to initiate new relationships in support of our mandate and to offer new opportunities for efficiencies and programming.

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

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 2020 we were able to keep most of our expenses within the approved budget amounts however our ability to generate revenue was

severely curtailed in 2020 due to social distancing restrictions and other challenges 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 2021 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 **Our Focus, Our Future** and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, **Culture Counts**.

The OHS is submitting a budget with no increases (0%) in the operating expenses for the OM. Any budget changes are related to the decrease in self generated revenue experienced during 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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. This was a challenging year for the OM as it was for everyone. Social distancing guidelines and our small public areas in the Museum buildings meant we had to shift from in person activities to mainly virtual. 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 public value to the City.

Our strength lies in our collections, our spaces and our people and our ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Oshawa's citizens tell us they enjoyed our online presence during the year 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.