



Oshawa Historical Society  
Managing  
The Oshawa Museum  
2023 Business Plan

## Introduction

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. Museum staff worked diligently to deliver programs virtually, where necessary, 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 presents five strategic objectives representing key areas of focus for the OM in 2023 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 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: trustworthy, respected in the community, professional, accurate
- Pro-active outreach: collaborative, creative, community focused
- Inclusive: accessible, open, representative, welcoming
- Education: engaging, original, imaginative, diverse
- Presentation: our collection helps us to understand and connect with our City both past and present
- Diligence: 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) at the OM. 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. 2022 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 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. On-site group tours resumed in September 2022 and many of our popular fall and winter events will be back for the first time since 2019.

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

The OM 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;

- Produced a microdoc, *Traditions and Celebrations: The Story of Oshawa's Jewish Community*, looking into Oshawa's early Jewish history and favourite Hanukkah traditions. This project was awarded a Culture Counts Innovation and Creation Champion award.

- Social media posts also represented inclusiveness and diversity by highlighting a wide range of content
- New virtual exhibit, E.S. Shrapnel Upper Canada Sketches, was launched
- Hosted several Harbour walking tours and Union Cemetery tours
- Coordinated the Holodomor National Awareness Tour to Lakeview Park

### **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;

- Four resource pages launched for Black History, Women's History, Asian History and Indigenous History
- In partnership with The Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA) we opened our new feature exhibit *The Oshawa Harbour From Ship to Shore: Looking at Oshawa's Relationship with Lake Ontario*, celebrating Oshawa's history with the harbour.
- A virtual reality tour of our feature exhibit *Leaving Home and Finding Home in Oshawa* was created
- Museum Assistance Program grant allowed the OM to purchase 8 Data Loggers to monitor temperature and humidity in the collection storage, exhibit areas and Henry House
- Audio transcription volunteers contributed 233 hours of service, helping to increase the accessibility of the audio recordings

### **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, Moccasin Project, Durham Region, Durham Region Area Archives Group, Durham College, and Trent University

Some of the year's highlights included;

- Grants successfully applied for include Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG), Digital Capacity in CMOG Museums, Heritage Organization Development Grant, Museum Assistance Program, 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
- Archivist asked to chair Archives Association of Ontario 2023 Conference program committee
- New partnership with OPL to host monthly speaker series to launch in January 2023

### **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
- Continued to investigate capital grants for the project
- Produced four pedestal signs designed for each of the houses and heritage garden and created to replace the current interpretive signs from 2005. Installation to be completed in the fall of 2022

## **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
- Additional insurance fees impacting programming
- 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 engagement

#### 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:

- Seasonal Covid-19 outbreaks 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
- Lack of communication regarding externally hosted events in Lakeview Park has a negative impact on museum operations during the busy summer months (Autofest, Ribfest, construction etc.)

## 5. 2023 Agency Objectives

The OHS recognizes the need for responsible action that will ensure a sustainable future for Oshawa. For the 2023 budget the OHS has adopted reasonable assumptions in budget planning while balancing the reality of operating post pandemic. 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 five strategic objectives for 2023 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 essential part of the community and cultural landscape in Oshawa

We continue to create and communicate knowledge and information that increases the understanding of Oshawa's history. We will expand the museum experience beyond our buildings to include enhanced and virtual tour and program 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 Foster a culture of inclusivity and recognize the value of diversity

The OHS values inclusion and fosters a culture where everyone feels respected and valued. We will continue to connect our collections, exhibitions and programs to new audiences that reflect the diverse nature of our community.

### 5.4 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.

### 5.5 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. For 2023 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 1.5% increase (\$ 6 900 ) in the City's contribution to the OHS. Overall we expect a 1.5 % increase in operating expenses related to increased insurance, accounting and personnel costs. Costs associated with pumping out the holding tank and utilities are also expected to increase. We are projecting a modest increase in self generated revenue in 2023 of \$ 1 000 over anticipated 2022 totals.

## **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 2.5 years 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, enhance public knowledge, encourage community engagement 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 2.5 years 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**  
**2023 Operating Budget**  
**Oshawa Historical Society**

Description	2022 Projected Actuals	2022 Approved Budget	2023 Proposed Budget	2023-2022 Variance \$'s	2023-2022 Variance %
Personnel Costs	396,600	396,600	402,500	5,900	1.5
Program and Office Supplies	24,400	24,400	24,400	-	-
Professional Services	38,800	38,800	39,700	1,000	2.6
Maintenance and Repairs	27,700	27,700	27,700	-	-
Utilities	24,600	24,600	25,500	1,000	4.1
Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy		-		-	
Agency Generated Revenue	(50,000)	(50,000)	(51,000)	(1,000)	2.0
City of Oshawa Grants	(462,100)	(462,100)	(468,800)	(6,900)	1.5
<b>Total Oshawa Historical Society</b>	-	-	-	-	

Variance Explanations:

Professional Services - Insurance and accounting costs

Utilities - Holding tank costs, electricity costs