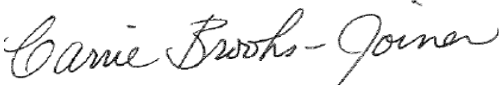




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 7, 2020
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Investigating the Feasibility of a City of Hamilton Museum (PED20172) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	John Summers (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1747
SUBMITTED BY:	Carrie Brooks-Joiner Director, Tourism and Culture Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

At the March 21, 2018 General Issues Committee meeting, staff was directed to “include the investigation of the feasibility of a City of Hamilton Museum as part of the work of the Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy and report to the General Issues Committee when the strategy is complete.”

This report provides an overview of the public consultation results regarding a proposed City of Hamilton Museum and options to move forward. Owing to public interest in the idea, this information is being provided to Council prior to the completion of the Civic Museum Strategy.

INFORMATION

Dundurn Castle served as Hamilton’s Civic Museum from 1900 to 1967 before opening as a restored historic house museum in 1968. Since that time, there has been public interest in the idea of a museum which would once again engage with the history of the whole city. Other Canadian examples of civic museums include The Guelph Civic Museum, The Civic Museum of Regina and The Museum of Vancouver.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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Though the City of Hamilton owns and operates eight civic museums, each has a specific site-based interpretive mandate and offers related programming. There is at present no dedicated space for city-wide exhibits or programs that are not part of an existing historic site.

The Museum of Hamilton concept envisions a broader and deeper approach to the City's history which would complement these existing civic museums and historic sites. Such a space would offer opportunities to address broader historical themes, engage with wider and more diverse audiences and facilitate collaboration on programs and exhibits with residents and other organizations.

In 2019, the Tourism and Culture Division retained consultants to conduct an external engagement for the new Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy and a City of Hamilton Museum. Stakeholders and members of the public expressed support for the idea of a Museum of Hamilton. The report will be presented to Council together with a Civic Museum Strategy in the second quarter of 2021.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) has also expressed interest in a Museum of Hamilton. On February 11, 2020, the Government of Canada announced funding from the Canada Cultural Spaces fund to support a feasibility study for a significant renovation of the Art Gallery of Hamilton and an expansion of the AGH's mandate to further educate visitors about the community's history. As noted by AGH President and CEO Shelly Falconer in the media release, "this grant will also pave the way for a civic museum that will facilitate the celebration of Hamilton's history by our citizens and visitors alike."

In 2019, an ad hoc community group called the Hamilton Museum Citizen's Committee formed to support the creation of a permanent Hamilton Museum to present and preserve local history. City staff met with the group several times during the year. Its members participated in stakeholder sessions and focus groups during the Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy citizen engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated what was already a growing trend towards museums doing more online engagement, which has proven to be a cost-effective means of reaching new and wider audiences. Even before the pandemic necessitated rethinking current audience engagement practices, the museum community was exploring ways to be more community-focused and involved beyond the walls of its institutions. Today, museums are seeking to offer spaces for interaction and engagement with their collections and to support communities in telling their own stories. This requires a different space than the traditional model of an institution focused on building artefact collections and creating its own exhibits.

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A Museum of Hamilton on these lines could be realized in several ways. At one end of the spectrum is a standalone brick and mortar museum which offers programs and exhibits within its walls. In the middle is the “storefront” model, which offers flexible programming and exhibit space within a larger brick and mortar building but does not have its own artefact storage, staff offices, parking or visitor services. At the other end of the spectrum is an entirely virtual museum with all content and experiences provided online.

The costs and opportunities associated with each model are summarized in Appendix “A” to Report PED20172.

In keeping with this international museum trend, in 2019 the Tourism and Culture Division initiated a strategic shift to focus on broader and online engagement. In response to restrictions on in-person visitation and programming imposed by COVID-19, staff has fast-tracked the expansion of its online heritage offerings. At the present time, this work is focused on promoting visitation to the re-opened civic museums and providing information about those that are not currently open.

Based on the models noted in Appendix “A” to Report PED20172, a virtual museum approach offers significant and cost-effective potential for not just responding to COVID-19, but also for offering content and experiences that will complement and expand in-person offerings at the existing civic museums. With additional resources dedicated to the development, facilitation and sharing of broad Hamilton stories, this online engagement approach could be expanded into a virtual Museum of Hamilton.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” - Summary of Costs and Opportunities

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