



Reimagine Our Museums

External Engagement Results Report

December 2019 - DRAFT



Civicplan was retained by the City of Hamilton, Department of Tourism and Culture to design and implement an external engagement process to help inform a new Hamilton Civic Museums strategy. This report provides a summary of the process and analysis of the results.

About Civicplan

Civicplan helps people shape communities through award-winning participatory planning, public engagement and strategies. For more information visit civicplan.ca

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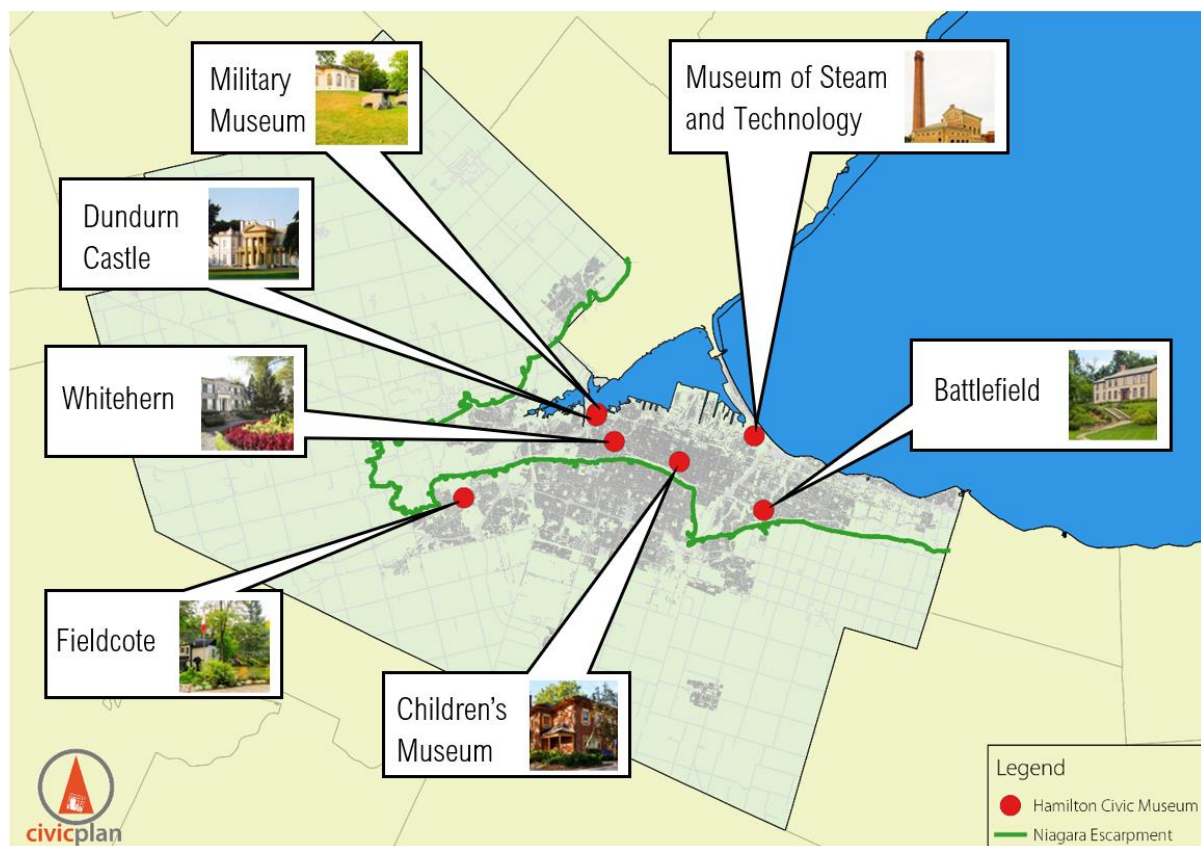
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1.0 Introduction

In 2019, the City of Hamilton began the process of creating a vibrant, inclusive and transformational Civic Museum Strategy. This process will result in a shared and strong vision with clear goals that will guide the long-term direction and sustainability of the seven City of Hamilton Civic Museums and their supporting programs. As part of the Strategy, City staff identified the need for external engagement with broader communities to gauge what opportunities and priorities should drive future planning.

In aid of this, an external engagement process called Reimagine Our Museums was designed and implemented. The goals of engagement were to reach a variety of external stakeholders, residents and patrons to learn about how people currently perceive and use the City's museums, and what challenges and opportunities are present moving into the future. The focus of the external engagement process was on the seven Hamilton Civic Museums that are open to the public and offer regular programming (Figure 1). Running concurrently with the external engagement, City staff has undertaken additional research, as well as internal staff consultations. The results of this external engagement process will help inform the City's new Civic Museums Strategy.

Figure 1: Hamilton Civic Museums



A Museum of Hamilton

Alongside the process of creating a new strategy for the existing City of Hamilton museums is a community discussion around the idea of a new “Museum of Hamilton” that would be a singular space to tell a more complete story of the city. Given the connection between the two issues, the Reimagine Our Museums engagement process was adapted to incorporate some elements that would explore further this issue of a Museum of Hamilton further.

Report Structure

What follows is a summary of the Reimagine Our Museums process. The report begins with an explanation of the methodology and design of the process including all the different parts of engagement. This is followed by a summary of the outreach and communication strategies that were employed. The next section outlines the results of engagement, organized under key topics that emerged throughout the process. The results from the specific questions concerning the Museum of Hamilton are reported separately. The report concludes with a summary of the major topics and sub-topics that emerged from this process that can assist to inform the development of the Hamilton Civic Museums strategy.

2.0 Process



"I feel very passionate about our history, arts and culture and would like to see our museums improve to better engage and communicate with the public. I am extremely pleased to see the City of Hamilton has taken the initiative to launch the process of 'Reimagine Our Museums'."

- Reimagine Our Museums Participant

The external engagement process involved multiple engagement methods over a six-month period. Additionally, an extensive communications and outreach plan was implemented to reach a broad cross section of residents and visitors.

2.1 Methodology and Design

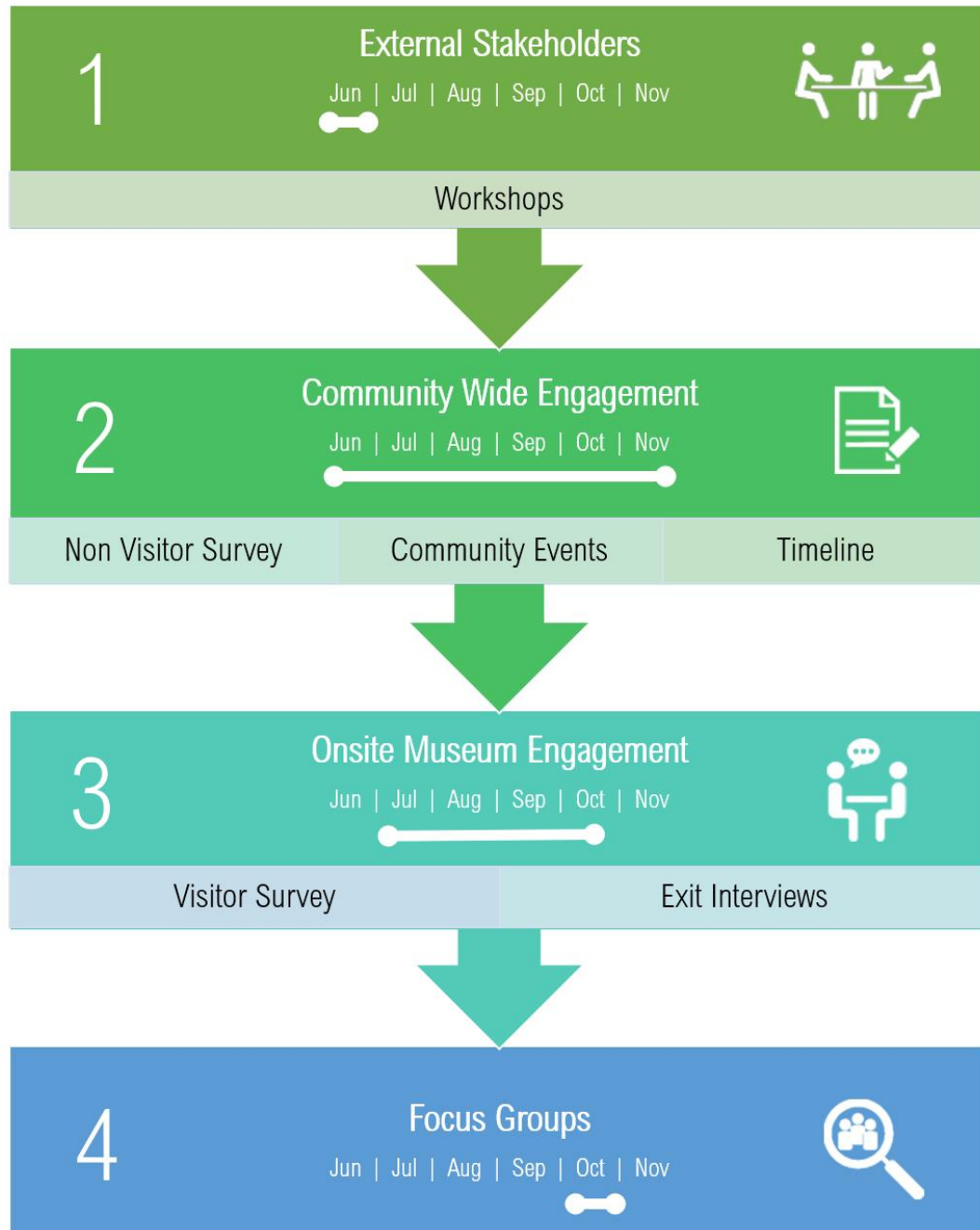
Various methods of engagement were employed in order to reach a breadth of people. Specifically, the engagement process was designed to reach three broad cross sections of people:



Engagement Mapping

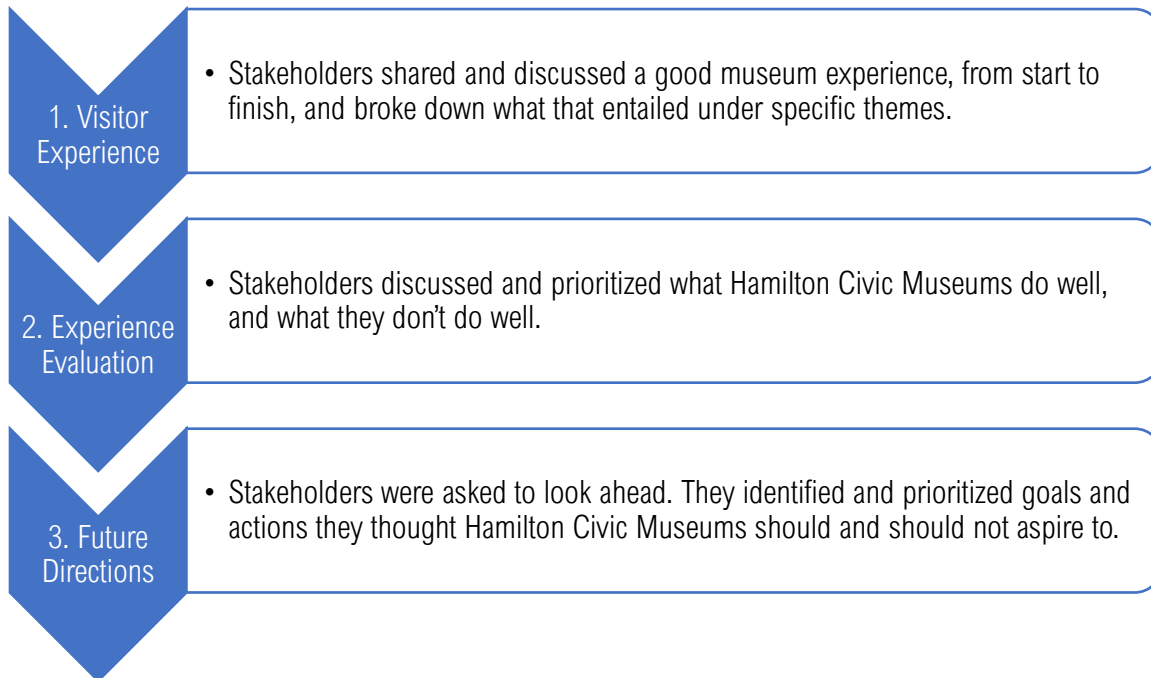
The approach to engagement involved a number of key activities, both in person and online, that were deployed over a six-month period. In order to efficiently and effectively engage a broader and more diverse number of Hamilton residents around Civic Museums, engagement and visioning activities were employed as displayed below. The details of each step of the engagement process follows thereafter.

Figure 2: Flow of Engagement Activities



Stakeholder Workshops – Two visioning workshops were held to engage stakeholders. The sessions were structured to assist with framing high-level ideas about Hamilton Civic Museums, understanding current perceptions of the City's museums, what the museums mean to people, and how they might change in the future.

The sessions were designed as a blend between a design thinking discussion and SWOC (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, constraints) analysis. More specifically, three sequential activities were undertaken:



Stakeholder Workshop at Whitehern

Surveys – Two surveys were designed to gauge the experiences of Hamilton residents and museum visitors with the Hamilton Civic Museums, as well as to inquire about what they would like to see in the future.

Visitor Survey – A visitors’ survey was developed to collect onsite feedback from museum patrons related to their experience visiting Hamilton Civic Museums. Visitors were asked to indicate what activities they undertook during their museum visit, as well as their level of satisfaction with those activities. Those survey respondents that agreed to do an interview were asked additional qualitative questions about their museum experience.

Non-Visitor Survey – The non-visitor survey focussed on gauging the perceptions of Hamilton residents who have not, or not recently, visited a Civic Museum. It was conducted online only. The questions centred on reasons why residents do not visit the museums, what they would like to see or what would encourage them to visit in the future. Additionally, residents were asked if they wanted to participate in the October focus groups.

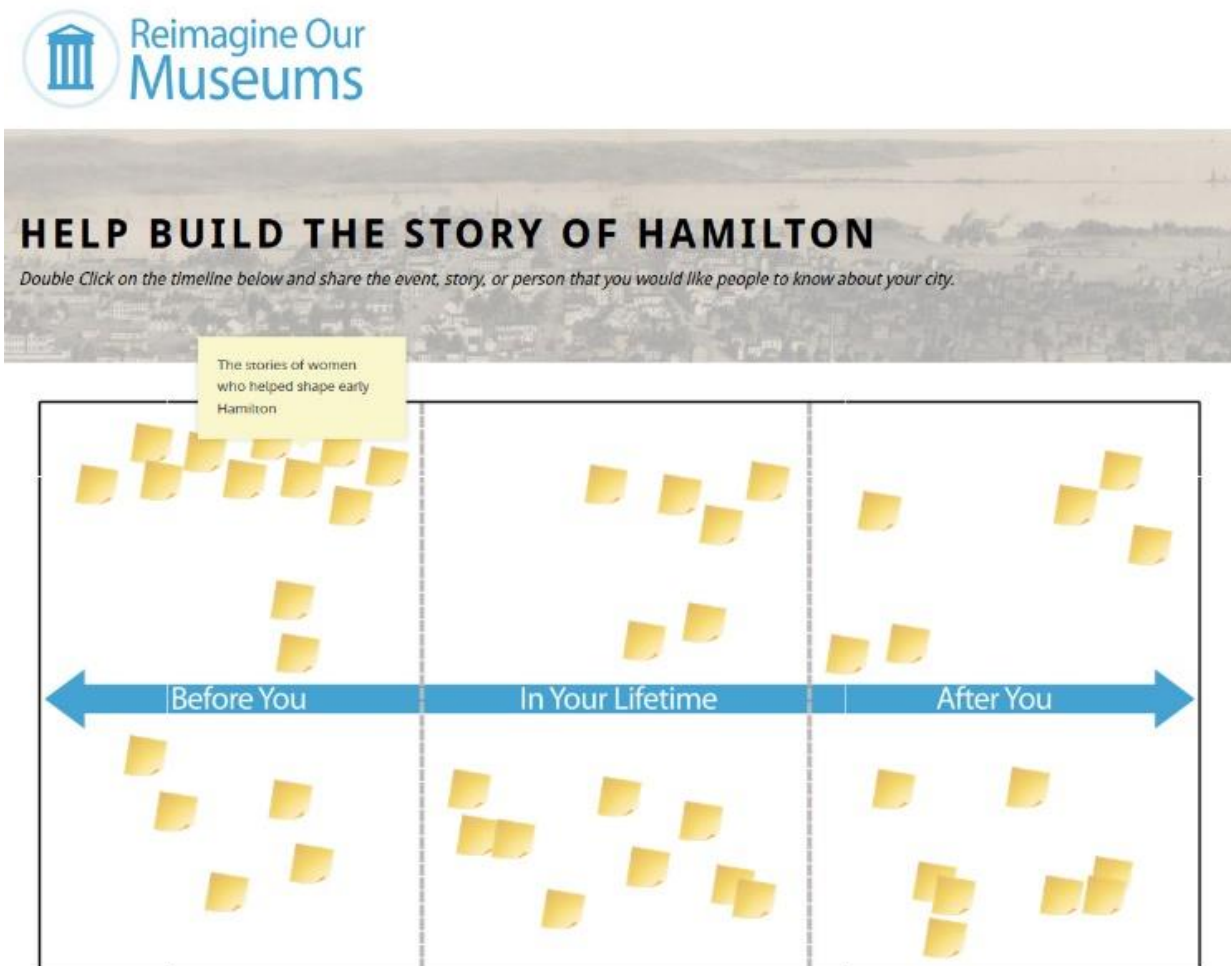
Exit Interviews – During the period of time that the visitors’ survey was underway, more extensive exit interviews were conducted at the seven Civic Museum locations. The interviews aligned with many aspects of the visitors’ survey, while requesting more qualitative feedback from respondents. A total of 10 hours was spent at each museum, resulting in 46 interviews. Typical interview length was 25-35 minutes. The interviews were conducted at three separate visits to each museum throughout the summer period (July – September) in order to capture different periods of time at each museum and, where possible, they were scheduled to coincide with particular museum-specific events (See Table 1).

Table 1: Schedule of Interviews

Museum	Interview Dates (d/m/y)			Museum Event (If applicable)
Dundurn Castle	9/7/2019	15/7/2019	11/9/2019	
Military Museum	15/7/2019	7/8/2019	11/9/2019	
Children’s Museum	3/7/2019	24/7/2019	9/8/2019	
Steam and Technology	28/6/2019	20/7/2019	11/8/2019	Steamer Days
Battlefield House	10/7/2019	20/7/2019	18/8/2019	Sara Calder Day
Fieldcote	1/8/2019	11/8/2019	15/8/2019	Music at Fieldcote, Women’s Group, Ancaster Horticultural Society
Whitehern	17/7/2019	31/7/2019	14/8/2019	Wednesdays at Whitehern

The “Story of Hamilton” Timeline – In any discussion of the future of Hamilton Civic Museums, ideas of what stories should be told inevitably emerged. A dedicated forum was created to capture all the different ideas that came to the fore at different engagement events. Thus, as part of the suite of engagement activities for Reimagine Our Museums, participants were encouraged to help build the “Story of Hamilton.” People were asked to “share what you would like people to know about your city.” The Timeline was designed as a personal reflection exercise, where participants could contribute stories that occurred “before you”, “in your lifetime” and “after you.” Thematically, there were no limitations on what could be shared. Stories could be about a particular person, people, events, place, groups, politics, innovation, industry, etc.

The timeline was available as at the stakeholders’ sessions, the community events and as an online interactive exercise on the Reimagine Our Museums website.



Screenshot of online Timeline

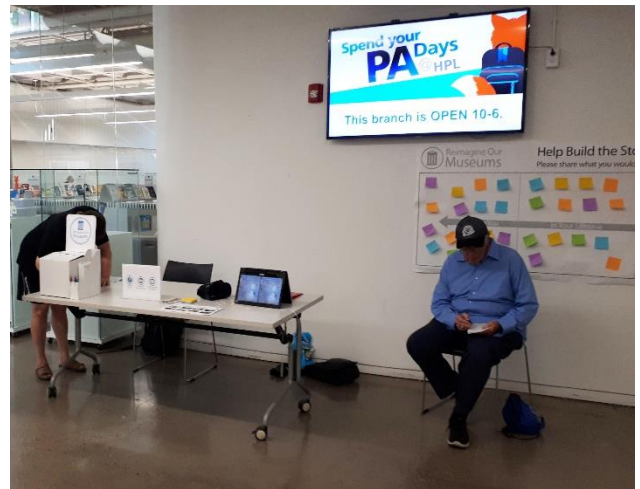
Community Events – In order to reach even more residents and visitors, engagement was conducted at community events in September 2019. This engagement was designed to reach people where they were already congregating in hopes of sharing information about Civic Museums and the Reimagine Our Museums project.

Supercrawl Community Event (Sept 14 & 15) – The Reimagine Our Museums team was present at the annual Supercrawl event on James Street North. This massive street festival attracts tens of thousands and was a great opportunity to communicate directly with residents and visitors about the engagement process, gather additional feedback and promote Hamilton Civic Museums to a broader audience. Alongside surveying people, a virtual reality (VR) station was set up to allow people an interactive look inside various places in Hamilton Civic Museums. In addition, there was an opportunity to contribute to the “Story of Hamilton” Timeline to help share stories or narratives that people felt passionate about.



Social Media Graphic for Supercrawl

Central Library Pop-up Event – Following the success of the Supercrawl event, a pop-up event was held at the Central Branch of the Hamilton Public Library with a focus on reaching out to a broader cross section of Hamiltonians about their experiences and perceptions of Hamilton’s Civic Museums. Again, there were opportunities to take a survey, try out the VR museum experience, and contribute to the “Story of Hamilton” timeline.

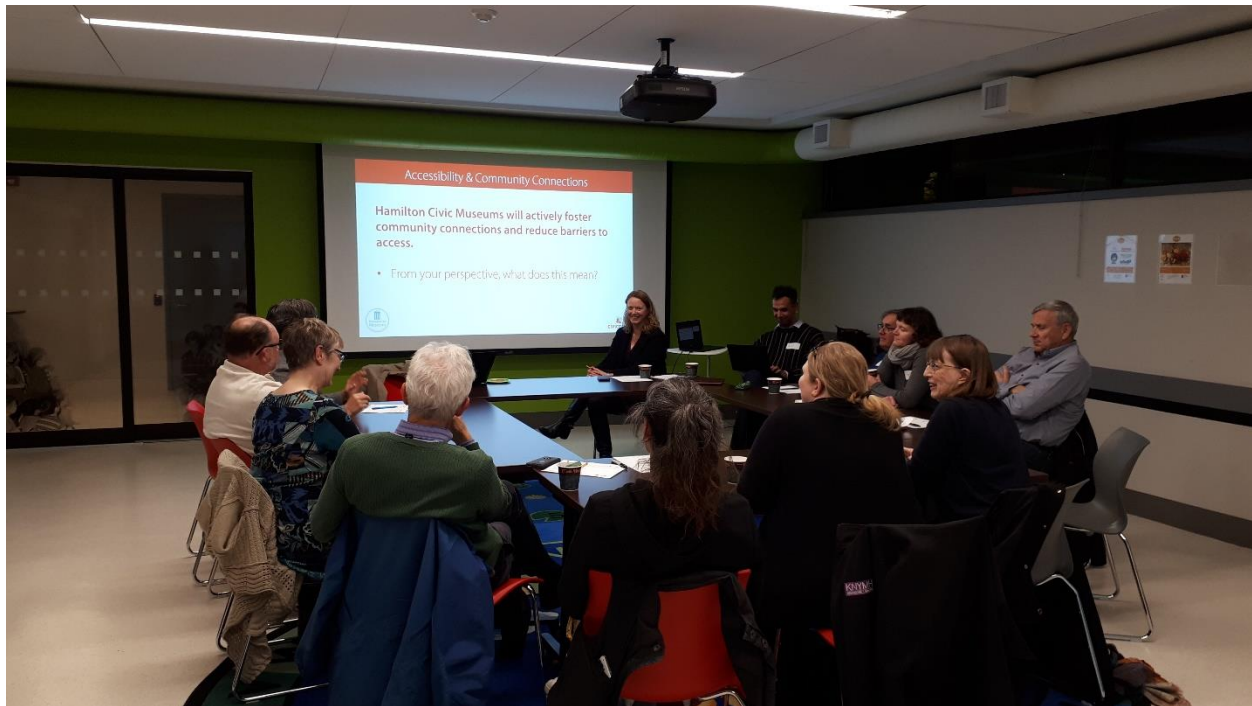


Images from Supercrawl 2019 and Central Library Pop-up Event

Focus Groups – Six focus groups were hosted across the city in October 2019 (see Table 2). The participants were selected from those who identified interest via the non-visitor survey, visitor survey, or community events and they were invited to the focus group nearest to their place of residence. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss and collect additional feedback and direction on the topics that emerged in other levels of engagement (i.e. surveys, stakeholders' session, community events).

Table 2: Focus Group Locations and Dates

Focus Group Location	Date
Ancaster Library	October 15, 2019
Terryberry Library (Hamilton Mountain)	October 16, 2019
Hamilton Central Public Library (Downtown Hamilton)	October 17, 2019
Saltfleet Public Library (Stoney Creek)	October 21, 2019
Kenilworth Public Library (East Hamilton)	October 22, 2019
Dundas Public Library	October 23, 2019



Focus Group in Dundas

2.2 Outreach and Communication

A broad outreach and communication plan was developed in consultation with the City of Hamilton, in order to reach a cross section of residents to share information about the Reimagine Our Museums process.

2.2.1 Outreach

Extensive outreach was conducted to ensure that many community-wide organizations and groups were given the opportunity to participate in the Reimagine Our Museums process. Additional effort was made to share information with the City of Hamilton advisory committees, inviting members to attend the stakeholder workshops, take and share the non-visitor survey, visit museums, and participate in the focus groups. In total, over 200 groups, organizations and stakeholders were directly contacted about the project at various points in time. These 200 contacts comprised 17 different categories of community representation as illustrated in Figure 2.

Extended Outreach

In November 2019, extended outreach was conducted by the Senior Curator, Heritage Strategies that included attending City Advisory Committees meetings to brief members about the project, as well as open a dialogue related to future changes at the Civic Museums to address issues of accessibility and representation.

In support of the recommendations of the City of Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy, the Senior Curator, Heritage Strategies continues to work with the Senior Project Manager of the Urban Indigenous Strategy to collaborate on implementing the Urban Indigenous Strategy recommendations and engage Indigenous communities over the long term in relation to the Civic Museums' Strategy.

Figure 3: Categories of Community Representation Engaged During Process



2.2.2 Communication

As part of the engagement process, a multi-faceted communication strategy was developed.

Branding

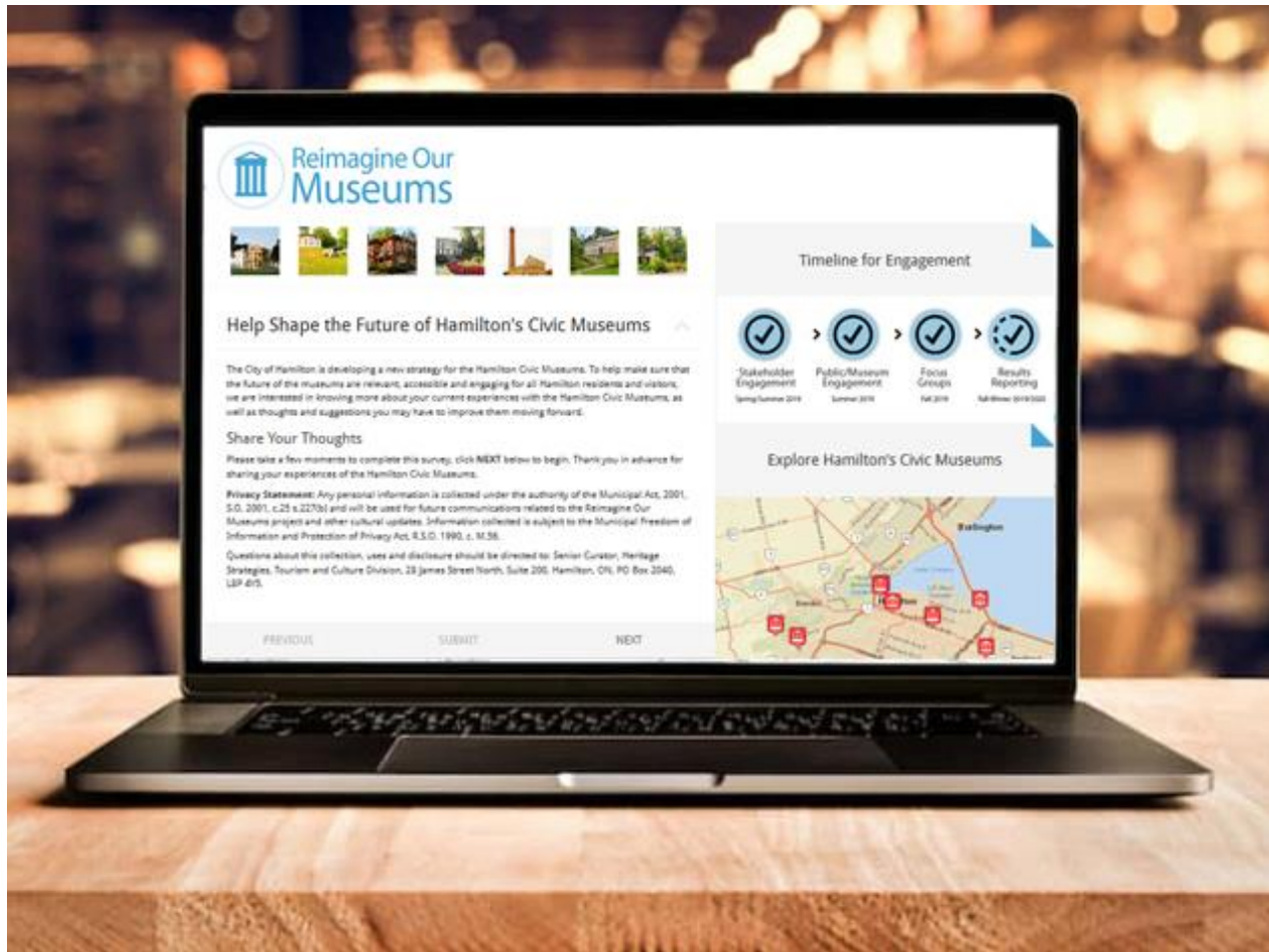
As a first step, the process required branding to provide a distinct and cohesive identity that would be recognizable throughout the entire engagement period. The brand needed to engender interest in the process, while communicating the tone and ambition that underlies the project goals. After a design and consultation process with City of Hamilton staff, "Reimagine Our Museums" was selected as the brand.



This brand was selected for a few reasons. First, "Reimagine" captured the City's desire to engage in a conversation about museums that would be forward looking and creative. Second, "Our Museums", communicated the fact that these civic institutions belong to all Hamiltonians and as such, they have a relevant stake in the engagement process. Third, the simple logo, including iconography, was meant to be visible on a variety of media, from signs, websites, social media, print media, posters, and worksheets at various engagement sessions.

Project Website

At the centre of the communications strategy was a project website (reimagineourmuseums.ca) that acted as a hub for project information, updates and engagement. The surveys and the online version of the interactive Timeline were included on the website. In addition, an interactive map pinpointing all the civic museums was included to give participants a quick overview of all the locations involved in the engagement process.



Project Website

The City of Hamilton website was another major source of promotion. In particular, the Civic Museums homepages provided links to the Reimagine Our Museums website. In addition, the City also promoted the project with a news release at the beginning of the process.

Direct Correspondence

As an extension of the outreach strategy, efforts were made to share focussed and direct communications with specific groups from a variety of community sectors. This was done primarily through email, where more detailed descriptions of the project were provided, highlighting a number of opportunities to engage in the process.

Traditional Media

A variety of traditional media sources provided promotion for Reimagine Our Museums process. This included articles, interviews and paid advertisements. Notable print media coverage came from The Hamilton Spectator (on multiple occasions), View Magazine and The Hamilton News. Radio coverage included CHML and K-Lite FM.

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

ADVERTISING FEATURE

More than MacNab?

Help Reimagine Hamilton's Civic Museums



It is hard to miss Dundurn Castle, the grand estate perched at the head of Lake Ontario atop Burlington Heights. It was the home of Sir Allan MacNab, politician, lawyer, land speculator, railway baron, a Hamilton legend. However, that is just part of the story. Dundurn sits on land that has a history stretching back more than 12,000 years. Clearly, the history of Dundurn (and Hamilton) is more than MacNab.

Did you know that Dundurn Castle is just one of nine museums that make up Hamilton's Civic Museums? Each museum and the landscapes on which it sits preserves and presents some aspects of the history of Hamilton and its people. You may have visited these other civic museums:

- Hamilton Museum of Steam & Technology
- Battlefield House Museum & Park
- Whitehern Historic House & Garden



- Hamilton Children's Museum
- Fieldcote Memorial Park & Museum
- Griffin House
- National Historic Site
- The Hamilton Military Museum
- Hamilton & Scourge Virtual Museum

While these represent an impressive collection of spaces and places, City staff recognize the need to update their approach to museums in the city. There are more stories to tell and different ways of telling them.

Museums are changing. They must look beyond glass cases and viewing objects from a distance. They must adapt to new technologies, welcome new audiences, and strive to reflect diverse histories and people. They must become active, vibrant

community spaces integrated into neighbourhoods.

That is why the Tourism and Culture Division is preparing a Civic Museums Strategy. As Sonia Mrva, Senior Curator at the Hamilton Civic Museums notes,

"We have an exceptional public resource in our City-owned museums – they are beautifully restored historic buildings surrounded by gorgeous parklands and gardens and have great staff and exhibits. I'm very proud of what we offer visitors and our local communities. Currently, we are trying to rethink how we can better serve our city. We want the museums to be places that people love about their city. As part of this, we have launched a public engagement process called Reimagine Our Museums."

The City of Hamilton wants to hear from residents. Over the coming months, residents are invited to engage in the following ways:

1. **Take the Survey** - visit reimagineourmuseums.ca or obtain a hard copy from any one of the civic museums.
2. **Visit a museum and share your experience with us** - entrance to all Hamilton Civic Museums is free with a Hamilton Public Library card.
3. **Visit us at Supercrawl** - September 14 and 15 at the Visitor Centre, 28 James St. N.
4. **Participate in a focus group** in Fall 2019. Visit the website to sign up.

For more information, please contact Sonia Mrva, Senior Curator, Tourism and Culture at 905-546-2424, ext. or visit reimagineourmuseums.ca




News Coverage of the Project

11°C | Wednesday Nov 27

HamiltonNews.com



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Battlefield House Museum and Park is among Hamilton's eight civic museums. - Torstar file photo


Hamiltonians have an opportunity to help shape the future of eight civic museums through a new survey, available at reimagineourmuseums.ca.

The survey aims to ensure the city's museums remain relevant, accessible and engaging for all residents and visitors. It asks respondents to comment on their current experiences with civic museums and to make suggestions for possible improvements moving forward.

Admission to Hamilton's civic museums is free with a Hamilton Public Library card, through a pilot project that runs until next February.

Hamilton's civic museums include Fieldcote Memorial Park and Museum, Griffin House, Battlefield House Museum and Park, Hamilton Military Museum, Whitehern Historic House and Garden, Hamilton Children's Museum, Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology and Dundurn Castle.

In addition to the website, members of the public can access the survey by visiting a museum, or responding to the survey during Supercrawl, Sept. 14 and 15 in the Lister Block in downtown Hamilton, at 28 James St. N.



Tags: [Hyper Local Community](#)

Social Media

Social Media provided a valuable means to spread the word about the various opportunities to participate in the Reimagine Our Museums process. This was primarily via Facebook and Twitter through existing City of Hamilton accounts, specifically those of the Culture Division and the City Manager's communication team. Tourism Hamilton and the Hamilton Public Library were additional major outlets for promotion of the process. Aside from the major municipal partners, many community associations and groups shared information about Reimagine Our Museums through their various social media channels. This included historical societies, volunteer organizations, and neighbourhood associations. Social Media engagement was connected to the outreach strategy to ensure various sectors of the local community were aware of opportunities to participate in the Reimagine Our Museums process.



Social Media Post from City of Hamilton

Institutional Support

A number of community institutions shared engagement information through their member lists, or newsletters. This included the Public and Catholic School Boards, Hamilton and District Chamber of Commerce, and Hamilton Business Improvement Areas (BIAs).

3.0 Participation



Between June and November 2019, over 1,700 residents, stakeholders and visitors participated in various ways throughout the Reimagine our Museums process.



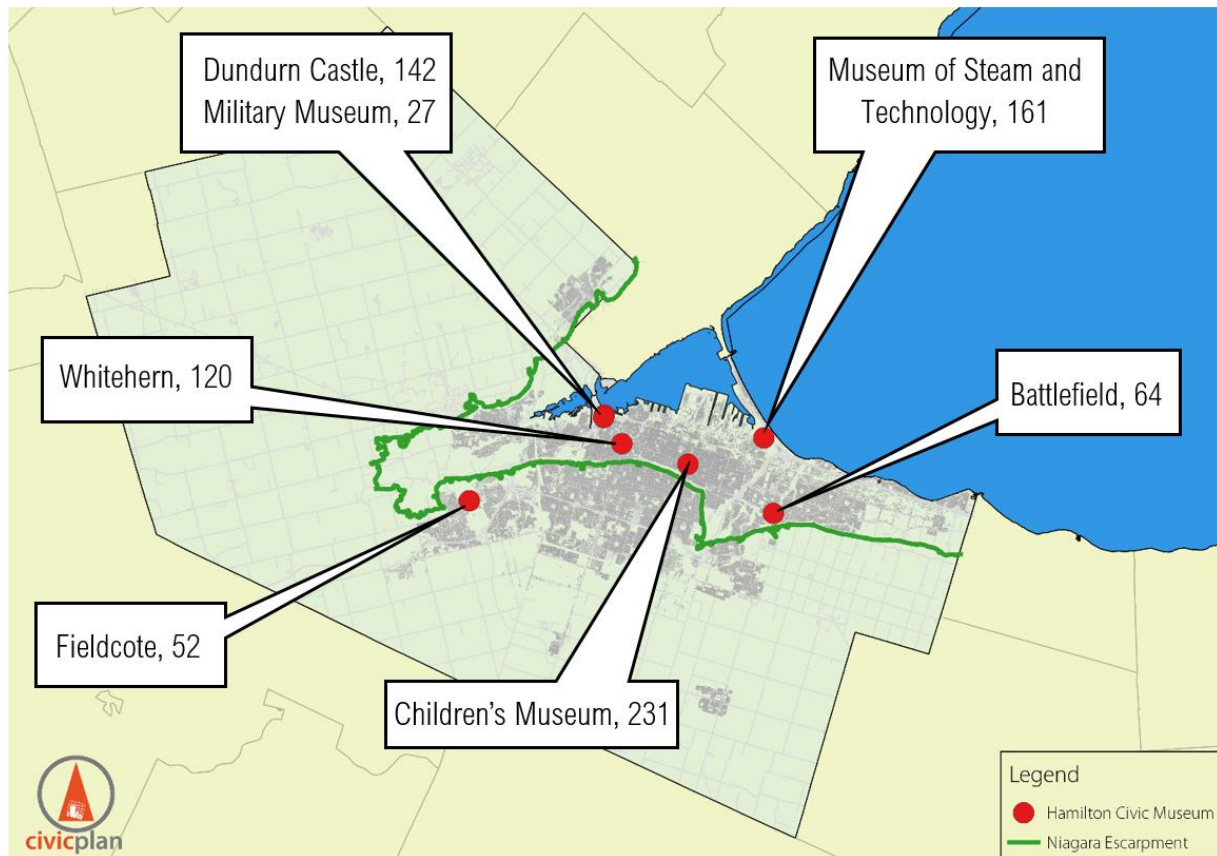
Stakeholder Workshops

The Stakeholder Workshops were organized to open a discussion with community stakeholders across various fields who have an interest in the work of the Civic Museums. Overall, 12 stakeholder groups were represented in these sessions.

Visitor Survey

The Visitor Survey was available at the seven Hamilton Civic Museums. Additionally, individuals who agreed to do an interview also completed the survey. In total, 797 responses were received. Figure 4 below displays the response rate to the survey by museum.

Figure 4: Visitor Surveys by Location



Exit Interviews

Between July and September visitors to the Hamilton Civic Museums had the opportunity to participate in onsite exit interviews related to the Reimagine Our Museums process. In total 46 visitors participated in interviews across the seven locations.

Non-Visitor Survey

The Non-Visitor survey was available online from the end of June through November 2019. Additionally, a paper version of the survey was available at Supercrawl and the Central Public Library pop-up event. In total 826 response were received.

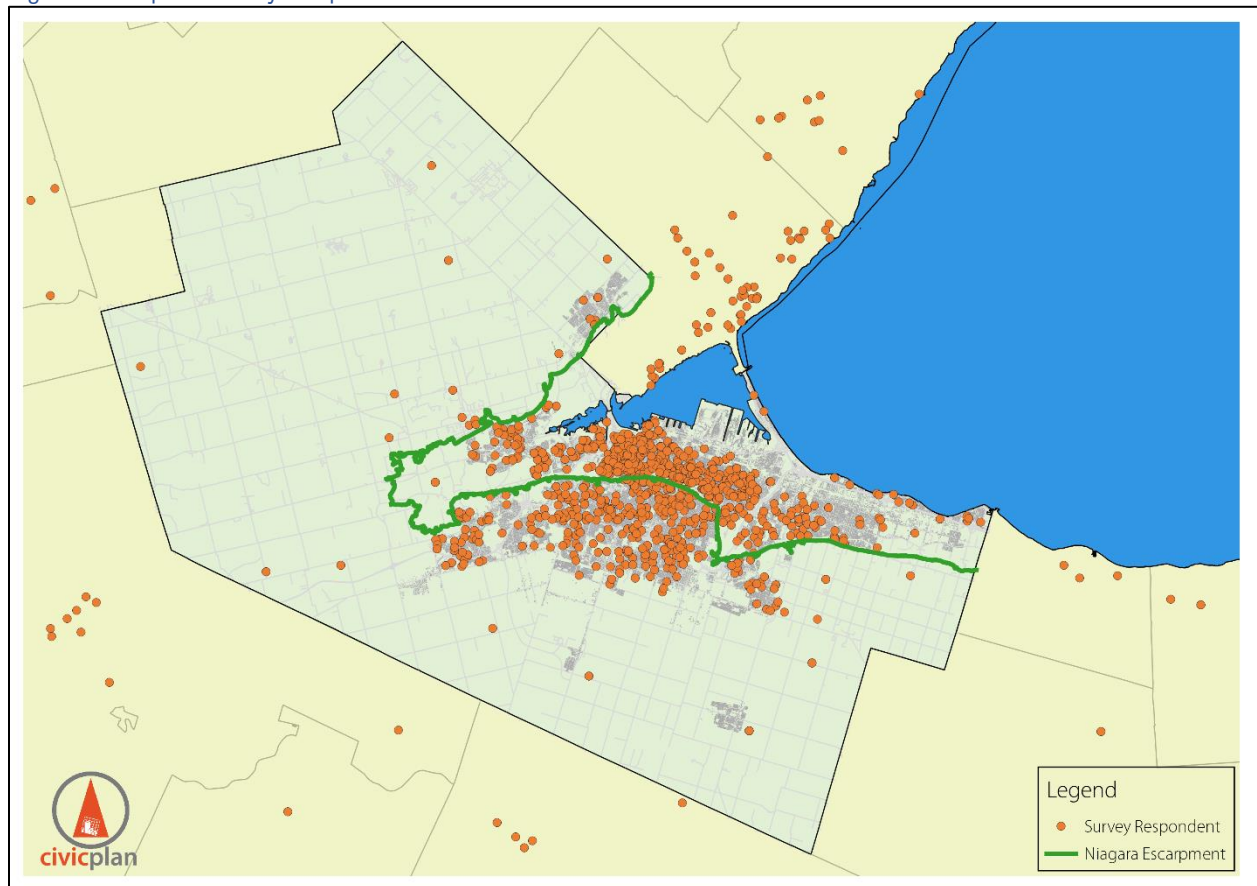
Focus Groups

Throughout the engagement over the summer months, both onsite at museums, at events and via the online non-visitor survey, participants were asked if they wanted to participate in focus groups in the Fall 2019. Six focus groups were organized across the city, at which a total of 39 residents attended.

3.1 Survey Demographics

Survey respondents were asked to share some demographic information to inform who was responding to the survey. Additionally, they were asked to provide postal codes so that the spread of participation could be tracked. Figure 5 is a map of participation by postal code.

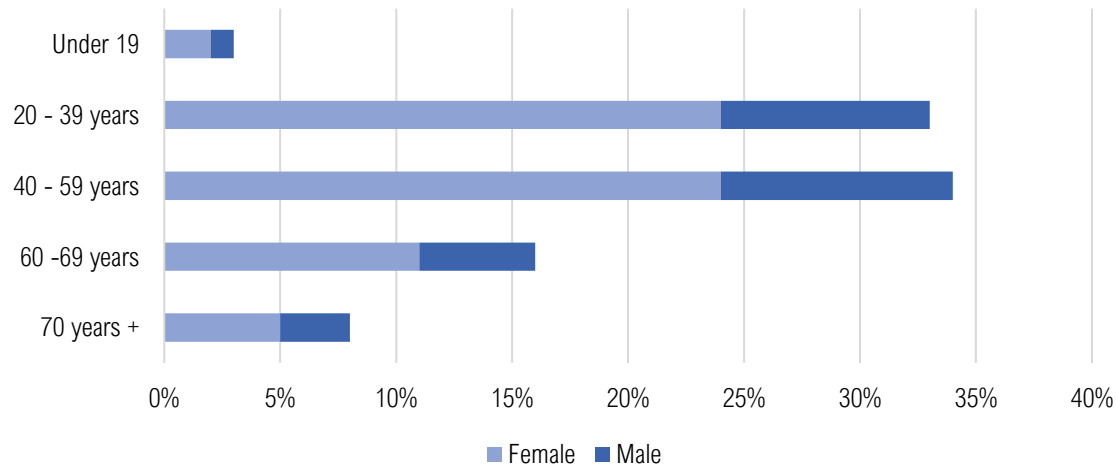
Figure 5: Map of Survey Respondent Postal Codes



The Reimagine Our Museums process was successful in engaging Hamilton residents from across the city. Additionally, the process collected responses from many people visiting the city from elsewhere, as well as people living in surround communities.

The following Figures display the total demographic breakdown for different factors for all the surveys. This includes the Visitor, Non-visitor, interviews and pop-up events data.

Figure 6: Gender and Age of Survey Respondents



Note: Five percent of respondents chose not to respond to these questions. Additional four respondents under the age 39 identified as transgender/non-binary.

People who identify as female made up the largest segment of respondents (68%). In terms of age, the largest segment of respondents indicated they were between 40 and 59 years of age (34%), closely followed by 33 percent between the ages of 20 and 39 years old. The next largest segment was 16 percent of respondents who indicated they were between 60 and 69 years of age.

Figure 7: Education Level of Respondents

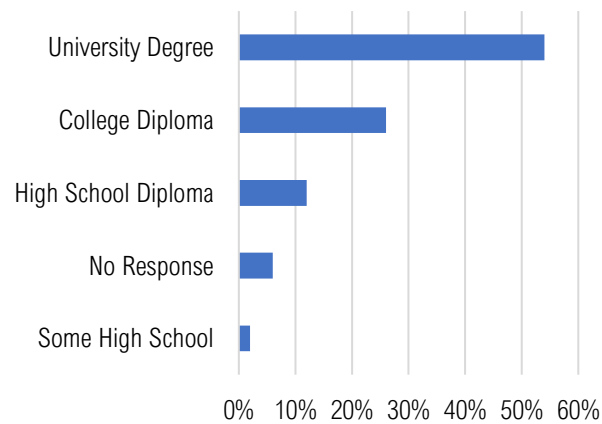
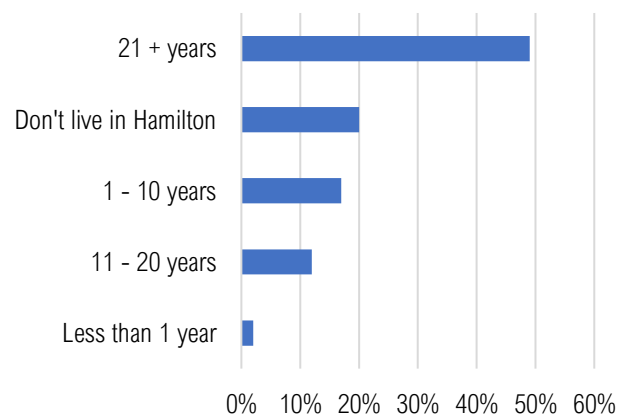


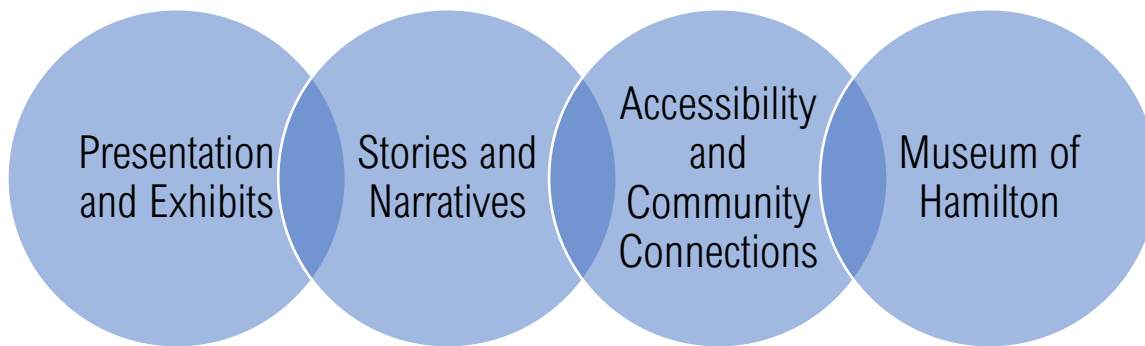
Figure 8: Time Living in Hamilton



The majority of respondents (54%) indicated they hold a University degree, while 26 percent hold a College Diploma. The single largest segment of respondents indicated that they have lived in Hamilton for 21 or more years (49%). This was followed by 20 percent who indicated they do not live in Hamilton, and 17 percent who have lived in the city between one and ten years.

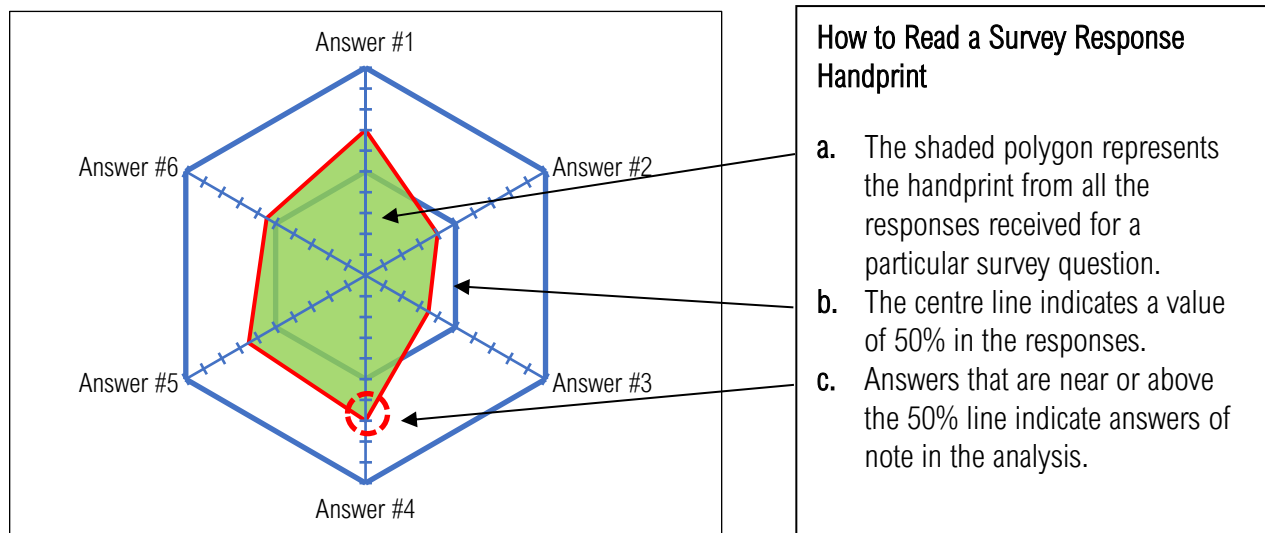
4.0 Results

The Reimagine our Museums engagement project used a diverse array of engagement methods to collect the thoughts and views of Hamilton residents and visitors. In reviewing all the data, qualitative and quantitative, four general topic areas emerged from all the forms of responses. These are as follows:



Reading the Results

The following section summarizes the results of the engagement methods into these four topic areas providing a review of what participants shared. While some results are straight forward and self explanatory, others are more complex. For example, some survey questions asked respondents to select and prioritize a series of activities or experiences. For these types of questions, a Handprint graphic is used to display collective results. The following explains how to read the handprints.



4.1 Presentation and Exhibits



“I like to interact with the museum artifact collections in new and interesting ways. I enjoy learning about new points in history, but not necessarily on a text panel. Because I have a 5-year-old son who also enjoys museums, I like having activities (interactive or public/educational programs) that we can do together.”

- Reimagine Our Museums Participant

A central role of museums, including the Hamilton Civic Museums, is to present a collection of artifacts for viewing by an audience. What is considered an artifact can vary widely, from objects, to letters and images, to structures and buildings. How they are presented and exhibited can be done in innumerable ways. In the context of the Reimagine Our Museums project, the presentation and exhibition of collections referred to the general experience for a museum goer. It included the sensory aspects of a museum visit – from what you saw and heard, to smell and touch. Additionally, it included the actual things, collections and artifacts that are displayed and how they are presented and experienced. The following sections outline how the topic of presentation and exhibits emerged in the different forms of engagement.

4.1.1 Stakeholder Workshops

Stakeholder participants shared their specific Hamilton Civic Museum experiences, as well as their views about the network of museums overall. They were explicitly asked to share their thoughts about exhibits and collections, as well as more generally about the museum spaces. In almost all cases, participants noted the impressive nature of the buildings and grounds that make up the Civic Museums. Additionally, there was strong support for the costumed interpreters. There was interest in seeing more rotation of exhibits at different locations, like Dundurn Castle and the Museum of Steam and Technology. Participants were equally interested in seeing more interactive exhibits, more opportunities for people to touch and feel artifacts. Relatedly, there was support for less reliance on text heavy interpretation and displays in favour of introducing technology or other interactive means of presentation. Some additional areas for improvement included better linkages between the different museums, for example between Dundurn Castle and Battlefield House around the stories of the War of 1812.

When asked for their future vision of what Hamilton Civic Museums will be, some key responses related to presentation and exhibits included:

- More tactile, interactive, and experiential
- Better online and digital exhibiting
- More focus on discovery and open to all ages

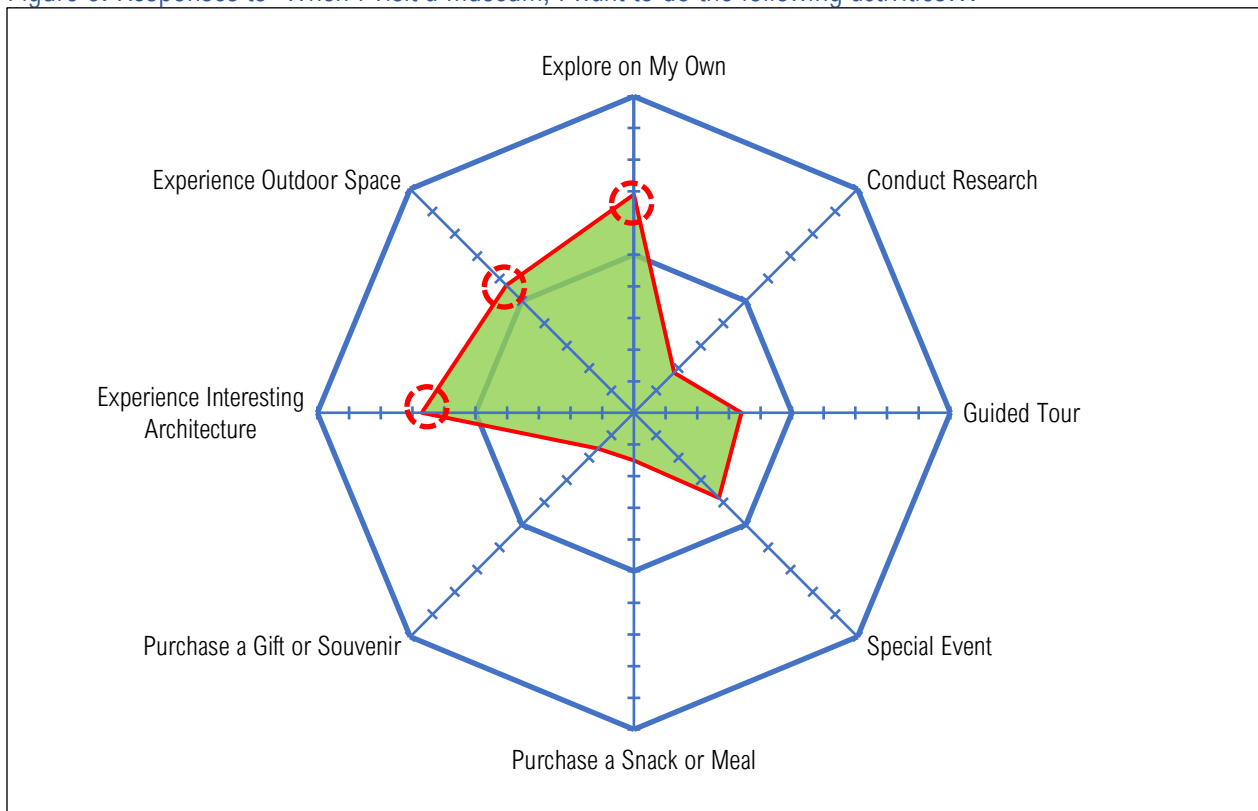
4.1.2 Surveys

Non-Visitor

There were a number of questions within the Non-Visitor survey that addressed presentation and exhibits within the Civic Museums. Overall, 93 percent of survey respondents indicated that it was a high priority for Hamilton Civic Museums to “Preserve objects and knowledge about Hamilton’s history.”

Also, respondents were asked what types of activities are a high priority when visiting a museum. The three top activities indicated were to explore on their own (69%), to experience interesting architecture (67%) and to experience outdoor space (57%).

Figure 9: Responses to “When I visit a museum, I want to do the following activities...”



In the context of the topics, these results point to a desire to have more freedom on how to experience the museum, whether through a self-guided tour, exploring the outdoor spaces around museums, or experiencing the architecture of the museums themselves.

When asked about barriers to visiting a museum, a number of responses related to the topic of presentation and exhibits. Specifically, within the “other” category to this question, respondents indicated that the current exhibits were static, meaning they did not rotate frequently enough for return visits or provide enough to draw them back. Additionally, other comments were related to guided tours and how they were not always welcoming for all ages. The current tour format is not always appropriate or scaled to children, making the spaces less welcoming to families.

Figure 10: Barriers to Visiting a Museum

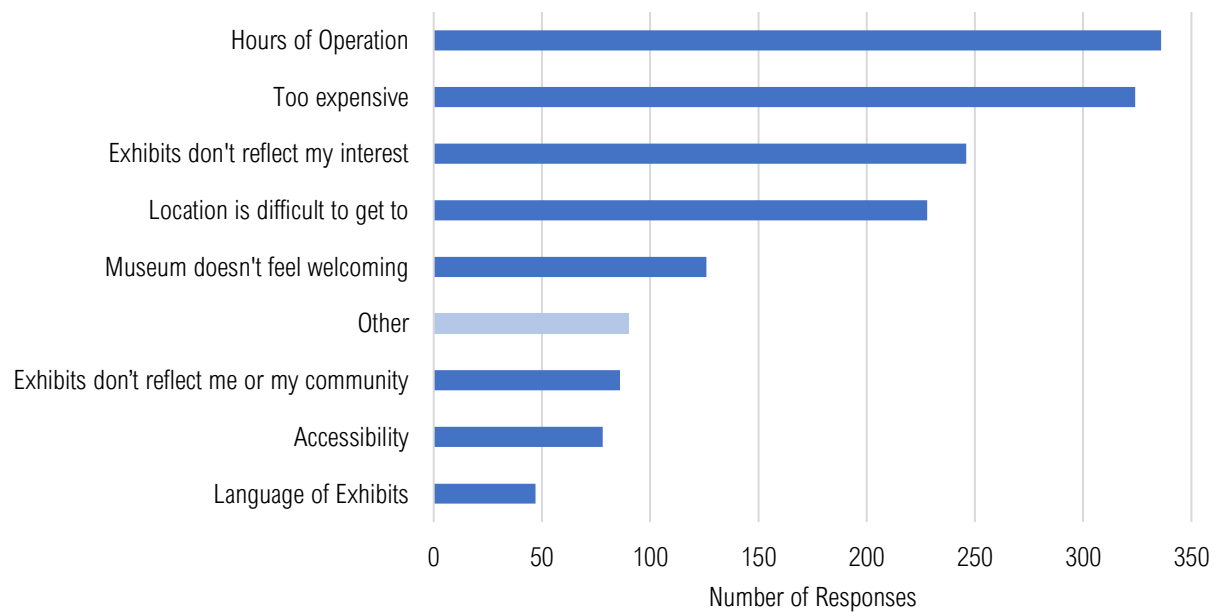


Figure 11: Responses to “When I visit a museum, I want to...”

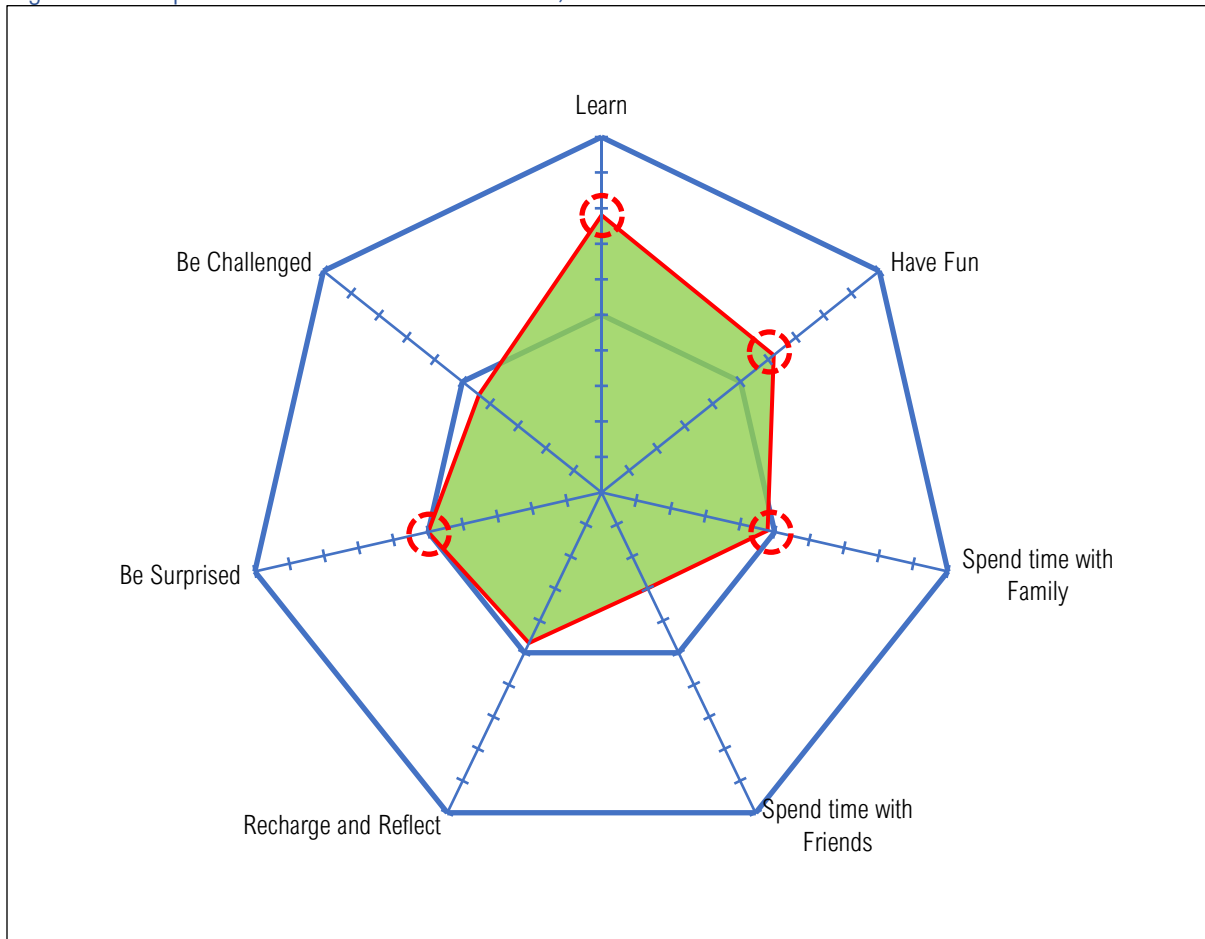


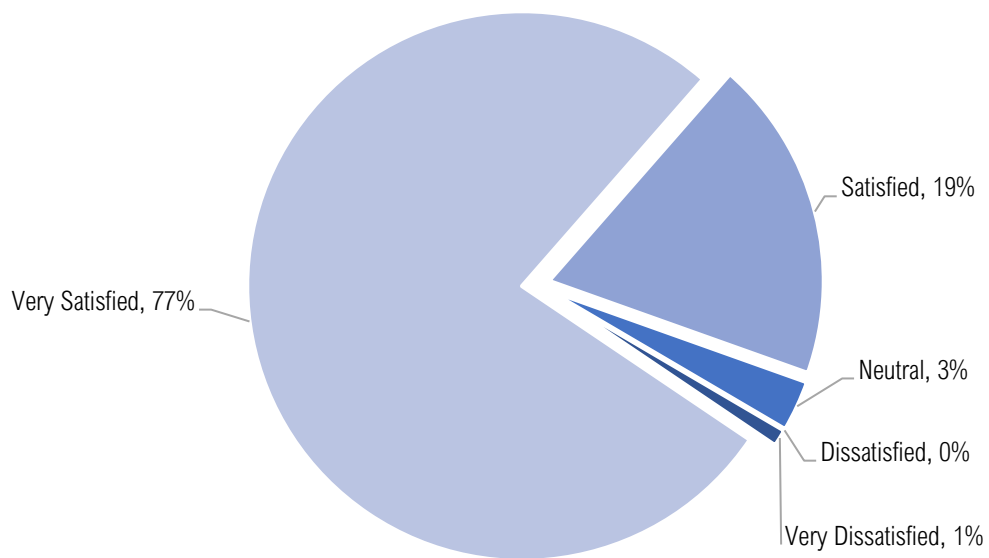
Figure 11 displays respondents’ answers to the question, “When I visit a museum, I want to...” This question was more general, aiming to gauge what types of experiences respondents prioritize when at a museum. The largest single percentage (78%) indicated that learning was a high priority when visiting a museum. This was followed by having fun (62%) and being surprised (50%) as the next largest percentages in the high priority category. Finally, spending time with family (48%) was also of note.

Along with choosing an activity, respondents expanded on their answers and this additional information highlighted how they relate to the topic of presentation and exhibits. Specifically, having more hands-on, engaging and interactive experiences was connected to having fun, being surprised, and learning. Likewise, having more age friendly exhibits was related to spending time with family, being surprised and learning. Finally, more variety in exhibits including exhibit rotation was connected to having fun, spending time with family and learning. Additional comments included support for the talent and dedication of the staff and interpreters.

Visitor Survey

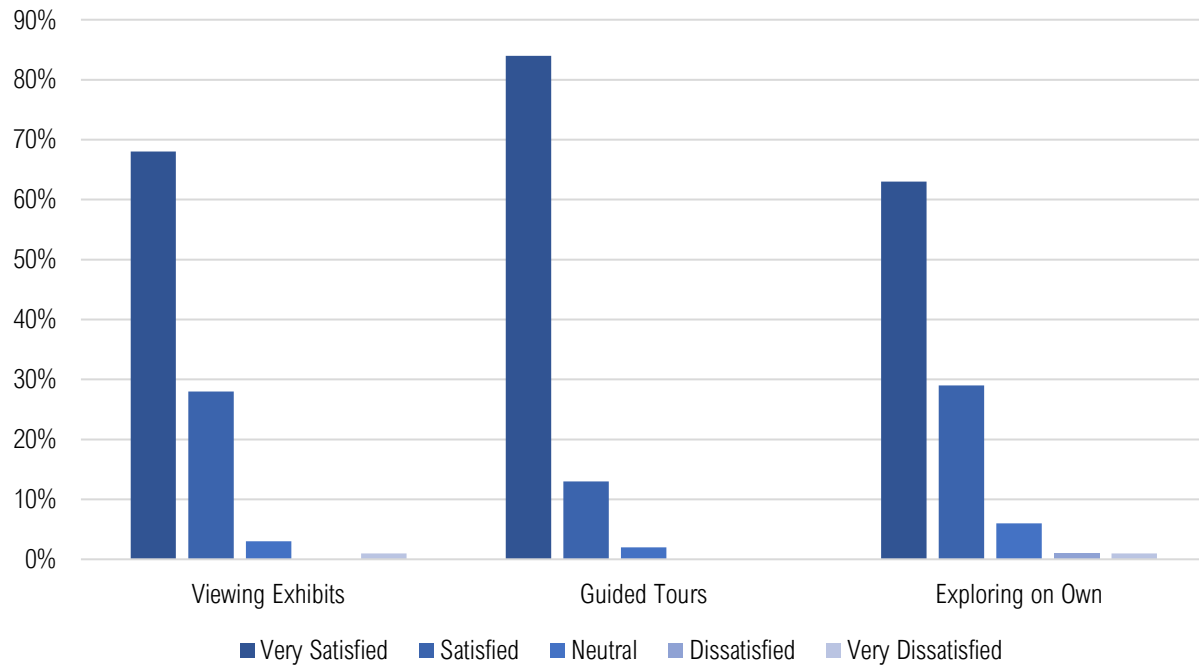
There were a number of aspects of the Visitor Survey that focused on collecting information from respondents about their experiences of museum presentation and exhibits. In terms of overall satisfaction with a visit to Hamilton's Civic Museums, Figure 12 displays the results from the visitor survey. Respondents indicated an impressive level of satisfaction with their museum visit, where 96 percent indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied.

Figure 12: Overall Satisfaction



Additionally, more detailed questions were asked about levels of satisfaction with particular elements of respondents' experience at the museum. Specific elements related to presentation and exhibits included viewing the exhibits, guided tours, and exploring on their own. In each case respondents indicated high rates of satisfaction with these specific experiences. Figure 13 displays the percentage of level of satisfaction for these three elements.

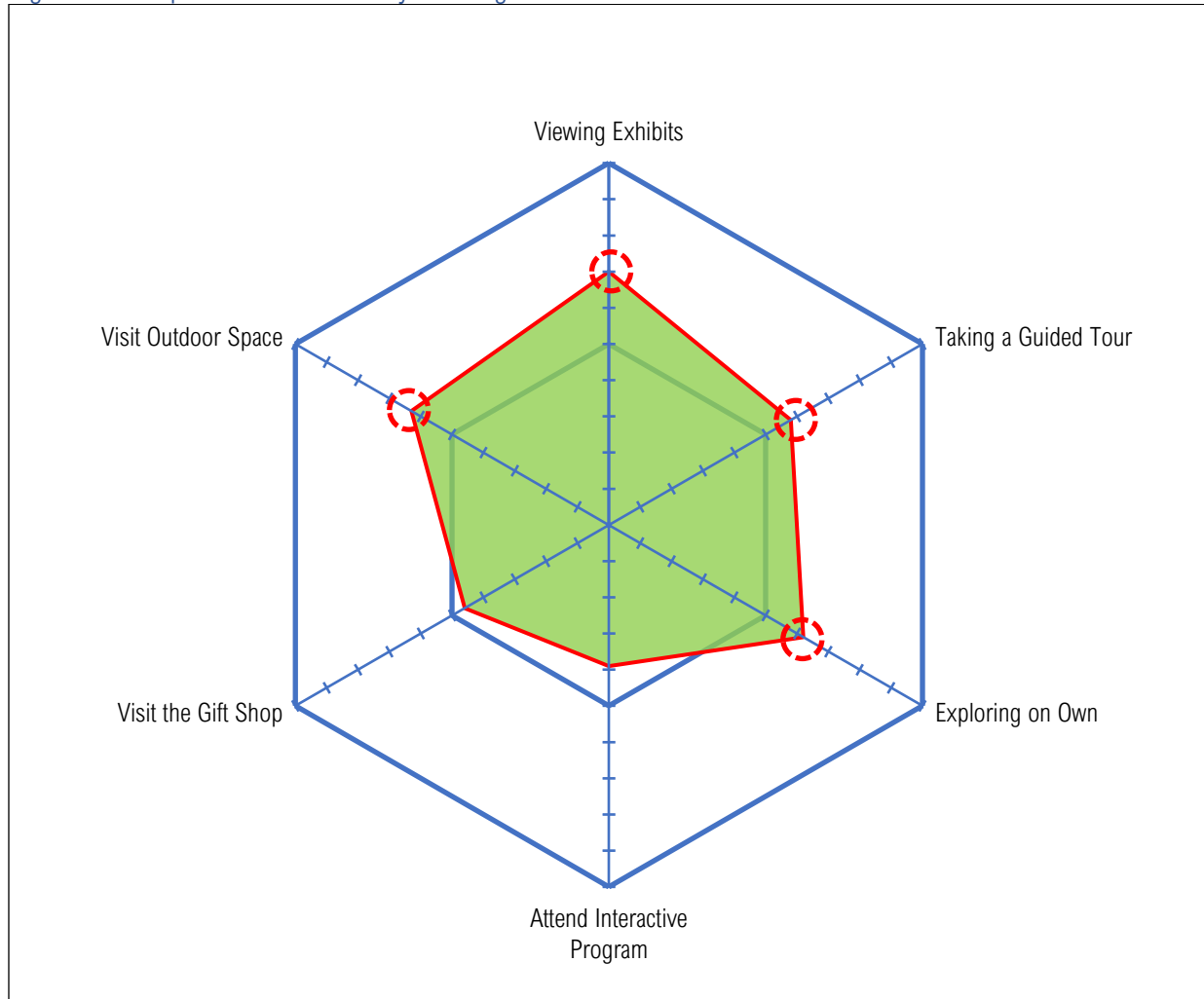
Figure 13: Satisfaction for Presentation and Exhibit Factors



It is interesting to note that while respondents to the non-visitor survey indicated that guided tours were not as high a priority, a majority of respondents to the visitor survey indicated that guided tours were a high priority and their level of satisfaction with these tours in the context of the Hamilton Civic Museums was also very high (84% very satisfied).

In order to better understand visitors' experiences, Figure 14 below illustrates the percentage response to the questions "What are you doing at the museum."

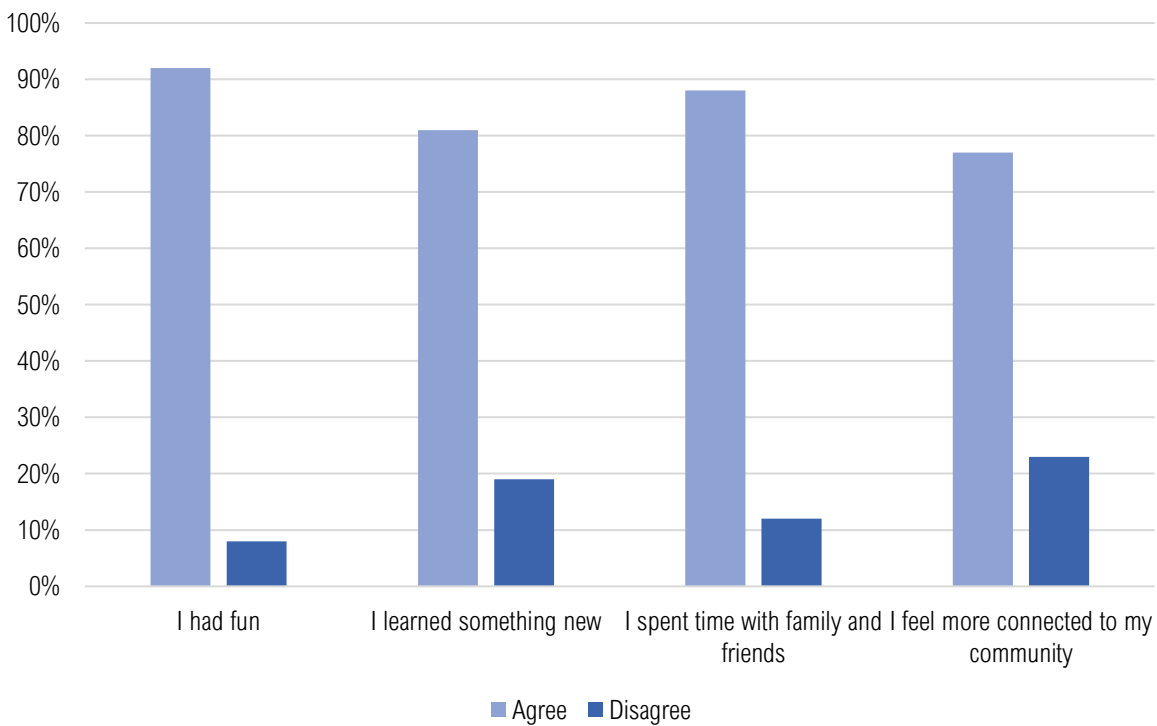
Figure 14: Responses to "What are you doing at the museum?"



With direct relation to presentation and exhibits, the largest segment (70%) of respondents indicated that viewing exhibits was a high priority. This was followed by 63 percent who indicated visiting outdoor space, and 62 percent who explored on their own. The prioritizing of exploring on their own and taking a guided tour indicate that respondents supported more flexibility in how they can experience the spaces and exhibits, both inside and outside.

Additional information about the nature of groups visiting the museums reflects the interest in presentation and exhibits that are scalable for all ages. While 88 percent of respondents indicated they spent time with family and friends (see Figure 15), a total of 59 percent of respondents indicated they visited the museum with children.

Figure 15: Responses to "Please describe your experience today"




4.1.3 Interviews

The interviews expanded on the visitor survey available at each of the museum locations. Issues of presentation and exhibits were prominent in the interview responses. Specifically, interview subjects were asked to share what they saw during their visit, and what was positive and negative about their experience. While there were specific responses for the different museum locations, there were also comments that appeared at many of the locations. For example, interviewees at most sites were very impressed with the architecture of the museums, whether Dundurn Castle, the Museum of Steam and Technology or the Children's Museum. In the context of the Museum of Steam and Technology, the building and structures as the central exhibit was highly prized by interview subjects. Additionally, many respondents indicated the value and beauty of the gardens and grounds at the different museums. The gardens at Dundurn Castle, Whitehern, and Fieldcote in particular.

Interviewees did comment that while many enjoyed the tours and knowledgeable staff, there was desire for more opportunities to explore on their own, as well as more programming scaled to different ages, from children to seniors. The interest in interactive and immersive exhibits was also noted as was the desire to see more change in what is exhibited to create more interest for a return visit.

4.1.4 Focus Groups - Presentation and Exhibits

A preliminary analysis of the results of the workshops, surveys and interviews was conducted, which helped in the development of a hypothetical objective statement that could be used to frame a focus group discussion for the topic of presentation and exhibits. This statement was,



Hamilton Civic Museums will be engaging in how they present and exhibit collections.

All members were asked to share what this statement meant to them in the context of the future of the Civic Museums. Four discussion areas arose from the focus groups around this topic.

More Immersive, Interactive Activities

Focus group participants talked about “getting beyond the rope” to feel more at the centre of the museum experience. They encouraged exhibits to be more than text on a board. They wanted more sensory experiences, to hear and touch exhibits. The use of technology was cited as a good means to create more interactivity. For example, an interactive map can put stories into a spatial context. Also, the use of guides or actors “in character”, or even allowing patrons to wear costumes and participate, were seen as effective means to create a more immersive experience. Many experiences from elsewhere were used as references including:

- **The National Civic Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee** – specific attention was paid to the “Rosa Parks Bus”, which allows visitors to sit on the bus with a status of Rosa Parks while ambient audio recordings play sounds and dialogue from the time.
- **Culloden Visitor Centre on Culloden Moor, Inverness, Scotland** – specific focus was on the interactive map displaying aspects of the battle.
- **Titanic Experience in Belfast, Ireland** – Specific mention was made by a number of participants about the level of interactivity of this museum’s experience. Additional mention was made of the scalability of the types of “experience” a visitor could have. Different types of tours were offered, some self-guided, others with guides, and others were more immersive. These scaled based on cost.
- **The Doors in St. John’s Newfoundland** – The focus was on interactivity, the use of audio and tactile exhibits. Additionally, respondents indicated the flexibility of ways to experience the museum, from organized tours to audio tours or self-guided.

More Exhibit Rotation

Participants cited the need for change in the exhibits at the Civic Museums to keep return interest high. Many pointed to the fact that they felt little need to return to a museum “any time soon” as they had already seen the exhibit on display. Lack of rotation of exhibits contributed to the notion that museums are boring and stagnant. The idea of more museum-specific exhibits was mentioned. For example, drawing inspiration from the surrounding communities, museums could tell stories of the people and the geography of the adjacent neighbourhoods, streets and spaces. A number of participants mentioned developing specific themed tours at each location that highlighted selected artifacts and objects, promoting these at different times of the year, as another way to encourage return visits.

Flexibility of Experience

Focus group participants also discussed the need for a more multi-channel experience at the Civic Museums, including the use of different forms of technology for interpretation (e.g. audio guides, digital tablets with artifact/exhibit information). Patrons wanted more ways to experience the museum exhibits and not be confined to one or two methods. For examples, along with guided tours, more self-guided experiences were suggested. These could be achieved and supported in a number of ways including audio tours, more self-explanatory text and wayfinding. Technology was again mentioned as a means to expand the delivery of the museum experience. For example, the use of virtual reality could be used to augment the enjoyment of a museum onsite as well as remotely, bringing the museum to the patrons wherever they are, be it at home, at school or elsewhere. Finally, the idea of museum “pop-ups” was suggested during the focus groups as a way to provide a different way to experience exhibits. These offsite, temporary exhibits could be located in popular locations to overcome logistical challenges of bring some patrons to the museums. For example, in local libraries, schools or shopping malls.

More Appeal for All Ages

The focus groups identified the need for the museums to provide scalable interpretation and exhibit information for all ages. This could be done in a number of ways. For example, tailoring the guided tours to different ages could make the exhibits more compelling to a broader audience. In addition, affordable additional programming for families would create appeal for a certain age bracket. Also, the more hands-on exhibits would be of interest to younger audiences while the use of more audio and visual exhibits could be appealing to older audiences.

4.1.5 Presentation and Exhibits Summary

Through the analysis of all points of engagement, seven sub-topics emerged that reflect what respondents shared through the process:



4.2 Stories and Narratives



“Would love to see more women's history included in Hamilton's museum strategy, as well as more focus on Hamilton's diverse communities.”

- Reimagine Our Museums Participant

Beyond the artifacts and buildings that make up a museum, what is compelling and keeps people coming back to museums are the stories and narratives told about the spaces, people, event, etc. Additionally, these stories are central in engendering a sense of pride and ownership, a sense of belonging in a community and within the museums themselves. The importance of the existing stories and narratives that are shared at the Civic Museums was communicated by those who were engaged in this process, but they also noted opportunities to go beyond the existing stories to learn about more people, places and things, as well as expanding those existing stories to more broadly reflect the context of all the peoples of Hamilton.

4.2.1 Stakeholder Workshops

Participants at the workshops appreciated the depth of research and knowledge that is shared in the stories about the specific museums and families, recognizing that within the existing frames of these museums the interpreters were trying to cover multiple narratives. Some examples that were highlighted were the role of women in the different households (e.g. Dundurn Castle, Battlefield House and Whitehern) and the larger social order in place during the specific time periods.

Participants at the workshops shared ideas about stories and narratives in two general areas. First was how to expand the types of stories that are covered within the existing spaces and narratives. The second area relates to developing a broader array of stories and narratives about the history of the city of Hamilton, more generally.

In terms of the ideas related to expanding the existing stories, participants highlighted the need to give better context within the existing museums by expanding narratives to include the stories of Indigenous peoples, immigrant communities and newcomers, or working people, for example. It was noted that bringing more representational and diverse voices in to share these stories was critically important. This was an area where participants encouraged the Civic Museums to be more “courageous” in building a more complex understanding of the history of these sites and the city’s history overall. Additionally, participants wanted to see more connections made between the existing sites in terms of the stories told, for example linking Dundurn Castle and Battlefield House via the War of 1812, or more pointed connections being drawn between the Gage, MacNab and McQuesten families.

Participants want the museums to move beyond the existing “origin” stories of the specific sites. They identified the need to broaden those stories that are told about Hamilton through the museums. This included a desire to see more focus on the natural history of the city, a better telling of the stories of labour, steel, innovation, and urban development and settlement. Also, participants wanted to see the museums cover a broader timeframe, whether prior to European settlement, or more recent history, of the 20th Century.

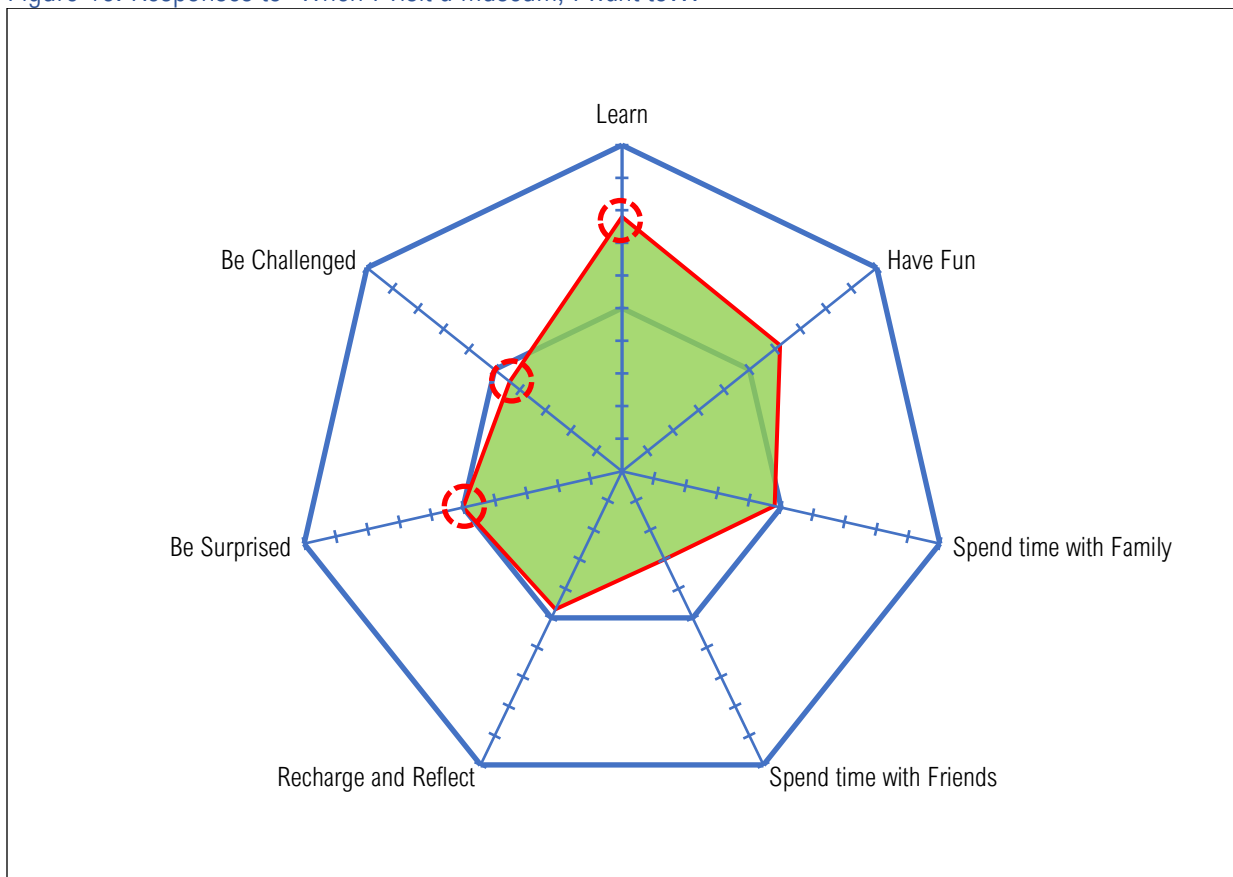
4.2.2 Surveys

Non-Visitor

Respondents to the non-visitor survey had a number of opportunities to share their views about stories and narratives at the museums. This ranges from being asked about their experiences when visiting a museum to what they think the Hamilton Civic Museums should do. Additional context was provided via opportunities to expand on answers throughout the survey.

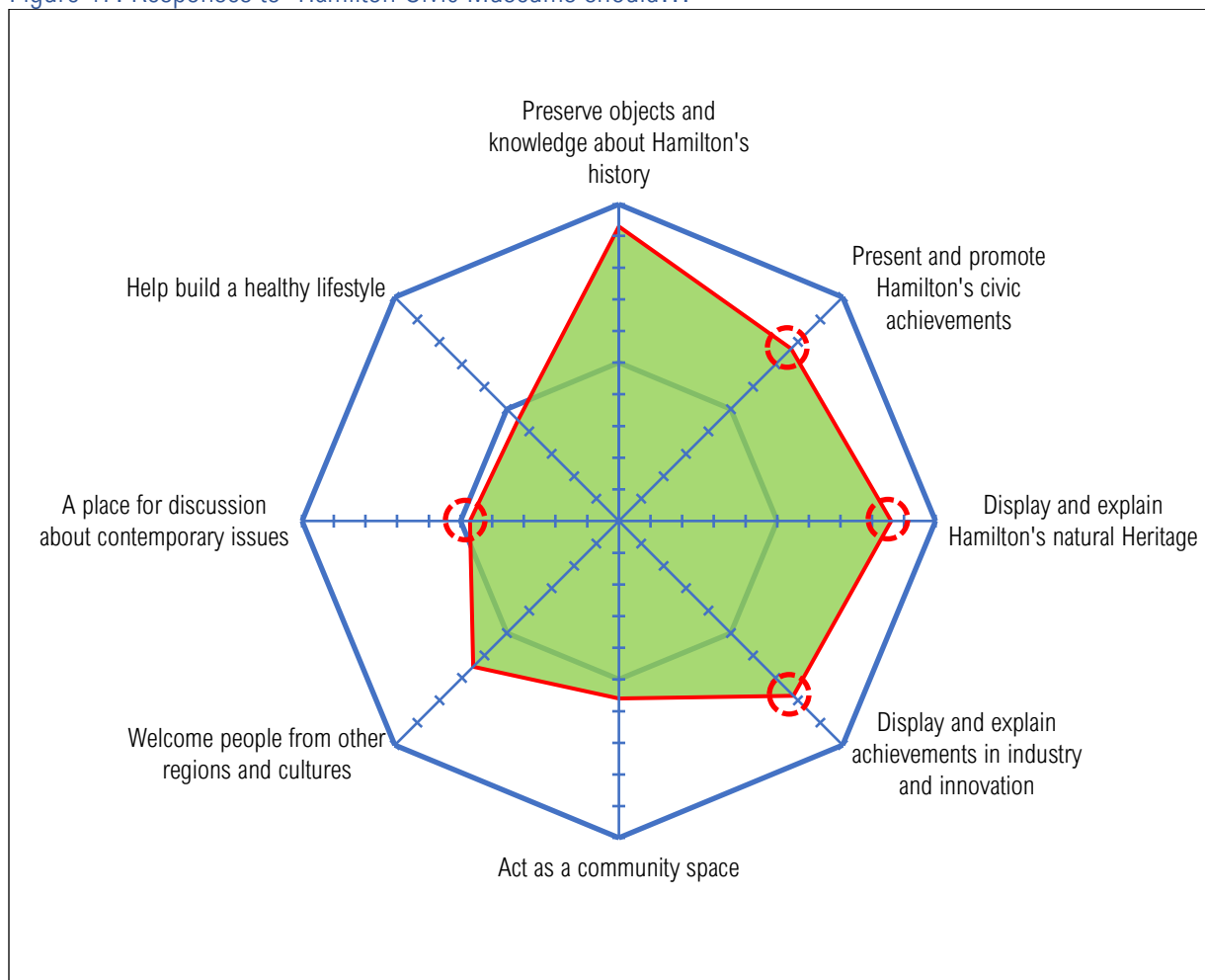
Respondents were asked to prioritize what experiences they wanted when visiting a museum. Three factors, learn, be challenged, and be surprised relate to stories and narratives. Figure 16 below displays the responses to these factors. While learning proved the highest priority for respondents at 78 percent, 50 percent of respondents indicated that being surprised was a high priority, with 44 percent indicating being challenged. More specifically, respondents provided additional comments to this question that spoke to the desire to see more stories about Hamilton told as well as have more diversity represented within existing stories.

Figure 16: Responses to “When I visit a museum, I want to...”



A clearer idea of what respondents think Hamilton Civic Museums should do in terms of stories and narratives is displayed in Figure 17, which illustrates the factors that were of high priority for respondents. Two factors relating to stories and narratives are that 86 percent of respondents indicated it was a high priority for HCMs to display and explain Hamilton's natural heritage, while 78 percent indicated displaying and explaining achievements in industry and innovation was a high priority. 77 percent of respondents indicated that presenting and promoting Hamilton's civic achievements should be a high priority. Finally, 47 percent of respondents believed that it was a high priority for HCMs to be a place for discussion about contemporary issues.

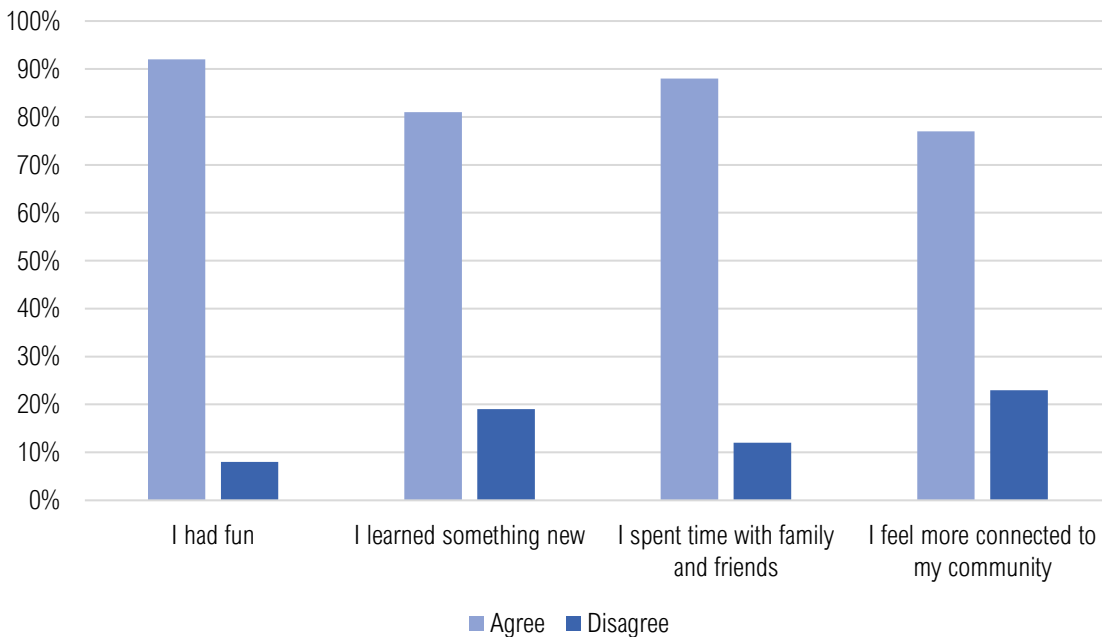
Figure 17: Responses to "Hamilton Civic Museums should..."



Visitor Survey

A key understanding of the impact of the stories and narratives experienced by visitors to the museums is illustrated in responses related to whether or not visitors learned something new. As noted in Figure 18, 81 percent of respondents agreed that they learned something new at the museum they were visiting.

Figure 18: Responses to “Please describe your experience today”



4.2.3 Interviews

The interviews expanded on the visitor survey and provided additional space for respondents to comment about stories and narratives. Ideas around stories and narratives emerged in conversations at certain museums, specifically at Battlefield House, Dundurn Castle and the Military Museum. In each of these cases, the interest was in seeing an expansion of existing narratives to better reflect stories not currently or not adequately addressed, for example interviewees wanted to know more about the women at Battlefield House, while at Dundurn Castle the interest was in expanding stories about the difficult topics of colonialism, as well as drawing more connections between MacNab and the Dundurn Castle location to present day Hamilton. At the Military Museum there was an interest in exploring more connections between local families and military stories, as well as more stories about minority groups in Hamilton’s military history.

4.2.4 Timeline

The Timeline tool, “Help Build the Story of Hamilton”, was explicitly designed to get participants to share ideas about what stories they would like others to know about the city. Participants were encouraged to include a wide variety of potential subjects, whether people, places, things, events etc. The timeline was used at the stakeholder workshops and again at the pop-up events at Supercrawl and the Central Library, as well as online. There were three major themes that emerged from the contributions:

Society and People - The largest number of responses in this theme focused on sharing stories about settlement, immigrant and refugee histories in Hamilton, as well as a focus on Indigenous histories.

Built Heritage - In the context of this theme the desire was to see stories about the city’s lost features, its’ architecture and infrastructure.

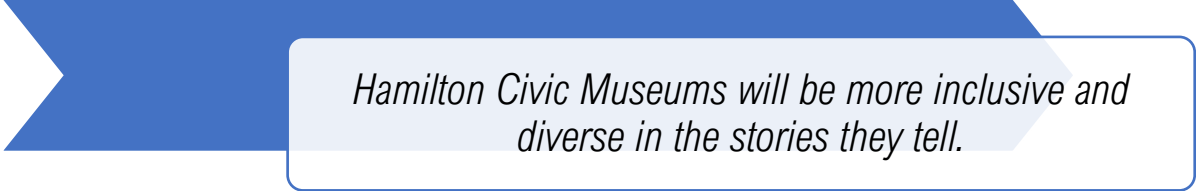
Natural Heritage - The interest in this theme was focused on more stories about the water and waterways of the city, and the layered history of the city’s landscape and environmental change.



Timeline at Supercrawl

4.2.5 Focus Groups - Stories and Narratives

As with the first topic, a preliminary analysis of the results of the workshops, surveys and interviews was conducted, which helped in the development of a hypothetical objective statement that could be used to frame a focus group discussion for the topic of stories and narrative. The statement for this topic was,



Hamilton Civic Museums will be more inclusive and diverse in the stories they tell.

All members were asked to share what this statement meant to them in the context of the future of the Civic Museums. Two general sub-topics arose from the focus groups related to stories and narratives.

More Representation Within Existing Stories

Focus group participants talked about the need to expand the representation of narratives within the existing stories that are told at the civic museums. This included two elements:

1. The narratives of different groups, such as Indigenous peoples or particular immigrant or class representation.
2. Different story narratives such as the story of mental health within the context of Whitehern.

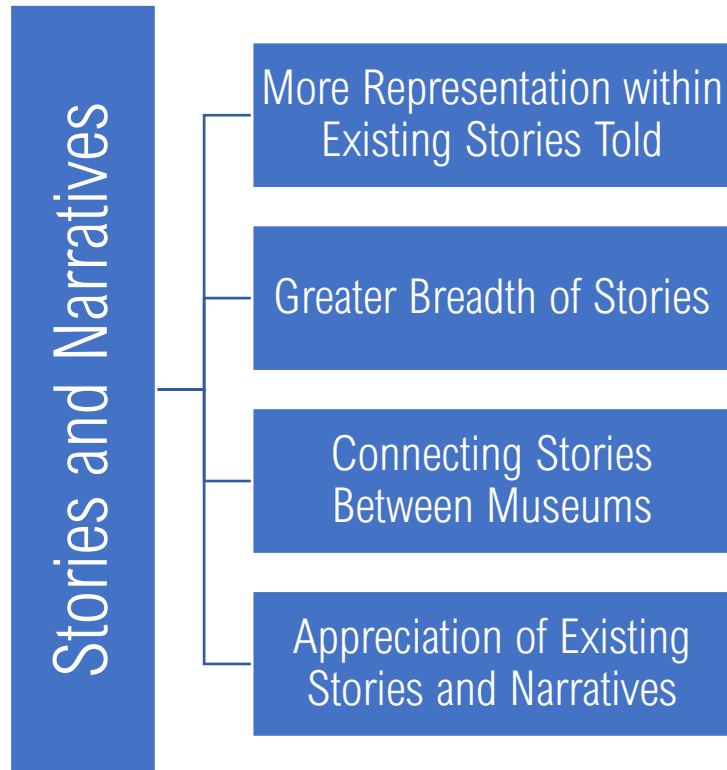
In general, it was thought that there were many more interesting stories within the walls and surrounding neighbourhoods of each museum that could be told.

Greater Breadth in the Stories Told

The major theme brought up in the focus groups was the need to create greater breadth in the stories told by Hamilton Civic Museums. As a start, there needed to be more stories beyond older wealthy white men of industry and politics. In general, many participants cited the story of Indigenous peoples as well as all the groups of immigrants who have made Hamilton what it is, as major untold stories. Beyond different groups of people, other subjects for focus included a more substantial effort at telling the “story of steel”, the geographic and geological history of the region including the harbour, the agriculture heritage of the area, as well as the urban evolution and development of the city. Another way to expand the breadth of stories, was to widen the timeline that is typically covered by the museum to included moving substantially back in time before the first peoples, as well as moving forward to more modern periods to cover more recent historical occurrences.

4.2.6 Stories and Narratives Summary

Through the analysis of all points of engagement, four sub-topics emerged that reflect what respondents shared through the process:



4.3 Accessibility and Community Connections



“You should reach out to the school board regarding field trips. None of my children have ever had a field trip to a Museum. And my oldest is now in grade 6.”

- Reimagine Our Museums Participant

As public spaces, the Hamilton Civic Museums have both the opportunity and responsibility to be open for all and to connect residents and communities. Issues related to accessibility, broadly speaking, was present in many responses throughout the process. This was often expressed via the barriers that exist and persist for people to access the museums. This could include physical access to the site, for example issues around parking, wayfinding, and actual physical access to the spaces and rooms of any of the sites, to accessibility related to cost or language, as well. A related topic is that of community connections. This includes how well do the museums link to local communities, whether cultural, geographic or communities of interest. Additionally, the community connections topic was one that participants saw as a way to address some barriers and challenges for museums, in conjunction with other topics.

4.3.1 Stakeholder Workshops

Stakeholder participants shared comments around accessibility including the need to have better transit connections to the museum sites and better hours of operation. In terms of the buildings themselves, participants recognized that there are limitations of National Historic Sites as fully accessible spaces, but there was a desire to see more efforts made to allow people with physical disability and mobility challenges to access the site and spaces. Accessibility extended to the presentation of exhibits, specifically around a desire to see less reliance on text heavy boards and displays.

Participants proposed broad solutions to accessibility concerns, particularly those related to physical barriers for patrons. Ideas included more online interactive exhibiting, a greater diversity of types of interpreted content onsite (audio guides, multiple languages etc.), and of course the removal of physical barriers as much as possible.

Ideas around reinforcing and building community connections was a strong theme throughout the stakeholder workshops. This included looking at how to bring a greater diversity of groups and communities into the museums, for example through expanding the types of events and activities that are programmed by the museums themselves. Also, participants discussed opening up spaces within the museums for community uses, volunteer activities etc.

The idea of pursuing strong community partnerships was raised by many. There were three general types of partnerships:

- Other Civic Institutions - The partnership with the Hamilton Public Library around the use of the library cards to access the museums was mentioned as an excellent first start, and a great way to address the barriers to access found in the cost to attend the museum. Other civic partners mentioned included the RBG and other City departments.
- Community Groups - Partnership with community and citizen groups was mentioned, through the provision of space for meetings and activities.
- Corporate and Sponsorship Partnerships - The importance of expanding corporate and sponsorship partnerships, for example through the use of museum space for events (e.g. Concerts), or for promotion and marketing purposes.

Promotion and Marketing

Further, a general need for more creative, effective and cohesive marketing and promotion was discussed at the stakeholder sessions. This relates to both accessibility and community connections in a number of ways.

1. Improved awareness of hours of operation, physical accessibility, cost, parking among others issues should be better communicated by the Civic Museums via their website.
2. Better targeted marketing to the general community, but specifically to civic institutions and partners could improve community connections.
3. Marketing and promotion should be extended beyond Hamilton and region to highlight the museums as a regional tourist draw.

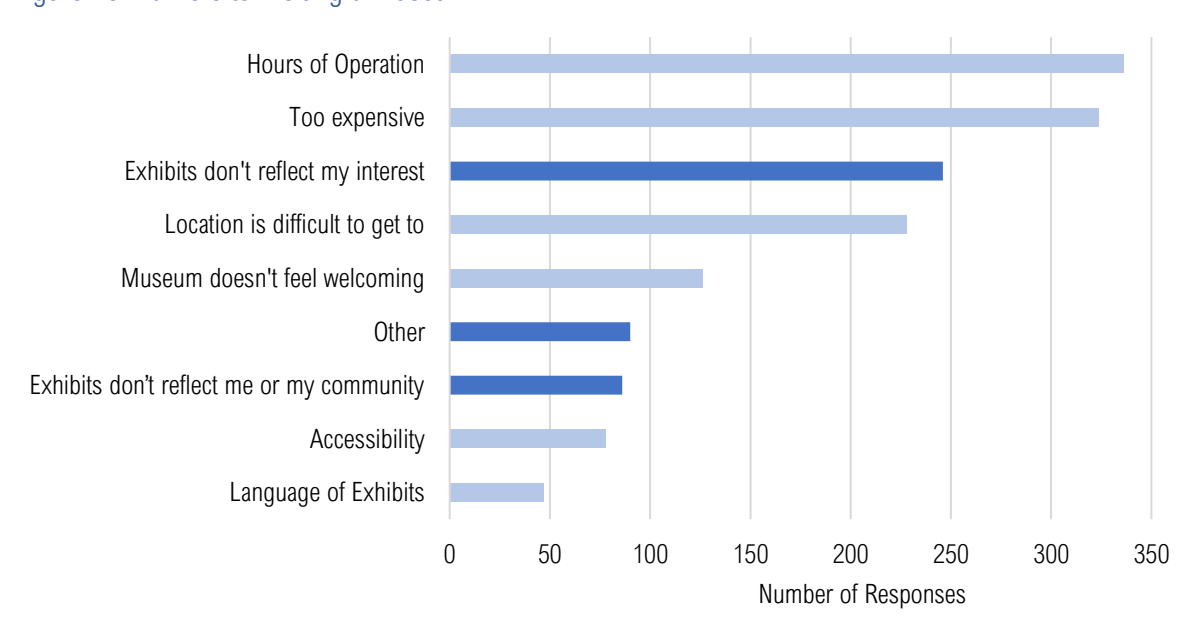
4.3.2 Surveys

Non-Visitor

Respondents to the non-visitor survey had a number of opportunities to share their views about accessibility and community connections at the museums. This ranges from being asked about their experiences when visiting a museum to explaining barriers to visiting a museum, to what they think the Hamilton Civic Museums, more specifically, should do. Additional context was provided via opportunities to expand on answers throughout the survey.

The most direct responses that spoke to issues around accessibility were related to the question of barriers. Figure 19 displays those responses.

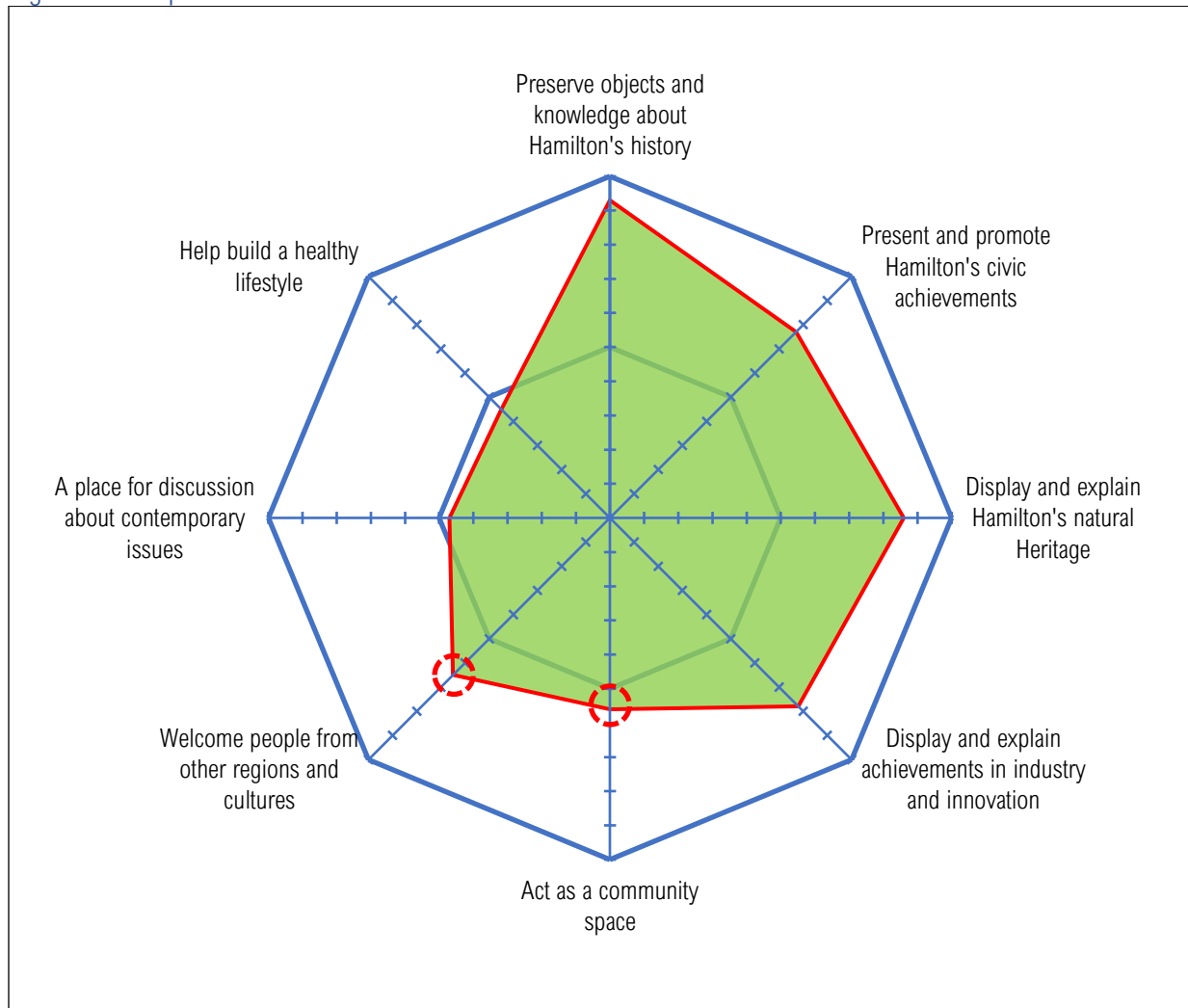
Figure 19: Barriers to Visiting a Museum



Hours of operations, cost, location issues, museum doesn't feel welcoming, accessibility, and language of exhibit are all factors that speak to accessibility. In reviewing the "other" response to this question, respondents expanded on some of these barriers. The issue of cost as a barrier was not related directly to the cost of entry to the museum itself. Respondents were aware of and pleased with the opportunity to access the Hamilton Civic Museums for free with their Hamilton Public Library cards. Where cost become a barrier is in the context of external costs for parking or transit to get to the site. Relatedly, respondents indicated that because a number of Hamilton Civic Museum locations are not readily accessible by transit, this creates a barrier to visit. In addition, lack of communications and advertising, and the difficulty in finding information was perceived as a barrier.

Respondents views about how Hamilton Civic Museums should build community connections is displayed in Figure 20, which illustrates the factors that were of high priority for respondents. Two factors that are highlighted related to community connections are that 56 percent of respondents indicated it was a high priority for HCMs to act as a community space, while 65 percent indicated welcoming people from other regions and cultures was a high priority.

Figure 20: Responses to “Hamilton Civic Museums should...”

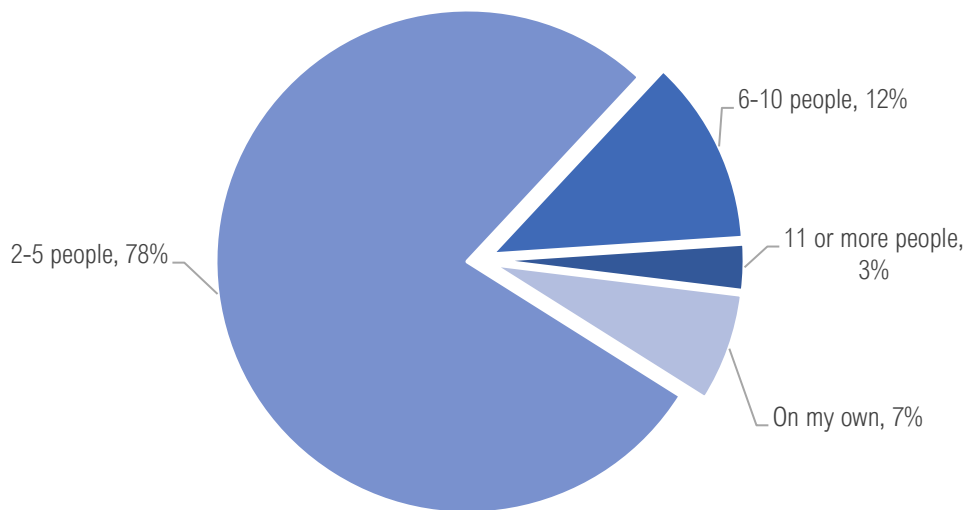


Visitor Survey

Several questions in the Visitor Survey aimed to delineate respondents' views of community connections. These questions were designed to gauge if museum visits presented an opportunity for people to build social connections (whether friends and family, for example), as well as if their visit to the museum brought a better sense of connection to community.

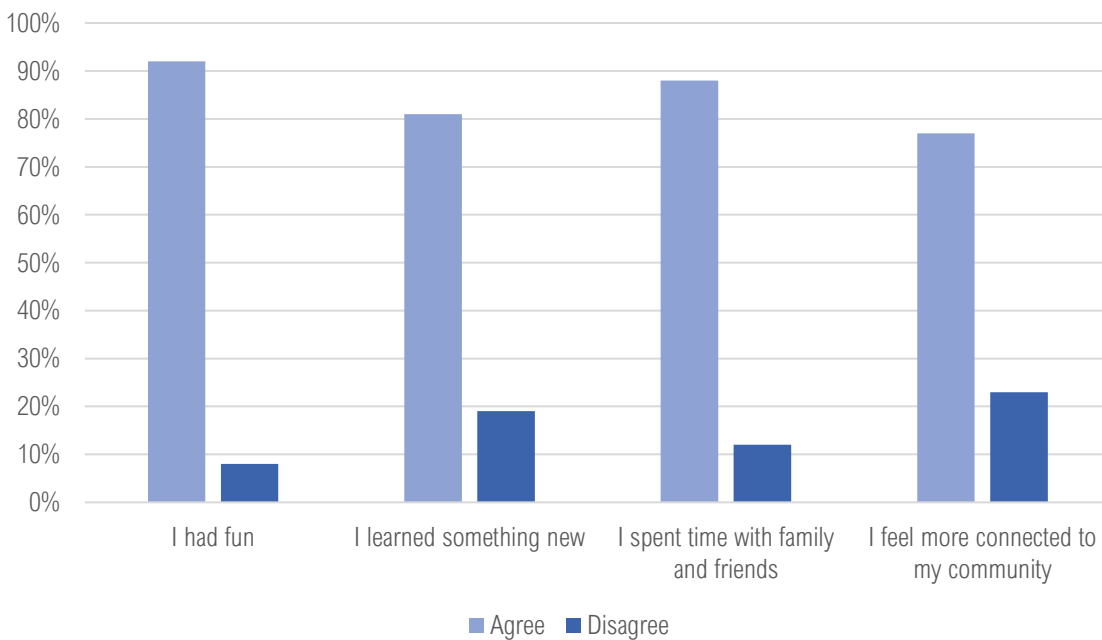
In the context of social connections, the majority of visitors came to the museum with other people. Figure 21 displays the breakdown of group attendance by percentage. While 78 percent of respondents indicated they visited with two to five people, an additional 12 percent visited with six to ten people. Respondents were asked if children were part of their group and 59 percent responded that they visited with children.

Figure 21: Group Attendance



When respondents were asked to describe their experiences of their visit (see Figure 22), 88 percent indicated that the visit allowed them time with friends and family. In terms of visitors' views about the role of museums as a means of connecting them to their community, 77 percent indicated that they felt more connected to their community as a result of their visit to the museum.

Figure 22: Responses to "Please describe your experience today"



A number of respondents indicated the reason for their visit to the museums was related to special events hosted at the respective museums, for example the Wednesday noon concerts in the garden at Whitehern, Summer concerts at Fieldcote or Steamer Days at the Museums of Steam and Technology. It is important to note that these events were central in bringing people to the museum site in the first instance.


4.3.3 Interviews

The topic of accessibility and community connections emerged in conversations across the museums. In the context of accessibility, interviewees noted that the physical accessibility of the museums sites was a challenge, including the ability to get around the grounds on assisted devices like scooters and wheelchairs. An additional issue raised at Dundurn Castle and Fieldcote related to wayfinding, specifically understanding where people enter the museum. Finally, the free entrance with a library card was seen as a very positive initiative that helped make museums more accessible from a cost perspective.

In the context of community connections, interviewees shared many positive ways that the museums, as community spaces are used and could be expanded in terms of community partnerships. Examples of this included expanding programming and events at the Museum of Steam and Technology around STEM learning, expanding volunteer opportunities, specifically youth volunteer opportunities, at Battlefield House, Dundurn Castle and Fieldcote.

4.3.4 Focus Groups - Accessibility and Community Connections

A preliminary analysis of the results of the workshops, surveys and interviews was conducted, which helped in the development of a hypothetical objective statement that could be used to frame a focus group discussion for the topic of Accessibility and Community Connections. The statement for the topic was,



Hamilton Civic Museums will actively foster community connections and reduce barriers to access.

All members were asked to share what this statement meant to them in the context of the future of the Civic Museums. Three key themes of discussion emerged from the focus groups in this area.

Accessibility

Discussion of accessibility was prominent at the focus groups. This included a number of points.

1. The physical accessibility of the museum sites to ensure people of different abilities were accommodated where possible. This could include simply having more places to sit down.
2. The navigation of the museum sites through better wayfinding.
3. Travel to the museum, especially by transit, was not convenient, or well understood.
4. Factors such as parking, the hours of operation, and cost were all mentioned as deterrents to easy accessibility.

The idea of museum pop-ups was discussed as one way to address challenges related to accessibility. Rather than expecting people to come to the museums, bring the museums (artifacts and interpreters) to people – via pop-ups at malls or other physically accessible spaces. Another idea was to mimic the Library Bus and have a Museum Bus (travelling exhibit) available to go around the community. This could communicate what museums do, broaden the reach and awareness, and give a taste of what could be seen at the museums themselves. The pop-up option was also discussed as a way to overcome cost restriction for schools. Taking the museum, artifacts and interpreters to schools would overcome the transportation cost barrier that keep many schools from visiting museums.

Community Connections

The major areas of dialogue from the focus groups centred on fostering better, more effective partnerships within the community. These partnerships involved different groups.

- Citizen-oriented groups, such as volunteer clubs that could participate in the animation, promotion and overall enjoyment of the museums.
- Civic institutions in the city. Discussions highlighted expanding and improving links with the Hamilton Public Library system as well as the Hamilton School Boards. The libraries were seen as natural allies to connect and promote museum content to broader audiences. The school boards were seen as a great way to introduce and connect younger residents to museums, fostering a culture of museum appreciation. On the flip side, the museums can provide valuable curriculum content to the schools to help animate the teaching of major events in local and Canadian history.
- Major businesses in the city could be a way to raise their profile and open up access to potential funding sources. One way to achieve this could be to have an advisory board.

Related to community connections was the ideas of having more community events at civic museums. This idea was popular in focus groups as a means of creating more vibrancy at museums all year round and to introduce them to potential audiences that might not typically visit for exhibits. Also, this was seen as a method of fostering the idea that museums are community spaces. Some respondents described going regularly to museums as a social outing (e.g. having coffee) and not necessarily viewing the exhibits. This made them a community destination for a broader set of reasons related to building social connections.

Promotion and Marketing

Promotion, marketing and overall communications were other topics of note discussed at the focus groups. Primarily, the lack of a more comprehensive marketing approach was highlighted. Opportunities were cited for a variety of approaches ranging from traditional media and advertising, to social media and even better word-of-mouth that engaging events can trigger. Existing municipal websites were not effective enough. Hamilton Civic Museums have significant competition for attention in the current advertising landscape and need a more consistent approach to keep their exposure high. Also, a coordinated marketing approach for all museums was seen as a more effective use of resources. Evidence of the current lack of communication reach was seen in the lack of broader awareness of the free museum entrance with your library card, an initiative that some focus group participants were not aware of.

4.3.5 Accessibility and Community Connections Summary

Through the analysis of all points of engagement, four sub-topics emerged that reflect what respondents shared through the process:



4.4 Museum of Hamilton



“I think that Hamilton desperately needs a museum and exhibition space that is not bound to a specific period in time / specific heritage property. We need an institution that not only tells a more complete history of Hamilton but one that can continue to evolve with the community so that residents stay engaged in the museums. This could be achieved by a more contemporary, flexible space that allows for a variety of exhibits, methods of interpretation, etc.”

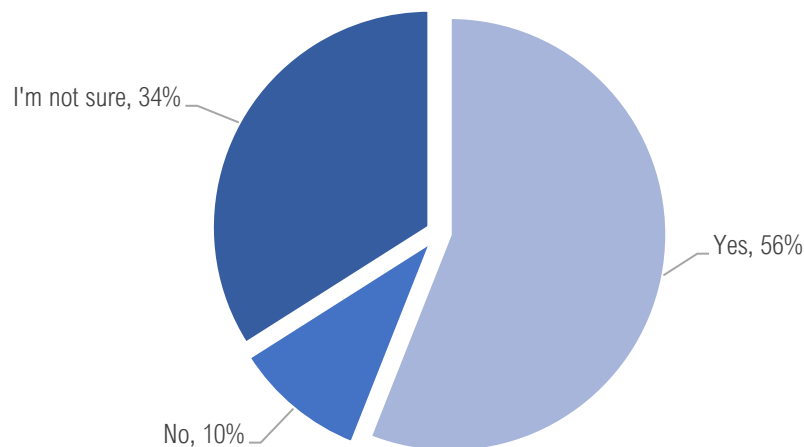
-Reimagine Our Museums Participant

The discussion around a “Museum of Hamilton”, meaning a central space that may provide an overarching narrative about the history of the city of Hamilton has been around for decades. In recent years, a more organized group of citizens have come together to advocate for creating a central space for this type of organization. The discussion dovetails with the development of the City of Hamilton’s new strategy around the Civic Museums, as it is an important complement to the broader vision of the future of museums in the city. Thus, discussion of a central “museum” emerged throughout the engagement in various ways.

4.4.1 Non-Visitor Survey

The non-visitor survey included a specific question related to a “Museum of Hamilton.” Figure 23 displays the response to this. The question was prefaced with the statement “There is community interest in the idea of a City of Hamilton museum as an institution to tell the complete history of the city.” The majority of respondents (56%) indicated they were supportive of a new Hamilton museum, while 34 percent indicated they were not sure, and 10 percent answered they were not in favour of a new museum.

Figure 23: Responses to “Do you think there should be a new City of Hamilton museum?”



Beyond the initial question, respondents were asked to explain more about their answer. There were several key themes that emerged from each group of responses.

In Support

The majority of respondents (56%) indicated that they support the idea of a new Museum of Hamilton. Within the more detailed answers, the following themes emerged.

- Support for a “whole” history of the city – The largest group of responses reiterated support for the idea of a whole history of the city in one place. This includes expanding the breadth and number of stories and narratives told about the city, who is telling these stories, as well as broadening the timeframe of the history of the city. Respondents included specific ideas as follows:
 - Immigrant and multicultural stories of the people of Hamilton - This includes tracing the history of immigrant settlement patterns in the city, as well as highlighting the unique contribution of different ethno-cultural groups to the founding and building of community and city.

- Indigenous Histories – Respondents wanted to know more about the Indigenous stories and narratives in Hamilton. From the ways of life before European settlement to better and more detailed recounting of local Indigenous peoples throughout the history of the city.
 - Industry and Innovation – Respondents indicated a desire to learn more stories about industry in Hamilton, specifically the steel industry. Additionally, there was a desire to see more about Hamilton “firsts” and the high number of industrial innovations that emerged from Hamilton mainly from the late 19th and 20th Centuries.
 - Natural Environment – The unique natural environment where Hamilton is situated was another important topic highlighted by respondents. Everything from understand more about the changing waterfront, to links between patterns of urban development and its impact on the natural setting.
 - Cultural and Artistic History – More stories about the cultural and artistic history of the city, including music, performing arts, visual arts, film and broadcasting.
 - Built Heritage – There was interest in knowing more about the built heritage and architecture of the city. A particular focus was on what has disappeared.
- Artifacts/Archives – Respondents highlighted the importance of preserving artifacts that support the diverse history of the city, as well as support for a central archive to store and preserve these items. These comments included reference to the City’s existing artifact storage facilities, making space for new donations, as well as bringing together, in a central space, other archives and collections, such as the Hamilton Public Library’s Special Collections and others from other civic organizations (e.g. Hamilton Police Services, etc.).
 - Pride in Hamilton’s rich history – Respondents communicated clearly that in their view Hamilton “deserves” a new Museum of Hamilton that incorporates this whole history of the city because of the maturity and complexity of the city’s history. Respondents indicated that there is such a rich and deep history in Hamilton that is not currently recorded and told. This legacy is important to share both with local residents, as well as with larger regional, provincial, national and international audiences.
 - Location – In the context of a new Museum of Hamilton as a stand-alone venue, respondents provided comments about their preferred sites, which included adaptive reuse of existing buildings, as well as building a new building. The top locations mentioned by respondents were Auchmar on the west mountain, followed by the former Marine Discovery Centre located on the waterfront, as well as general statements about downtown or a central location.

- Tourist attraction – One important function a new museum could play, according to many respondents was as a central tourist attraction that provides visitors with a broader view of the city and its history.
- Community Destination – Respondents were equally interested in seeing the new museum as a community destination, including partnerships with other civic and cultural organizations to share exhibits, stories and narratives, as well as containing space for community events and activities.
- Connections – Another organizational aspect of a new museum that respondents noted was its connection to the existing Civic Museums. They identified that currently, a gap exists in effectively connecting the existing museums together to tell a more holistic story of the city. The idea of a new museum was a compelling response to this, whereby the new space would provide a broader series of narratives about the city's history and timeline, which then connects to the existing museums.

Not Sure

The next segment of respondents (34%) indicated they were not sure about a new Museum of Hamilton. In terms of their comments, another set of themes emerged.

- Purpose – Respondents indicated a desire to know more about the idea of a new museum. A number indicated they had not heard about the idea, while others wanted to know how it would fit with and complement existing museums in the city.
- Support Existing Museums – Another theme was the idea that a segment of respondents wanted to see support for existing museums, whether through an expansion of existing narratives or expanding existing spaces to address some of the ideas for a new museum before building a new stand alone space.
- Cost/Sustainability – Concerns were raised about the cost of a brand new museum and how this would impact the sustainability of existing museums.
- Needs to be different/unique – Respondents supported the idea of a new museum as long as it was different or unique from existing museums. This included being different in relation to the stories and narratives told, as well as difference in the presentation and exhibition of collections and artifacts.
- Work with existing community partners – Another idea shared in the comments was the need for the existing museums to connect better with other community cultural partners, both now and in the context of a new museum. Partners mentioned included the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Worker Arts and Heritage Centre, the Dundas Museum, and the Erland Lee Museum.

Not in Favour

A smaller percentage of respondents (10%) were not in favour of the idea of a new museum. Two general themes emerged from comments around this response.

- Support existing museums before creating new one or adapt existing museum – Many of those who indicated they were not in favour of a new museum expressed that they were not against the idea of a more holistic history of Hamilton, but rather they were not in favour of a new stand-alone space. Instead, respondents highlighted two approaches to this, the first was to tell more stories within the existing museums, and the second was adapt the existing museums both physically and in terms of exhibits and narratives to include a broader and more connected history of Hamilton.
- Cost/sustainability – The other central reasons respondents did not support a new Museum of Hamilton was related to the cost of building and operating this new space, as well as concerns raised about the sustainability of the existing museums.

4.4.2 Other Discussions

Many of the participants at the stakeholder workshops were interested in the idea of a new Museum of Hamilton as a physical space to tell and connect the stories of the people of Hamilton as a whole. They saw it as a venue to be able to expand the diversity of stories currently shared via the Civic Museums, in the context of including different ethno-cultural communities not currently covered in the existing museums. The idea of this museum was discussed as providing a broader context to the “story” of Hamilton, from a geographic and archeological level, from a temporal perspective – incorporating time frames and histories not currently included in existing museums, for example pre-European settlement, or more contemporary 20th Century histories. Relatedly, participants saw this space as an opportunity to expand the voices of peoples telling the stories, from Indigenous peoples to ethno-cultural communities being able to better reflect their own histories in Hamilton.

A small segment of interviewees raised the topic of a new museum of Hamilton. In general, they wanted a museum that better captures a broader history of the city or the “whole” history, as one interviewee put it. Additionally, there were comments that noted that a new museum of Hamilton could be better able to address the innovative and industrial history of the city with a greater emphasis on the 20th century.

4.4.3 Focus Groups - New Museum

As with the other topics, a preliminary analysis of the results of the workshops, surveys and interviews was conducted, which helped in the development of a hypothetical objective statement that could be used to frame a focus group discussion for the topic of a Museum of Hamilton. In addition, specific language from a relevant City Council Motion¹ was used to help frame the statement. The statement for the topic was,



The City of Hamilton will conduct a feasibility study into a Museum to tell the “complete history of the city.”

All members were asked to share what this statement meant to them in the context of next steps on this idea. Several themes of discussion emerged from the focus groups in this area.

Overall, participants were supportive of the ideas of a new civic museum, especially as a means to be able to tell more of the stories of Hamilton that are currently not represented at the Civic Museums. Creating a new space, rather than adapting an existing museum tended to be favoured, as there was no interest in encroaching on or erasing any of the existing stories that are being told. Rather, the idea that a new museum could actually tie the narratives of all the museums together was seen as beneficial. In this way a new museum could be a ‘hub’ and the existing museum ‘spokes’.

There was interest in seeing a new Hamilton museum as a significant tourist draw that could show off the city and be a regional or even national destination. To achieve this, a focus on particular Hamilton strengths, such as the “story of steel” was seen as beneficial. Alongside tourists, there was a strong theme of a new museum being a place “by and for local residents.” A place where residents could gather, see themselves and hear stories relevant to them and that the stories should change over time to make it a dynamic destination. It should be a tactile, interactive and exciting experience.

In term of locations, a number of places were mentioned including the waterfront and the downtown and some were interested in seeing existing city-owned buildings used for this purpose such as the former Marine Discovery Centre or the Auchmar Estate, or privately-owned buildings of note. Participants also expressed the concern that a new museum could impact the financial feasibility of the rest of the civic museums and wanted sustainability to be a core part of this project moving forward.

¹ City of Hamilton Council Motion, Item 9.1, General Issues Committee Report 18-007. March 21, 2018.

4.4.4 Museum of Hamilton Summary

Through the analysis of all points of engagement, six sub-topics emerged that reflect what respondents shared through the process:



5.0 Conclusions

Throughout the Reimagine Our Museums process, specific topics and sub-topics were raised through the different forms of engagement. The following Topic-Engagement Matrix (Figure 24), organizes and illustrates these ideas.

Figure 24: Topic-Engagement Matrix

	Workshops	Non-Visitor Survey	Visitor Survey	Interviews	Focus Groups
Presentation and Exhibits					
More Immersive and Interactive Exhibits	●	●		●	●
Increased Exhibit Rotation	●	●		●	●
More Flexibility on How to Experience Museums	●	●	●	●	●
Design Exhibits and Tours for All Ages	●	●	●	●	●
Support for Existing Interpreters/Guides	●	●	●	●	
Appreciation of Existing Presentation and Exhibits	●		●		●
Recognize Buildings and Grounds as Part of Museum Experience	●	●	●	●	
Stories and Narratives					
More Representation within Existing Stories Told	●	●		●	●
Greater Breadth of Stories	●	●		●	●
Connecting of Stories Between Museums	●				●
Appreciation of Existing Stories and Narratives	●		●	●	●
Accessibility and Community Connections					
Stronger Social Connections and Community Partnerships	●		●	●	●
More Community Events at Museums and Grounds	●	●	●	●	●
Improved Physical Accessibility to and Within Sites	●	●		●	●
Increased Promotion, Marketing and Communications	●	●			●
Museum of Hamilton					
A Place to Tell More Stories (A more holistic picture of the city)	●	●		●	●
A Place by and for Hamiltonians (To Tell Their Stories)	●	●			●
A Community Gathering Space		●			
A Major Tourist Draw		●			●
A Place to Link Existing Stories: 'Hub and Spoke'		●			●
A Sustainable Institution		●			●

Presentation and Exhibits - The majority of sub-topics were supported through several points of engagement, starting with the Stakeholder Workshops and including the Surveys, Interviews and Focus Groups. Engagement revealed support for the existing interpreters and guides at HCM, while also pointed to a variety of ways that the museum experience could be improved to increase interactivity and more flexible ways of touring the museums.

Stories and Narratives – The Stakeholder Workshops, Interviews and Focus Groups were where issues around stories and narratives most strongly emerged. This is not surprising as these were the venues where longer discussion could take place. In addition, the outcomes from the Timeline exercise, which produced a variety of ideas, explicitly addressed the sub-topic related to telling a greater breath of stories at Hamilton Civic Museums. That being said, engagement also revealed a strong appreciation of the existing stories and narratives told at HCM and a desire to not see them erased.

Accessibility and Community Connections – A number of issues related to accessibility emerged across the different forms of engagement, with an interest in ways of improving the physical spaces in and around museums, as a key sub-topic mentioned. In relation to community connections, this was addressed in detail in the Stakeholder Workshops, Interviews, and Focus Groups. Of note, support for community events hosted at Civic Museum sites was found across all points of engagement. In addition, an array of potential community partnerships was discussed, revealing ideas for future action in this area.

Museum of Hamilton – The topic of a new Museum of Hamilton was primarily explored through two points of engagement. The Non-Visitor Survey, which had specific questions related to the topic, and the focus groups, which dedicated time to explore the issue. A robust discussion on what a new Museum of Hamilton could be is illustrated in the sub-topics. It should also be noted that there was some overlap between discussion of a Museum of Hamilton and some of the other topics. For example, a new museum was seen as an opportunity for a more interactive museum experience, as well as a place to tell a greater breath of stories that would communicate a more “complete” story of Hamilton, as well as reflect a broader diversity of groups and people.

Final Thoughts

Overall, the Reimagine Our Museums process provides a number of concrete ideas and directions for a new Hamilton Civic Museums Strategy. Across the various methods of engagement and through the responses received from across the city and beyond, various shared topics and themes emerged to provide guidance for future action. A clear message from respondents across the engagement was that there is high satisfaction with Hamilton Civic Museums and strong pride in what they provide. Specifically, this manifests in local pride that positions museums as key venues to better communicate the story of the city and its various people and communities. Further, this is demonstrated in the desire to see improvements to the existing museums, as well as in the support for the idea of a new Museum of Hamilton as a place to showcase Hamilton for both locals and tourists.