

Museum Services Revitalization Update

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Recommended by:	Chief Administrative Officer

Report Summary

This report provides information regarding the Museums Revitalization Plan presented to Council on November 30th, 2022.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

The Greater Sudbury Museum Revitalization plan and its recommendations will address the following goals and objectives outlined in the Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (Revised): Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness and Create a Healthier and More Vibrant Community.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implication associates with this report.

Introduction

This report provides an update on the Greater Sudbury Museum Revitalization Plan (Revitalization Plan) and progress achieved. As previous reports have described, museum operations have remained largely unchanged in the 20 years since municipal amalgamation. Previously identified challenges regarding facility renewal and infrastructure needs, artifact conservation and program resources, continue to put pressure on staff's ability to advance the recommendations of the Revitalization Plan; however, Museum Services has made strides toward realizing the recommendations of the Revitalization Plan.

On November 30, 2022, staff presented the Revitalization Plan to Council highlighting three main recommendations.

- An increase in the Museums Services Operating Budget to provide for the addition of two full time permanent staff to address the shortfall of skilled resources required to meet community expectations, industry standards and perceived service levels.
- An increase in the operating budget to address increased costs in maintenance and provide financial support for the required external storage for a portion of the artifact collection.

- The appointment of an Advisory Panel to provide advice and input for the creation of short and long-term plans, including facility and programming opportunities.

Background

Museum Services operates as a “Community Museum” as defined under the Heritage Act ([Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18](#)) and continues to receive a modest annual grant from the Province for this designation. In order to continue to comply with this designation a community museum must reflect the following characteristics and follow the Ontario Standards for Community Museums ([Standards for community museums in Ontario | ontario.ca](#)). A community museum must:

- Adhere to the requirements of the Heritage Act;
- Ensure staff resources that have sufficient, appropriate technical and administrative skills/experience to sustain the service’s administration needs and ensure programming and artifact management reflects industry standards; and
- Establish an advisory body that can demonstrate community support, provide guidance in prioritizing programs and activities, develop and validate strategic direction, and ensure representation for culturally significant communities.

Governance and Structure

As part of the Economic Development division within the Tourism & Culture team, Museum Services provides reports and updates to Council through the Community and Emergency Services Committee. The Economic Development division also coordinates the Museum and Municipal Heritage Advisory Panel, which provides advice and input on Museums planning, activities and programming opportunities.

As per provincial standards, Council’s specific responsibility is to act as the steward for the Museum’s collection in the public trust. Council is responsible for ensuring that the collections are properly managed and that adequate resources (financial and otherwise) are allocated for their care and management. Council is also responsible for approval of any museum policies and is also ultimately responsible for the Museum’s adherence to these policies.

As per resolution CC2022-291-A1:

...the City of Greater Sudbury approves the establishment of a combined Museums / Heritage Advisory Panel and directs staff to develop a draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for this new advisory panel, including consideration for heritage designation, museum programming and cultural heritage representation, and heritage tourism opportunities, and further, that the draft TOR be presented to Council for approval by the end of January 2023.

The Terms of Reference for the Museums/Heritage Advisory Panel was subsequently approved by Council in 2023 through Resolution CC2023-22; based on this direction, the Advisory Panel provides advice and input on plans and activities for Museums as well as Heritage-related items.

The City of Greater Sudbury appointed Councillors Landry-Altmann, Vagnini (replaced by Councillor Benoit March 8, 2024), Labbé (stepped down from Advisory Panel) and Fortin to the Museum and Municipal Heritage Advisory Panel. Subsequently, during the Nominating Committee of May 23, 2023, with Resolution NC2023-16, Council appointed the following citizens to the Museums and Municipal Heritage Advisory Panel for the term ending November 14, 2026:

Karanbir Badhesha	Emelie Bourgeault-Tesse	Dieter Buse
Kate Gauvreau	Vicki Gilhula	Kathryn Huneault
Garry Michalak	Leslee Salo	Darlene Shawbonquit
Mark Simeoni		

This Advisory Panel had its inaugural meeting June 29, 2023, and has met several times since. The Panel will also be supporting the strategic planning process, which is a key recommendation of the Revitalization Plan, described in more detail below.

Human Resources

Museum Services includes Anderson Farm Museum, Copper Cliff Museum, Flour Mill Museum and Rayside Balfour Museum. As outlined in the recommendations of the Revitalization Plan, Museum Services now has a compliment of three full-time staff members: the Museum and Cultural Experience Officer, the Curator, and the Curatorial Assistant. During the summer months, Museum Services hires additional resources with summer students to primarily focus on education and programming with additional support focused on collection management.

Sites and Facilities

As reported in the Revitalization Plan, the City continues to invest in the maintenance of the museum facilities, having completed several improvements at Anderson Farm, including stair replacement in the log cabin, exterior fire escape stairs at the milkhouse/bar and interior stair replacement from the ground floor to the upper level of the barn.

The Plan also identified both the Milkhouse/Barn and Stable requiring loft floor reinforcement. Many of the Museum facilities are designated heritage structures and are therefore artifacts themselves. Accordingly, to preserve heritage characteristics and in some cases maintain heritage designations, heritage structures cannot be maintained the same way modern buildings are maintained. Each heritage building has distinct needs that must be research and carefully documented.

When repairs to the original elements of a heritage building are required, the following must be considered:

- Restoration and repairs must be based on historical documentation of the building and consistent with the original character of the building, with specific approaches used for repairs.
- An expert in heritage building conservation should be consulted to determine the best materials and methods for the job at hand.
 - o If repairs are considerable and will require drawn plans, architects who are members of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals should be used.

Anderson Farm Museum

Anderson Farm Museum is a listed heritage site on the City of Greater Sudbury's Heritage Register under Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act. Before proceeding with repairs proposed for the Milkhouse/Barn loft floor reinforcement staff have engaged the services of LHC Heritage Planning & Archaeology Inc. to undertake two studies, a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) and a Heritage Conservation Plan (HCP). These studies inform how best to proceed with these improvements that are necessary for ensuring public safety.

The CHER comprehensively evaluates the cultural heritage value of a resource, site, or cultural heritage landscape. It provides historical documentation, identifies heritage features, and compiles a Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. Essentially, CHER is a stand-alone version of the first part of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), which is a necessary step toward achieving heritage designation.

Complementary with the CHER is the HCP. The purpose of a conservation plan is to identify the cultural and historic significance of a site and to set out a policy and strategy for the management and conservation of the heritage values, attributes, and integrity of that site. The conservation plan examines the long-term planning of a cultural resource and should determine how to retain its significance in any future use, alteration, repair, or development. Staff anticipate that work on the Anderson Farm reports will be completed by the end of Q1 2025.

When staff began to plan and investigate the work associated the barn loft floor reinforcements, it was discovered that the recommended approach would drastically limit how this space can be used; specifically,

the addition of six structural columns would limit the types of activities possible for the space. Subsequently, it was determined that this space could be better utilized as administration and program planning space for Museum Services.

Museum staff currently occupy the attic of the Milkhouse, which is not adequate for year-round occupancy. A shift in approach for the Stable will allow for appropriate staff space, more accessible space for visitors, continued community and citizen use resulting in revenue potential and future opportunities for enhancements to the visitor experience.

To execute the capital improvements described above related to the Anderson Farm Museum, the artifacts previously stored in both the loft of the Stable and of the Barn have been relocated to off-site storage to accommodate the capital work.

Flour Mill Museum

In accordance with the Revitalization Plan, the Flour Mill Museum heritage house and log cabin were relocated to the O'Connor Park site in 2019. In July 2022, in response to concerns of possible damage to the structures due to the move, consultant firm FCAPX was engaged to conduct a building assessment for both the heritage house and log cabin; this work subsequently determined that a structural engineer is required to complete a review of the structural integrity of the heritage house structure from water damage that has been identified. Staff have arranged for this work to be completed by A2S and the final report is anticipated shortly.

The detailed structural condition assessment further revealed several key findings. Museum occupancy loading and/or occupancy limits should be approved by the Chief Building Official (CBO), and an architectural review of code compliance and heritage requirements is recommended to ensure alignment with applicable standards. To address excessive sagging of the upper floor joists, a new drop beam or joist reinforcement is needed, along with additional upper floor reinforcement if required to support museum occupancy loading. Modifications or reinforcement of the attic roof framing are essential to address excessive sagging and unintended load redistribution to the ceiling joists. Next steps will include a review with the Capital Projects team.

Website Development

An effective website is an important tool to help increase awareness of the facility, market to attract visitors and provide on-line programs for users. As recommended in the Revitalization Plan, Greater Sudbury Museums in collaboration with Communications launched a new website in September 2024. The new site improves the overall user experience, integrates current branding, meets AODA standards and replaces the current dated platform. While some database resources will take longer to migrate, a few redirects to the old site will remain during this transition. The new website is an essential step forward in meeting our revitalization service level goals and can be accessed at <https://museums.greatersudbury.ca/>.

Staff will continue to manage the website to ensure the information remains current and relevant, which keeps visitors coming back and contributes to elevating Museum Services credibility and reputation. As well, active website management contributes to Search Engine Optimization (SEO), which improves visibility and drives more organic traffic to the website. Additionally, regularly reviewing and tracking user behavior and website performance through analytics supports staff and Council's ability to making data-driven decisions.

Vision and Strategy for Future of Museum Services

Museums play an important role in making communities vibrant, welcoming, and desirable places to visit and to live. Strategic planning is an essential activity for all museums and cultural institutions to ensure that they meet community needs and funder requirements. Efforts towards realizing a vision and strategic plan for Museum Services are one of the Revitalization Plan recommendations.

A Strategic Plan Working Group has been established, consisting of staff from across the organization, key stakeholders, and community group and user representation. This working group will share updates with the Museum and Municipal Heritage Advisory Panel, and will follow a five phased approach:

- Phase 1: Preparation.
- Phase 2: Research and Consultation.
- Phase 3: Analysis and Recommendations.
- Phase 4: Strategic Planning; and
- Phase 5: Implementation and Reporting.

Building on the groundwork established during the development of the Revitalization Plan, the process will incorporate a community engagement strategy. This approach, coordinated with the Communications team, will provide multiple opportunities for public input and meaningful dialogue regarding the future of Museum Services in the City of Greater Sudbury.

Staff anticipate presenting the completed Strategic Plan by Q4 2025.

Conclusion

Museum Services continues to play a crucial role in advancing goals associated with both *Creating a Healthier and More Vibrant Community* and *Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness* by providing and supporting educational programs and resources that engage people of all ages, promoting learning about local history, art and traditions; fostering a sense of belonging and pride among residents by involving the community in curating exhibits and programs resulting in stronger local ties; attracting visiting and boosting our local economies; and celebrating shared heritage can promote understanding and dialogue among different groups, fostering social harmony and cohesion.

Next Steps

1. Complete Flour Mill Museum Heritage House structural review (Q1-2025)
2. Complete Anderson Farm Stable renovations (Q1-2025)
3. Complete Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report and Heritage Conservation Plan (Q1-2025)
4. Complete Anderson Farm Milkhouse/Barn loft floor reinforcements (Q3-2025)
5. Approval of Strategic Plan by Council (Q4-2025)

Resources Cited

Museum and Municipal Heritage Advisory Panel Appointments—Nominating Committee May 23, 2023
[Nominating Committee Meeting - May 23, 2023 \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

Greater Sudbury Museums Revitalization Plan – City Council Special Meeting November 30, 2022
[Special City Council Meeting - November 30, 2022 \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

[Greater Sudbury Museums Review – City Council Meeting February 8, 2022](#)
[City Council Meeting - February 08, 2022 \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

Ontario Standards for Community Museums
[Standards for community museums in Ontario | ontario.ca](#)

Ontario Heritage Act
[Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18](#)