

Advisory Committee of Council Staff Report



To Accessibility Advisory Committee
Date Tuesday, August 20, 2024
Subject **Guelph Civic Museum Renovations**

Recommendation

1. That the AAC recommend the Museum consider the following elements when designing an accessible, memorable and inspiring experience:
 2. That the AAC recommend the following stories be considered for inclusion at the Museum to best reflect life in Guelph – past, present, and future, and the lived experiences of people with disabilities:
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To seek AAC advice on accessibility features and inclusive exhibition content to inform Civic Museum renovations.

Key Findings

The City is renovating three existing areas at Guelph Civic Museum:

- The Families Gallery – a hands-on, interactive space for children from birth to 10 years old and their grown-ups, envisioned to provide playful learning experiences
- The City Gallery – an engaging space intended to reflect through artifacts and multi-media installations the stories of the people and the place we now call Guelph
- The reception lobby – a welcoming, enticing, accessible greeting area

In addition, the City will upgrade the HVAC system at the Museum to improve humidity control within the building.

We hope to receive feedback from the AAC on:

- exhibition content that will represent and reflect the lived experiences of people with disabilities in Guelph,
- accessibility features that will contribute to a safe, welcoming, engaging museum experience.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This initiative supports:

City Building - Growing and caring for our community spaces and places, including attracting more people to our programs by making them easier to access and enjoy.

People and Economy – Growing Guelph’s economy through tourism; making downtown a vibrant place for everyone; and supporting community well-being.

Foundations - Providing excellent service and removing barriers to participation.

Financial Implications

There is \$1.75 million budget for this project. It is anticipated that recommendations from AAC will be accommodated within the existing budget.

Report

Guelph Civic Museum relocated to the former Loretto Convent 12 years ago. As part of a lifecycle renewal, the City is undertaking a major renovation to the exhibition and reception spaces at the museum, and an upgrade to the HVAC system to improve humidity control. The updates are intended to serve until the next lifecycle update in approximately ten years.

Specifically, the City is renovating three existing areas at the Civic Museum:

- The Families Gallery – a hands-on, interactive space for children from birth to 10 years old and their grown-ups, envisioned to provide playful learning experiences
- The City Gallery – an engaging space intended to reflect through artifacts and multi-media installations the stories of the people and the place we now call Guelph
- The reception lobby – a welcoming, enticing, accessible greeting area

Guelph Museums, which includes the Civic Museum, McCrae House National Historic Site, and Locomotive 6167, exists to:

- Collect and protect artifacts, artworks and stories that reflect our community.
- Share the collections and stories – locally, nationally, and internationally – through exhibition, interpretation, and online access.
- Provide inclusive, accessible, interactive, and enlightening experiences.
- Nurture interest and engagement in history, art, and culture.
- Cultivate a connection to place, with focus on the tangible and intangible cultural landscape unique to Guelph.

The Museum’s strategic plan identifies current priorities to:

- **Adapt** to meet community needs, to address emerging opportunities, and to foster transformational change, including increasing access through digitalization and practicing and modelling environmental sustainability
- **Innovate** to advance knowledge and cultivate creativity using best practices and technologies
- **Represent** the full and truthful stories of our community from perspectives as plentiful and diverse as the community itself; and amplify voices that have traditionally been under-represented. This includes diversifying our collections, programs, and staff and volunteer team composition.
- **Connect** citizens to opportunities, and people to each other
- **Grow** community engagement and participation in art and heritage activities; build the profile of the local cultural sector; increase opportunities for artists; and boost economic impact through culture, contributing to a prosperous community

This renovation project advances the Museum's strategic priorities and encompasses exhibition content and presentation; accessibility enhancements including lighting, tactile and audio experiences; and physical plant repairs and updates. In addition, the humidification system will be upgraded to provide adequate environmental conditions for the protection and preservation of Museum artifacts and the comfort and safety of visitors, volunteers, and staff.

The goals for this project are:

- To provide accurate, current, engaging information through updated exhibitions, which are representative of the diversity of our community
- To reduce barriers and introduce new features which enable accessibility
- To de-centre Guelph's founding narrative, reflecting the rich Indigenous history on the land we now call Guelph
- To provide safe, welcoming, inspiring visitor experiences
- To build modularity into semi-permanent exhibition spaces, enabling more frequent updates to ensure current and relevant content.
- To improve environmental conditions within the Museum

The City has engaged an experienced multi-disciplinary consulting team, including architects and engineers J.L. Richards & Associates Limited and exhibition specialists Lupien + Matteau Architecture Inc. As they embark on the development of conceptual design, the Museum is seeking input from the AAC. Committee members are asked to reflect on their own museum experiences and share advice and aspirations to inform decisions about accessibility features and to contribute to museum content that is reflective of the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

Specifically, AAC members are asked:

- What elements should the Museum consider when designing accessible, memorable and inspiring experiences?
 - If you visit museums, consider your most memorable museum experience and what made it so
 - If you do not visit museums, consider what might inspire you to visit
- What stories should be considered for inclusion at the Museum that best reflect the lived experiences of people with disabilities in Guelph?
 - Consider stories that reflect life in Guelph – past, present, and future

The input provided will be incorporated into the initial conceptual design. The Museum anticipates returning to the committee near the end of 2024 to invite further feedback on the draft conceptual design.

Financial Implications

There is \$1.75 million budget for this project. It is anticipated that recommendations from AAC will be accommodated within the existing budget.

Consultations

Guelph Museums Advisory Committee

Guelph Museums staff, volunteers, visitors

Leanne Warren, Project Specialist, Accessibility Services

Jean Starchuk, Project Manager, Facilities and Energy Management

Attachments

Attachment-1-Presentation_Guelph Civic Museum Renovations

Departmental Approval

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This report was approved by:

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