



Oshawa Historical Society and the Oshawa Museum Business Plan 2024

Introduction

Since 1960, the Oshawa Museum, operated by the Oshawa Historical Society, has been collecting, researching, and telling the stories of Oshawa's history. As the only museum with a focus on the community of Oshawa, we take great pride in showcasing the history of our city from the earliest First Nations settlements to the present day.

The Oshawa Museum's Business Plan for 2024 presents five strategic objectives for key areas of focus that will guide and build on the ways the Museum serves the people of Oshawa, including:

- manage the artefact and archival collections that tell the stories of Oshawa and the land on which it sits
- research, interpret, and present Oshawa's history
- guided by collaborations with our partners, colleagues, and stakeholders, provide compelling experiences to the public that will connect them to Oshawa's past
- remain resilient and prepared for the future.

The objectives of the Business Plan 2024, along with the related strategies and actions outlined in the Action Plan 2024, will ensure that the Oshawa Museum continues to play a central role in the cultural life of Oshawa, and that it remains:

- visitor oriented
- flexible and responsive to change
- accessible and engaging to diverse audiences
- fiscally responsible
- connected with the community
- supportive of the City's culture and heritage tourism goals.

The five strategic objectives will help the staff and directors of the Oshawa Museum to shape the work to be accomplished over the next year, in order to realize the mission of the Oshawa Historical Society, and the goals shared with the City of Oshawa.

1. Mission Statement

The Oshawa Museum preserves and actively promotes awareness and appreciation of Oshawa's history for the education, enrichment and enjoyment of a diverse audience.

The Oshawa Museum will be guided in all its activities by the following values:

- Respect: trustworthy, respected in the community, professional, accurate
- Pro-active outreach: collaborative, creative, community focused
- Inclusive: accessible, open, representative, welcoming
- Education: engaging, original, imaginative, diverse
- Presentation: our collection helps us to understand and connect with our city, both past and present
- Diligence: accomplished, consistent, mindful

2. Service Description and Client Identification

The Oshawa Museum is:

- The only museum in Oshawa focused on the history of the community
- Comprised of three heritage-designated houses and the Anniversary Drive Shed
- Supported by five regular full-time staff, five part-time staff, seasonal/temporary staff
- Home to 50,000 objects and photographs covering Indigenous history, Oshawa's social history, science, technology, and more
- An accurate and dependable source of information on Oshawa's history.

The Oshawa Historical Society is a not-for-profit charitable institution, and maintains the Oshawa Museum as a repository for artifacts and written records of historical interest to Oshawa. The Museum is operated by an elected Board of Directors, as an external agency of the City of Oshawa. As outlined in the Constitution and By-Laws (2005), the Board is responsible for all decisions relating to the operation of the Museum. The Board consists of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary to the Membership, Standing Committee Chairpersons and Directors at Large. Each Board position is assigned specific responsibilities, as are the committees.

The staff of the Oshawa Museum is currently made up of five regular full-time positions (Executive Director, Archivist, Curator, Community Engagement Coordinator and Visitor Experience Coordinator), one regular part-time position (Maintenance), and four casual positions (Visitor Hosts). Core staff are supplemented with contract staff funded by project grants, as well as interns, co-op students, and volunteers.

Our Collections

The Oshawa Historical Society recognizes the stewardship of the Museum's collections and structures as a public trust. We value the trust placed with us to safeguard the artefact and archival collections, and we recognize our responsibility to strategically develop the collection for future generations. Our collection is diverse, just like Oshawa's history, and we are committed to expanding the narratives we share to be more inclusive of underrepresented communities, and to examine our lexicon for biased or outdated terms. We care for over

50,000 artifacts and will continue to strategically manage and develop the collection as a resource for education and research.

Our Spaces

The three heritage-designated buildings, Guy House (1846), Henry House (1840), and Robinson House (1854), as well as the Anniversary Drive Shed (2009), are comprised of programming areas, workspaces, artifact storage, and exhibition space. The buildings are owned by the City of Oshawa and, in 2010, a 20-year occupancy license was signed between the Oshawa Historical Society and the Corporation of the City of Oshawa. The Oshawa Museum promotes its spaces as an asset to the community, to engage visitors, and raise the visibility of the Museum. Future plans include the construction of a new visitor center designed to offer an elevated museum experience, including a larger and improved community programming space.

Our People

The Oshawa Museum has a professional, committed and highly-educated staff. The specialized knowledge of the staff is what gives significance to the Museum's activities, and they strive to share unique and relevant stories with the public through various means including exhibitions, newsletters, presentations, publications, social media, blogs, regular newspaper articles, and OshawaMuseum.org. We will continue to promote the Oshawa Museum as a reliable source on the history of Oshawa, and explore new ways to create and present our knowledge to the community. Our staff share their expertise with the community and colleagues through their work on community committees, in various publications and by presenting at conferences.

3. 2023 Accomplishments

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- The Oshawa Museum is Oshawa's only museum dedicated to the history of the community of Oshawa and is recognized as the definitive source on Oshawa history
- Most extensive archival and artefact collections representing Oshawa's history
- Well-known, beautiful, and easy-to-find location in Lakeview Park can easily be optimized for City's waterfront development plans
- Good relationship with members of Council, City staff, Heritage Oshawa and other boards and committees
- Highly-knowledgeable, skilled, respected and committed staff, board and volunteers
- Flexible and responsive to change and new challenges
- Strong usage of the Museum's programming by Oshawa schools
- Broad thematic scope of programs that engage visitors
- Respected by the public and colleagues
- Known for transparent and positive interactions with the public
- In 2023:
 - Opened *From Ship to Shore: Exploring Oshawa's Relationship with Lake Ontario* as a new virtual exhibit in partnership with the Digital Museum of Canada

- Opened *Be Prepared*, a new exhibit on the history of Guiding and Scouting in Oshawa, with support from the Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority
- Métis artist Tracey-Mae Chambers installed *Hope and Healing Canada* at Robinson House, a site-specific project that examines the theme of reconciliation
- Staff created visibility for the Museum and strengthened its reputation as a knowledgeable and reliable institution by sitting on several committees, including (but not limited to) the Archives Association of Ontario 2023 Conference Committee, Heritage Oshawa, Cultural Leadership Council, York-Durham Association of Museums and Archives, Durham Region Area Archives Group, Program Advisory Committees at Fleming College and Durham College, and as an instructor in the Cultural Heritage, Conservation and Management Program at Fleming College
- Project and employment grants meant that the Museum could take advantage of employing a Registrar, a Collections Assistant, and an Archives Assistant to continue digitization, research, and artefact storage projects
- Successfully applied for several grants including the Community Museum Operating Grant, Heritage Organization Development Grant, Museum Assistance Program, Canada Summer Jobs and Young Canada Works
- A new monitored security system was installed in all museum buildings
- Continued regular and well-attended walking tours of the Harbour and Union Cemetery, including the partnership with the Oshawa Little Theatre for *Scenes from the Cemetery*

Challenges (Weaknesses)

- Difficult to increase self-generated revenue with spatial limitations and lack of programming, storage, and exhibit space
- Increase in insurance and audit fees
- Collections and building interpretation has historically over-examined the experiences of white, middle-class, 19th century residents of Oshawa, underserving other experiences and communities
- Difficult to apply for many major grants due to lack of matching funds
- Self-generated revenue is contingent on external factors such as weather, adequate space for events and external events happening in Lakeview Park.
- Vulnerable to vandalism, environmental factors due to location
- Adapting historic homes for museum functions leads to Infrastructure challenges (ex.: HVAC, accessibility)
- Insufficient funds for artifact purchases to address gaps in the collection
- Low public profile for the Oshawa Historical Society and lack of awareness for heritage locally
- Multiple paths of approach to the Museum creates confusion for visitors
- Poor internet service presents challenges for virtual engagement
- In 2023:

- Three pest infestations (squirrels at Robinson and Henry House, wasps at Guy House) that threatened the heritage buildings and staff safety
- An incident of vandalism demonstrated the weaknesses of the security system
- Though the number of members increased in 2023, the membership model is still overall in decline. This number is often requested as an important indicator of community support

Opportunities:

- City's future plans for waterfront development
- Oshawa's centennial celebration in 2024 will bring a greater recognition for Oshawa's history
- Facility expansion project will address several challenges
- Use of web-based tools and more virtual programming helps to increase profile, broaden reach and connect with the Museum's audience
- Partnerships and collaborations with post-secondary institutions and community groups maximizes the reach of the Oshawa Museum
- Location in Lakeview Park allows for maximum visibility for museum programs and events, especially during the summer months
- Participation in Cultural Leadership Council
- In 2023:
 - The planning and opening of *Be Prepared: Guiding and Scouting in Oshawa* led to several new sponsorships, donors, and partnerships, and generated a lot of community interest
 - A new memorandum of understanding signed with Trent University for ongoing internships and shared projects
 - A new partnership with the Oshawa Public Library, including regular speaker events, has been very well-attended
 - A new partnership with Second Marsh resulted in several new walking tours

Threats:

- Seasonal Covid-19 outbreaks and associated restrictions
- Potential cuts to operating budget from all levels of funders – Federal, Provincial and Municipal
- Reliance on employment grants means uncertain seasonal staffing levels
- Year-on-year inflation of non-discretionary, fixed costs
- Uncertainty in local economy
- Challenges in recruiting volunteers, members, and Board members
- Increasing budget pressure from aging infrastructure and related maintenance costs
- Lack of communication regarding externally hosted events in Lakeview Park has a negative impact on museum operations during the busy summer months (Autofest, Ribfest, construction etc.)
- Schools and staff have expressed frustration with the wide slate of programming options available for teachers – simplification needed

- Pricing for programming and shop items hasn't been reviewed for some years

4. 2024 Agency Objectives

The Oshawa Historical Society recognizes the need for responsible action that will ensure a sustainable future for Oshawa. For the 2024 budget the Oshawa Historical Society has adopted reasonable assumptions in budget planning while balancing the reality of operating post pandemic. The Museum's staff and directors continue to create efficiencies where possible, avoid unnecessary costs and generate revenue where applicable. The Oshawa Historical Society believes that a strong commitment to the arts and culture community contributes to the overall vision of the Oshawa Strategic Plan, the Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, as well *Ontario Museums 2025*, from the Ontario Museum Association. The strategic objectives for 2024 contribute to the goals of each of these strategies.

Objective 1: To be a dynamic and essential part of the community and cultural landscape in Oshawa.

The Oshawa Historical Society and the Oshawa Museum provides excellent learning experiences that increases awareness and understanding of Oshawa's diverse history. By creating and delivering quality programming, and by forming and engaging in community partnerships, the Museum will foster a greater sense of community, broaden the Museum's audience, and contribute to Oshawa's reputation of a destination cultural city.

Objective 2: To present relevant and meaningful exhibits, collections, and content.

The Oshawa Museum will develop its collections, research, programming, and exhibits to better represent diverse and underrepresented audiences. The Museum will have a special focus on Oshawa's centennial anniversary in 2024, and will solicit community input on the development of future collecting and exhibit plans.

Objective 3: Foster a culture of inclusivity and recognize the value of diversity.

The Oshawa Historical Society values inclusion and fosters a culture where everyone feels respected and valued, and will continue to work to connect the Museum's Board members, staff, volunteers, and audience to content that reflects the diversity of Oshawa's community. Through community partnerships and input the Society will strengthen its practices and policies, with the aim to diversify its board and staff.

Objective 4: Continue to be resilient and flexible.

The Oshawa Historical Society fosters a culture of good governance and strong oversight to support its mission and a sustainable future. This includes an active membership, and the Society and Museum will review and revise the current membership program, aiming to increase member numbers and participation.

Objective 5: Provide inspiring and efficient spaces and facilities for museum functions, the community and our visitors.

The Oshawa Historical Society and the Oshawa Museum has long required a new space for a visitor centre and programming area, and will continue to pursue improvements and an

expansion in its facilities in Lakeview Park, to support the sustainable operation of the Oshawa Museum. The Oshawa Museum will also pursue better wayfinding tools to increase the visibility and accessibility of the museum site.

5. Resource Requirements

The Oshawa Historical Society appreciates the support from members of Oshawa City Council and City staff for the work of the Museum, and we recognize the need for responsible action that ensures the sustainability of the agency on behalf of Oshawa going forward. For 2024, the Oshawa Historical Society has produced a responsible operating budget that controls expenses and aligns resources consistent with the direction provided by the *City of Oshawa Strategic Plan: Our Plan for Success 2020-2023*, and *Culture Counts: Oshawa Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, 2014*.

The Oshawa Historical Society is submitting a budget with a minimal request of a 3.8% increase (\$17,814) in the City's contribution. The Oshawa Historical Society expects to see an increase in operating expenses related to costs associated with the annual audit, pumping out the holding tank, and utilities. A cost-of-living increase (forecasted at 4%) has been added to personnel costs. The Society also anticipates an increase in self generated revenue in 2024 of \$1,632 over projected 2023 totals.

6. Conclusion

The Oshawa Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Oshawa for the Oshawa Museum and its efforts to preserve and promote awareness and appreciation for the history of Oshawa.

The Oshawa Museum is an important part of the cultural community in Oshawa and will continue to tell great stories, expand the historical narrative and spark interest in local history. As the only community museum in Oshawa, the three heritage homes and the drive shed that comprise the Museum are ideally situated to tell the story of Oshawa from the earliest First Nations settlements to present times. The Oshawa Museum helps to communicate community identity, enhance public knowledge, encourage community engagement and contribute value to the City.

The Oshawa Museum's strength is in its collections, spaces, and people, along with the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. History organizations make their communities more attractive places in which to live, work, learn and play. With astute leadership, compelling vision, and partners and resources sufficient to the task, the Oshawa Historical Society will continue to be a leader in the arts, culture and heritage community of Oshawa.

The Corporation of the City of Oshawa
2024 Operating Budget
Oshawa Historical Society

Description	2023 Projected Actuals	2023 Approved Budget	2024 Proposed Budget	2024-2023 Variance \$'s	2024-2023 Variance %
Personnel Costs	402,500	402,500	418,600	16,100	4.0
Program and Office Supplies	24,400	24,400	25,093	693	2.8
Professional Services	39,700	39,700	41,407	1,707	4.3
Maintenance and Repairs	27,700	27,700	27,895	195	0.7
Utilities	25,500	25,500	26,251	751	2.9
Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy	-	-	-	-	
Agency Generated Revenue	(51,000)	(51,000)	(52,632)	(1,632)	3.2
City of Oshawa Grants	(468,800)	(468,800)	(486,614)	(17,814)	3.8
Total Oshawa Historical Society	-	-	-	-	

Variance Explanations:

Personnel Costs - cost of living increase of 4% (projected in 2024).

Professional Services - auditor increase of \$1,707.

Program and Office Supplies - 4.2% (CPI) increase in stationery, janitorial supplies only. This percentage tied to City inflationary increase.

Utilities - 5% increase in fuel, 4% increase in electricity, and 3% increase in water. These percentages tied to City inflationary increases.

Maintenance and Repairs - 4.2% (CPI) increase. This percentage tied to City inflationary increase.