



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: October 16, 2017

SUBJECT:	Markham Museum Strategic Plan
PREPARED BY:	Cathy Molloy, Manager, Museum ext: 3164
REVIEWED BY:	Stephen Chait, Director, Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) THAT the report entitled, “Markham Museum Strategic Plan”, be received and approved;
- 2) AND THAT the Museum’s vision and mission statements be endorsed;
- 3) AND THAT Staff bring forward an annual business plan in support of implementing the Strategic Plan recommendations;
- 4) AND THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The strategic plan provides direction for a 10 year period (to 2026) and will be a guiding document for the Markham Museum for planning activities on all fronts. The plan will act as a ‘road map’ for the Museum in guiding the allocation of staff and financial resources. It sets out a purpose (‘Vision’) and mandate (‘Mission’) for the Museum, and, contains a set of strategic actions and initiatives to fulfill that purpose and mandate.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council’s approval of the new Markham Museum strategic plan, and to endorse the vision and mission statements.

Vision

We inspire a life-long curiosity of, pride in, and care for, the people, tangible heritage, places, lands and waterways of the City of Markham: past, present and future.

Mission

We will examine Markham by engaging technologies developed and used by all human cultures to live in the natural world; agriculture and food; material culture; engineering; and environmental. We will engage science, industry, history and the arts to understand how Markham became what it is today and what its possible futures could be.

The Museum Strategic Plan identifies planning strategies and goals to guide Markham Museum over the next ten years. These strategies will help increase revenue generation, elevate community and regional awareness, and transform the Museum’s status into a hub that connects our diverse community through engagement with the arts, academic institutions, community groups and local businesses. The Strategic Plan will achieve the following outcomes:

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- New Museum vision and mission statements, marketing plan and brand identity
 - A formal partnership strategy to make connections under the broad categories of, ‘Cultural Diversity’, ‘Community Commons’ and ‘Commercial Community’.
 - Revised exhibition and collection policies that will inform exhibitions, collecting and de-accessioning within the strategic framework
 - Revised and expanded programs and rental business
 - A fundraising, membership and sponsorship strategy, in collaboration with the Friends of Markham Museum
 - A future Museum Master plan to guide the development of the site and buildings in keeping with the Museum’s strategic principals

BACKGROUND:

The Museum sits on 25 acres of land at the northwest corner of Markham Road and 16th Avenue. The site features over 30 structures including: houses, barns, sheds, a cider mill, the LEED GOLD collection building (completed in 2011), and others.

Markham Museum has been open since 1971 and was previously known as “The Markham District Historical Museum”, before the Museum became owned and operated by, the then, Town of Markham. The Museum was known as “Markham Museum and Historic Village” until a strategic master plan was created in 2004.

In 2004 a Master Plan recommended that the Museum become “The Markham Heritage Adventure and Time Park”. The site was to be divided into three distinct thematic precincts: a Heritage Discovery Zone, a Multicultural Celebration Field with water play, skating rink and playground features, and a fully functioning Heritage Carnival and thirdly, a Children’s Museum in the former Mount Joy School building. Staff at the time started to implement components of the plan, but the dependence on events to build audience exhausted the site and staff, and the cost of infrastructure to activate the Celebration Field could not be substantiated as a good business model.

Staff have used City of Markham planning documents, the Building Markham’s Future Together (BMFT) strategy, the Excellence Framework, the Ontario Museum Association ‘Looking Ahead’ strategies, Provincial standards and Federal funding guidelines to help guide the Museum’s operations through annual business plans.

Over the past few years the Museum has experienced growth in program and related revenue generation. This was achieved by regarding the site as an urban park and a place to celebrate life today in Markham. The first immigrants to Markham used the land as a pottery. Sitting on the Rouge Watershed, the pottery was one of many that dotted the watershed, representing both indigenous and European industry. This understanding was the catalyst to form a new program direction, examining shared human technologies, providing a basis to connect with all people that make Markham their home. Since 2009 the Museum has repurposed several structures, Burkholder House is now a textile lab, there is an operational pottery and print shop on site, and the grounds are dotted with

native gardens that have been planted in partnership with Rouge Park, TRCA, Water for Tomorrow and others.

Over the past 7 years staff have developed a growing rental program. The rental space was accommodated by re-purposing a large, dated transportation exhibition building into a modern event hall. Renovations also included new restrooms, a catering kitchen and exterior improvements.

The basement of Mount Joy School was vacated when curatorial staff moved to the new Collections Building. Renovated into a modern program space for young children, it is used for private birthday parties, mini-mornings, family Sundays and more. These programs have also contributed to growing attendance and revenue generation. Markham Museum has grown substantially over the past few years, with thanks to a dedicated and passionate staff, the support of senior City staff and of Council.

The new strategic plan was commissioned in 2015. Research about the Museum and the community was carried out by WeatherstonBruer Associates and TCI Management Consultants throughout 2015 and into early 2016. Interviews were carried out during this time with key stakeholders including the Mayor and several members of Markham Council. Workshops were held with Friends of Markham Museum and Museum staff.

The consultant's research revealed: the absence of an operating and strategic framework, a risk to collections due to insufficient storage space, the absence of formal integration of Museum programs with the community groups, and a low level of community awareness.

The development of the new strategic plan has been a long and thorough process. The resulting strategic plan will enable the Museum to position itself for future growth and development and enable the facility to be an active, current showcase of life in Markham.

The consultant's report (Appendix A) recognizes that Markham Museum does not operate like a traditional museum. Markham Museum does not rely upon drop-in visitors and exhibitions to drive attendance; rather, it attracts its audience and visitors through programming. The consultant's report also confirms Markham Museum attracts non-traditional Museum visitors by providing programming that connects with the community. Camp and other children's program are designed using a recreation model, and the activities are deeply rooted in the Museum knowledge and resource base. Another example is that exhibition planning is driven by program staff, where staff attend every exhibition planning meeting, and members of the community are consulted and represented in each exhibit. This has resulted in highly interactive exhibitions that are marketed extensively by program staff. A great spin off is that drop-in attendance has grown substantially, in large part from campers wanting their family to have the experience and those families recommending us to others.

Markham Museum operates very differently to a traditional museum business; the recommended strategic plan recognizes this and provides a framework for future growth and development. The consultants conclude that Markham Museum could be a role model for other museums that need to reflect changing and increasingly diverse

communities, essentially re-defining the role of a museum in a dynamic and growing community.

DEFICIENCIES:

1. The core of the Museum is the collection, without a clear strategic direction there is no clear collection policy. Markham Museum currently does not have a de-accession policy. There are several artifacts, clearly not related to the story of Markham, and/or in bad condition. These are taking up valuable storage space. Without a strategic policy the collection faces further disenfranchisement from the community and deterioration. The Museum has produced many engaging and successful exhibitions; however, a strategy is required for longer term planning. Without relevant exhibitions, related programs will begin to falter.
2. The Museum is at capacity for summer camp and wedding event rentals, and yet several structures remain un-used and are a drain on museum resources. Conversely, at other times of the year the site is underused. The Museum does not have a physical master plan (i.e., a plan for the lands and buildings), which could follow the implementation of the strategic plan, and address these issue and others.
3. Artifact storage is at capacity, and some artifacts are at risk as a result of being stored out of doors under temporary tents on the Museum grounds.
4. The Museum does not have a long term program strategy to continually engage the community. Programs will eventually stagnate as they become disconnected from the community.
5. The Museum relies on 'word-of mouth' marketing. City Communications has proven valuable for camps, in particular. However, most of the business growth has been via happy customers who have 'spread the word'. The Museum does not have a marketing plan and is in need of a strategy that will reflect its brand and successfully attract new business.
6. The Museum does not have a sponsorship/fundraising plan. The Friends of the Markham Museum have successfully raised money via two galas and a number of smaller events, but have no long term planning strategy to raise money. The Museum risks losing the dedication of the Friends, and the opportunity for sponsorship and fundraising.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES:

Museum staff will develop active partnerships within community under the broad categories of 'Cultural Diversity', 'Community Commons' and 'Commercial Community'. A partnership orientation will be adopted by staff so that every program and exhibit would be aligned with a community sponsor, (a cultural group, corporate sponsor or community organization.)

The strategic focus of the Museum will be articulated as; 1) Material Culture;
2) Agriculture and Food; 3) Engineering; 4) Environment.

The diagram below shows graphically how the interrelationship of core programs and strategic partners would operate.



All Museum programs, events and exhibitions will be planned in collaboration with one or more community partners. The role of the Museum is to curate the stories of the community, involving a wide cross-section of the municipality. The broad categories and the strategic focus will ensure that the Museum conducts all business within a well-defined framework.

The Collections and Exhibition Policies will be re-written to reflect the strategic operating framework, giving the Museum the authority to develop a de-accession policy. This will result in an academically authentic collection, and make the most efficient use of storage space. A new exhibition policy will enable staff to strategically connect with the community for temporary exhibitions, and will also enable us to repurpose the installations in the smaller structures on-site.

These opportunities can be incorporated into the short and longer term planning at the Museum, and will be accommodated within the operating budget for future years.

Site Development and Financial Considerations

A primary recommendation in the strategic plan is to develop a Master Plan, and it is required for longer term infrastructure (land and buildings) planning. The plan will require capital funding. Staff will bring forward a Terms of Reference and capital budget request in 2019.

In the interim, the Museum will examine the structures on site that are not usable for programs, exhibits or storage and consider a re-purpose or their removal from the site. The Museum will consider repurposing structures that could be used to expand the camp and rental business. The Strickler barn, for example, could be renovated or the Chapman cottage could potentially be re-purposed as a community kitchen.

Staff will examine new ways to utilize the site in collaboration with other City departments and with community groups or business to produce programs or events. Other possible ways to make more use of the site are to create community gardens or a natural playground, both of which would require the development of partnerships with community groups and external organizations to share expertise and costs.

Operational Improvements

The Museum will expand the range of activities and events when there is a strong business case to do so. Specifically the Museum will not threaten current business and will always work within the strategic operation framework.

The Museum will re-examine the general admission site tours and develop a self-guided option. Active participation by community partners will contribute to the experience.

The Museum will develop an annual marketing plan beginning in 2018. The marketing plan will align with those of the Flato Markham Theatre and the Varley Gallery. In 2019 the Museum will review its branding and recommend opportunities to refresh or replace it, as may be appropriate.

The Friends of the Markham Museum will create a strategy of their own, based on the strategic operating framework and focusing on fundraising and sponsorship strategies.

All of these improvements will be conducted by staff within the prevailing annual Museum operational funding.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Municipal Services – The Museum will continue to hold signature public events where departments have a presence; the Museum will further partner with departments that can contribute to programs and exhibits.

Parks/Recreation – The Museum will continue to work with recreation for current and future program collaboration and for volunteer support.

Environment – The Museum will strengthen partnerships with the Rouge National Urban Park, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and develop stronger connections with Sustainability.

Culture and Library Master Plan – the strategic operating framework facilitates a stronger Museum community connection.

Diversity – The Museum will connect with all people that make Markham their home.

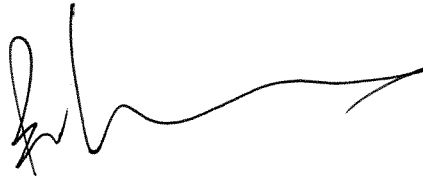
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Not Applicable

RECOMMENDED BY:



Stephen Chait, Director
Economic Growth, Culture and
Entrepreneurship



Brian Lee, P.Eng
Acting Commissioner, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A – Markham Museum Strategic Plan