



Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Visitor / Community Centre

FACT SHEET

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Visitor / Community Centre

The construction of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Visitor / Community Centre will create a new, quality venue for arts, culture, heritage and community celebration activities centrally-located within York Region. The versatility planned for the space, opens the possibility for a wide variety of new programming initiatives from lectures, receptions and meals to hands-on activity programs for all ages; from small dramatic or musical performances to cinematic/video presentations. The additional programming space with its high level of flexibility for different uses will significantly increase public exposure to heritage, artistic and multi-cultural experiences while also contributing to the financial sustainability of the community's cultural facility.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Visitor Centre / Community Centre is intended to

- better leverage and enhance the facility as a key element in the Town's leisure, culture and tourism development strategy.
- accommodate the museum's growing attendance with a new, integrated community centre function;
- meet accessibility requirements;
- expand and diversify exhibition and programming capacity to build new audiences and increase revenue generation potential;
- provide dedicated workspace for curatorial functions, research, and volunteer activities with enhanced technology and equipment;
- add collection storage space;
- upgrade kitchen facilities for catering purposes; and
- improve the reception and gift shop areas in terms of functionality and positive visitor experience.

The concept developed for the Visitor Centre / Community Centre proposes a completely barrier-free accessible, 10,000 sq. ft. L-shaped addition linking the Vandorf Public School and Bogartown Schoolhouse buildings. The approximately 6,500 sq. ft. main floor space will provide a welcoming "front door" to the Museum site and create an impressive public façade that respects and complements the existing heritage buildings by incorporating a cluster of smaller building volumes. On the main floor there is

- a multi-purpose room with a capacity for 150 (80 seated at tables) that can be divided for smaller group activities with attached kitchen and storage;
- a gallery specifically for temporary or rotating exhibitions;
- washrooms and cloakroom;
- staff offices;
- a hands-on seminar room to provide an interactive centre and alternative meeting space;
- a public research area adjacent to staff offices for ease of service/surveillance with potential to be used as additional meeting space;
- circulation areas that not only provide



indoor links to most museum activities but also double as a spill-out area during large events and provide additional exhibition opportunities; and

- a reception area with potential for retail display that is located to create a focus point for visitor arrival, ease the management of visitor traffic flow and facilitate monitoring of the entire site by the Museum's small staff.

The approximately 3,500 sq. ft. basement will have walkout to ground-level access at the rear and provides additional artifact storage and potential for additional community use space. The L-shape of the structure enables the Brown House, the "jewel" of the Museum site, to be framed in the initial view for visitors as they enter and start their Museum experience. It further creates a sheltered outdoor courtyard space with covered performance or presentation areas. The construction of the new Visitor / Community Centre facilitates the conversion of existing space to create a permanent exhibition gallery to present Whitchurch-Stouffville's unique history as well as a curatorial work room.

Background – Vandorf Community Centre VCC existing)

- constructed by the local community in 1921 to serve as social centre for the Vandorf and surrounding community
- now operated by the Department of Leisure Services and a Council-appointed Board
- provides multi-purpose space to the public for community celebrations, social events, recreation programming and lifelong learning activities. The existing VCC facility will be sold by the Town as part of the funding sources for the new facility.

Background – Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum

- owned and operated as a municipal facility since 1971
- originally opened in hamlet of Bogarttown, relocated to Vandorf site in 1978
- now includes the Bogarttown Schoolhouse (1857), Vandorf Public School (1870), Pioneer Log Cabin (c.1850), Barn (c. 1830) Brown House (1857), outbuildings and heritage gardens set on a 2 hectare parcel of land adjacent to the Vandorf Park
- Museum core services fall into three distinct operations: Stewardship, Public Service & Programming, and Administration & Support. Stewardship pertains to the Museum's collection of artifacts held in public trust and includes functions related to the development and management of the collection, artifact conservation and research. The Museum's public service and programming includes special events, exhibitions, programs for school groups as well as the general public, volunteer and membership programs as well as research facilities available to the public and research services for the public. Within the administration and support services, physical plant management, staffing, marketing, community involvement and fundraising are included.
- Museum has received several awards: the Ontario Historical Society's **Museum Award of Excellence** for public programming and community involvement (1999), Ontario Museum Association's **Award of Merit** (2003) for innovation and outstanding achievements in fundraising and public relations, **Special Mention** Canada Communities in Bloom Ontario (2006); and the Museum Curator received the **Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal** (2003) for contributions to community and volunteer engagement through the Museum

Project History:

- 2002 Future attendance projections developed as part of Town's Fiscal Impact and Development Charges Study
- 2003 Space Needs Assessment for Museum prepared
- 2004 Application submitted for funding through the Department of Canadian Heritage's Museums Assistance Program (MAP) to undertake a Facilities Concept Plan
- 2005 Museum develops a new Vision, Mission and Values Statement, MAP grant approved (\$17,000) and Facilities Concept Plan study initiated
- 2006 Facilities Concept Plan for a new Visitor Centre at the Museum developed by ERA Architects Ltd. is received by Council and referred to the capital budget process for inclusion in the 5-year forecast
- 2007 Council endorsed the integration of the Vandorf Community Centre function within the plans to construct the Visitor Centre at the Museum and the application for funding through the Cultural Spaces Canada (CSC) program was initiated
- 2008 CSC funding approved for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Visitor / Community Centre Project Phase I: Site Preparation and Design Finalization approved (up to \$170,000),
- 2009 Phase II funding application for the construction and development (\$3.256 million) was submitted for federal and provincial grants under the Building Canada Fund (BCF) - Communities Component and approved.