

MEAFORD MUSEUM

STRATEGIC PLAN

CREATING OUR HISTORY TOGETHER



2021 - 2024

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MUSEUM HISTORY

Originally built in 1895 by McQuillen and Co., the Meaford Museum was once home to the town's Pumping Station. A few years following its construction, a brick chimney was added in an effort to make the facility more efficient.

In 1924, an electric pump and auxiliary gas pump were added to the building. Eventually, the Public Utilities Department was relocated to the pumping station and the building was from then on referred to as the "Power House". During the 1940's, the brick chimney was removed and both the Public Utilities and Public Works Departments vacated the building, leaving it unoccupied.



By 1960, the Pumping Station had been vacant for years, but being a unique heritage building right on the Harbour, its Power House was chosen as the venue for a new Museum, and refurbished primarily through the efforts of the Kent Women's Institute and a dedicated group of volunteers. The first collections for the Museum were donated by the Sing and Godfrey families, for the express purpose of creating a new Museum.

When the new Meaford Museum opened its doors to the public in 1961, it was a huge success with guests from all around the globe visiting to see the unique and one-of-a-kind artifacts it housed. Over the years, as the collections continued to expand and visitor traffic increased, several renovations were required to update the building, improve lighting and increase exhibit space.

In 1997, the first of several renovations was generously supported by The Apple Harvest Craft Show, the Kiwanis Club, Lions Club and Kinsmen Club, and resulted in the creation of a new foyer and exhibit hall.

The following year, another addition was built to house the 1938 Bickle Maple Leaf Fire truck, which had been temporarily donated by the Meaford Fire Department. This addition was funded by the local Kiwanis Club and built by local residents and contractors.

In 1999, the outdoor Farm Shed on the northern grounds of the Museum was made possible by the Estate of the late Joe Walker. The Farm Shed is a seasonal venue, which tells the story of Meaford's pioneer farming and homesteading roots with its large collection of antique tools and heavy equipment.

The most recent renovation was in 2002-2007 when the Museum was entirely refurbished and modernized with state of the art climate control system to preserve the collection.

Although the Museum was originally created to house the history of the Town of Meaford, the scope of its mission changed with amalgamation in 2001. The Museum now also serves the former Townships of St. Vincent and Sydenham, which provides an even larger and more diverse area from which to draw stories and artifacts about both its Indigenous and European settlement communities.

EXISTING COLLECTION AND ACTIVITIES

Educational Displays and Exhibits

The Meaford Museum has a vast collection of artifacts and documents which are displayed on a rotational basis with the express purpose to educate and inspire its visitors and residents. The exhibitions are designed to shed light on Meaford's unique history, identity and culture as an agricultural and industrial port community.

Research Facilities

The Reading Room is closed to the public, but staff are available to assist with research requests. Here is a list of the types of materials we keep on file:

- Local assessment rolls from 1850
- Local census documents
- Local cemetery inventories and maps
- Obituaries, marriages, births and deaths
- Local church histories
- Family genealogies and early settlers
- Diaries and oral histories
- Detailed local history publications (books & periodicals)
- Local mayors
- Local schools
- Railways
- Shipping
- Century homes and farms of Meaford
- Local industries, factories, mills, and professions
- Local agriculture
- An extensive photo collection
- Access to Ancestry.ca

Publications for Sale

The Museum offers a limited number of local history publications for sale which are not available for purchase elsewhere.

Group Visits

The Museum is available to host small group visits (up to 10 people) from schools and community groups who would like to learn more about Meaford's History.

VISITOR NUMBERS, VISITOR LOCATIONS DATA

Meaford Museum Visitors Report

January - December 2019

(Source: Square POS machine)

Museum Visitors	Adult	Child	Senior	Totals
Local Visitors	924	221	132	1277
Canadian Tourists	748	359	528	1635
USA	73	24	48	145
Europe	118	19	88	225
Asia	53	7	20	80
	1916	630	816	3362

Onsite Programs & Special Events	1543
Off-Site Programs	736
Research Room	91
Gift Shop	933

Total Visitors to Museum 2019 6665





The development of the Meaford Museum Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) was based around the input of various groups of stakeholders, including volunteers, staff, Council and the public.

The first stage of consultation was based on a survey, which was available via the Municipal website and at various facilities, including the Museum. The survey covered a variety of Museum related topics, including number of visits per year, purpose of visits, as well as asking participants what they liked and disliked about the Museum, and how they thought the Museum could be improved. The 127 survey responses that were received included responses from a wide variety of age groups and visitors.

In February and March, Municipal staff facilitated three focus groups and one special Council meeting. One of the focus groups was specifically aimed at Museum volunteers, while the other two were targeted at the general public. There were 25 participants across the various focus groups.

At both the focus groups and the special Council meeting, participants were asked what the Museum meant to them, what the purpose of the Museum is, and what a reasonable tax-subsidy for the Museum is. Participants also discussed the draft Museum Mission, Vision and Values, and took part in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) exercise, both of which are discussed in more detail on the next pages.

In addition to these public consultation activities, Municipal staff reviewed Museum statistics, current operating practices, existing programs and activities, and future needs. Council also provided further direction at a regular meeting in May 2020.





The Meaford Museum Mission, Vision and Values were first drafted by the Meaford Museum Advisory Committee in 2015. They were refined during the Strategic Plan process, with input from Council, volunteers, staff and the public.

The Meaford Museum's Mission is:

To celebrate, collect, display, conserve and share the heritage of the Municipality of Meaford and its people.

The Vision for the Meaford Museum is:

The Meaford Museum continues to offer innovative programs and an interactive collection. We pride ourselves on the contribution of volunteers and the partnerships we seek and maintain. We do our work to a high standard in a welcoming and accessible space. We reach out and make our heritage come alive. We celebrate our past, in the present, to prepare for our future.

The Values of the Meaford Museum align with the Municipality of Meaford's corporate values, which are:

Integrity, Respect, Community





A SWOT analysis is a tool used in developing strategic plans, to assess the current state of the institution, and to recognize what could happen in the future.

Each of the focus groups that took place during the development of this Strategic Plan were asked to go through a SWOT analysis, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Museum, as well as potential opportunities for development and threats to the current service. A summary of the points repeated in multiple focus groups is provided below.

Strengths

- Variety of artifacts
- Museum location
- People – staff and volunteers
- Community historical knowledge and desire to learn more

Weaknesses

- Hours of operation
- Building limitations, including access to parking
- Budget and staffing resources
- Storage and archival information
- Ability to sustain volunteers

Opportunities

- Gather more information on local history from residents and community groups
- Connect with new audiences
- Increased partnerships
- More events, tours, education opportunities
- Improved representation of wider municipality
- Touring exhibits

Threats

- Funding sources
- Fragility of artifacts, and storage issues
- High water in Georgian Bay threatens building
- Lack of public support for Museum activities



Through public consultation and analysis of existing operations, five key focus areas for the Meaford Museum have been identified. These focus areas are:

- Capital and Building
- Administration and Customer Service
- Collections and Exhibits
- Finance and Staffing
- Partnerships and Programs

The following pages expand on each of these focus areas, and set specific action items to be achieved by 2023.





CAPITAL AND BUILDING

CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES

The Meaford Museum building was built in 1895 as a Pump House for the Meaford Water System. The most recent major renovation took place between 2002 and 2007. A Facility Condition Assessment was completed in 2018, which identified \$369,000 of capital funding needs over a 10-year period. These costs are outside of the scope of the Strategic Plan, and are managed by the Municipality's Parks and Facility Services division.

The interior of the Museum building is in fair condition, with the exception of the basement. The basement is completely unusable due to water inflow issues created by the high water level of Georgian Bay.

Externally, sidewalks to the Museum, and parking alongside, are not maintained during the winter months, making access to the Museum difficult for anyone with mobility challenges. This was consistently raised as an issue during the public consultation process.

There has been a serious lack of investment in capital equipment related to the provision of Museum services. All existing display cabinets are second or third-hand, and many are damaged or without appropriate display lighting. Staff and customer furniture has been obtained from yard sales and from other Municipal facilities after it has reached the end of its useful life for other purposes. Significant investments must be made over the next 10 years to ensure that Museum artifacts are kept and displayed appropriately.

Currently, archival storage is in the Museum attic on open shelves and without temperature controls or dust protection. In order to maintain and protect the Museum's artifact collection, improved archival storage is essential.

Internet and telephone connectivity at the Museum is limited by the Municipality's existing IT (Information Technology) infrastructure. The ongoing fibre-optic project will resolve the connectivity issues, once the network is installed between facilities.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop and implement a 10 year capital plan for the replacement of workstations, IT equipment, and display cabinets.
2. Create improved archival storage areas (on or off-site) to ensure that the collection is maintained and protected.
3. Ensure that parking and pedestrian access are available year-round by ensuring Bayfield Street parking and sidewalks are plowed.





ADMINISTRATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES

The Museum, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been open five days a week year-round, and seven days a week over the summer period. Standard opening hours have been 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It has been closed on public holidays.

A recurring theme in the public consultation was the need to amend the opening hours to be available outside of traditional business and school hours. A primary aim of this Strategic Plan is to open the Museum on Saturdays and public holidays year-round, as well as regularly assessing opening hours to ensure the facility is available at convenient times for the visiting public.

Maintaining the number of opening hours with the existing staff complement, while achieving the other, necessary aims of this Strategic Plan will not be possible. Current practices and opening hours do not allow for staff to take regular lunch breaks, as required by law, and restrict vacation and sick-time unreasonably. As part of this Strategic Plan, analysis of staffing needs and the role of volunteers at the Museum will be conducted to ensure that staff and volunteers are treated appropriately.

Volunteers are essential to the Meaford Museum, but commented during the public consultation that an improved orientation and training program was required in order to make best use of the hours generously given by the community.

The Museum has a wide selection of policies and procedures, but these have not been reviewed for more than a decade. A full review is required, with new best practice added where appropriate. Similarly, a communications strategy is required, in order to promote the excellent work that the Museum does, and bring more visitors to the facility.

ACTION ITEMS

1. With immediate effect:
 - a. Reduce opening hours to three days per week outside of peak season; and
 - b. Open on Saturdays and public holidays year-round, excluding the Christmas municipal closure.
2. Review the public opening hours annually to maximize visitors and donations, based on visitor statistics of previous fiscal year and staffing constraints. Priority should be given to opening on Saturdays and public holidays year-round for improved public access.
3. Review and update all Museum policies and procedures by the end of 2021, bringing policies forward for adoption by Council.
4. Develop a communications strategy to promote the Meaford Museum, its exhibits, events, and programs to a wider audience.



5.3

COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS

CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES

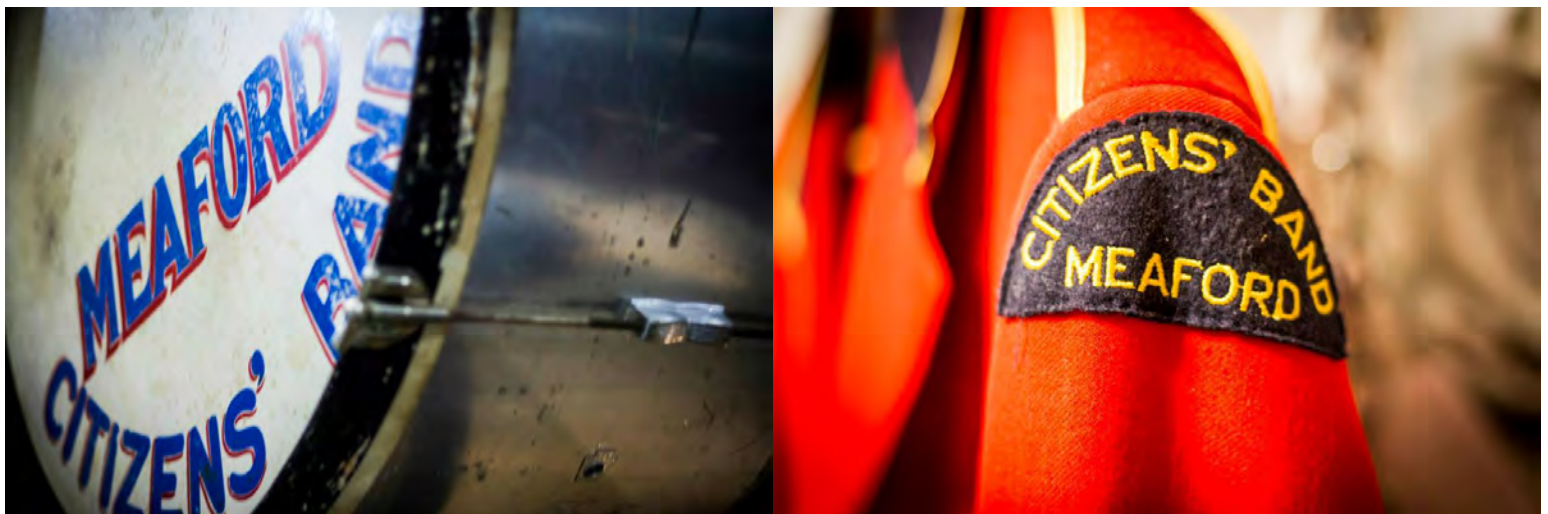
The Meaford Museum has an extensive collection of artifacts, collected and donated over many years. This collection is significantly larger than can be displayed at any given time, and includes a range of artifacts from Meaford specific items to general era and topic specific pieces.

At present, a comprehensive catalogue of artifacts is not available. The collection is partially catalogued, with additional items stored pending classification. Donations are regularly received from local residents, often at the time of a home or estate sale. These donations range in relevance, condition, and age.

The Museum has not deaccessioned (officially removed an item from the listed holdings of the museum, typically in order to sell it to raise funds) any part of the collection in at least five years. Displays and exhibits within the Museum are assessed on a regular basis, with some exhibits replaced each year. Generally, the larger exhibits have been in place for some time, with smaller displays rotated on a more regular basis.

The exhibits in the Museum are typically on topics that are relevant to Meaford, including farming, the military, and apple growing, but the artifacts in each exhibit are not necessarily specific to Meaford.

The COVID-19 shutdown in 2020 allowed staff to spend time cataloguing the collection and updating exhibits. While this has been welcome progress for the Museum's collections and exhibits, further work is required over the course of this Strategic Plan period.



ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop a comprehensive catalogue of Museum artifacts.
2. Develop a three year exhibition plan meeting the Museum's Mission, Vision and Values.
3. Create a Collections Plan, identifying the types of artifacts that should be held and acquired by the Meaford Museum.
4. Deaccession artifacts which do not meet the updated Collections Plan annually until 2023, and when necessary following that time.



5.4 FINANCE AND STAFFING

CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES

The Meaford Museum had an annual budgeted operating cost of \$188,000 in 2020, offset by budgeted revenue of \$16,000.

The Museum is predominantly funded by the property tax payers of the Municipality of Meaford, with 91.5% of the total budget funded through the tax levy in 2020. Other revenue is obtained through public donations in lieu of a ticket price, government grants, and gift shop revenue.

Admission has been via donation since 2015, following a brief period of fixed entry fees. The revenue from donations on an annual basis since 2015 has been greater than the revenue from entry fees prior to that.

The Museum employs the equivalent of 1.75 full-time staff consisting of: one full-time employee, a year-round part-time employee, and a summer seasonal post. These costs make up approximately 70% of the Museum's annual budget. The Museum has a team of dedicated volunteers, who generally contribute around 10 person hours per week.

Existing staffing arrangements result in significant difficulties when the full-time staff member is sick or on vacation, as well as for mandatory meal breaks.



ACTION ITEMS

1. Conduct a comprehensive staffing review, including the use of volunteers for front-line activities, by the end of 2021, to allow for any necessary amendments to be included in the 2022 Operating Budget.
2. Conduct a volunteer recruitment needs analysis and develop a volunteer recruitment campaign, to run as necessary based on the needs analysis.
3. Enact a comprehensive volunteer training program and develop a volunteer task list annually.





PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAMS

CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES

The Museum has up, until early 2020, run a variety of programs including on and off-site activities.

On-site activities have primarily been based around day camps during school vacations, with additional regular gatherings of community members, such as a knitting circle. Day camps have been operated in partnership with both the Municipality's recreation programs team and the Meaford Public Library.

Off-site activities are organized and run by volunteers, and include the very successful Living Memories program. Living Memories is designed to provide a safe environment for people to interact with Museum artifacts and art, while engaging in conversation and stimulating memories, and is primarily aimed at seniors with memory difficulties, including dementia.

Museum programming has been reliant on volunteers as the existing staff complement do not have the capacity to operate the existing offerings or develop the program. Going forward, any Museum programming will be based on partnerships with other organizations, or as small parts of larger Municipal camp and programming activities.

One major opportunity is to expand the self-guided tours available at the Museum. Working with volunteers, the Museum will develop several tours, stopping at historical sites across the municipality, starting or ending at the Museum.

There are several municipal museums within the Grey Bruce area, including Grey Roots, operated by Grey County. There is significant scope to develop relationships with these museums, with the long-term aim of sharing exhibits, expertise, as well as working together on collection management and policies.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop closer working relationships with Grey Roots and local lower-tier municipalities, including sharing of exhibits, policy development, and the investigation of shared services.
2. Provide space and volunteers to work with the Municipal recreation team to operate programs for youth onsite.
3. Grow existing outreach programs such as Living Memories through the training of volunteers to administer programs into group homes, and long term care facilities and schools.
4. Develop a new online learning hub for educational opportunities about Meaford's history to engage both youth and adult historians.
5. Promote and grow revenue streams for genealogical research according to Council approved rates and fees by-law.
6. Expand the variety and significance of self-guided tours of Meaford and develop new historical tours featuring the industrial history of Meaford; hamlets and settlements of Meaford; Indigenous activities; architectural landmarks. Work with local volunteer historians in developing these tours.



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Successful strategic plans are monitored on a regular basis, including providing a summary of the status of action items. The Meaford Museum, as part of the Cultural Services division of the Municipality of Meaford, will monitor progress and report results in three ways:

ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL

A Meaford Museum Annual Report will be generated and presented to Council in the first quarter of each year of this Strategic Plan. The report will include statistics, such as number of visitors, donation per visitor, and number of items catalogued. The report will also provide detailed analysis of progress on Strategic Plan Action Items, and a summary of the workplan for the upcoming year.

STATISTICS PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Visitor statistics will be published monthly on the Museum website, including year over year comparisons.

PUBLIC NEWSLETTER / WEB UPDATES

Progress reports on Strategic Plan Action Items will be included in the eNewsletter developed by the Meaford Museum, as well as posted on the Museum website.



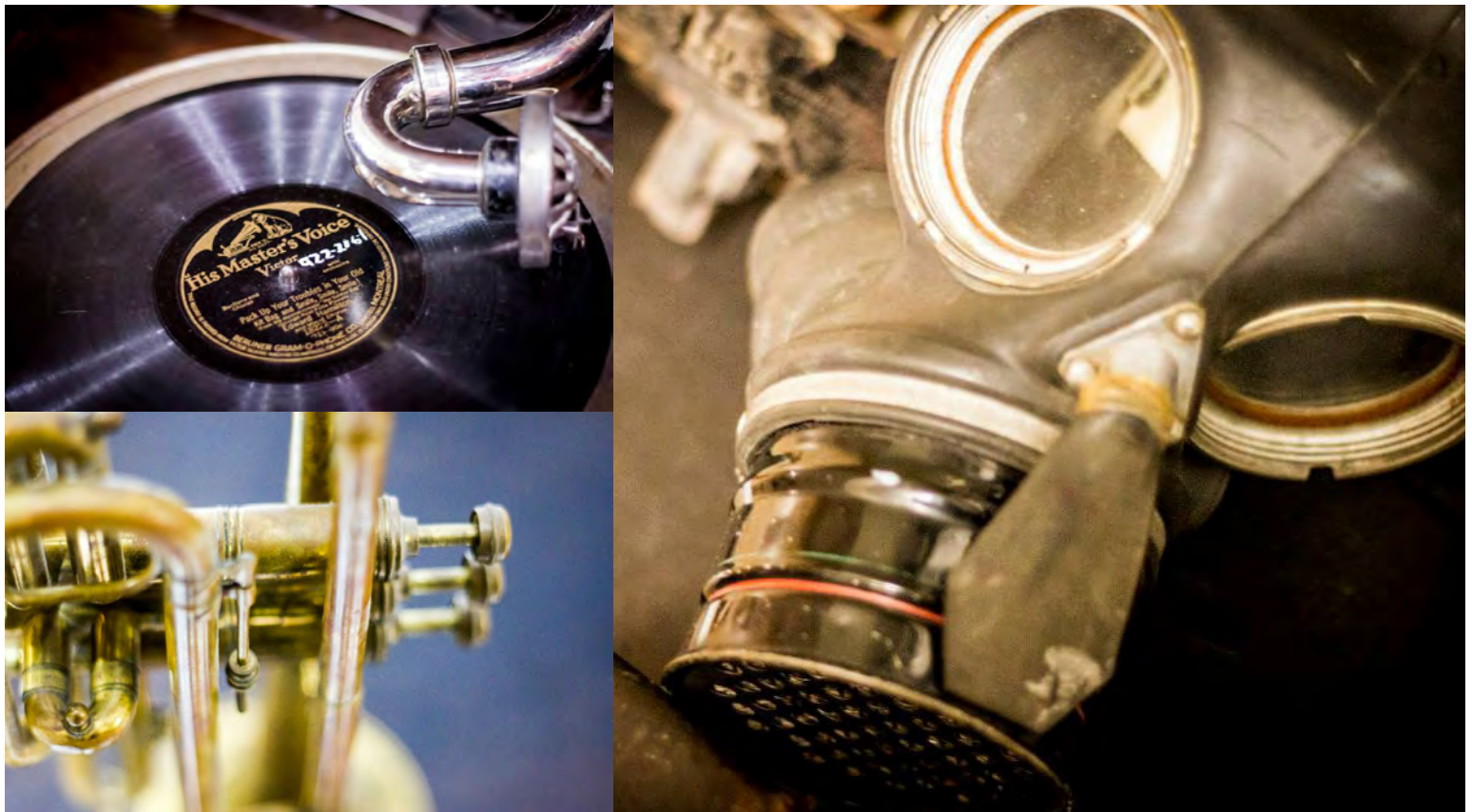
CONCLUSION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

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The Meaford Museum, its staff and its volunteers have made admirable progress over the last four years, but there is still much to do in order to ensure that the Museum has a bright future in a growing municipality. As the Museum's vision says, "we celebrate our past, in the present, to prepare for our future", and that requires investment, development, and consolidation to be successful.

The action items throughout this plan have been developed with that goal in mind, and are based on the excellent input obtained from Council, staff, volunteers and the community at large. We are grateful for their time and insight throughout this process.

The Museum Strategic Plan was approved by the Council of the Municipality of Meaford in September 2020, and forms the guiding document for the next four years at the Meaford Museum, ending in August 2024.





STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024

