




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Council
DATE:	September 24, 2025
SUBJECT:	Hamilton Children's Museum Expansion Project Update and Re-Opening (Ward 3)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Peter Fortune on behalf of Lisa Abbott Director, Tourism and Culture Planning and Economic Development
SIGNATURE:	

This communication update is to provide information on the completed Hamilton Children's Museum Expansion project and the grand re-opening of the museum scheduled for January 10th, 2026.

The Hamilton Children's Museum has been providing family-friendly learning opportunities from an 1875 farmhouse in Gage Park since 1979. The need for improved accessibility and more programming space led to the expansion of the current facility. A 3800 square foot addition clad in blue glazed block substantially increases the occupancy and makes more space for exhibitions, provides more seating and a new barrier-free front entrance.

The design took cues from the original house, its relationship to Gage Park gardens and the museum's focus on hands-on learning through self-directed play. The result is a gabled-roof addition with a colourful, child-focused design that nods to domestic form and scale, with a variety of materials and spaces to explore. A glass hallway lined with yellow tapered steel columns provides breathing space between the original house's red brick facade and the wood millwork that fronts the new spaces.

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.



Expansion Enhancements

The expansion project created a major asset in an under-served neighbourhood for children and families of diverse incomes and cultures providing protected outdoor family activity spaces and expanded programming opportunities. Substantial advancements were made in the areas of energy efficiency and accessibility supporting the City of Hamilton's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Framework and 2022-2026 Council Priority #1: Sustainable Economic and Ecological Development and Priority #2: Safe and Thriving Neighbourhoods.

The enhanced facility provides:

- Barrier free and 2SLGBTQIA+ positive spaces
- Large accessible inclusive family washroom with multiple change areas
- 2 large program spaces + a large circulating space
- 2 restored programming rooms in the historic house
- 1 large fenced outdoor gathering space with 2 exterior patio play spaces
- Exterior children's garden
- Accessible entrance doors in front and to the exterior play area
- Level floors and ramps for access throughout facility including ramp access to exterior play areas
- AODA compliant visible and audible alarms
- Coordination with the CNIB for informative digital media support and QR code assistance for the visually impaired planned for 2026
- Parking spots for disabled persons
- Installation of an elevator in the older building for second floor access
- Low sensory space
- Infant friendly space
- Stroller parking
- Bird friendly frit installed on windows to prevent bird collisions
- New efficient heating and cooling

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- Educational programs inclusive of a diverse population
- Continued partnership with the Hamilton Public Library to offer free admission for Hamilton Library card holders.

The New Exhibition

The expansion project also includes a new fully accessible exhibition space for learning, movement and play which explores the unique aspects of Hamilton including a climbing wall celebrating the escarpment, water and boat themed activities, a greenhouse to pot up imaginary plants and a basket to collect the gardening bounty of the three sisters.

Visitors will be able to explore issues around climate change, sustainability, and the environment and how they connect with an indigenous world view.

History of Expansion

The Hamilton Children's Museum has been located since 1979 in a residential house, originally built in 1875 in Gage Park as part of the colonial homestead. The publicly accessible space was originally about 2500 square feet including the school portable at the rear. By the early 2000s, the museum was tired and experiencing size and accessibility restrictions.

The Gage Park Master plan undertaken in 2010, recommended a new Hamilton Children's Museum be built in a centralized location in Gage Park, next to the greenhouses and parking. The proposal was for a 2-storey new building of about 12,000sq ft. with a construction estimate around \$10 million. At the time, there was no external granting support and Council chose not to implement the plan.

In 2012, a feasibility process was undertaken to determine the best way to proceed with an expansion. Issues identified through consultation were poor wayfinding, a small entrance foyer and hallways which created bottlenecks and lack of accessibility. The process resulted in an estimate for a new 2 storey addition onto the old house at a cost of \$7 million but a project of that size could not be funded, and staff were asked to reduce the scope further and look for grant funding.

In 2013 the museum had to be closed for structural remediation which took two years re-opening in 2015.

In March 2020, along with the other Hamilton Civic Museums, the Hamilton Children's Museum was closed due to the pandemic. When all the Hamilton Civic Museums reopened in February of 2022 from pandemic shut down, it was decided that the Hamilton Children's Museum would stay closed as it was slated for an exhibition refresh. It was during this time the City secured the required grants for an expansion moving the focus from an exhibition refresh to an expansion.

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The Class A project estimate was done for the reduced scope in 2022 and the section successfully applied for Investing in Canada Infrastructure Programme and Canada Community Revitalization Fund funding to support the project. Construction began 2023 and was completed in the fall of 2025.

Expansion Costs

Total Cost of the expansion was \$6,700,000

- Investing in Canada Infrastructure Programme grant for \$3.5M, (with the City providing \$938,800 matching funds)
- Canada Community Revitalization Fund grant for \$450,000
- Tourism and Culture's Capital block funding was used to cover the balance and any contingency

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A

Contact

If you require any further information on this matter, please contact Debra Seabrook, Manager Planning & Economic Development Division at (905) 546-2424 ext. 2521 or by email at Debra.Seabrook@hamilton.ca.