

Communication Update

To: Mayor and Members of City Council
Committee Date: May 19, 2026
Subject/Report No.: Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy Implementation Plan
Ward(s) Affected: City Wide
Submitted By: Lisa Abbott
Director, Tourism and Culture
Planning and Economic Development Department

Signature:



This communication update will provide information on the Implementation Plan for the Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy.

Background

At the General Issues Committee on November 17, 2021 the Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy (PED21212) (City Wide) (Item 8.2) was received by Council.

The vision of the Hamilton Civic Museums contained in the Strategy is “to become museums of, by and for the city rather than just museums which are operated by the City”.

Within the Strategy are six (6) pillars meant to guide the work and future growth of the Museum & Heritage Section. Although the strategy was received by Council it did not include an implementation plan to help realize the pillars. Work to develop an implementation plan began in late 2024 and was completed in 2025.

The **Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy Implementation Plan** was conceived as an addendum to the Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy to identify tangible actionable items that bridge both the strategy and City of Hamilton Council priorities. The Actions contained within, are the result of consultation with all levels of staff within the Museums & Heritage Section. The implementation plan has a 3-to-5-year lifecycle, outlining the timeline for each of the 48 Actions contained within the plan.

To measure progress, staff propose to provide a communication update annually to report back on the progress of each action.

Key highlights include:

- **Actions #1: Develop a comprehensive 3-to-5-year exhibition plan for museum spaces including the Visitor Experience Centre (VEC).**

Since its opening, the VEC has hosted 5 public exhibitions. The most recent, *Punching In* opened January 26, 2026, and explores and celebrates Hamilton's long history as a music city.

- **Actions #4: Creation of an ethical framework to ground Museum & Heritage's work in Truth and Reconciliation, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the City of Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy.**

Museums & Heritage staff continue to lead the Tourism & Culture Division's work on Truth and Reconciliation. They support a division-wide workplan and directly support the Indigenous Relations Division with staffing for National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Day of Truth & Reconciliation, Indigenous Veterans Day and project work for Landmarks and Monuments and Moccasin Identifier.

- **Actions #9: Appropriately resource Collection Management staff to ensure the proper care and management of the City's artifact collection.**

The Museums & Heritage Section has begun the restoration of the collection database, securing a new software and restarting cataloguing and data entry.

- **Actions #26: Develop a comprehensive digital strategy for the Museums & Heritage Section.**

This strategy was completed in early 2025 and was used to leverage funding from the Province through the Community Museum Operating Grant for \$212,000 in 2025.

Staff are working collaboratively across the Corporation to embrace a whole-city approach to heritage within Hamilton.

For the Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy Document: please visit the [Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy webpage](#).

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Hamilton Civic Museum Implementation Plan and Status

Contact

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

Implementation Plan & Status

Action One: Embrace the City

Priority	Action	Status
1	Develop an implementation plan for the Hamilton Civic Museums Strategy.	Completed
2	Develop a comprehensive 3-to-5-year exhibition plan for physical museum spaces including the Visitor Experience Centre and digital spaces at HamiltonCivicMuseums.ca	Started
3	Expand outreach and pop-up offerings and participation in community-led events and initiatives.	Started
4	Develop site and museum-specific interpretive plans guided by the Museum & Heritage section's city-wide interpretive master plan.	Started
5	Creation of an ethical framework to ground Museum & Heritage's work in Truth and Reconciliation, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the City of Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy.	Started
6	Improve wayfinding and signage for all the Hamilton Civic Museum sites including interpretation of outdoor spaces.	2027-2028
7	Refresh interpretive content and tours to reflect interpretive plans.	2026 Workplan Item

Action Two: Rethinking Collecting

Priority	Action	Status
8	Review and update Accessioning and Deaccessioning Policies and Guidelines to embed best practices for Heritage Collection Management.	2026 Workplan Item
9	Appropriately resource Collection Management staff to ensure the proper care and management of the City's artifact collection.	Complete
10	Implement accessioning/deaccessioning policy changes to move from passive collecting to curating a collection that truly reflects Hamilton's diverse community and history.	2027-2028
11	Rebuild the collections database.	2025-2030
12	Develop an outward facing collections database to be able to share with the public.	2027-2028
13	Develop a long-term plan for collections storage.	2027-2028
14	Create a business case for and pursue an expanded, dedicated space for collections storage.	2027-2028
15	Develop and implement a plan to use collections in exhibitions.	2027-2028
16	Evaluate the City of Hamilton's monuments portfolio.	Started
17	Develop a 10-year plan for capital work for all 39 heritage buildings and Hamilton Civic Museum sites.	Started
18	Develop a 10-year business plan for Auchmar	Started
19	Develop and implement a plan for the Gardener's Cottage located on the grounds of Dundurn National Historic Site.	Started
20	Complete an assessment of all heritage properties within the Museums & Heritage Section portfolio.	Started
21	Establish a Centre of Excellence for Collections Management through networking and sharing of best practices, offering training and development opportunities for students, interns, and expanding local heritage networks.	2028-2030

Action Three: Embed the Shift to Digital

Priority	Action	Status
22	Evaluate Hamilton Civic Museums portal site and create a plan for an optimized, accessible and manageable web presence.	2026 Workplan Item
23	Build-out, optimize and expand social media to support the website and visitor experience.	Completed
24	Activate web-based analytics and use the data to inform content and programming.	Completed
25	Complete implementation of Xplor to include online ticketing.	Started
26	Develop a comprehensive digital strategy for the Museums & Heritage Section.	Completed
27	Develop enhanced digital museum experiences such as newsletter, podcast, blog, digital programming materials and exhibits.	2026-2029

Action Four: Collaborate and Co-Create

Priority	Action	Status
28	Develop a framework for community-led collaboration.	2026 Workplan Item
29	Optimize program offerings and remove overlap or competition.	2026 Workplan Item
30	Develop Annual Event listings for Hamilton Civic Museum sites.	Started
31	Offer space on digital and other platforms for community-curated content.	2027-2028

Priority	Action	Status
32	Expand the scope of collaboration with the Hamilton Public Library to explore the use of library branches as site for heritage-based exhibits, programming and community engagement.	Started
33	Provide better role clarity for staff to ensure front line staff have the support they need.	Started
34	Complete a service review of all areas including programming, outreach, partnerships, accessibility, operational hours, tours, rental program, and the film program.	2027-2028
35	Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Museums & Heritage Section.	2027-2028
36	Develop and outdoor concert series programs at multiple sites.	Started
37	Initiate a pilot project to create a street-level downtown storefront space that will present creative, flexible and community engaged heritage experiences and serve as a learning laboratory for staff to explore new ways of engaging with and expressing the City's heritage.	Completed (Visitor Experience Centre)

Action Five: Develop the Workforce

Priority	Action	Status
38	Harmonize job descriptions, identify and resource inequity.	2027-2028
39	Introduce new positions based on skills needed to realize strategic goals and current museum best practice mindful of financial constraints.	Completed
40	Develop annual schedule for professional development to support skills growth.	Started
41	Staff to share Museum & Heritage section and Hamilton success stories throughout the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector.	Started
42	Develop and offer internal training opportunities to build competencies among staff.	Started

Action Item: Develop Additional Revenue Streams

Priority	Action	Status
43	Develop additional revenue streams by exploring alternative business models for museum retail.	Started
44	Develop a program to monetize collection assets through reproduction and retail.	2027-2028
45	Implement enterprise scheduling software for part time staff.	2026 Workplan Item
46	Develop online retail for museum gift and reproduction items and explore partnership opportunities with local artists and artisans through a consignment program.	2027-2028
47	Explore opportunities to add food services at museum sites.	2027-2028
48	Develop SOPs across the section.	2026 Workplan Item