

**City of Windsor Administration's response to the  
Museum Development Feasibility Study presented by  
Lord Cultural Resources**

Lord Cultural Resources began work on the Museum Development Feasibility Study in 2011. Considering the parameters of Windsor's economy, they proposed new museum development within 401 Riverside Drive West, a building owned by the City of Windsor, and the maintenance of the Francois Baby House as one of the spokes in a cultural hub.

Lord Cultural Resources made several suggestions as to the capital improvements for the Museum and the theming of different exhibits at both the Francois Baby House and 401 Riverside Drive West, but the specifics of those exhibitions were beyond the scope of their contract.

The goal is to present exhibits designed according to current trends and best practices in the field, which will appeal to a variety of markets, and offer the latest in technological innovation. The museum needs to retain current customers, develop a membership base, attract new visitors and encourage repeat visitation to generate revenue to support operations.

City of Windsor Administration is supportive of the recommendations of Lord Cultural Resources with additional considerations. Administration's suggestions are based upon the recommendations presented by the consultants in 2012, but include additional investment and enhancements to improve the presentation, exhibition of, and access to the community's museum collection.

Details of the recommendations for the new museum are noted below and they can be found with context in the Museum Development Feasibility Study. Highlights include:

- A new, permanent, engaging exhibit on Windsor in what is now called the Barbaro Gallery at 401 Riverside West
- Exhibition/programming space in what is now called the Tepperman Sculpture Court – with a proposed theme of First Nations/Original Peoples
- Efficient auditorium/programming/temporary gallery space created in what is now the Wilkinson Room
- A new Children's Gallery with dynamic exhibits and interactivity created from the former gift shop and art rental and sales space
- Development of exhibition/display space in the Concourse
- Development of retail space in the southwest area of the Concourse
- Development of temporary exhibit and programming space in the former restaurant area
- Development of a permanent gallery on Francophone Heritage in the Francois Baby House
- Development of a permanent gallery on the War of 1812 and Battle of Windsor at the Francois Baby House
- Creation of additional storage space through restructuring the mezzanine of 401 Riverside West, repurposing the former gift shop storage room into artefact storage at

401 Riverside West, and converting the children's activity area in the Francois Baby House to visible storage space

- Expansion of space in the Francois Baby House to showcase the Museum's archives
- Improvements to the infrastructure to preserve and protect the collections - security and HVAC improvements, building management systems, the gaseous pollutant filtration system, humidification system and conversion to LED lighting

### *Museum Feasibility Development Study*

The following are the recommendations made by Lord Cultural Resources for Museum use of the ground floor of 401 Riverside West. Details are found in Sections 5.4 and 5.5 (pages 49-60) of the Feasibility Study. As directed by City Council (M150-2013), qualifying comments from Administration appear in italics underneath each point. They are made within the context of maximizing efficient use of space and with staff knowledge of the collections, the buildings, requests for services, markets served and local considerations.

### ***New Museum Development at 401 Riverside Drive West***

#### Recommendation #1

The Barbaro Gallery will become a major space for telling the story of Windsor and region, and will be expanded slightly by extending its back wall to take over part of the space of the present Tepperman Sculpture Court section of the present Concourse. The view through the (suitably filtered) window of the Sculpture Court can be integrated into one of the exhibits on the more contemporary stories of the City of Windsor in the Barbaro Gallery. Barbaro Gallery exhibits are organized thematically, with an introductory and an exit experience to provide historical and geographical context.

*Cultural Affairs agrees that the Barbaro Gallery should remain a permanent gallery devoted to the history of Windsor. Due to structural issues, staff do not support moving walls to expand the current space. This also affects the Tepperman Sculpture Court. Although the consultants recommended its division, considering the structural issues, Administration recommends that this space retain its original footprint. Window treatments and temporary walls can transform the Tepperman Court into a more formal, flexible gallery which can be used as a designated Aboriginal history gallery, food service space or temporary exhibition space.*

#### Recommendation #2

Exhibits in the Concourse will graphically introduce visitors to the exciting story of the First Nations, the French settlement, the War of 1812-14, and the 1837 Battle of Windsor, and will show visitors how to find the important exhibits on these subjects at the nearby Francois Baby House (with photographs and maps).

*Cultural Affairs agrees that the Concourse walls do provide an expanse of space that could be used in a variety of ways, not just for the themes put forth by Lord Cultural Resources but to connect guests to other historical/heritage sites in the region, wall-mounted cases displaying*

*mini-exhibitions, works produced by children in the Children's Gallery or the promotion of activities and events occurring in other City owned facilities.*

*Administration suggests that a welcome desk remain, but be re-configured to improve customer service for patrons of the museum and gallery.*

*Cultural Affairs and the consultants offer different locations for a gift shop. Administration suggests the triangular space at the southwest of the Concourse, closest to the Pitt Street entrance, would be best place for retail. With the large glass exposure, this area is not suited for exhibition space. Although some shading would still be required, this space could be an interesting location for a shop that could support exhibitions and tourism initiatives and contribute to the revenue stream. The triangular space at the north end of the Concourse would be a resting or gathering space for families and groups.*

#### Recommendations #3 and #4

3. The Betty Wilkinson Room, which currently serves as a too small and too poorly equipped auditorium, will similarly be extended into part of the present Sculpture Court so that there is no remaining corridor between it and the Barbaro Gallery, and will be converted, along with its supporting projection booth, 'Green Room' and 'AV Room' spaces, into a Temporary Exhibition Gallery for the Museum. Naming and related issues will need to be addressed to the satisfaction of the donors.

4. It is strongly recommended that the Library's addition to the AGW building should include an auditorium with fixed seating on a raked floor capable of accommodating an audience of up to 200 persons that is needed and will be booked for use by all three institutions – Library, Museum and Gallery.

*Cultural Affairs and the consultants agree that auditorium space is necessary. It supports a number of Community Museum initiatives and provides an opportunity to raise revenue. However, as the consultants were preparing the feasibility study, the city was engaged in discussions with Windsor's Public Library to relocate to 401 Riverside Drive West and an addition to include auditorium space was proposed. Though the Library is no longer being considered at 401 Riverside, Cultural Affairs staff are of the opinion that it is important to retain auditorium space on the main floor of the building.*

*The Wilkinson Room could become that auditorium and a very flexible, multi-purpose space. With adequate window treatments, permanent wall cabinets could be installed to provide space for 'mini-exhibitions'. The old projector in the Wilkinson Room could be removed and a new ceiling mounted projector permanently installed. Also proposed are temporary, retractable walls to allow the space to be divided, if necessary. These changes allow for auditorium space, a large temporary display or two smaller, or perhaps the incorporation of interesting digital projections as part of an exhibition.*

*Similar to the Barbaro Gallery in Recommendation #1, the entry wall into the auditorium appears to be load-bearing so changes to the footprint of the Wilkinson Room are not recommended.*

#### Recommendation #5

The present Gallery Shop should be converted into a Children's Gallery, with the existing storage and support areas used as education work space, storage and office. The Museum should operate its shop in the present Art Rental and Sales area. The Art Rental and Sales Storage space would become the Museum Shop Storage room.

*Cultural Affairs agrees that the former gift shop be converted into a Children's Gallery space, but suggests the Art Rental and Sales area also be incorporated into the Children's Gallery. By re-arranging non-load bearing walls, a gallery space of approximately 1,600 square feet could be developed. This exhibition space would provide children with hands-on, participatory learning opportunities. Recreation and Culture staff suggest that programming could also be developed to capitalize on synergies created by the Windsor International Aquatic and Training Complex and other downtown activities. The gift shop could be relocated to the southern triangle of the Concourse, as noted in Recommendation #2.*

#### Recommendation #6

The currently closed cafe should be converted into a multi-purpose Events and Rental area that will be used for Museum educational and entertainment events but will also be rented for small weddings, birthday parties, corporate hospitality or other occasions, supported by the existing kitchen and related facilities.

*Recreation and Culture suggest that the City of Windsor already operates beautiful facilities much more suited to this type of enterprise. With the removal of the restaurant equipment and the opening of walls, the space would be better utilized as temporary exhibit and programming space. The Manager of Cultural Affairs suggests that a small portion of the back of house restaurant remain to ensure that there is space for safe food handling.*

*This would provide opportunities for the Museum and Art Gallery to provide special event and occasion programming throughout the entire gallery, which could contribute to the revenue stream. An example may be to provide food service for a fundraiser or during a special fireworks event.*

#### Recommendation #7

The Museum will utilize existing back-of-house spaces for temporary exhibition and incoming collection handling purposes, sharing the purpose-built collections truck bay with the Gallery.

*Cultural Affairs staff agree. As the Consultants point out, one of the important features of 401 Riverside West is the back of house space that was designed for gallery collections. The truck bay and the loading area are important features that will allow Museum staff to easily change the temporary exhibitions.*

### Recommendation #8

The Museum's need for increased permanent collection storage space can be partially met in the short term by converting the existing children's activity area in the Francois Baby House to serve as visible storage of some aspects of the collection, thereby freeing up other areas of existing Baby House storage; for the long run, however, it is essential that the Library addition to the AGW building should include at least 1,500 sq ft of permanent collection storage for Museum artefacts.

*Cultural Affairs agrees that the children's activity area in the Francois Baby House should be converted to visible storage for some of its collection. As previously noted, the Library component is no longer part of the Museum/AGW discussions. To address additional museum artefact storage needs, Culture suggests minor restructuring of two spaces. The Lower Mezzanine space will require building a wall to separate the areas used by the Museum from those used by the Art Gallery of Windsor. This wall is required to delineate ownership and protect the integrity of each entity's collections. The Museum portion will require the installation of museum quality shelving (both rolling and fixed). In addition, the space that had been utilized as gift shop storage can have rolling storage installed to suitably house artefacts. Combined these spaces equal 1175 square feet of storage. With additional artefacts on display, and additional space made available at the Francois Baby House (also discussed in FBH Recommendations #5 and #6) these modifications should meet the storage needs of the museum for a number of years.*

### Recommendation #9

Public access to the Art Gallery of Windsor on the second and third floors of the AGW building cannot effectively be accommodated by either the small passenger elevator or the double-storey staircase which is not appropriate for seniors, families with small children, or visitors with mobility impairment. In order to avoid impatient crowds, especially at times of Gallery exhibition openings or other events attracting larger numbers of visitors at one time, consideration should be given to adding a larger passenger elevator, which could be a glass elevator exterior or interior to the North Point of the Concourse, affording an excellent view of the river as it ascends to the second and third floor of the building with Gallery visitors.

*Staff from both Culture and Facilities agree that the current elevator does not adequately serve users. A new, efficient elevator, located within the footprint of what exists now, would improve the visitor experience for all guests attending 401 Riverside West, especially those with mobility impairments. The Canada Cultural Spaces Program considers "systems and measures to improve accessibility and mobility" an eligible expense. If approved, this grant will provide up to 50% of the funding required for eligible expenses. Facilities recommends that improvements to the current elevator be considered in the plans now so that the capital investment can be shared through the grant. Additionally, addressing the elevator shortcomings once all other construction is complete is expected to add to its cost.*

## Recommendation #10

Concerns about the capacity of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system to support the larger area of an expanded ground floor, especially in gallery areas that require museum-standard environmental controls, will need to be reviewed by an engineer, architect and museum planner in planning the future expansion of the AGW building.

*Culture and Facilities staff agree. Although 401 Riverside West was built to museum standards, it was completed over a decade ago. Museum staff have been taking humidity readings and have noticed fluctuations that are not conducive to the preservation and exhibition of its collection, particularly in the new spaces being developed for exhibitions. Livelink #16252 (CR282/2012) identified the need to investigate repairing or replacing the HVAC and humidification systems. The Canada Cultural Spaces program considers environmental control systems as eligible expenses. An upgrade to, or replacement of, the HVAC system is included in Administration's proposals.*

The Francois Baby House, with its National Historical Site significance, remains part of the museum complex as a "spoke". The specific role of the Francois Baby House is three-fold:

- To continue the primary mission of the Francois Baby House to preserve and interpret its historic significance;
- To serve as the primary artefact storage facility for Windsor's heritage;
- To serve as the administrative headquarters of the two-site Windsor Museum service.

The following recommendations indicate the new role of the Francois Baby House consistent with these objectives and summarized by Lord Cultural Resources. Again, qualifying comments from Administration follow each recommendation. Details are found in Section 5.6 (pages 61-63) of the Museum Feasibility Development Study.

### **Francois Baby House**

#### Recommendation FBH #1

The primary function of the Francois Baby House is preservation of the building as a heritage site and its interpretation to the public as a site associated with the early historical periods.

*Cultural Affairs staff concur.*

#### Recommendations FBH #2 and #3

2. One scenario is for the Gallery to the left upon entry to the Baby House to be used to tell the story of the indigenous people and the French settlement of the region in far greater depth than is now possible. The chronological focus of this Gallery should be from the First Nations prior to European-origin contact through to the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, however it should also make connections to these communities today to emphasize that they are still an important part of the Windsor community. In this scenario the Gallery to the right upon entry would focus on the region's involvement in two important 19th century conflicts that shaped this country—the War of 1812-14 and 1837 Battle of Windsor during the Upper Canada Rebellion.

The chronological focus of this Gallery is a limited period of time, but could include multiple perspectives on the conflict - military, political, social, and personal - in order to make connections with visitors.

3. An alternative scenario would have one side of the main floor devoted to First Nations and the other side to the Francophone heritage of the area. This could enable First Nations and Francophone organizations in Windsor to tell their own stories in collaboration with the Windsor Museum. In this scenario First Nations and Francophone organizations would seek capital and operating funds associated with their exhibitions and spaces in collaboration with the City of Windsor. This scenario has been assumed.

*Cultural Affairs recommends that the stories of French settlement and communities, and Windsor's military history – particularly surrounding the War of 1812-1814 and the Rebellion of 1837- continue to be told at the Francois Baby House as it is within this context that the Baby House was designated a National Historic Site. The First Nations story is more appropriately told at 401 Riverside Drive West, where space permits its telling through exhibits, presentations and other activities. Regardless of where the exhibits depicting the Francophone and First Nations history are located, Culture has committed to collaborating with local community organizations for their development.*

#### Recommendation FBH #4

With the focus of the two ground-floor galleries in the Baby House, more space in the present Barbaro Gallery can be devoted to more recent Windsor history, through the thematic framework identified in the feasibility study. Graphics and wayfinding in the Concourse of the present AGW building will tell visitors about the importance of the nearby Baby House, show photographs of its exciting exhibits and give them a map to help them find it.

*Cultural Affairs supports the proposal to present focussed exhibits in the Francois Baby House and present the permanent, enhanced Windsor exhibit and promotion of the other cultural "spokes" at 401 Riverside West.*

#### Recommendations FBH #5 & #6

5. The present Children's Activity area on the lower level of the Francois Baby House should be converted to visible storage of those aspects of the collection that are suitable for such display, thereby relieving pressure on the collection storage needs of the Museum.

6. The Collection Storage vault and all other spaces on the lower level of the Francois Baby House should retain their present functions.

*Cultural Affairs concur. As noted in Recommendation #8 related to 401 Riverside West (page 8 of this report), the space allotted to storage at 401 Riverside West, combined with the storage space at the Francois Baby House, meets the storage requirements recommended by the Lord consultants.*

#### Recommendation FBH #7

The upper level of the Francois Baby House should continue to house the offices of the Curator and Registrar, although the Education Office will be relocated to the present AGW building ground floor, in support of the Children's Gallery and the multipurpose space there.

*Cultural Affairs staff concur.*

#### Recommendation FBH #8

If the Library relocates the Municipal Archives to the addition to the AGW building as part of its relocation, the Museum's archives should be integrated with that space; if not, the Archives should remain at the Baby House and may use the present Education Office as additional storage space.

*Consideration of the Municipal Archives is not within the current scope of the museum discussion but remain with Windsor Public Library. However, the space where the museum's archives are housed currently is overcrowded. The archives of Windsor's Community Museum are vital to exhibition and collections research and also for answering public reference questions. What is currently 2<sup>nd</sup> floor exhibition space at the Francois Baby House is proposed to become space for an expanded museum archives.*