



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration

Date:	July 16, 2010
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development and Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:/2010/Cluster A/EDC/ECON DEV/August/ed1008-021

SUMMARY

City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square occupy part of the “Ward,” a 19th- and early 20th-century immigrant reception area. To commemorate the Ward and Toronto’s rich immigration story, this report recommends that the currently vacant third floor mezzanine of City Hall be used for The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration, and that steps be taken to implement the gallery concept.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council dedicate the currently vacant third floor mezzanine of City Hall for use as The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration.
2. City Council direct staff, led by the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture or his designate, to initiate community engagement processes to:
 - a. finalize the scope, content and design of The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration; and
 - b. raise funds to implement the Gallery.
3. City Council direct staff to report back to the appropriate committee, once the exhibition program and gallery design has been finalized, with additional information on building retrofit implications and costs.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report. Exhibition and building retrofit costs will be determined in the next phase of the project. Funds to implement The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration will be raised from public and private sources. Finance staff have determined that the existing Toronto Museum Project Reserve Fund, intended to receive funds for the future Museum of Toronto and associated galleries, can be used to receive funds for the Gallery of Immigration.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On January 12, 2010, the Toronto and East York Community Council referred Motion MM41.2 by Councillor Moscoe respecting a request to revive and celebrate the “Ward,” to City and Heritage Toronto staff for consideration and report back to the appropriate committee.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/te/decisions/2010-01-12-te30-ds.htm>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The “Ward” referenced in Councillor Moscoe’s motion is the now-vanished neighbourhood that was Toronto’s most important immigrant reception area – and most vexing social concern – for more than a century.

For over 100 years, no area in Toronto was more congested, squalid or infamous than the rectangle bounded by Yonge Street, Queen Street, University Avenue and College Street. For decades, the precinct – originally “Macaulaytown,” later the “Ward,” eventually “Chinatown” – was Toronto’s most popular area of settlement for new immigrants. Lying within the shadow of Old City Hall, it often drew the attention of reformers, journalists, politicians and bureaucrats. The Ward’s role and visual image as a key immigrant reception area and as a slum persisted until the early 1960s.

Named after a 1797 land grantee, Macaulaytown already had a reputation as a slum by the mid-nineteenth century, prompting charitable institutions to move into the area to respond to social needs. The House of Industry opened on Elm Street in 1848; it offered social services to seniors, homeless people, unemployed people, orphaned and abandoned children, recent immigrants, and the families of servicemen until 1946. Further north, the Hospital for Sick Children was built on College Street in 1891.

For municipal purposes, the area officially became St. John’s Ward in 1853 and was soon known simply as the “Ward.” By the early 1890s, the area had attracted immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe looking for cheap housing and ready access to workplaces. After the First World War, the area attracted many immigrants from China.

In the early twentieth century, the Ward consisted of a mixture of residential and light industrial land uses. Housing was largely unsanitary, in disrepair, and home to Toronto's poorest immigrants. In response to housing demand, landlords profited by subdividing land and raising rents, forcing many families to double-up in order to fulfill rent payments. Overcrowding became a characteristic feature of the area.

These slum conditions established the Ward as Toronto's first "priority neighbourhood." The city's first scientific studies of poverty were carried out there in the 1910s by the Medical Officer of Health and activist groups like the Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research. Assistance to newcomers was provided by social settlements; Central Neighbourhood House, for example, was based in the Ward in 1911-28.



Old City Hall from 21 Elizabeth Street, 1913. Future site of New City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square. City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, Subseries 32, Item 187.

The Ward's population shrank as institutions and enterprises grew along the area's perimeter. Along College Street and University Avenue, this meant the expansion of Toronto General Hospital and The Hospital for Sick Children, and the construction of the Toronto Armouries (later replaced by the University Avenue Court House) and office towers. Business interests dominated along Yonge Street, marked by two Eaton's department stores and their associated factories and warehouses. On Queen Street, law

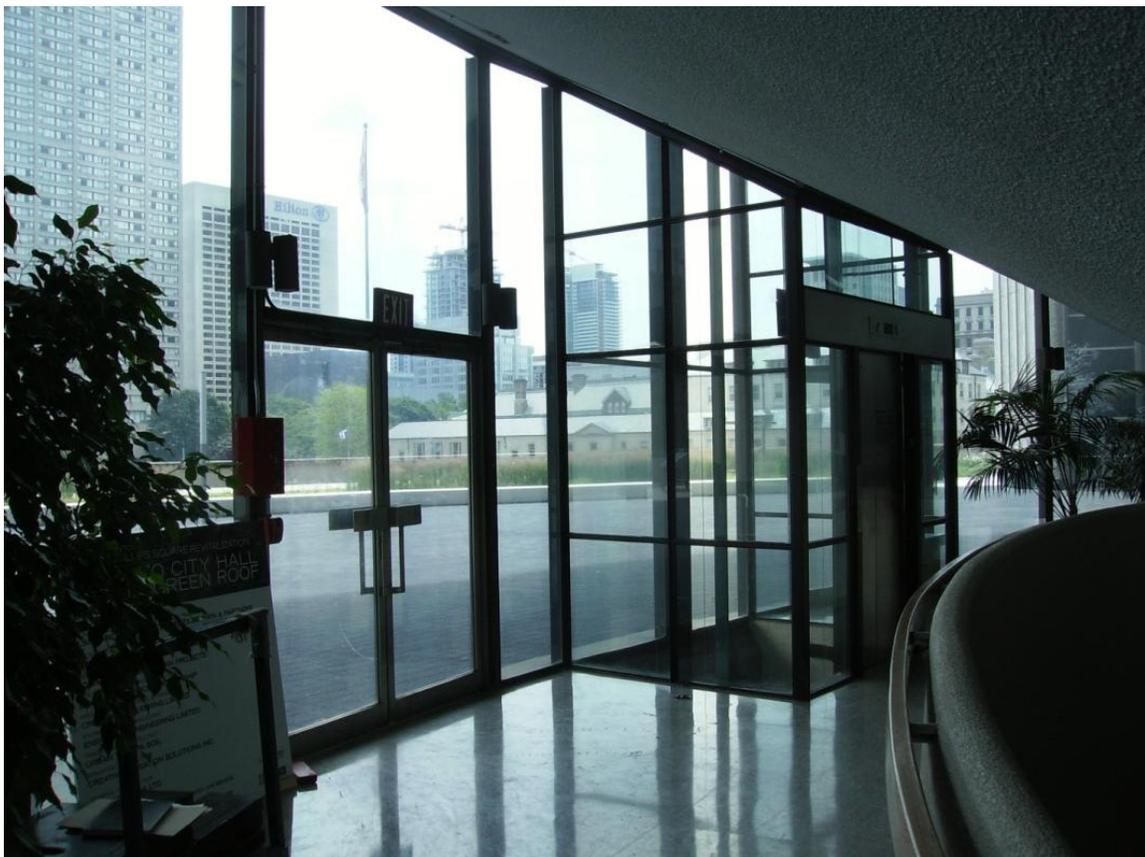
and local government had its impact, first with the building of Osgoode Hall, then Old City Hall and the Registry Office, and finally New City Hall.

Today, the Ward’s historical identity has largely been eliminated. Two tiny pockets of nineteenth-century low-rise housing exist on Gerrard and Elm streets. Two key institutional buildings (the House of Industry and the original Hospital for Sick Children) survive, though both have been put to new uses. The past 20 years have seen the return of residential activity to the area now known as the “Bay Street Corridor neighbourhood.”

COMMENTS

Despite being a city of newcomers, Toronto has no museum dedicated to telling the rich story of immigration.

The third floor mezzanine of City Hall – a 2,600 ft² donut-shaped space that is currently vacant and inaccessible, yet which opens onto the new Podium Green Roof – presents a remarkable opportunity to tell one of the most significant stories in Toronto’s history. As noted above, City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square occupy a substantial part of the south end of the old Ward. The third floor space provides an overview of this area, and conceptually can be used to explore the meaning of the City’s motto, “Diversity Our Strength,” in an historical context.



Part of the third floor mezzanine of New City Hall, overlooking Nathan Phillips Square and Osgoode Hall, 2010. Photo by Lord Cultural Resources.

Lord Cultural Resources was retained by Toronto Culture staff to develop a concept for an exhibition about the Ward in relation to the broader story of Toronto immigration; present high-level plans that visually communicate the concept; and create a cost-estimate and schedule for the execution of the exhibition.

The conceptual approach developed by Lord outlined exhibition priorities and characteristics, a core message, a thematic approach, and key exhibition themes.

Priorities for the gallery exhibition are that it

- Tells the specific story of the Ward, but links to the broader immigration story of Toronto.
- Complements the mandate of the Toronto Museum Project.
- Recognizes the importance of “sense of place.”
- Operates for several years with minimal on-site staff presence.
- Contains broad themes so that diverse stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to the layers of content that will be developed for the exhibition.

Exhibition characteristics include:

- Minimal physical impact on City Hall as a heritage building.
- Changing and personally engaging content.
- Appealing and relevant to diverse audiences.
- Use of multi-media based exhibits that will allow for a depth of content and interactivity.
- Opportunities for partnerships with community groups.
- Opportunities for partnerships with cultural institutions and heritage organizations.

The proposed core message for the gallery is that it will introduce Torontonians and tourists to the “Ward” as geographic location, as neighbourhood in transition, as home to diverse and changing communities, and as lens to view the larger immigration story of Toronto.

Connecting the overarching narrative of the story will be the individual stories of the people and places that defined the Ward, enabling the unique histories of people from various backgrounds to bring the area to life.

Potential means of expression to translate the thematic approach and content into exhibit ideas include graphic displays, small artifact or object displays, window treatments, touch screens and soundscapes. Given limited operating resources, it is not intended that the exhibition space will have an ongoing museum staff presence.



A proposal for one area within The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration, 2010. Rendering by Lord Cultural Resources.

As the exhibition concept was being developed, a preliminary infrastructure/operational review was undertaken to assess the mezzanine’s ability to support a Gallery of Immigration. Several constraints were noted in terms of compliance with City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines, Ontario Building Code and fire safety requirements, and the abundant natural light and limited electrical supply in the space. Additional security will need to be provided, and use of the mezzanine when Council is in session must be addressed. While it is anticipated that these issues can be resolved in future phases of the project, no building retrofit plan or costing exercise has yet been undertaken. This work is required once the exhibition program is more clearly defined.

The next step in finalizing the scope, content and design of the exhibition involves the preparation of an Interpretive Plan. The plan will ensure that the design is a cohesive presentation that communicates exhibit content to the visitor in meaningful ways, maximizes use of space and available resources, and meets the needs of diverse audiences and learning styles through the use of a range of media and display techniques. It is at this stage that community input will play a key role in refining the exhibition framework.

The Interpretive Plan provides an overall vision for the exhibition and is the foundation upon which further work in exhibition design, graphic and multi-media design, research

and content development and coordination, and finally fabrication and installation will be based.

The preliminary budget estimate for concept implementation (not including building retrofit) is \$785,500. A budget range of plus or minus 20 per cent is considered reasonable. This includes only exhibit-related hard costs (fabrication and installation; graphic and A/V production; lighting) and soft costs (interpretive planning, content development and scripting; exhibition and graphic design; project management). Building retrofit costs are not included; these will be determined once the exhibition program and gallery design have been finalized. Capital funds are not currently available to proceed with any of this work.

Should Council decide to dedicate the third floor mezzanine to The “Ward” Gallery of Immigration, staff will initiate two related community engagement processes. The first will finalize the scope, content and design of the exhibition, which includes the development of the Interpretive Plan. The second process involves raising funds from public and private sources to implement the gallery and its exhibition.

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SIGNATURE

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