



REPORT

Recreation Programs, Culture and Tourism

TO: Parks Facilities and Tourism Committee

FROM: Amanda Ferraro, Director of Community Services and Katlyn Jones, Manager of Cultural Services, Tourism and BIA.

DATE: March 3, 2025

REPORT: RC-02/25 **FILE NO.**

SUBJECT: Uxbridge Historical Centre – Risk assessment and Opportunities

BACKGROUND:

In 2023 Report RC-07/23 by Amanda Ferraro, Director of Community Services reported on the Shed Condition Assessment that was done by Tacoma Engineers on July 10, 2023.

This report highlighted critical repairs for both the Hillson Shed and Nesbitt Shed. Report RC-07/23 indicated a second report would follow with recommended actions and cost estimates.

Hillson Shed (Red Barn):

Tacoma review, analysis and assessment concluded that the Hillson shed is in poor condition and is considered unsafe. Note that these poor conditions are well concealed as a cursory review from the exterior. This building is currently closed to the public and staff until the required work is done to make it safe.

The scope of work to investigate could include upgrading the facility for alternate use, like public programming, camps or potential weddings.

Nesbitt Shed

The Nesbitt shed is in good condition with no structurally significant damage, deterioration or distress identified. The primary concern is the capacity of the mezzanine to serve as a storage loft.

The scope of work to investigate could include upgrading the facility for alternate use, like public programming, or enhanced exhibit space.

Lodge Hall

On May 21st, 2022, the Lodge Hall, a heritage building at the Uxbridge Historical Centre, was destroyed by a major weather event. All efforts to save the building and its contents were done through our Insurance, Heritage Consultants, and Engineers. With Report RC-08/23 it was decided that the building, in accordance with the Heritage Act, and with consultation from the Heritage Committee, would be removed. Demolition was approved and completed in 2023.

A settlement with our insurance company was received and with the intension of re-investing in the Uxbridge Historical Centre site.

DISCUSSION:

Risk assessment and Opportunities

In June 2024, the Uxbridge Historical Centre engaged Hugh Spencer and Diane Oliver-Jensen of Museum Planners Group (MPG) to do a site Risk assessment and highlight potential opportunities for the site. Specifically, staff wanted to examine the potential of the site with the loss of the Lodge Hall and the risk of the two buildings needing major repair.

The Museum Planners Group visited the site several times and organized workshops with staff, the Museum Advisory Committee and the Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society to gain feedback and insight into the current and potential uses of the site.

Additionally, staff visited four other museums to gather ideas and best practices for programming uses of old buildings.

A few major themes emerged during this study / investigation.

1. The importance of saving the two sheds but re-purposing them for alternate, revenue generating uses that would benefit the site.
 - a. Staff saw great examples of this at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, and the King Heritage and Cultural Centre, where the outside of the building remains a historic building, but the inside was modernized to service public programs and exhibits.

2. The importance of making the site more usable for events, programs, camps, rentals and weddings.
 - a. A great example of this came from The Village at Black Creek (Previously known as Black Creek Pioneer Village), where they use most buildings in their care as an area for rentals and/or programming, resulting in increased opportunities for revenue generating buildings.
3. Improving display and exhibit space and ideally featuring the Steam Threshing machine which is in storage and cannot be viewed by the public at this time.
4. Making improvements to the Quaker Hill School House so that we can expand programming, rentals and weddings into this space while preserving the front entrance and stairs. This would be achievable with adding accessible washrooms for the site.

Future Planning / Opportunities

Based on the feedback from staff, the Museum Advisory Committee, the Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society and the Museum Planners Group, we would like to request permission to look for grants that could:

1. Look to repair, upgrade and renovate the Hillson Shed (Red Barn) so this space could be reopened and used for public programming, camps or potential weddings.
2. Look to repair, upgrade and renovate the Nesbitt Shed for permanent exhibit space for the Stream thresher and related demonstrations.
3. Look to make the Schoolhouse washrooms accessible.

Funding: Funding for the project would be contingent on a large grant with match funding. The matching funds would come from the insurance settlement from the Lodge Hall.

Next steps:

- **Phase one (1): Concept drawings-** Engaging an architect and engineering company that could begin plans for the proposed renovations and with costs estimates associated with the grant application. This will include 3-D visualization rendering for the Hillson Shed (interior), Nesbitt Shed (interior) and the School House. This phase will also include engaging our stakeholders, Council and the Heritage committee to ensure we work collaboratively to address the needs of the community.

Budget: \$22,000 - \$25,000

- **Phase two (2):** Look for match funding grants to assist with the repairs needed and to elevate the space using the phase one cost estimates and the 3-D visualization drawings.
- **Phase three:** If successful with a grant leverage the Lodge Hall insurance money to double our return on investment.

In conclusion, advancing Phase 1 enables access to grants for the renovation of the Uxbridge Historical Centre buildings, an initiative that goes beyond heritage preservation to strengthen financial sustainability, tourism appeal, and community impact. Enhanced facilities will improve visitor experience, create new revenue-generating opportunities, and reinforce the Centre's role as a key cultural and economic asset for the Township of Uxbridge. These upgrades will establish the site as a premier destination for local heritage tourism, attracting more visitors, partnerships, and funding opportunities in the long term. By securing grant funding, these goals can be achieved without placing additional strain on municipal resources, ensuring that Uxbridge's history remains a vibrant and valuable part of its future. Support for this initiative will deliver lasting economic and cultural benefits—investing in the past to build a stronger, more prosperous future.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Good Governance

- Identify opportunities to diversify funding sources.
- Integrate accessibility, sustainability, safety and inclusivity into decision making and project implementation.
- Consult stakeholders and work collaboratively to address the needs of the community.

A Vibrant and Growing Economy

- Continue to maintain and invest in the preservation of our heritage assets.

- Address infrastructure deficit.
- Explore strategic use of municipal property and assets to promote economic success.
- Make optimal use of and maintenance of existing assets.
- Leverage tourism and heritage cultural assets to drive economic advantage for future generations.

Community Engagement

- Target volunteers, committee members, contractors, staff and service partners with information updates.

Community Well-Being

- Maintain and plan for future investments in civic infrastructure.
- Continue to identify opportunities to improve accessibility throughout the municipality.
- Identify opportunities to enhance community facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Report RC-14/24 of Amanda Ferraro, Director of Community Services, and Katlyn Jones, Manager of Cultural Services, Tourism and BIA be received for information;

AND THAT staff look at options for an Architect and Engineering company in 2025 that could begin Phase One and that this initial step be funded from the insurance settlement from the Lodge Hall up to \$25,000.

AND THAT staff investigate grants that could support funding the repair, upgrade and renovations for the Hillson Shed, the Nesbitt Shed, and the Quaker Hill School.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Amanda Ferraro, Director of Community Services and Katlyn Jones, Manager of Cultural Services, Tourism and BIA