

Risk Assessment & Opportunities Report for the Uxbridge Historical Centre



January 2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface: Our Team	4
1. Introduction:	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Need for a Risk & Opportunity Assessment• Assignment Scope & Methodology• UHC Vision, Mission & Values• Lessons & Trends from Comparable & Best Practice Sites	
2. Building & Site Review:	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take-Aways from Engineering Report• Site Visit Observations• Building & Site Issues & Questions	
3. Staff/Stakeholder Workshops:	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Methodology• Results• Options for Future Development	
4. Recommendations:	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Future Uses of Hillson Shed & Nesbitt Shed• Possible solutions for Quaker Hill Schoolhouse and Lodge Hall Replacements• Structural Upgrades & Renovations• Possible Exhibits, Programs & Uses	
5. Next Steps	24

Our Team

Hugh Spencer of Museum Planners Group (MPG) has been providing highest quality services and innovative programs to museums, Heritage Sites and tourist destinations for over 25 years. Hugh specializes in customized master plans, educational plans and interpretive plans with awards to attest to his expertise. Based on MPG's professional experience in the museum and cultural heritage sector, we are able to help clients create spaces and programs that have a deep and transformative impact on our world. Our team is supported by a wide network of national and international professionals which enables us to tap into knowledge and expertise while delivering the highest calibre of work.

Diane Oliver-Jensen, rla, LEED A.P., of Jensen Design, brings over 25 years of experience in architectural and landscape architectural design, master planning and informal educational exhibit design and evaluation to this collaboration. Diane has worked with and for clients across the globe helping to transform visitor experiences to the highest levels. Lessons learned from working with clients as renowned as Disney's Wild Animal Kingdom and the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, PA are brought to even the smallest budget projects. Special emphasis is always placed on environmental stewardship and sustainability.

MPG and Jensen Design have collaborated on projects since 2011 beginning with the Waterloo Region Museum (now Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum and Doon Heritage Village). Hugh and Diane have worked closely on several previous projects including most recently the multimedia exhibit "Alien Enemies" at Fort Henry and the new exhibits (currently under construction) for the expanding Hamilton Children's Museum.

Together our goal for this project has been to assist and enable Uxbridge Historical Centre to move confidently into their next directions with best possible benefits of our individual and collective experiences. Seeking input and background from UHC staff and supporters, we hope we bring fresh eyes and ideas to help UHC grow and flourish in both the near and long terms.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Need for a Risk & Opportunity Assessment

Since its founding in 1972 by the Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society, the Uxbridge Historical Centre (UHC) has occupied several acres overlooking Uxbridge Valley and Oak Ridges Moraine. While the Centre maintains an ongoing collaborative relationship with the local Historical Society, the Township of Uxbridge has assumed responsibility for staffing and operations of the Centre.

As noted on their website, the UHC consists of 10 buildings, more than 10,000 artifacts and archives pertaining to regional history. All these buildings and collections serve to preserve and interpret the history and heritage of the Township of Uxbridge through exhibitions, programs, workshops, camps, tours, and more.

Staff and stakeholders from the UHC, the Uxbridge-Scott Historical society have been actively engaged in strategic planning to ensure the successful and sustainable operation and development of the site and its heritage resources. Products of these efforts include a 2022-2024 Business Plan, a 2024 Emergency Plan, as well as a Condition Assessment for the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds. However additional work is now needed: The plans have reached their end of terms and the Centre also has to address the May 21, 2022 tornado which damaged beyond repair the Victoria Corners/Orange Lodge Hall which functioned as the UHC's main exhibition space.

The intent of this report is to examine the potentials of two buildings on the site. With the loss of the Lodge Hall and the need to repair two buildings (the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds) there is now a means of addressing immediate programming and preservation needs at the centre.

Current UHC institutional needs include but may not be limited to: the loss of exhibition gallery and programming space since Victoria Corners/Orange Lodge Hall was lost; insufficient collections storage space; limited fully accessible program spaces, including accessible washrooms; limited room for camps and rentals and overall connectivity within the site.

The site is also seasonal, which does affect its overall operations. A four-season facility would be ideal, but in this report, we are proposing renovations that would create three-season opportunities and increase the site's availability for rentals and programming. This could, in turn, result in increased revenue.

These needs can and should be addressed by carefully considering and designing future building and restoration projects. Considerations should be given throughout to any and every opportunity afforded for increasing sustainability, resiliency and green options both for reduced long-term costs and footprint impacts, but also for current and future trending grant opportunities.

1.2 Assignment Scope & Methodology

Specific tasks for this Risk Assessment & Opportunities Report include:

1. RISK ASSESSMENT:

- Confirm Goals
- Site Visit
- Staff/Stakeholder Workshop
- Report Preparation

2. SITE & BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Confirm Goals
- Site Visit & Analysis
- Staff/Stakeholder Workshop
- Report Preparation

There are opportunities to explore new program offerings to expand UHC's community outreach and regional importance. The Hillson and Nesbitt Sheds offer the most immediate opportunities, and they present some of the most immediate needs on the site.

1.3 UHC Vision, Mission and Values

It is helpful to consider the preservation and interpretation of the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds in terms of how they support and advance the goals and services of the UHC:

Vision:

The UHC is a heritage leader and important community resource, providing engaging exhibitions, workshops and other programs that explore and share the history of the Uxbridge area with diverse audiences.

Commentary:

The restoration and new uses of the Sheds (rather than having them removed or left to deteriorate) will enhance the UHC in its role as a heritage leader and community resource. The Sheds will provide more ways to reach the public with meaningful and authentic experiences connected to their heritage.

Mission:

The UHC connects today's audiences with the rich heritage of Uxbridge Township through the collection, preservation, interpretation and display of artifacts, documents and photographs, and related programming that illustrate the history of the Uxbridge area and the former Townships of Uxbridge and Scott.

Commentary:

The Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds will permit more opportunities for visitors to connect with the

collections and interpretative programs offered by the UHC with new experiences in place of what has recently been taken away.

UHC Values:

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility to our facility, collection, exhibits, programming, and knowledge in a visitor-friendly environment
- **Engagement & Collaboration:** Inspiring engagement, fostering relationships, and developing meaningful partnerships.
- **Life-Long Learning:** Promoting and offering opportunities for life-long learning
- **Preservation:** Preserving our material heritage and historical knowledge
- **Respect:** Respect for all people, history, and our environment.

Commentary:

Some of the recommendations for restoration and interpretation of the Sheds (to follow) are intended to support UHC's ongoing efforts to meet best practice standards in achieving all of these values. In other instances, the options presented in this report are suggestions for going beyond existing standards and uses for the Sheds to explore new approaches for improving service and experience.

1.4 Lessons and Trends from Comparable and Best Practice Sites

It is beyond the scope of this assignment to provide a comprehensive and systematic overview of established and emerging trends and best practices at heritage sites and community history museums. Such an exercise would be useful as an evaluation tool in a full master plan for the entire UHC site and its ancillary programs.

However, for this study the consultants are able to identify the following trends and best practices from comparable sites that are relevant to the future uses of the two Sheds:

- Community Hub
- Performance Places/Arts Events
- Advanced Media
- Living Collections
- Re-Enactments, Role-Play and Costumed Interpretation
- Interpretation of Restoration
- Feature Exhibits/Multi-Disciplinary Approaches
- Enhanced Extension Programming

The following chapters of this report will explore which of these trends can be found at the UHC as well as approaches that could be explored or enhanced in the future.

2. BUILDING & SITE REVIEW

Four key buildings/locations on the UHC site offer opportunities for development to meet current needs/shortages and build upon successful current program offerings. Those are:

- Hillson Shed
- Nesbitt Shed
- Quaker Hill Schoolhouse and...
- The former site of the Victoria Corners/Orange Lodge Hall, lost to tornado in May 2022.

Opportunities always come with simultaneous constraints and these are no exception to that rule. Constraints include, first and foremost, the ubiquitous dilemma for small not-for-profits, costs and fundraising, especially for construction. Additional constraints include but may not be limited to:

- Interruptions during construction to UHC normal functions, most especially safety and visitor accessibility.
- Proximity to/supply of needed infrastructure and utilities before during and after construction.
- Protection of existing historic building collection(s) during construction.
- Disruptions to the crucially peaceful bucolic spirit of place.
- Limited staffing putting limits on program expansion opportunities
- Current status of the relationship with the Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society which has not been as active as it has been in the past.

2.1 Take-Aways from Tacoma Engineers Report

Tacoma Engineers, in their report dated 26 May, 2023 made numerous recommendations. Most immediate and notable among these was:

- The complete and entire closure to visitors and staff of the Hillson Shed due to current separation of the exterior cladding most notably at the upper west facing elevation and significantly less than adequate structuring, notably lack of structural bearing for upper level floor joists on post and beam structures.
- Access denial for visitors and staff to upper level mezzanine only in Nesbitt Shed due to unequally spaced and floor sized joists, many being far from sufficient to meet functional codes.

Both of these closures have been undertaken by UHC staff. Closures however, have created challenges for UHC staff to deliver programming and messaging, but the complete closure of Hillson Shed impacts most of all.

Additional recommendations made by Tacoma Engineers have yet to be fully addressed. The most immediate stated need that is, as of yet, not fully addressed is the need for stabilizing bracing to be applied to the Hillson Shed, both inside and outside, to ensure it can withstand

the stresses of increased snow loading and wind loads.

Estimated averaging of wind roses from the three closest airports (Buttonville Municipal, Barrie/Oro Medonte, and Toronto City Centre) collecting annual wind data indicate that UHC site will likely be experiencing the most wind loads, both sustained winds and likely strongest gusts, from the west to northwest. Although Hillson Shed has some windbreak provided by tree lines along the adjacent north property line, it is still at threat from these winds. UHC's siting is on a prominent hilltop with largely open agricultural fields to the west and northwest allowing winds to gain strength as they approach. Additionally, Hillson is significantly taller than the adjacent Implement Barn and so may be subject to significant wind loads.

At the very minimum, exterior bracing of Hillson Shed should be addressed immediately with priority given to the de-attaching west side cladding and additional priority engineering recommendations addressed quickly. These include: interior structural bracing in Hillson Shed to aid in carrying wind and snow live loads and continuing to carry dead load stresses of second level floor and structures; attention to repairing degraded mudsills on both sheds. These structural stabilizations will also allow for the safety and preservation of collection artifacts contained in the Hillson Shed, most notably the Steam Thresher.

2.2 Site Visit Observations

UHC's site is one of its greatest assets to the Town of Uxbridge overall. It is the site which provides the setting for the primary historic artifacts, the historic buildings themselves. This prominent hilltop site, sitting currently on the literal dividing line between Uxbridge's living and historic agricultural bloodlines and residential growth, serves as a tremendous asset to the community and offers possibilities for future benefits to the community and region.

Upon arriving at UHC for the first visit, the consultants were immediately impressed by the beauty of UHC's vast vista. The Centre is well-placed in its peaceful and bucolic setting.

These assets should not be taken for granted. The regionally comparable historic sites the consultants toured for this project (Whitchurch – Stouffville, King City) have sites that are smaller, and in the consultants' opinion less scenic than UHC's. Even some of the largest Ontario historic sites (e.g. Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Historic Museum and Doon Heritage Village) who may have equal acreage and building collections do not have the equally vast views.

Anything that Uxbridge can do to advocate for protection of this vista (view shed) can and should be made an immediate priority. UHC's physical setting is a precious jewel and should be allowed to sparkle!

Additional benefits to UHC within their site are proximities to multiple other Uxbridge community features. These include not only the Quaker Hill Trail System and the Uxbridge Community Dog Park, but also adjoining residential developments. The consultants were somewhat surprised by the proximity to medium/high density residential developments on

both the southeast and north property borders but little to no visual intrusion by them onto UHC's site.

These neighbouring residential areas should be cultivated as pockets of opportunity for community outreach and connection, most especially through the popular Quaker Hill Trail and Dog Park.

Preserving, capitalizing upon and publicizing the peaceful spirit of place at UHC are, to us, obvious opportunities. Every opportunity should be captured and cultivated to welcome strollers, hikers, bird watchers and dog walkers to come and enjoy this public amenity responsibly.

2.3 Building and Site Issues and Questions

Current building and site issues and questions include, but may not be limited to, availability of any and all public utilities that may be needed to meet UHC's current and projected future needs.

- What projections and action steps are Uxbridge municipal government and UHC staff and board making to address changing future conditions (e.g. climate change, weather instability, emergency preparedness, resiliency, etc) and how does UHC fit into these projections? How can UHC be a driver and community asset in these projections?
- Is UHC sitting on critical local or regional ground water resources that merit protection/offer benefits? Is UHC's site a potential critical agricultural site that can and should be preserved for future regional resiliency through food security? Although the UHC site is not under any regulated protections, it is worth considering if these might become regionally important in the future.

Additional questions for UHC revolve around not only the growth of on-site programs and activities that this report will address, but also growth of Uxbridge Region overall in terms of:

- Population growth and needs.
- Public amenities like parks and recreation facilities.
- Needs for climate mitigation areas (e.g. ground water recharge, flood and surface drainage mitigation areas, etc) that impact health and well-being of both human and nonhuman regional residents.

Careful consideration of and planning around these future issues will allow UHC to position themselves prominently as a leading community asset in the face of changes locally and regionally.

3. STAFF AND STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Following the start-up session and site visit the consultants and UHC staff and stakeholders engaged in two workshops (August 16 and 28) which were directed discussions to explore the requirements, challenges and potentials of the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds within the overall context of the Uxbridge Historical Centre.

3.1 Methodology and Preliminary Findings

3.1.1 Background Review

Preparation for the Workshop session began with a review of background information about the Uxbridge Historical Centre in general and the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds in particular. In addition to the UHC website, we examined the following:

- 2023 Annual Report, Uxbridge Historical Centre
- Uxbridge Historical Centre, Hillson Shed & Nesbitt Shed Condition Assessment
- Uxbridge Historical Centre, Business Plan 2022 - 2024
- Township of Uxbridge, Emergency Plan

The content of these plans and reports confirmed the consultants' view that the UHC and Township have already created relevant and comprehensive planning tools to guide the operations, public experiences, and maintenance of the Centre. It is clear that the Township and staff of the Centre are actively, and proactively, ensuring that the UHC plays an important role in preserving and sharing the heritage of the community, and supporting the quality of life in Uxbridge.

3.1.2 Brainstorming Questions and Answers

Based on what was learned from the site visit and background review, the consultants prepared a series of topics and questions to gather more information and insights from those directly involved in the planning, care and operation of the UHC in general and the two Sheds in particular.

What is working well at the Centre? How do these impact on the development of the Sheds?

- Human interpretation through staff and volunteers is the main form of communication throughout the site. This takes the form of guided tours or programming leaders for scheduled activities and events. Costumed, first person interpretation is not offered at the site and there are no plans to do so in the foreseeable future.
- Public feedback indicates that staff are viewed as very helpful throughout the site.
- The physical context of the Sheds offers opportunities. The site is very beautiful and pastoral with many attractive vistas of the surrounding farmlands.

- The Trails throughout the site offer good access to pathways between buildings and program/event spots.
- Buildings throughout the site have lots of stories associated with them with some very good rooms and interior spaces at the Centre, e.g. Scott Building, School-house.
- The buildings also have a lot of programming potential, and this includes the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds.
- Staff are pleased that some of the rooms at the site are functional (e.g. Print Shop) and can be used for educational programming. Would like more functional settings throughout the site.

What could change at UHC? What could we be doing better? What are the implications for the Sheds?

- Some buildings could be better used for more rentals, events and programs. Hillson Shed is a good example of a building that could be expanded for rentals, and to house exhibits and programs.
- The larger exhibition space lost with the Victoria Corners/Orange Lodge Hall – we need to replace it somehow either through renovated or new buildings.
- There is a lack of resources and people. We have a long list of what's needed for more services and programs. Would like to update content and activities more often, create more reasons for people to come back to the Centre.
- More strategic marketing. Due to the location, there is very little drop-in traffic. There needs new and more marketing surrounding the Centre communicating what's available at the site.
- There is desire to make the UHC a place for hands-on history to better engage and connect to visitors. This could also broaden the range of content and curriculum links, e.g. STEM related materials.
- Develop a more active relationship with the local historical society – important as a major fundraising arm of the Centre and an important resource for programs and content development.
- Build on the connection to the dog park – people regularly go to the dog park but they don't seem to come to the Centre very often.

What are the most important things we do?

- Serve as a community hub – a place people can rely on for events, activities and a place to learn, recreate and relax. Promote community identity and joy.
- Act as a forum to discover and discuss topics, raising awareness and interest in a range of different topics.
- Promote family connections. A unique place for inter-generational activities. Creating a greater sense of shared identity and cultivating new generations of museum goers.
- Be a place for memory-making – people have fond memories and feelings towards the Centre. Need to build on those associations to create more active friends of, and visitors to, the Centre.
- Offer a unique pastoral site, associated with the community's heritage.

What have we seen elsewhere? Best practice examples:

King Heritage & Cultural Centre for:

- A good example of a museum being an environmental steward – focus on sustainability throughout.
- A great permanent exhibition including a complete timeline of local history – good orientation to the history of the community and region.
- Combination of new construction with restoration of heritage structures for maximized storage of collections and program supplies.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum and Community Centre for :

- Covered walkway (extended porches) between Centre/Gallery & School; protected access/accessibility, and increases sites operations throughout the seasons.
- Juxtaposition of "new to old"; "jump" from now building to then old.
- Includes exhibition spaces plus rental facility – all as part of new construction.
- Connected to nearby parkland.
- Able to open spaces to the public throughout the year. Makes for a richer experience, i.e. connections between above elements and uses.

The Village at Black Creek for:

- Includes Hands-On History space with drawers and doors with interesting old materials but combined with engaging interactive elements.
- Use of graphics and selection of content/interpretation in the Flynn House which is a demonstration of life in a lower middle class, working family home.
- Exhibition Centre – featuring changing special topic exhibits to appeal to different audiences and explore different aspects of settler and Indigenous life, e.g. 19th Century science and technology, British Home Children program, etc.

Bruce County Cultural Centre and Museum for:

- More old and new juxtapositions – historic building is used as archive and revenue source, Museum charges to offer to access archives and assisted research.
- Another example of a community hub and meeting place for local history societies, seniors and service groups.

Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum/Doon Heritage Crossroads for :

- Good example of a new museum/multi use facility in context with historic village buildings.
- Regular use of costumed interpreters as well as scheduled guided tours.

What are the needs and potentials of the Sheds?

Hillson Shed:

- Assessment of structural engineer forbids entry to the building, so there is a need to remediate these issues to allow for eventual detailed planning, design and renovation.
- However, same structural engineering report also states that the Hillson Shed is not in

immediate imminent threat of collapse.

- Currently holds larger agricultural implements: large steam thresher machine (ground floor right side), as well as farm hand tools on one wall.
- Once stabilized and renovated it could be a new programming space, e.g. display artifacts along the wall(s) while keeping the central space stays open for groups of people.
- It is a beautiful building (of its kind) with an unusual and unique gothic point and an appealing red exterior.
- There is public interest in the building, guests ask: "Why can't we go in?"
- Priority should be to restore this shed for program use – can handle more visitors and generate more revenue.
- The Shed can be equipped with utilities to provide the facility with necessary amenities to deliver successful programming, Hands-On history and potentially serve as another rental facility.

Nesbitt Shed:

- Could reinforce inside or outside, stabilize upper floor for staff/storage.
- Add lighting for extended exhibits.
- Barn Quilt Mural draws folks in and introduces L.M. Montgomery local connection. This is an example of the use of the Sheds to offer more programming/content and enhance the visitor experience.
- Will need extensive renovation before it can be opened to the public or re-purposed for programs or displays.
- Could also be used as an equipment and storage space to support operations throughout the site.
- Investigate removing or reconfiguring the upper mezzanine area to allow the Steam Thresher, currently housed in the Hillson Shed, to move here. This shed could work as the Thresher display if current artifacts can be relocated to another space.

3.1.3 Idea Mapping

The consultants distributed coloured cards as the basis for an Idea Mapping Exercise as “homework” to capture concerns, suggestions and options for the future uses of the two Sheds in the context of the UHC site. This was a means to organize issues in a more strategic form as well as to give more staff and stakeholders the opportunity to provide their input. The coloured cards were coded so that stakeholders could classify their ideas into the following groups:

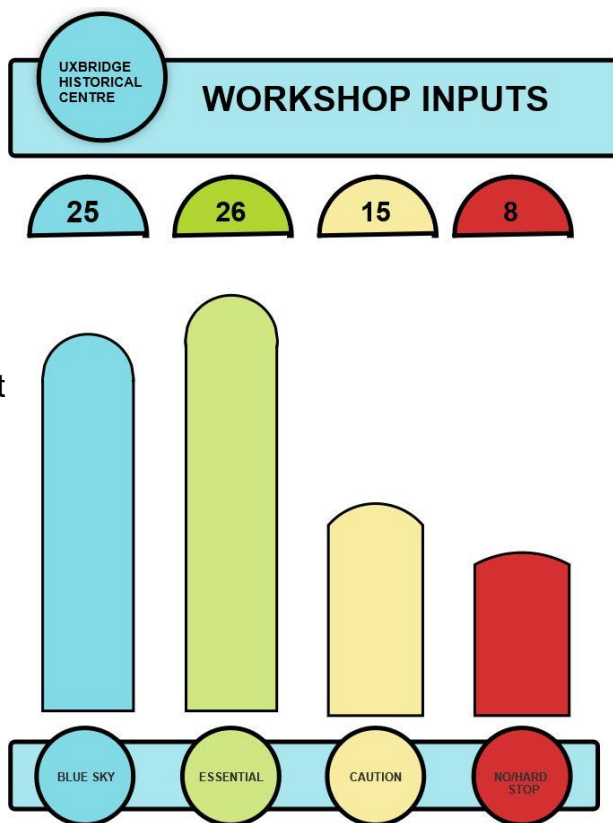
Blue (Sky)	No limits. What would you do if you had all the time and resources imaginable?
Green	Essential. What <i>must</i> happen or be there?
Yellow	Caution. What should you be careful about or aware of as you proceed?
Red	Stop/Avoid. If you are thinking about doing this, don't. If you are already doing it, stop as soon as possible.

Results:

The total number of ideas in each of the categories suggests that UHC staff and stakeholders are a highly motivated group who are not afraid of high standards and with clear understandings of a range of challenges and opportunities that the Centre needs to pursue (starting with the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds).

The number of Caution and Stop ideas suggest that stakeholders have already made efforts to determine what factors effect the development of the UHC in general and the two Sheds in particular. There are also clear indicators of what the staff and stakeholders want to do and what they do *not* want to do.

Below we list a few of the main ideas from the first three categories judged by the consultants to be of particular interest:



Blue Sky:

- All buildings – including the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds – are used for more events and programs.
- Create a new purpose-built program space for exhibits and large-scale events space with a capacity greater than 60 (weddings, etc.)
- Significantly more fully functional settings (e.g. working print shop) and hands-on exhibits throughout the site.

Essential:

- Repair the Nesbitt and Hillson Sheds and make them accessible for purposes of public programming and other revenue generating initiatives.
- UHC continues to serve as a community hub – a place people can rely on for events, activities and a place to learn, recreate and relax.
- Continue and grow a more active relationship with the Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society – an important partner in content development, research, expert and dedicated volunteers, and fundraising.
- Replacing the Victoria Lodge/Orange Hall exhibit space in some form.
- Develop a new exhibition for Scott Hall – ideally a hands-on exhibition with a timeline of important events, inventions, and prominent people from Uxbridge.

Caution:

- Connect with dog park, vendors, markets – developing new demographics. It is important to reach out to more people in the community but we should try to have some connection to UHC mandate and not over-extend capacities of staff and volunteers.
- Deaccession items/ reorganize Nesbitt Shed to make it more interesting for visitors. Must wait until the building is safe and must ensure all deaccessions qualify.
- Live performances, movie nights, speakers, concerts, etc. These are good ideas but need to ensure the settings on the site are conducive to visitor experience and avoid over-extending staff and volunteers.

Nesbitt Shed, 2024



Hillson Shed, 2024



4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Future Uses of Hillson Shed and Nesbitt Shed

4.1.1 Hillson Shed

The Hillson Shed is a spectacular addition to the look and feel of the UHC site overall. It's classic red barn aesthetic adds tremendous ambiance. Unfortunately, this building is in critical need of immediate remedial restoration according to Tacoma Engineers (see reported dated 26 May, 2023) and was deemed unsafe for occupation until such stabilizing restoration could be completed. Steps should be taken ASAP to begin to address the immediate needs listed in this previous report, including but not limited to erection of stabilizing bracing to support Hillson Shed structure and cladding prior to winter's addition of snow and wind loads. The risk of losing such an iconic structure poses far too great a threat to the reputation of UHC.

Additionally, the engineers report assumes, but did not verify, the Hillson Shed's change of use approvals have been initiated, undertaken and/or completed and approved. This will be critical for determining in advance any and all public building codes that will need to be met in any planned renovations and upgrades.

The Hillson Shed currently houses the Steam Thresher, a key artifact in the UHC collection, that can serve as the centerpiece to many seminal stories relating to Uxbridge/Scott's agricultural heritage and community spirit. The Thresher is a very large piece and its current location does not allow for public viewing. It also takes up the majority of the Hillson Shed which would make it unusable for any other function once stabilization work allows it to reopen to staff and public access. With mindfulness to the utilitarian purpose of agricultural sheds, and their constant physical changes to meet changing needs of farms, farmers and agricultural technology, we see featuring this piece of equipment as an opportunity for UHC.

Opportunities/Recommendation:

- Begin the recommendations of Tacoma Engineers as soon as possible to re-brace the exterior and interior. This should be a priority if Hillson Shed is to remain on site.
- Consider moving the Steam Thresher and other farm equipment to the Nesbitt Shed (see Nesbitt Shed recommendations)
- Consider renovations that would include make the space usable for programs, camps and wedding events. *This would include bringing parts of the project up to current building codes for a seasonal space.
- Consider making the newly purposed space as a temporary replacement to the lost Lodge Hall and make it available for programs, exhibits, camps, rentals and events.
- Consider adding an accessible washroom, that can be accessed from indoors or outdoors (see School House recommendations).

Currently, rentals are a primary income generator for UHC and weddings are a primary component of this program. The Hillson Shed is seen as a potential prime rental and wedding venue for many reasons, not least of which is it's very picturesque presence. UHC currently does not have a suitable space to serve as a Bridal Preparation Suite prior to ceremonies. Upgrading the Hillson Shed to a level that will allow for these functions would require significant upgrades to provide accessible washrooms, and meet current codes (insulation, plumbing, lighting and electricity, HVAC, fire codes including sprinklers and lighted exits, etc.) Planning for the highest possible future use of this structure

from the outset will allow the space to meet any other uses (e.g. exhibition galleries, lecture and public presentation space, etc) to the greatest extent possible.

Despite our inability to tour the Hillson Shed, opportunities are present here, according to information in the Tacoma Engineers report. Per their report, the Shed was placed on a concrete block foundation and slab on grade when moved to the UHC site. While this could limit and/or complicate location and placement of plumbing upgrades, it is not impossible to add sewer drain lines or plumbing supply lines into or through an existing concrete slab. If ceiling heights are sufficient, it may also be possible to place utilities above the slab and install a raised floor over. This could accommodate, not only a specifically designed dance floor area, but also insulation, air supply and return ducts, electrical conduits, etc. Consideration might be given to using a high thermal mass insulation here to help reduce temperature fluctuations from the slab, especially if the slab was not insulated when installed.

Tacoma Engineer's report also indicates that the Hillson Shed cladding is in two (2) layers, a horizontal internal layer and the vertical board and batten exterior cladding. This provides an opportunity for insulation between layers. Additional opportunities here may include additional structural upgrading with lightweight steel structure and/or tensioning, and vertical utility supplies between the cladding layers.

Recommendations:

- A glazed connection space between Hillson Shed and the Implement Shed could provide some limited gallery space which UHC urgently needs while also addressing the inadequate access into the Implement Shed.
- Explore opportunities to reduce the site's carbon footprint and other green alternatives to heating and cooling. Because UHC staff have expressed excitement and interest in sustainable grant opportunities, an energy feasibility study would be a worthwhile exercise.
- The amount of specialty work needed to allow this building to truly flourish and give flight to UHC programming is extensive enough that specialized professionals are critical. A mixed practice historic restoration architectural and landscape architectural firm, most preferably one that has direct experience with historic barn restoration and adaptive reuse AND also in low impact sustainable design and construction (e.g. LEED accredited, Passive House certified, etc) will be most valuable to consider all opportunities and options to highest benefit, both in the short and long terms. Specialized professionals will save money in the long term by maximizing benefits and opportunities and minimizing oversights and mistakes.
- Begin the process of preparing for this project as soon as possible by considering preliminary phase budgeting (based on Tacoma Engineer's assessments) and seeking appropriate professionals for the work. Simultaneously begin the stabilization actions recommended by Tacoma Engineers ASAP. Work should also start on assessing the Nesbitt Shed for the potential need and viability of partially removing the second level mezzanine, to the extent necessary and to the extent structurally possible, to accommodate the storage and display of the Steam Thresher in the near term.
- Consult the Town Council for support of a plan consisting of architectural renderings of proposed changes to buildings, and for permits for approved work from Building Department.

4.1.2 Nesbitt Shed

The Nesbitt Shed is a fine example of a classic utilitarian equipment shed. Maintaining it and attending to the structural repairs called for by Tacoma Engineers adds an opportunity to experience a traditional equipment barn to visitors historical immersion. It makes perfect sense that this should be

the home and exhibition space for the Steam Thresher, at least for the foreseeable future. According to Tacoma Engineers, this shed is in acceptable condition with a few caveats. The walls and roof are in serviceable condition but one corner of mud sill has rot that needs to be repaired/replaced and a few locations of siding show signs of animal access (likely rodents, either squirrels, rats or mice). However, the mezzanine second level and access stair to same are deemed to be not structurally sufficient to allow access of either staff or visitors.

Because of this assessment, and because the Steam Thresher is currently not on display for visitors in the inaccessible Hillson Shed, it seems most likely that minor adjustments to the Nesbitt Shed will be the most expedient and cost effective means to several ends. Primary among these are getting this key artifact out of Hillson Shed to free Hillson for more extensive restorations and to allow the Thresher to be appropriately displayed for visitors as it deserves.

It is not clear to the consultants if it is needed in the long term to try to completely tighten the Nesbitt Shed. As long as the collection artifacts stored and displayed in the Nesbitt Shed are able to be kept protected from direct damage, it may not be cost effective to intervene on the structure to the extent necessary for complete upgrading.

Proper display of the Steam Thresher to convey many of its stories will require several upgrades and/or interventions. The size of the thresher may require removal of at least some of the second level mezzanine. It is unclear whether the structure of the mezzanine is integral to and necessary for structural integrity of the Nesbitt Shed overall. It is therefore recommended that careful analysis and consideration be given to how much should be removed and how to remove it. A carefully detailed plan should be developed to this end as soon as possible so that the Thresher may be moved and Hillson stabilization and restoration may begin.

Since the Thresher cannot safely be made operational (insurance liability concerns with steam engines) other methods should be explored to tell visitors why this is such a key piece of Uxbridge History. These other methods may require due consideration during the planning and analysis for mezzanine removal modifications. At an absolute minimum, additional lighting will be necessary to make the details of the Thresher and any relevant signage easily visible and visitor access around the Thresher safe. Consider making this lighting battery operated at least in the short term. It may be desirable to include large format mirrors suspended above and mounted below the Thresher to allow viewing of the mechanical details. This should be considered a long term investment in extended life display. Additional display considerations may include: video displays of threshers in operation; upgraded video displays with sound to allow for a fuller sensory experience; recorded first person stories of local people remembering working with or watching threshers in use and related stories around sharing the costs of big equipment as well as sharing the work load. Whether these exhibit elements and lighting are battery powered or hard wired, any electronic exhibit elements should be appropriate for outdoor use since the Nesbitt Shed is not currently fully weather tight. It is functioning as exhibit space as is, but exhibits can still be upgraded for improved visitor experiences until or unless Nesbitt is also upgraded.

Insulating the Nesbitt Shed will be extremely challenging since it has single layer cladding and any benefits derived may not be worth the costs. Daylight and breezes entering through gaps between the cladding boards is an essential part of the experience in a barn such as this.

Recommendations:

- Begin assessments of size and space requirements for storage and display of the Steam Thresher as soon as possible.
- Begin assessments of the structural viability of at least partial removal of mezzanine level of the Nesbitt Shed as soon as possible.
- Begin the recommended repairs listed in the Tacoma Engineers report. As soon as possible, move the Steam Thresher to the Nesbitt Shed and prepare exhibit materials.
- Arrange for storage of any suitable lumber materials that may be removed from the mezzanine for reuse in restorations.
- Consult storage unit companies to quote on facilities to store artifacts while work will be done.

4.2 Future Configurations of Quaker Hill Schoolhouse

As currently configured, the Quaker Hill Schoolhouse is home to very popular rental programming and the highly successful Summer Camps. While the Schoolhouse offers opportunities to draw increased program and rental attendance numbers, current constraints of inadequate accessibility, capped maximum occupancy, lack of flexible programming space and suitable washroom facilities inhibit UHC staff from realizing these growing public demands.

There are opportunities in the current Quaker Hill Schoolhouse to address some immediate needs. Re-configuring and redesigning the current spaces will improve current issues of inadequate accessibility, inadequate washrooms and institutional lack of flexible programming and/or exhibition spaces. However, longer term issues might also be addressed if a phased building program is planned from the beginning. Capitalizing on planned replacement of the adjoining vacant site, previous home to Victoria Lodge/Orange Hall, may allow for dramatic expansion of UHC's prominence as a community hub. The Schoolhouse lower level is the optimal location for physical expansion to meet current and future camp and rental programming expansions. If the lower level of the Schoolhouse can be made to connect to the lower level of the replacement building on Lodge Hall site, then one set of amenities and one set of costs may be able to address multiple current and future needs. Capitalizing on the current grade changes that drop away towards the Gazebo and Horse Shoe Pitch allow for addition of a walk out lower level similar to the collection access on the East side of Stokes-Kydd. As with Stokes-Kydd, this would be oriented away from highest visibility of Concession 6 and the current primary visitor access path so visual impact on historic buildings can be minimized. Climate controlled access between the two buildings will add four season functionality for rentals and public civic functions as well as maximizing gallery spaces and programming opportunities.

Opportunities/Recommendations:

- Consider building a new accessible entrance where the ramp is currently located. This new entrance could be a small addition to the building and could house accessible washrooms for the site. Since the School House is central to the site, it could be open as a stand-alone space or add significant value to the School House space. If care is taken in placement & design, this addition would not take away from the heritage look of the building and may aid in reducing wear & tear to the current historic front steps.
- Concurrently, basement renovations could optimize the current space. Opportunities for lower level expansion, could offer abundant benefits to functionality and programmatic expansion. These suggestions could improve accessibility, especially to upgraded washrooms, and optimizing of current minimally-used spaces for collections storage, flexible exhibition and programming space with improved staff functionality.

4.3 Victoria Corners/Orange Lodge Hall Replacement

UHC Staff have indicated additional facility needs as limiting to their ability to maximize their role as a community hub. They have opportunities of sufficient demand to expand popular programs that cannot be realized with current facilities. This limitation has been exacerbated by the loss of Victoria Corners/Orange Lodge Hall to the May 2022 Tornado.

The destruction of the historic Lodge Hall was tragic. Not only was it a key piece of regional historic fabric lost to Uxbridge, but UHC has also lost critical collection storage and flexible exhibition and programming spaces. This loss is severely limiting UHC staff's ability to excel in their service to community. Ability to expand programming to meet growing interest is critical for UHC's mission to serve as a community hub.

Within the UHC Mission Statement are direct intentions to serve as a community hub and to do so sustainably. One significant limiting factor, at least anecdotally, to UHC expanding its positioning as a community hub is the lack of awareness of UHC among some Uxbridge and region residents. Replacing the Lodge Hall offers UHC and Uxbridge opportunities to better meet both of the Mission intentions while also addressing current limitations and the needs for additional flexible programming space, better accessibility, and replacement of lost exhibition galleries as well as collection storage. A replacement building could serve to increase visibility and awareness of the entire Centre. Most notably, the Steam Thresher presents both unmet needs and opportunities for proper storage and display that make it a significant prospect to become both a keystone artifact and an icon.

The now vacant site of the former Lodge Hall is strategically located between the Stokes-Kydd House and the Quaker Hill Schoolhouse. These adjacent buildings serve informally as the primary public faces of UHC through their functions as Reception/Gift Shop/Staff offices/Research and temporary exhibition gallery

(Stokes-Kydd House) and as the primary flexible programming space for rentals and camps (Schoolhouse).

Careful design of a replacement to the Lodge Hall can meet many of UHC's current needs:

- First, is the prominent location of this site, adjacent to not only the key public interface buildings, but also to Concession 6 Road and the main driveway entrance to both UHC and the neighborhood dog park. This is a great opportunity to create a jewel box exhibition space for long term exhibition of the Steam Thresher visible to passing travelers on Concession 6. A glazed display space, with limited lighting at night could increase both visibility and recognition of UHC through the elevation of an iconic collection piece. Additional opportunities within this jewel box display include a prominent stage for publicly restoring the Steam Thresher, allowing the public to witness and create memories of the making of an icon. Although the Thresher may not be able to be mechanically restored to full functionality, an aesthetic restoration would still present significant opportunities. Many museums and zoos are creating public viewing spaces for safe observation of professional curatorial or veterinary operations to significant educational and programming benefit. UHC already offers highly successful public programming with its functioning printing press. Here may be another opportunity to offer hands-on restoration work on antique farm implements relevant to sleigh, carriage and wagon restorations as well as steam implements. See photos on next page for inspiration look & feel.
- Second, the prominent location of this site and its adjacency offer opportunities to address other UHC mission and programming needs. Even more than with the Hillson Shed and Implement Barn, there is significant opportunity to utilize beneficial siting to maximize both passive solar heating and cooling strategies, and solar orientation for photovoltaics while also maximizing visibility. Again, using concrete slabs for thermal mass, south-facing glazing for winter passive heating and extended roof line(s) for summer shading will allow for minimized lifetime heating and cooling costs. Additionally, if the slab and roof lines are sufficiently extended, this creates an extended three or four-sided covered walkway to maximize all season access and minimize need for snow removal between Stokes-Kydd and the Schoolhouse. Adding benches in this publicly accessible porch space will add amenities for visitors to linger.
- Third, both adjoining buildings have significant but limited basement spaces. Careful consideration of the orientation and sizing of a below grade space or spaces in this replacement building offer multiple opportunities that should be explored. Below grade spaces are passively heated and cooled naturally and can work in tandem with passive solar gain from the above grade jewel box exhibition spaces. Circulation cores (stairs and elevators) add critical air circulation as well as visual interest. Many collections require carefully controlled lighting to properly store, protect and exhibit sensitive artifacts and below grade spaces can meet many of these needs. If below grade renovations to the Quaker Hill Schoolhouse (see below) are coordinated with this adjacent replacement building they may be able to function in tandem to maximize UHC functional needs and realized new spaces, and simultaneously minimize visual intrusion on the historical settings, especially for the Schoolhouse. Phased construction will minimize costs and site interruptions while maximizing benefits. **Reference Photos** – Lodge Replacement Possibilities modern barn-inspired buildings.

Uxbridge Historical Centre: Risk & Opportunity Assessment



Lodge Replacement / Jewel Box Display Barn - Thresher Display and Gallery (Den Outdoors, denoutdoors.com)



Lodge Replacement – Extended porches (Den Outdoors, denoutdoors.com) wings



Lodge Replacement – Historic barn reference, extended (porch)



Lodge Replacement – Modern Barn-Inspired buildings, jewel box display, deep eaves & covered walkways (Weald House, England)

Recommendations:

- Hire specialized architectural energy efficient design professionals to properly evaluate, design and bring to life all the possibilities while bringing best value to UHC and the Uxbridge community. The opportunities here to maximize on multiple needs and functions is vast. This replacement building, more than any other, offers UHC opportunities to meet mission intentions through optimized green and energy efficient planning and design to meet growing community needs and demands.
- ***Plan all expansion and renovation projects in a phased Master Plan*** to allow for realization of shared facilities and best value while minimizing interruptions to UHC's daily functions. This replacement building can become both a dramatic new gateway to better announce UHC to those community members who are not yet familiar and simultaneously meet many current programmatic needs and wishes. This can also be a visually dramatic new space for civic and rental functions fit for photography and memory-making.
- Maximize the opportunities of adjacency to the two neighbouring buildings, most especially the Schoolhouse, to offer greatest return on investment. This replacement building has the opportunity to sit lightly on the historic site both in terms of physical footprint, visual addition to the overall site and also in terms of long term environmental footprint.
- Use siting and grade changes to maximize functionality while minimizing visual intrusion into historic spaces.
- Incorporate passive heating and cooling, and maximize green design principles (LEED accreditation or similar).
- Consider feasibility here also for geothermal ground source heat pump to supply reliable, resilient and low cost/low footprint heating and cooling to the three adjacent buildings.
- Incorporate photovoltaics on this optimally-sited facility to maximize UHC resiliency for the long term.

5. NEXT STEPS

Most of the planning documents for the UHC have reached, or are approaching, the end of their terms. The UHC and the Township now need to develop new standards, goals, practices and policies to govern the operation and future development of the Centre, its collections and its intellectual resources.

This Risk Assessment and Opportunities Report can in some ways be seen as an initial step towards a pilot project for the coordinated operations and development whole of the site.

In the near future:

- Recommendations and the related actions made in this report should be prioritized and acted on. The Centre, the Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society and the Township must seek resources, financial support, and all necessary permissions to schedule and carry out all approved recommendations.
- While the work on the Hillson and Nesbitt Sheds and any associated elements is underway, A Master Plan Study for the Uxbridge Historical Centre should be undertaken. Best practices would include or simultaneously develop an Interpretive Master Plan to ensure consistency of vision and voice in exhibition, programming and storytelling, as well as a Collections and Archives Management Plan – to ensure there are adequate care and storage for the UHC's tangible and intangible collections.