

**Archives Strategy  
Stakeholder Meetings  
January 2020**

**Details and Summary**

In January 2020, the Cornerstone Planning Group and City of Winnipeg staff met with groups to gather input on their needs, values, priorities, and views with respect to the Archives. Meetings included representatives from the Manitoba Historical Society, Heritage Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Foundation, the Association for Manitoba Archives, the Centre du Patrimoine, and the University of Winnipeg.

At these meetings, stakeholders:

- Expressed concerns about the present state of the Archives (50 Myrtle St.), noting the current facility is inadequate for storing archival collections, lacks public programming space, and does not sufficiently support engagement or access to Winnipeg's history and records.
- Wanted the Archives to do more public programming activities and become a center for learning about and engaging with Winnipeg's history; also observed that Archives could be places for tourism and storytelling.
- Confirmed the importance of the Archives to their own work and talked about its broader social role and value to the community; they did not think the value of the Archives is being fully realized.
- Spoke about the importance of having Indigenous histories represented in Winnipeg's Archives and acknowledged the role of Archives in the City's Journey of Reconciliation.
- Stated how important it was for Archives to serve Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth; they encouraged broader engagement with Indigenous peoples.
- Spoke about the critical need among individuals, families, companies, and organizations to preserve their records, noting that this need isn't currently being met right now; there are lots of community records out there that people want to donate to the Archives.
- Asked us to consider what capacity will be needed to manage born-digital records now and into the future.
- Expressed concern for the preservation and use of the building at 380 William Ave.
- Some stakeholders pointed out the advantages of renovating 380 William Ave. for the Archives; they saw it as the best use of that building. However, other stakeholders were open to other sites like a new build or another heritage building.
- Most stakeholders wanted the site and/or building to have historical significance; they also pictured it being centrally located and easily accessible.

**Heritage Winnipeg and Manitoba Historical Society – Meeting Notes**

- Heritage Winnipeg (Heritage) has had a long interest in the future of 380 William Ave. and has been advocating for protection of 380 William Ave. It has been part of showcasing the initial and ongoing rehabilitation work and featuring in Doors Open Winnipeg events.

- While the focus of Heritage has been on protection of the built heritage, it was noted that we have to care what goes into these buildings (i.e. there is a need to protect the building and the use of the building).
- The building at 380 William Ave. is in a great location; it is part of the downtown and close to City Hall. Also, it has been an established City Archives since the 90s, close to City Hall with established political support, and moving towards a world class city archives.
- There was some confusion as to why the City's previous plans for the building were not followed through; after the flood, people were under the impression that plans for the building would move forward. Where did the committed city archives funding go, along with the approved business plan from 2010?
- From a Heritage perspective, a new build for the archives was not a great idea, given climate change and the fact there are so many useable heritage buildings; the City should not entertain the idea of a new build; the Archives should be history based – it is so much more environmentally sustainable than a new building, and like the Provincial Archives, it would be history housed in a significant heritage building with designation.
- Referenced the fact that 380 William Ave. appeared on a list of 10 endangered places from the National Trust. There is national interest.
- Heritage Winnipeg has done a lot of advocacy work focused on built heritage (e.g. education, digital displays, Heritage Day, fundraising luncheons, heritage tourism) and knows how to fund these buildings.
- There is a desire from companies and young professionals working downtown to have interesting spaces. It is important to have significant historical or architectural spaces close to downtown and secondary schools.
- The Manitoba Historical Society has a building mapping project and is interested in the building permit collection at the Archives; they depend on archives; archives are the memory of society.
- Public programs (e.g. presentations) are important; we should run them at public spaces.
- The Manitoba Historical Society is primarily interested in the preservation of archives as a service; wanted a secure site with proper archival standards, a larger research room with self-service options, wider range of hours with occasional evenings and weekends, and improved parking and bus-route access.
- Suggested Archives could go into the Hudson's Bay Company building, although it was noted it was an enormous building.
- The fundamental point is that the collection is preserved.
- It was asked if we had a sense of what organizational records were out in the community and not yet in the archives.
- Had heard from other archives that the biggest challenge is space right now and that the need and collections were too big for the space.
- Archives are important to the activities of the Manitoba Historical Society, Heritage Winnipeg and Heritage Tourism, and the work they do on behalf of the public.
- There should be tours of the Archives.
- Location as well as the preservation of the archival collection is critical.
- Digitization and online resources are also important as well as tangible spaces for community connectivity.

## **Winnipeg Foundation – Meeting Notes**

- Winnipeg has one of three archival programs in this country. This is an asset that we haven't taken advantage of, particularly from the perspective of the City.
- There is an opportunity to accept more personal collections and organizational collections in the future.
- The Winnipeg Foundation has previously presented the City with loan offers and endowment opportunities as financial assistance in support of the re-development of 380 William Ave. as an archives, but there has been little follow up from the City.
- It is uncertain what the Winnipeg Foundation may be able to offer in the future, although past action shows a willingness to support the Archives.
- Thought there was opportunities for the Archives to deliver its mandate in a better way.
- When talking about the City's history, it is vital to talk about Indigenous history.
- Shared the idea of building a brand new Archives adjacent to Fort Garry Park, where Manitoba and Winnipeg was founded; the site "desperately" needs a visitor center and thought the historical importance of the site would make for "great synergy" with the Archives; the Archives paired with the visitor center would ensure traffic and benefit from the park adjacency; the Métis history of this site is rich and Métis perspectives on the site would offer important and different views.
- If 380 William Ave. does not become an archives, the building may be suitable for genealogical or historical societies.
- Noted that collections have to be curated.
- Reconciliation with Indigenous communities is very high on our list of priorities – how can we tell a respectful and informative story?
- The Winnipeg Foundation is one of many organizations looking for a home for its records.
- There are interesting collections out there but not enough space to store it.
- It is about engaging the community and telling a story.
- There is a huge opportunity here, including economic opportunities (film industry, etc.).
- There is a lot of public sympathy for 380 William Ave.
- Asked if there are other heritage buildings that would be interesting spots for the Archives.
- Tell the community's story, the City's story, with records to back it up – this would be the most resonant with the Foundation as well.
- Accessibility is important; the Archives should support public access and be public facing
- The City's population is growing and we should consider how to introduce newcomers to our history and values; this could be done through the Archives.

## **Association for Manitoba Archives – Meeting Notes**

- The City Archives has a "facility crisis" not a program crisis. The City Archives staff is excellent. They require a proper facility, however, in order to do their work.
- There is a strong legal basis for the work of the archives: the Manitoba Municipal Act says municipalities must archive their records; the City of Winnipeg Charter Act requires the appointment of a City Archivist; the Records Management By-law requires the preservation of civic and private sector generated records. This legal framework

supports acquisition of municipal government records and archives of private citizens and organizations.

- Without a proper facility since 2013, there has been greatly reduced public use of the archives.
- We are concerned that the archives avoid a catastrophe like the recent fire on Jarvis Street that destroyed an aging warehouse similar to the Archives warehouse.
- The citizens of Winnipeg deserve a modern research facility with space for public programming (e.g. exhibitions of documents, special lectures, film nights, book launches, conferences, space for researchers and school children to visit).
- Archives are a legal requirement and also a societal requirement.
- The Archives has the records of the 13 municipalities that amalgamated to form the City of Winnipeg in 1971; for 50 years, we have been waiting for a proper facility, one that adequately reflects the importance of the Archives. City Council has to assume its responsibilities from 1971 when area municipalities amalgamated to form the City of Winnipeg and the City took possession of the records of former municipalities (e.g., St. Boniface, Transcona, West Kildonan, Tuxedo).
- Volunteer and community organizations have always played a central role in shaping Winnipeg. Archives are highly important to understanding that history, yet community organizations have no place to deposit their archives, as part of Winnipeg's collective memory to be safeguarded.
- The City Archives as a community archives would, in consultation with Indigenous people and Indigenous communities, embrace Indigenous materials, perspectives and contributions, and support the principles of Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord and Welcoming Winnipeg initiative.
- The Archives should be able to provide support to the efforts to ensure contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are reflected in place names and markers, as place names matter and should come from knowledge of place and history.
- Indigenous children should be able to go the City archive and learn about their history through records and artifacts. There is also a need to change how we think about records. Records are not only written on paper -- records can be paintings on rocks, they are landscapes and petroforms, bows and arrows.
- Oral histories are fundamental to understanding Indigenous perspectives. The City Archives should provide facilities for oral histories to be gathered, recognizing who was here before settlers came – and the Archives should reach out to Métis and other Indigenous communities.
- Archives are more than just storage space. We envision the Archives as a community place for all Winnipeggers, a learning/resource centre for learning about our history.
- For example, the University of Manitoba Archives was renovated in 2008 into a proper facility, and included: a public space that could hold more than 150 people; a spacious Research Room for researchers; a classroom; and a vault with a proper preservation environment. Foot traffic increased, and the UM Archives have since hosted large numbers of classes, exhibits of records, and special public events and have seen many thousands of people come through the Archives.
- We need to shoot for the best facility, not the most affordable one.

- Winnipeg has been a wired city since the 1950s and we must incorporate our digital records and digital technology into the City Archives. Virtually every form of record today is digital.
- Digitization of paper records has merit, but keep in mind there is a “tsunami” of born-digital records that requires urgent attention. Archives need to develop a robust strategy and infrastructure for the acquisition of born-digital records. There are significant digital storage needs arising from this acquisition.
- Providing access to digital records also presents challenges (e.g., confidentiality, privacy, donor agreements) and the physical space of the Archives needs to accommodate these needs.
- The Archives also needs to provide a fully wired Reading Room for researchers.
- Museums and other sources of knowledge depend on archives and archival research (e.g., exhibits in museums, galleries, libraries, books and other publications, films, tourism, plays, dance, music). We enjoy these activities, places, and sources of information each day without always understanding that they draw heavily on archives. People are “living archivally” often without even knowing it.
- We are now in a knowledge economy driven by information. The City Archives has the largest body of information about Winnipeg yet cannot help drive this new economy without a proper archival facility. Currently, our greatest source of knowledge is left languishing in an aging obscure substandard industrial park warehouse.
- Standards exist for proper archival facilities (for example, consult the Canadian Council of Archives, Canadian Conservation Institute, the Association for Manitoba Archives).
- There is a danger that the City of Winnipeg Archives may lose its accreditation with the Association for Manitoba Archives because its Myrtle St warehouse does not meet standards.
- Through the Association for Manitoba Archives, over 100 organizations and individuals signed a coalition letter to the Mayor and councillors in support of a proper facility for the archives. Many Winnipeggers also attended a public meeting and panel discussion on the future of the Archives in March 2019 organized by the Association for Manitoba Archives.
- City proposals for a proper facility for the Archives should be discussed in community stakeholder consultations. Community engagement should include consultation with members of Indigenous communities. This consultation should involve physical and personal meetings (not only email or phone calls) – as there is a need to build trust.

### **Academic Stakeholders (University of Winnipeg) – Meeting Notes**

- Archives should be centrally located and close to hotels for out-of-towners.
- The most important thing is the actual archivist and access to their knowledge of the records.
- Employees working with researchers should know the records in an in-depth way.
- The way to make the archives an enjoyable place is to have accessible staff.
- Archives should connect with groups whose research models focus on self-governance and Indigenous control (e.g. Indigenous Health Research).

- Work on description in the archives is very important; ideally, Archives should have research organized by Band level (e.g. indexing Band-level information), but the vast majority of records are not done that way.
- Archives should have connections with Indigenous organizations throughout the City.
- Indigenous records are typically stored with each Nation.
- Reference to the Indigenous Afternoons in the Archives program (hosted at Archives of Manitoba), which involves inviting people (e.g. Indigenous students) to come in and learn about Indigenous histories in the archives with support and guidance.
- Beyond the physical space, Archives should support Indigenous histories through its records.
- Archives can feel a bit too regulatory; they should be welcoming spaces for people
- Having a classroom space is important for teaching.
- There should be table space and collaborative work space.
- There is a feeling of archives not having a lot of useful information for Indigenous communities; Archives unfortunately contribute to this by referring people to the National Archives of Canada, when they should be taking a closer look at their own collections and re-examining assumptions around what Indigenous records and histories look like.
- To create welcoming spaces for Indigenous researchers and better serve Indigenous communities, it is important to have a person on staff who is Indigenous.