

King Township Museum poised to become 'hub' of the community



By Mark Pavilons

The historic King Township Museum, sitting at the gateway to King City, is poised to become the cultural hub of the municipality. And to help make that happen, consultants are preparing a draft report of the museum's Strategic Business Plan to present to council in the coming weeks, outlining the goals and direction of this municipal showpiece.

Museum staff hosted a public information session July 30 to gather input from residents on how they would like the museum to serve their needs and evolve.

Kathleen Fry, museum curator, said roughly two dozen residents provided input and were joined by senior staff, councillors and Oak Ridges-Markham MP Paul Calandra. The evening's "cultural cafe" offered four tables of questions where participants rotated and provided specific input.

The consultants will amalgamate the information from this, and previous sessions, in their analysis. Fry said the report will be a long-range plan to help museum staff develop some direction to ensure we're doing what the community wants.

This recent session and feedback will be important so the museum can be relevant.

It's an exciting time for the museum to take the next step," Fry said.

The museum received a pleasant surprise recently, in the form of a \$400,000 bequest, through the King Township Historical Society. The money was left to specifically enhance the museum by a former resident and supporter.

Fry plans to be frugal and maximize these funds.

"We're in a super situation," she said.

The plan is to leverage the building and property to the benefit of the community. The draft report will be presented to council in the coming weeks.

The museum sits on a majestic 2.5-acre parcel on King Road, just east of Jane.

Operated by the Township of King since 2003 through Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, it's a place to preserve, interpret and celebrate the history of the Township.

The Museum is housed in the Old Kinghorn School SS #23 built in 1861 with modern additions added in the 1960s. In 1978 the school was purchased by the Township and placed under the care of the King Township Historical Society. Made up of dedicated volunteers and local residents, the Historical Society started the museum in 1979 and officially opened it in 1982. For 20 years the Society ran programs and events and began the collection and cataloguing of local artifacts. Through fundraising efforts and volunteer commitment they were able to restore the King Railway Station to highlight some of its former glory.

In conjunction with Genview Homes, the Museum building has a spacious, 749-square-foot addition. It will be used by the museum once the lease agreement with Genview expires.

Also housed on the property are the King Railway Station and King Christian Church.

The railway station was built in 1852 as part of the Canada National Northern Railway. The railway linked Toronto to Lake Simcoe with the first train stopping at King Station in 1853. The station was used until 1967 and was then moved to the Kortright Centre prior to a final proposed move to Black Creek Pioneer Village. However, due to local interest, the station was returned to King Township in 1989. Through fundraising and volunteer commitment the station is being restored on an ongoing basis. It's known as Ontario's oldest surviving railway station.

The Christian Church was built in 1851 by offshoot members of the Children of Peace congregation, a Quaker sect who built the

Sharon Temple. It served the local community for 80 years until it was re-adapted as the King Emmanuel Baptist Church in 1931. The church eventually closed for good in 1978. Its original location was Kettleby Road and Jane Street, but it was moved to the museum site in 1982 in order to preserve the building for future generations.

The museum collection includes more than 1,800 artifacts ranging from household items to tools, books, clothing and more, all relating to the history of King.

The museum is open Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Wednesdays until 7.

Hours are flexible and the museum can open for appointments and for special events, tours and programs.

For more information call 905-833-2331 or kingmuseum@king.ca.