

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Founded in 1974, the Art Gallery of Peterborough (AGP) is a well-established community-based initiative to foster visual arts in the City of Peterborough and its surrounding communities. The current AGP location was developed in 1977, when the City acquired the house of former sawmill operator John MacDonald. The house was given to the Gallery along with the adjacent land along Little Lake, where a modern wing was added and opened in 1979. Since then, the Gallery has been dedicated to exhibiting and collecting works of art from Peterborough and across Canada. In its recent 3-year Strategic Plan, the Gallery states, “as an exhibition venue with educational programmes, the AGP will present a variety of visual art experiences and explorations to stimulate and expand public perception of art as a part of their life and community.”

Previous Study

In 2011, the AGP undertook a Function Analysis Plan to analyze the operational, functional, and technical aspects of the Gallery. The purpose of this was to test and confirm community consensus with the Gallery’s long-term vision, and to develop the programmatic and facility requirements for its achievement. The objectives were to determine the adequacy of the facility for current and future needs within a framework of art gallery best practice, and to develop the facility needs that would support the Gallery’s vision for the following 25 years.

The Functional Analysis Plan 2011 determined the following recommendations:

Based on the findings from consultation, comparison with other galleries, and analysis of the existing facilities – it is evident that the current facilities do not meet the needs of the community. The building is too small, limiting the public programs and services the Gallery is able to offer. The inadequate space and technical deficiencies compromise the safety of the collection and make it virtually inaccessible. The building is a significant impediment for the Gallery to fulfill its mandate and develop the full potential of its relationship with and service to its community.

The recommendation of that study was that the City of Peterborough, in cooperation with the Art Gallery of Peterborough, seek improved accommodation for the Gallery – either through renovation and expansion on its current site, or at another location.

The accommodation must meet the functional criteria as well as the technical requirements that are particular to professional art museums. The technical considerations are important in order that the AGP maintain its Class A designation.

Planning Objectives

The overriding objectives for the future AGP facility include:

- Achieve a strong visual image for the AGP that signals ‘public art gallery’ as a prominent presence in the community.
- Create a gallery building that is welcoming and accessible, with amenities and character that make it a comfortable destination.
- Include public gallery spaces that support and enhance the widest range of media and installation formats, and facilitate efficient exhibition turnovers.
- Plan for a main lobby that begins a coherent visitor experience with good orientation and access to all the public destinations, and contributes to special events and uses.
- Rationalize all movement of visitors, staff, and art, while respecting security and efficiency considerations.
- Build a suite of back-of-house spaces that support the safe and efficient movement of art, facilitate preparation of exhibitions, and provide for processing, access, and storage of collections.
- Meet generally accepted professional museological standards in all aspects of the facility, and, in particular, meet the expectations of the Category A designation as well as the requirements of other institutions for loans and exhibitions.

Space Requirements

After review with Gallery staff and initial trials of laying out the program, the following adjustments to the 2011 needs assessment were made:

- increase lobby allowance
- increase program studio size
- increase collection storage

The total net space requirement is 20,210 square feet.

Alternative Site Studies

Site studies were undertaken to test the fit of project program at two alternative locations in downtown Peterborough in comparison with the existing Gallery location at Del Cray Park. These exercises tested the program, ensuring that the AGP could be accommodated in a new building at a generic downtown site, or as an expansion project at the existing site. For comparative purposes, an identical set of spatial requirements and functional criteria was used for all three sites. The studies provide a way of better visualizing the pros and cons of each location.

The site studies took two alternative locations as representative downtown sites. The intention was not to draw detailed conclusions about the specific properties of each site.

In consultation with the City planning department, and agreement of the Steering Committee, two alternative locations in downtown Peterborough were selected as representative downtown sites. The first site is located at the northeast corner of King and Water Streets (Representative Site 1). The second site is located at the southeast corner of Charlotte and Aylmer Streets (Representative Site 2). Each site varies slightly in size, is different in shape, and carries specific potentials and issues. Each trial planning concept represents one of many architectural interpretations to accommodate the Gallery at the chosen site.

Various means of developing the existing building were studied and presented in the report. The recommended option is the one that best utilizes parts of the existing building while meeting the functional requirements of the Gallery.

Comparative Cost Estimates

Budget estimates were developed for each of the three sites using available cost information from similar projects. One of the significant differentials between the new building sites and the existing site is the land purchase cost. For the new building sites a nominal amount is included representative of downtown sites of this size. These amounts do not reflect any specific investigation of the market value of these specific sites. Another difference is the ability to utilize part of the existing value in the existing building.

Estimate for Representative Site 1

Construction: 12,467,000.; Total Project: 16,960,000.

Estimate for Representative Site 2

Construction: 13,305,000.; Total Project: 17,966,000.

Estimate for Existing Site

Construction: 10,622,000.; Total Project: 12,746,000.

Steering Committee and AGP Board

On 5 September 2013, the trial planning concepts for the two downtown sites and the existing Gallery site were presented to the Steering Committee, along with the comparative cost estimates. On 26 September 2013 the same findings were reported to the AGP Board. In these meetings, various potentials and issues for building downtown and expanding at the existing site were discussed. The outcome was a general consensus in favour of renovating and expanding at the existing Gallery site. Some of the main reasons include the following:

- Lower project cost
- City ownership of site and adjacent park land
- Has been the Gallery site since 1977
- Views of Little Lake
- Potential enhanced relationships with Del Crary Park
- Potential enhanced relationships with waterfront trail network
- Potential reuse parts of the existing building
- Represents the south anchor of Downtown Peterborough

Recommended Development Concept

The recommended concept achieves the stated functional and spatial requirements, and accommodates the most desirable planning ideas. A large portion of the existing modern wing is preserved. An 'L' shaped new expansion is created at the north and west sides of the site. Site work is needed to provide dike protection from Little Lake, and to create some pleasant outdoor spaces at the forecourt and sculpture garden. Interior planning and architectural concepts are proposed to maximize the functional qualities of the Gallery.

A strong visual image for the AGP has been achieved by placement of dual entrances and identity markers facing Crescent Street and Del Crary Park and an increased transparency of many of its spaces. The appropriate use of architectural transparency advertises visitor activities in the lobby, program studios, lounge, lecture / events space, and library / meeting room to the exterior. The new elevator and ramps also provide up-to-date accessibility requirements. The split lobby and its loop connection to the lounge offer interesting circulation routes for visitors. The main stair and elevator at the centre of the atrium, nevertheless, provides an efficient hub for vertical circulation.

Three unique exhibition galleries on two different levels offer a diverse gallery experience. Facing the lake, the secure sculpture garden presents a much desirable addition to the gallery experience and curatorial options. With panoramic views of Little Lake and its outdoor terrace, the lecture / event space will become a premium event space in the City. At the opposite end of the building, the lounge combined with the project gallery also provides a special venue for art-related events. At a different scale, the library / meeting room on the upper level can also be considered a unique rental space with pleasant views.

Feasibility Study

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Two well-sized studio spaces located near the main lobby can be combined into one single programming space when needed. The street facing windows allow studio activities to be seen from Crescent Street.

All collection storage spaces are organized in a back-of-house zone at the lower level. These new collection spaces will accommodate the growing collection in conditions that meet modern museological requirements. The new art circulation corridor at the lower level supports the safe and efficient movement of art and facilitates preparation of exhibitions. A more efficient office suite occupies an exclusive administration zone on the top level. It is conveniently located above the program studios, collection vaults, and exhibition preparation spaces for vertical interconnection of all work spaces.