

City County Task Force
On the Stratford Perth Museum

Report to the Municipal Councils
December 2004

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On the
Stratford Perth Museum

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City County Task Force

On the

Stratford Perth Museum

Executive Summary

This task force, comprised of 4 municipal councilors, the Chair of the Stratford Perth Museum Association Board of Directors, coordinated by the former CEO of the Stratford Public Library, and assisted by the staff of the Museum and the Stratford Perth Archives, met between July 17th and November 27th 2004 to examine questions put forward by the Councils of the County of Perth and the City of Stratford.

The task force concluded that the Museum is an important part of the cultural mosaic of Stratford and Perth County, and that given differences in legislative accountability and governance, an amalgamation with the Archives would result in steeper costs due to revenue losses from the loss of provincial grants.

Specific conclusions arrived at by the task force:

On the Value of the Museum (page 5):

- The Museum's mandate should be amended to highlight collection development in those areas that make Perth County unique: manufacturing, the railroad, the Normal School and the Festival.
- Appropriate documentation outlining the agreements between the municipal councils and the Museum Association regarding ownership of the artifacts and parameters of operation should be created.
- To simplify ownership of the collections, past, present and future, ownership be designated to the City and County at a ratio of 60/40, and that the Museum Association be the stewards and managers of the consolidated collection. (Rationale: Analysis of the current situation reflects this ratio, as shown in Appendix V)
- An enhanced partnership with the Archives for development of exhibitions and programmes would benefit both organizations.

On the Sustainability of the Museum (page 7):

- The Museum cannot remain viable on its present funding level (52% from the municipal sector).
- That should the municipalities commit to the principle of supporting the Museum, that support be at an annual commitment of 70% of the Museum's revenues, and of that 60% will be paid by the City and 40% by the County, reflecting the ownership ratio.
- That the Museum revises its business plan to include the new numbers from the budget projections, and including performance measures for use and programme.
- That the Museum conforms with Archives practice by reporting to the City and County Councils on a regular basis.

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On the Amalgamation of the Museum and the Archives:

- That any savings accrued by the amalgamation of the Museum and Archives would be lost through reduction in provincial support.
- That while formal amalgamation is not supportable, partnership for programming and mutual interests is encouraged.
- That the Museum, in addition, should look for other partnerships within the community.
- That the Perth County Information Network (a federation of the libraries of Stratford, West Perth, Perth East and the Stratford Perth Archives) and the Museum Association work together on fund development initiatives.

The task force also includes a brief look at implications if the Museum is not municipally supported.

CITY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON THE STRATFORD PERTH MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

The Museum Task Force was struck at the instigation of the County of Perth in June 2004. County Council, in approving the Museum's 2004 grant request, made it conditional on a task force to review the Museum's mandate and operations. To this end, Stratford City Council and Perth County Council agreed on the following mandate for the task force:

Consider and resolve:

1. *The future of the Museum including a plan to provide stable, long term funding;*
2. *Cost sharing arrangements between the City and County (if it is determined that the Museum and its collection is worthy of continuation of municipal support);*
3. *Any possible economies of scale should the Museum and the Archives be amalgamated.*

Both Councils agreed to the composition of the task force as follows:

4 councillors (2 appointed by each of the councils)

2 Board representatives (1 each from the Stratford Perth Museum and the Stratford Perth Archives)

The Stratford Public Library CEO as coordinator.

Staff from the Museum and Archives to provide information and participate in discussions as needed, but not holding decision making responsibility.

The task force began meetings on July 17th 2004.

Background to Deliberations:

Both Museum Executive Director Linda Carter and Archivist Administrator Lutzen Riedstra provided history on the development of the Museum as an entity. A museum, in one form or another, has been in existence since 1903. Governance has included the Stratford Public Library, the Perth County Historical Society, later Foundation, the Perth County Historical Board/Stratford Perth Archives, the Stratford Museum Board and the current Stratford Perth Museum Association (incorporated 1997). Two collections make up the majority of the Stratford Perth Museum's artifacts: the collection amassed between 1900 and 1991 by the Perth County Historical Society/Foundation and jointly owned by the City and County, and the Stratford Museum (the Thomson collection) owned by the City.

Effective January 1st 1998, with the incorporation of the Stratford Perth Museum Association, the County and City delegated management of their respective collections to the Museum Association. The Association has continued to acquire artifacts from donors in the County and City.

In 1998, the Museum moved into the Stratford Normal School, renting its space from the Ontario Realty Corporation. The City of Stratford purchased the building in 2001 and appointed a Board

of Management to operate what is now known as the Discovery Centre. The Museum Association continues as a tenant in the Discovery Centre.

Germaine to the task force's deliberations were the Hushion Report¹, a strategic planning project on the Museum's future, prepared for a County/City task force in 1995, and the relationship with the Discovery Centre.

Role of the Museum in Stratford and Perth County

Museum Mandate:

The Stratford Perth Museum's mandate as set forth in its constitution is:

"The Stratford Perth Museum Association is a not for profit corporation, which operates a Museum dedicated to the preservation and celebration of the rich material and cultural heritage of the City of Stratford and the County of Perth. The Association is governed by a Board of Directors, which is responsible to members of the Association and citizens of the communities it serves."

Moving on from the mandate, the Board defines its mission as being:

"The Association is dedicated to educating the citizens of the communities it serves concerning the heritage of the City and the County. Its intention is to foster an appreciation for the region's past in relation to its present and future development. To this end, the Association's museum provides curatorial services for the artifacts and collections placed in its care, and presents educational exhibits, programmes, and information which bring to life the history of our region for its citizens and visitors."

Archives Mandate:

The Stratford Perth Archives Board was formed in 1981 with the following mandate:

The Stratford Perth Archives Board is vested with the responsibility of acquiring and preserving Stratford and Perth County archives, and of acquiring, preserving and maintaining an historical collection and other historical resources which may from time to time become available.

The focus of the Archives operation is the records of public and private agencies in Perth County and Stratford, as well as records of private organizations, families, and individuals significant to the history of Perth County and Stratford. In addition to the records management process, the Archives also administers the records in its care for freedom of information and privacy concerns. The primary public role is to provide access to the information contained in the wide variety of records – historical, legal, public, and private – contained in its facilities. Stratford Perth Archives operates in 3 locations, Stratford, Mitchell and Listowel.

The task force spent some time addressing the issue of whether the roles of the Museum and Archives overlapped. While both have an education component to their operation, and both deal with local history, the nature of the two agencies is quite different. They complement each other

¹ On October 29th and November 12th 1996, Stratford City Council and Perth County Council respectively adopted by resolution the report's recommendations: that the Stratford Perth Museum operate independently of City and County Councils; that the Museum apply for a yearly requisition from both City and County Councils; that the Museum report to the Municipal Liaison Committee.

without in fact duplicating collections or operations. Where the Archives charts County and City history through documents, the Museum does so with artifacts. The Museum develops both permanent and subject specific exhibits, thus requiring extensive exhibition space. The Archives promotes its research function, requiring both extensive storage for records and public work areas. The Museum interprets history through its artifacts, the Archives preserves history through its original documents and its first edition publications.

Museum Collections and Exhibits:

As noted in the introduction, the majority of the artifacts housed in the Stratford Perth Museum belong to the Perth County Historical Collection which is jointly owned by the County of Perth (57%) and the City of Stratford (43%). (See Appendix V). The Perth County Historical collection was amassed over the past century and was for many years under the guardianship of the Perth County Historical Society/Foundation. In addition the City owned a collection of artifacts purchased in 1979 from the Thomson family, and augmented by donations over the next two decades. The two collections were united under one roof in 1991 at 210 King Street. Objects obtained after January 1 1998 are owned by the Association.

Questions have been raised about the value of the Museum's collection to the community, especially when considering what other surrounding museums hold. It was also noted that in Perth County, the Brocksden School² and Fryfogel Inn³ operate museum type programmes; in addition the Town of St. Marys operates a museum which includes an archival component. In considering whether the collections speak directly to Perth County's history, the task force looked at what are deemed to be the unique parts of our history – the railroads, manufacturing industries of textiles, automotive and furniture, the Perth Regiment, education – as well as the more universal aspects of community museum collections such as agriculture and daily life. The Museum's collection management policy (attached as Appendix II) indicates that the museum *"has been created to collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret objects, photographs, and printed audio-visual material that best serve to illustrate the founding, settlement and development of the County of Perth, the City of Stratford and the immediate area in accordance with its Mission Statement."* The materials of an archival nature collected under this policy are minimal in number and serve to support the history of the artifacts. A review of the holdings reveals that the Perth County Historical Collection (1902 – 1992) contains not only the early acquisitions from the 1900's but also specific donations from a number of people and organizations from the City and the County. Significant are the Fryfogel Inn and Fryfogel archeological artifacts, donations from the Orr family and Hugh Nichol.

The agricultural artifacts are used quite extensively in the school outreach programmes; children can participate in hands on activities such as butter making and spinning. The Museum works closely with the district school boards to offer programmes that are relevant to school curriculum. In 2004 (to June) it presented 51 programmes to 1797 (1247 in 2003) children from schools in Perth and Huron counties, and a further 20 programmes to 517 (870 in 2003) children from City of Stratford Schools. While the artifacts may be similar to those found in other collections, how Museum staff use them to interpret the history of Perth County is what is unique.

The historical clothing collection donated by R. Thomas Orr in 1932 forms the nucleus of a valuable textile collection that has been augmented by other donors.

² Owned by the Municipality of Perth East

³ Owned by the Perth County Historical Foundation

The Perth Regiment has donated its artifacts to the Museum; portraying the distinguished history of this regiment is an important part of the Museum's operation.

The Thomson collection, started by Minnie Thomson and carried on by her sons until 1977, is an eclectic one comprised of artifacts which portray daily life in Stratford and Perth County. Prior to turning the collection over to the Museum Board, the City culled it through a sale of items. At the time the Museum took over management, the collection comprised some 2,000 items. Subsequent donations from members of the community have augmented the City collection.

A review of the exhibitions list proposed for the 2004/05 school year reveals that all programmes tie the artifacts into the history of Perth County. Programmes run the gamut from native occupation patterns through early settlement, 19th century domestic life, textiles, manufacturing, the military, education (the Normal School in particular) to 1950's pop culture. The Museum also works with Brocksden School to offer theme programmes at the school and the Museum. Current exhibits have been augmented by loans from community organizations and individuals (e.g. the Police and Fire Departments).

There is no doubt that the Museum plays an important role in terms of the formal education system in the County. The education component is available for the entire community to access, and that is ultimately the Museum's *raison d'être*. A Museum provides access to our community's cultural heritage; it serves as a public trust, holding its collections and information as a benefit for those it was established to serve.⁴ The fact that questions continue to be raised about the value of the Museum to the community and the cost to support it indicates that despite its long history – a century – more telling arguments need to be made for its support.

Value of the Museum:

In 1995, consultant Nancy Hushion was hired to review the Museum's operations and make recommendations on how the Museum should proceed. The Museum Association has acted on all 8 of the recommendations:

- Develop a mission statement. (Quoted above)
- Develop a strategic plan. (In place)
- Define responsibilities of board, staff and volunteers. (Set out in the Association's Constitution and By Laws + related policies)
- Attend to current (i.e. 1994) collection and deaccession what is irrelevant or duplicated. (Task completed by 1996)
- Define the audience and increase the public profile. (Primary audience: area schools and all visitors from outside the area)
- Devote more resources to attracting schools to the Museum. (# of schools has risen from 15 in 1994 to 70 in 2004) See Museum School brochure, attached as Appendix B)
- Bring the Museum in line with the six provincial standards in order to be eligible to access the Community Museum Operating Grant. (The Museum now receives \$14,000 from the Ministry of Culture program.)
- Develop a membership programme. (Current membership stands at 350).

The Stratford Perth Museum collects and preserves historical artifacts from the City of Stratford and the County of Perth. As a community museum, SPM uses these artifacts as tools within exhibits and programmes to educate the visitor about Stratford and Perth County's past. While this community may share a similar history with neighbouring counties and while the Museum may hold similar artifacts, our residents have distinct experiences and stories to tell. Geographical

⁴ Paraphrased from the Ministry of Culture fact sheet on community museums.

location, early settlement patterns, population makeup, architectural elements, businesses, industries, manufacturers and cultural institutions, together, make Stratford and Perth County unique.

In addition to its curriculum based education programme, the Museum offers varied and changing exhibits in order to attract repeat visitors and to draw attention to other significant aspects of our past. The Museum also provides opportunities for area residents and institutions to showcase their personal collections.

The present Museum Board and staff carry on a century long tradition begun by people such as R. Thomas Orr who believed in the need for preserving our history. The true value of the Museum lies in the interpretation of our rich social history through the programming.

Our Conclusions from the Review of the Value of the Museum:

- That the Museum's mandate be amended highlight collection development in those areas that make Perth County unique: manufacturing, the railway, the Normal School, the Festival;
- That appropriate documentation outlining the agreements between the municipal councils and the Museum regarding ownership of artifacts and parameters of operation be created;
- To simplify ownership of all the collections, past, present and future, that ownership be designated to the City and County at ratio of 60/40 and that the Museum Association be the stewards and managers of the consolidated collection. (Rationale: Analysis of current situation is reflected by this ratio).
- That an enhanced partnership with the Archives for development of exhibitions and programmes would benefit both organizations.

Sustaining the Museum

Budget Review:

The task force reviewed the Museum's operating budget in detail. As well they reviewed the Archives Board budget, the budget of the Brocksden School Museum and obtained information from the St. Marys Museum about their budget. The Heritage Branch of the Ministry of Culture was consulted regarding municipal per capita support benchmarks.

Salient points from this review are:

- The 2004 budget is \$191,000⁵. In terms of revenue, the municipalities provide 52%, or \$97,000. \$18,000 is derived from provincial (\$14,000) and federal (\$4,000) grants.
- The Museum projects raising \$70,000 through admissions, programme fees, memberships, donations and special events. (As compared with \$69,000 in 2002 and \$57,000 in 2003)
- Major expenses for the Museum are: salaries at \$113,000 (59%) of budget for 3 people; rent to the Discovery Centre at \$43,000 (22.5%).
- Per capita support is: City \$1.88; County \$1.08.
- The County lower tier municipality of Perth East owns the Brocksden School which is maintained, operated and fully supported by volunteers who are the Easthope Historical Group Inc. (annual operating budget = \$14,000).
- The Archives budget is \$445,544 in 2004. The municipalities provide 98% or \$435,544.

⁵ Official budget estimate

- Major expenses for the Archives are: salaries at \$318,120 (71%) for 6 FTE; rent for 3 locations and 3 storage facilities at \$51,282 (11%).
- A 10 year forecast for the Museum reflects a realistic revenue and expenditure flow, incorporating pay parity with the Archives. (See Appendix IV).

Budget Issues:

1. *The ratio of municipal support to self generated revenue.* The task force investigated the prevailing norm for percentage of museum budgets supported by municipal councils. This number varied from a low of 45% (1) to a high of 95% (1). The average for the majority of museums surveyed was 79%. Similarly, looking at those museums that reported per capita support, the range was \$1.26 to \$15.00. Because of the wide range it is difficult to achieve a definitive average. Mathematically it was \$6.87. It was noted as well that St. Marys Museum receives town support of \$9.00 per capita. The Stratford Perth Museum receives a combined per capita support of \$1.43 which accounts for 52% of its revenue, both numbers being well below the provincial averages.
2. *Revenue Generation:* In addition to the grants it receives from the provincial Ministry of Culture and the federal employment programme, the Museum raises \$70,000+. This is from admissions (free will), programme fees, memberships and fund raising events. The fact that the Museum is raising close to 40% of its operating budget leaves it vulnerable to external pressures such as reduced tourism traffic, changing priorities at the Boards of Education, competing fund raising activities.
3. *Volunteer Burn Out:* The Board of the Stratford Perth Museum is dedicated and hard working. They and the staff are aware, however, that the constant need to raise funds and the amount of effort to do so is sapping the commitment of the volunteers. Because so much is being invested in fund raising, the function of the Museum is subsumed to that effort. It is a real concern that volunteers will drift away from the Museum.
4. *Staff Compensation:* In an effort to keep costs to a minimum, the Museum Board has exercised restraint in the area of staff compensation. However, the negative effect has been to create high staff turnover, with all the attendant costs, and to perpetuate the inequity between Museum staff and the closest comparator, the Archives. When the salary was set for the curator in 1994, it was comparable to the Archivist's. Since then, Museum salaries have fallen to an average 72% of compensation paid to Archives personnel. As well, there is no pension plan offered to Museum employees.
5. *The Discovery Centre:* When the Museum moved to the Normal School in 1994, the Board paid a nominal rent to the Ontario Realty Corporation and was able to use a full two floors for exhibits and storage. The transition from Normal School to Discovery Centre occurred with a community effort to save the building and the subsequent purchase of the building by the City. An incorporated Board of Management now manages the Discovery Centre. As a result, the Museum is now a tenant of the Discovery Centre, leasing 7,960 square feet with a further 700 square feet temporarily available on the 4th floor. The Committee found that parts of the space being rented are not in fact conducive to Museum operations for health and safety reasons. In 2002, the Museum had to give up 700 square feet of storage space due to financial constraints. Presently, the rent represents 22.5% of the Museum's budget (compared to 11.6% of the Archives budget). The relationship between the Museum Association and the Discovery Centre can create opportunities for competing interests; the Task Force found a number of issues of concern and suggests that Stratford City Council seek clarification on the nature of Board appointments and accountability.

Budget Implications:

1. *10 Year Forecast:* At the request of the Task Force, the Museum Board prepared a 10 year forecast in order to give some idea of the long term financial picture. This forecast, in 2004 dollars, includes a 4 year plan to achieve pay parity with the Archives and contributions to a new pension plan. The budget forecast shows a cutback on fund raising projections for operations; this is intended to allow room for concentrated efforts for capital drives. Also included is rental for increased space starting in 2005 as well as anticipated rent increase in 2010 (when the current lease expires). The rent is being gradually increased to bring the Museum rent into line with the other tenants.
2. *Municipal Support:* Our research and review of the Museum's budget and operations indicates that the level of municipal support as a percentage of budget needs to be adjusted. As noted previously, a provincial average is 79%; the 10 year forecast calls for a commitment of 70%. The per capita support would translate as \$2.25 in 2005 rising to \$2.74 in 2014.
3. *Ratio of County/City Support:* In 2004, the County has contributed 42% and the City 58% of the total municipal funding to the Museum. Historically, one reason has been because the Museum is located in the largest municipality in Perth County, thereby providing opportunity for more usage by the citizens. The ratio does in fact reflect the ownership ratio of the artifacts in the collection (60% owned by the City; 40% owned by the County).

Our Conclusions Regarding the Sustainability of the Museum:

- That the Museum cannot remain viable on its present funding formula.
- That should the municipalities commit to the principle of supporting the Museum, that support be at an annual commitment of 70% of the Museum's revenues and that of that, 60% will be paid by the City and 40% by the County reflecting the ownership ratio. Subject to budget review during budget deliberations.
- That the Museum revises its business plan to include the new numbers from the budget projections, and including performance measures for use and programme.
- That the Museum conforms with Archives practice by reporting to the City and County Councils on a regular basis.

Amalgamation of the Stratford Perth Museum and the Stratford Perth Archives

The Task Force was charged with looking at whether there were economies of scale if the Museum and the Archives were amalgamated. Given the past history of the Museum and its association with the Archives, this was a logical direction to pursue. To this end, the Task Force Coordinator made a request for information over the Internet to see if there were existing models which could be examined. We also consulted with the field officer for Museums in the Ministry of Culture. In addition to Archives – Museum amalgamation, joining with libraries was also examined.

Our research revealed that there is no successful partnership with the exception of Huron County where a cultural division has been created within the County structure. It encompasses the Huron County Library System and the Huron County Museum. It is too soon to tell whether the arrangement will be successful, but we must note that the set up in Huron County in terms of its organized library system, its Archives and Museum differs considerably from that in Perth County.

Because the nature of the operations of a Museum and an Archive in fact differ considerably, there are few areas of commonality. It was pointed out that there is greater similarity between the Archives and the Library, and that it is not uncommon for public libraries to operate an Archive.

The major impediment to any form of amalgamation is the governance of both the Archives and the Museum. As an incorporated non profit association, the Museum falls under the Ontario Historical Society and reports to the Ministry of Culture. As such, the Museum is able to access \$14,000 in grant money from the Ministry; amalgamation with another Board would put this funding in jeopardy. The Archives operates under the aegis of Municipal Act through a municipally appointed non incorporated Board. There are examples of one group of volunteers operating as two or three separate boards. E.g. the library board meets, adjourns and reconvenes as the Archives Board, adjourns and meets as the Museum Board. This is possible, with one individual as the Director of all 3 agencies; realistically, however, it is doubtful that a volunteer would want to make that level of commitment.

Our Conclusions on the Amalgamation of the Museum and the Archives:

- That any savings accrued by an amalgamation of the Museum and Archives would be lost through reduction in provincial support.
- That while formal amalgamation is not supportable, partnership for programming and mutual interests is encouraged.
- That the Museum, in addition, should look for other partnerships within the community.
- That the Perth County Information Network (libraries of Stratford, West Perth, Perth East and the Stratford Perth Archives) and the Museum Association work together on fund development initiatives.

Implications if Not Municipally Supported

Members of the Task Force agreed that this report should include a summary of the effect should the municipalities decide not to support the Museum. There is no question that the Museum as presently constituted cannot continue if it does not receive funding from both municipalities. If the Stratford Perth Museum Association dissolves, both Councils must consider the following:

- Retention of the artifacts. Since 95% of the collection is held in trust for the municipalities, the County and City will have to decide whether they will keep them or dispose of them. If keeping the artifacts, alternative storage and a guardian will have to be found.
- Once lost, the collection can never be replicated; if it goes it will leave a void in the social fabric of the community.
- If the artifacts are disposed, provincial regulations come into play. Those artifacts owned by the Museum must be turned over to the Ontario Historical Association.
- Wind down would take at least a year, which involves on going payment of the curator, rent and related expenses.
- The impact on the community with the loss of a unique cultural and educational facility.
- The impact on the Discovery Centre with the loss of a major tenant.

To Summarize...

The task force recognizes the immense value of the work that has been done by the volunteer Boards of Directors and the other volunteers who assist with daily operations of the Museum. Their belief in the value of the Museum has kept it functioning and brought it from a moribund operation to today's community museum. Since 1995, the Museum has implemented the recommendations of the Hushion Report, and has been continuously working on improving its governance and operations.

Because the Museum Board and staff expend significant energy on fund raising 40% of their operating budget, they cannot devote the time they should be to developing their programme and market. In effect, they are in a typical Catch 22 scenario. The task force's recommendation to provide a stable funding formula to the Museum will not only give the Museum the opportunity to fully implement its strategic plan, but will have further positive effects within the community. One of these will be a more willing inclination to donate items to the Museum, knowing that it has a secure future.

The forecast is for a conservative, bottom-line operation; it does not include capital expenses for extraordinary space renovations, or possible expansion. The Museum Association would expect to deal with potential capital expenditures through fund raising and potentially the budget process. There is an implied agreement within this recommendation that a commitment from the Councils to the proposed funding formula will mean that the Museum operates within the budget forecast. At the end of its deliberations, and its review of the Museum's operations, the Task Force concludes that the Stratford Perth Museum is an important component of the social fabric of the Stratford Perth community. Without stable funding, its continuing existence is precarious, and should it have to close, its loss would be irretrievable by future generations. We therefore urge the municipal councils to make a commitment to sustainable funding for the Stratford Perth Museum.

Stratford, December 1st 2004.

Appendix I

City County Task Force On the Stratford Perth Museum

List of Members

Jane Kirkpatrick, Kirkpatrick & Associates (former CEO, Stratford Public Library): Coordinator

Councillor Chris Rickett: City of Stratford

Councillor George Brown: City of Stratford

Councillor Bob McTavish: County of Perth

Councillor Gerry Wallis: County of Perth

Margaret Wilson: Stratford Perth Museum Association

(Cheryl Ruby/Ron McKay): Stratford Perth Archives*

Staff Consultants

Linda Carter: Executive Director, Stratford Perth Museum

Lutzen Riedstra: Archivist-Administrator, Stratford Perth Archives

Appendix V

Ownership of the Stratford Perth Museum Collection

<u>Collection</u>	<u># of Artifacts</u>	<u>Ownership</u>
Perth County Collection	3500	57% County 43% City
Thomson Collection	2000	100% City
1993-98 Municipally Collected	2000	100% City
Museum	2500	100% Museum Association