

| Project Vision

Fort Henry Visitor Centre

The new Visitor Centre for Fort Henry will provide an inviting, informative and compelling environment to orient visitors prior to entering the site.

Key themes will encompass early Kingston, the Fort's creation, its role in the War of 1812 and in defending Canada, its reconstruction, more modern day uses, and its distinctions as a National Heritage Site and UNESCO World Heritage Site (designation earned in 2007 in conjunction with the Rideau Canal and Kingston Fortifications).

The design of the Visitor Centre shall be harmonious with the Fort's waterfront environment and blend into the natural landscape. It should provide for sweeping views of the water and downtown Kingston, allowing for interpretation of the strategic defensive role played by the Fort on the St. Lawrence River.

Sophisticated and understated, with extensive openness, glass and natural light, the design should compliment vs. replicate the Fort itself. Ample view-scapes and decking should complete the design, providing for unique event hosting opportunities.

It is expected that the Visitor Centre building and landscaping design will reflect these **key attributes**:

- **Respectful** – of the Commemorative Integrity, history, culture, and geography of the site,, including the strategic view overlooking the former Royal Naval Dockyards and the entrance to the Rideau Canal.
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- **Visitor-focussed** -- meeting the needs of a range of customers and providing easy flow for those making a quick stop as well as those spending an hour or more.
- **Flexible** – offering unique and adaptable venue spaces for meetings, group gatherings and special events as well as the opportunity to change exhibits
- **Economical** – minimizing operational and maintenance costs wherever possible.
- **Sustainable** – incorporating energy-savings and reducing environmental impacts. (LEED* certified at the SILVER level)
- **Sense of arrival** – stimulating visitor curiosity and a “wow” response.
- **Inspirational** – simple yet elegant, enduring, and timeless ... as the exhibits and visitor experiences engage, enrich, entertain and educate.
- **Evocative** – with the design stirring a positive emotional response, reinforcing the Fort's significance as a National Historic Site and a powerful icon for Kingston.

- **Quality** – reflecting the strong international reputation and heritage designation of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- **Recognition** – of Parks Canada as “owner” and of designations as National Historic Site of Canada

(*LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

Space Allocation

The new Visitor Centre should allow for a welcoming environment that is friendly, open, and flexible to meet the demands of large groups or visitor rushes. The following elements will be included in building design:

- Accessibility, functionality, and flexibility of all space.
- Welcoming reception area
- Flexible exhibit & customer experience spaces, allowing for multiple uses as meeting and hospitality areas for 300+ people.
- Ticketing & visitor services
- Adjacent retail for merchandising a range of souvenirs, artisan and military heritage items and books, and snack items
- Sufficient food preparation area for event hosting and execution of 300+ people; seating for 50+ which could be achieved with an outdoor patio/deck.
- Adaptable group orientation/meeting/presentation space which can also house temporary or rotating exhibits.
- Conference room (or adaptable space) for 20-25 people featuring state of the art media technology and web hosting capabilities.
- Washrooms
- Storage and receiving area for retail merchandise, out of sight yet convenient.
- Easy way-finding.
- Tasteful sponsorship, partnership, and “friends” recognition area.
- A small office and dressing area with lockers.
- Extensive exterior patio space (including a 3 season area) affording incremental hosting spaces and weeping water views.
- Smooth, controlled access entrance/exit into the Visitor Centre, retail areas and Fort itself.
- Built-in public address audio visual, variety of interior lighting, bright exterior lighting and presence.
- Seamless display opportunities for electronic displays, material distribution (such as brochures), computer terminals and web interaction, potential vending machines.

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Strategic Objectives of Visitor Centre

- Drive **incremental, sustainable visitation** to Fort Henry, Kingston's iconic attraction and one of Canada's most recognized National Historic Sites.
- Celebrate the **unique heritage and historical importance of Fort and the Kingston harbour**, leveraging the its key strategic location and defensive role, military life, the iconic Fort Henry Guard, and the social environment of early Canada.
- Generate **new net revenue streams**, especially capitalizing on the group meetings and hosting marketplace and the Fort's strong heritage dining reputation.
- Heighten **visitor experiences/satisfaction** and extend length of stay.
- Attract new visitor segments and **generate economic development** to area.
- Be deliverable within **budgetary and timing** constraints.
- Cost-effectively contribute to the **long-term financial sustainability and viability** of Commission operations.

How will success be defined?

- SLPC will attract significantly more Incremental visitors and tap into new visitor segments.
- Lapsed and repeat users will come back more frequently.
- Fort Henry's profile will expand and its heritage image strengthened, along with increased recognition of Kingston as Canada's historic capital.
- New reasons to visit will be immediately visible, extending interest and seasonality.
- The historic relevance of the Fort, the dockyards, the harbour and the Rideau Canal will be self-evident, enhanced and celebrated.
- Additional retail and other new net revenue streams will be realized.
- Operating costs will be minimal, thus allowing for a longer season with negligible added expense.
- Residents and visitors alike will commend the new structure for its design, relevance and ease of use.
- Residents and visitors alike will become more informed about Fort Henry, Kingston harbour, the dockyards, the Rideau Canal and the stories behind the Fort's role in defending Canada.
- Third parties will seek to host events and gatherings as this new "wow" venue.
- Parks Canada, UNESCO, and historic groups will be satisfied that Fort Henry's Commemorative Integrity has been protected and celebrated.
- The Ontario government, the Ministry of Tourism, the SLPC Board and staff will all be proud of the new centre and agree that we have successfully achieved our mandate.