

Key Points: An Overview

1. Why We Need a Proper City of Winnipeg Archives Facility

- The city of Winnipeg needs an appropriate centrally located, up-to-date, environmentally sound, secure home with programming space that befits researchers and that meets the legal responsibilities of our municipal archive.
- The creation of a modern, well-located facility for the city's priceless records could be the centrepiece of our celebration in 2024 of the 150th anniversary of Winnipeg. It would be a fitting public face for Winnipeg's cultural and historical heritage.
- Such a facility could support reconciliation initiatives, fulfill the needs of civic administration, strengthen heritage tourism, and promote the use of our archival holdings in publishing and within our schools, universities and colleges.
- In order to ensure the creation of a modern facility, there must now be wide public consultation on the various needs of an archives facility.

2. The Archives' "Temporary" Home at 50 Myrtle Street: A Compendium of Inadequacies

- In 2013, renovations were underway to the iconic Carnegie Library building at 380 William Avenue to modernize and provide a state-of-the art facility for the archives.
- However, a summer storm breached the roof during the renovation leading to extensive water damage to the building.
- As a "temporary measure", the archival records, staff, and public service were moved to 50 Myrtle Street - into substandard storage conditions in a nondescript industrial warehouse where the archives have languished for the last eight years.
- With no environmental controls over fluctuating temperature and humidity levels, inadequate security, insufficient staff workspace and minimal space for researchers, the Myrtle Street facility is gravely deficient and leaves municipal records too vulnerable to degradation.
- The records are not being preserved in conditions meeting archival standards. A decade spent in these conditions have likely already greatly increased conservation costs in the future and may result in some records having deteriorated beyond reasonable conservation costs.
- The facility is difficult to reach by transit and there is limited parking for those who can drive there. The building cannot accommodate groups, and thus school and tour groups have had to suspend their visits to the archives. There is no workspace for necessary conservation activities, no public programming facilities, and no exhibition area.

- Lack of storage space means community collections are not being accepted and will be, or have already been, destroyed by donors. Gaps in our municipal history will increase.
- Public use of the archives has been greatly reduced since the move to Myrtle Street, as has public programming. This limits the archives' ability to make records available.
- Increasing numbers of original records are being withheld from access due to their deteriorating condition and the inability of the archives to provide in-house conservation efforts.

3. Legal Requirements

- The 1971 *City of Winnipeg Act* amalgamated the former City of Winnipeg and the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg with the rural municipalities of Charleswood, Fort Garry, North Kildonan, and Old Kildonan; the Town of Tuxedo; the cities of East Kildonan, West Kildonan, St. Vital, Transcona, St. Boniface, and St. James-Assiniboia into one city. When this new government replaced the existing municipalities on January 1 1972, it became responsible for the archives of all these former civic entities.
- Clause 17 of the City of Winnipeg Records Management By-Law No. 123/2020 states that: “The City Archives, which serves as a repository for archival City records, are under the direction of the City Archivist. The City Archivist is responsible for managing and preserving archival City records, for promoting, exhibiting, publishing or otherwise making such records known, and for facilitating access to them as is lawful and appropriate considering their content, nature or form.”
- Under clause 14 (d), the City of Winnipeg Records Committee, appointed under subsection 110(2) of The City of Winnipeg Charter Act, may authorize the City Archivist to acquire non-city records of archival value from a person or organization.

4. Community and Private Archives

- The archives referenced in clause 14 (d) are usually referred to as community archives. They are extremely important to record the history of Winnipeg, given that between 1873 and the end of the Second World War – the first 70 to 80 years of Winnipeg's history – the role of government was much more limited than it is today.
- Community organizations have played central roles in the development of Winnipeg in many areas: health services, education, social services, arts, culture, music, theatre, ballet.
- Many community organizations aren't active today but they played crucial roles in Winnipeg's development. They have all created letters and minutes of meetings, they have made photographs, recordings and films. Yet there is no institution dedicated to preserving these records and making them accessible to the public.

- In considering the future of its archives, the City must consider the need for community archives. They tell the story of the City and its remarkable development, of the people who worked to make the City what it is today. They are at risk of being lost because we did not provide for their safe preservation.
- The City of Winnipeg must plan to preserve community archives; its own archives can only tell a small part of the story of this city.

5. The City Archives, Indigenous People and Reconciliation

- The City Archives hold records of interest to many Indigenous communities, and has made efforts to make these known and available.
- To advance reconciliation, Winnipeg needs to move forward in understanding its past and planning for its future.
- In January 2019, the Mayor of Winnipeg launched an initiative he called: **Welcoming Winnipeg: Reconciling our history**. This initiative responds to the national dialogue that seeks to re-examine historical markers and place names ‘to resolve the absence of Indigenous perspectives, experiences, and contributions in the stories remembered and commemorated in Canadian cities.’
- This aspect of the City’s reconciliation process aims to ‘help ensure that the contributions, experiences, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are reflected truthfully in our stories, historical markers, and place names.’
- A modern, accessible archives facility is required to examine historical markers and place names, and to obtain information on the place names that were used well before various municipalities were created during the last century.
- With an adequate and welcoming space for Indigenous people, the City Archives could increase the number of them who use the archives and serve as a learning centre for all Winnipeggers about Indigenous contributions to the city.

6. Intercity Comparisons

- Compared to similar municipalities, the City of Winnipeg archives fares very poorly
- The City of Ottawa Archives has a state-of-the-art LEED gold facility that opened in 2011, featuring four climate-controlled vaults, ample space for the public to consult the records, a conservation lab and an exhibits gallery.
- The City of Calgary Corporate Records Archives has a modern, spacious up-to-date researcher room, centrally located downtown, next to the mayor’s office, on a light-rail

transit route. It also has an environmentally controlled and secure storage facility for its historical records.

- The City of Edmonton Archives is in a purpose-built facility in the centrally located historic Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre.