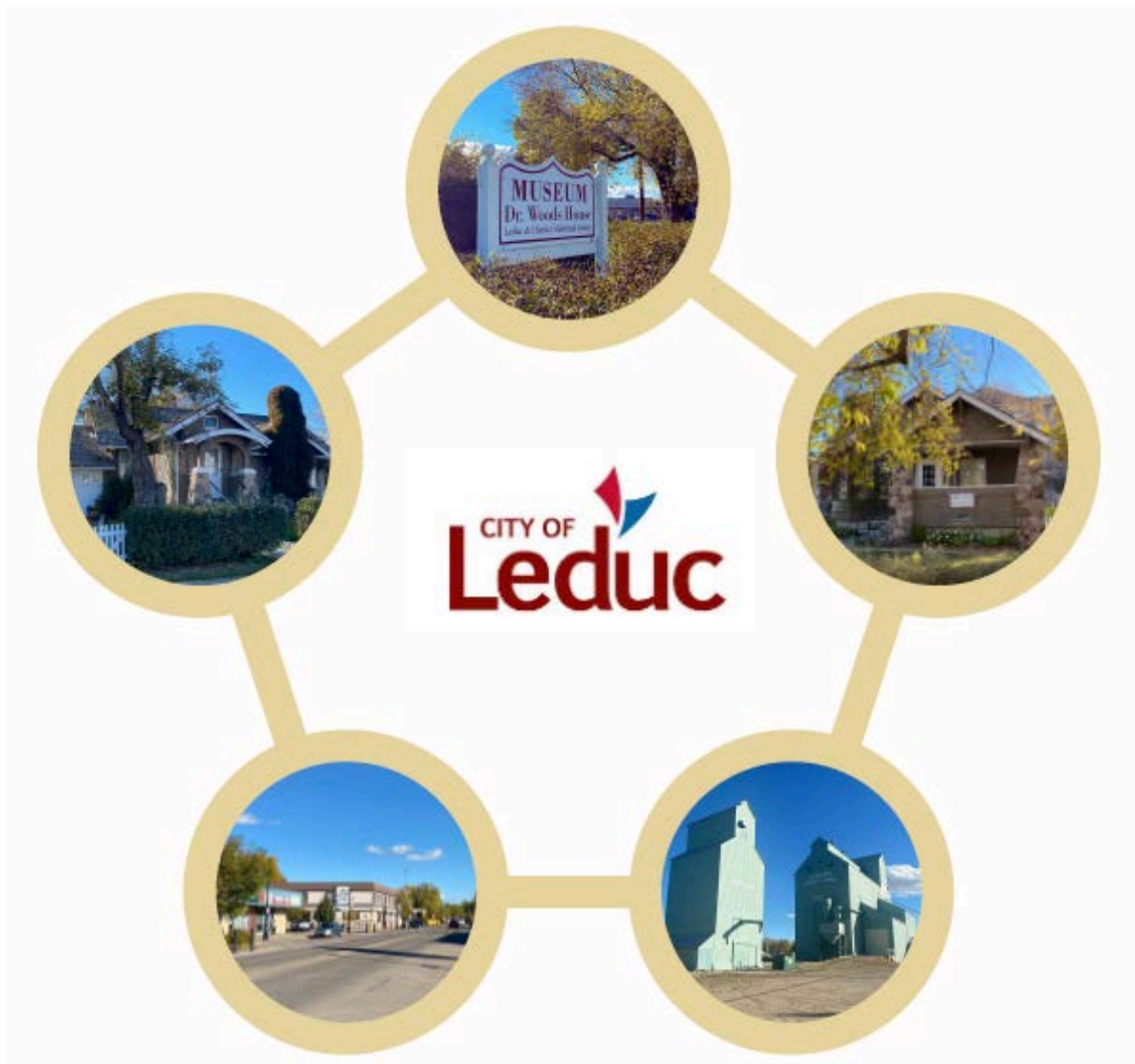


What We Heard

Engagement & Consultation Report

Exploring Sustainable Heritage Solutions for
Dr. Woods' House Museum and Leduc's Heritage Landscape



PREPARED BY

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City of Leduc
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *What We Heard* report summarizes the findings from partner and public engagement sessions contributing to the development of recommendations for the future of Leduc's Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage assets. These consultations occurred in November and December 2024. All group engagement sessions and Council consultations were in-person. One staff consultation was held virtually.

Engagement Timeline



Project Deliverables

Nov 2024	Nov/Dec 2024	Dec 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Jan/Feb 2025
Report A: Research of heritage trends and best practices	Partner and community engagement and consultation	Report B: What We Heard summary of engage- ment 	Report C: Operational models and cost analysis	Report D: Recommend- ations	Present findings



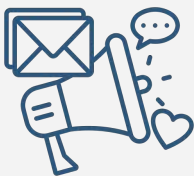


The themes discovered during these engagement activities are extensive and important to consider when planning for Dr. Woods' House Museum and sustainable heritage solutions for Leduc's heritage assets. The key themes on the next page represent an overview of perspectives heard and the overall conclusions obtained through the partner and community engagement process.

"Heritage is vital to any healthy community's sense of itself, acting as a touchstone for our personal and collective identity. It moors us to place."

City of Leduc's Cultural Development Strategy, p.31

Key Themes: Sustainable Heritage Solutions

Participants in the engagement process identified and emphasized the following key themes:

				
Consolidate heritage management	Diversify programming	Enhance heritage promotion	Expand funding sources	Build a strategic path for heritage
<p>Form an umbrella organization (i.e. board, trust, committee, etc.) to oversee Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage assets in Leduc, and to explore a regional approach to heritage.</p> <p>Activate a combination of paid and volunteer positions to coordinate heritage-related activity, with the City of Leduc as a key partner.</p>	<p>Diversify programming at Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage sites to cultivate interest and increase site utilization.</p> <p>Examples include: hosting events, speakers, space rentals, educational programming, rotating exhibits, utilizing the outdoor spaces at heritage sites, digital and virtual engagement tactics, satellite museum exhibits, and more.</p>	<p>Develop and implement promotional strategies to raise the profile of heritage and draw visitors to the sites.</p> <p>Ideas include: using social media, increased heritage site identification via Google, improved signage, and tying heritage promotion to major events in Leduc (i.e. community events, sporting events, celebrations, etc.).</p>	<p>Explore opportunities to broaden funding through grants, memberships, partnerships, sponsorships, donations, legacy gifts, and more.</p> <p>Participants noted the need to structure heritage oversight and management in ways that ensure access to an array of funding streams and potential grant dollars.</p>	<p>With community, and in alignment with the City of Leduc's strategic direction, build a five to ten year vision and business plan for Leduc's heritage.</p> <p>Ensure that it focuses on shared purpose, impactful collaboration, and well-designed operating models.</p> <p>Along with this, explore and create opportunities for regional collaboration and alignment.</p>

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Leduc's heritage sites, including Dr. Woods' House Museum, represent a connection to history and culture, drive economic growth, and help shape Leduc's identity. Heritage sites represent a physical connection to the past and they help community members and visitors understand the way Leduc was.

These spaces, however, face increasingly complex challenges, and Dr. Woods' House Museum is no exception. Escalating infrastructure and operating costs, patterns of declining volunteerism, urbanization, and more all contribute to the collective challenge of ensuring such spaces continue to thrive.

While Dr. Woods' House Museum benefits from a designation as a Municipal Historic Resource (2007), positive tourist reviews, and a substantial museum collection, finding sustainable strategies that align with community interests and City commitments is paramount.

Recognizing this, the City of Leduc identified the following goals for this project:

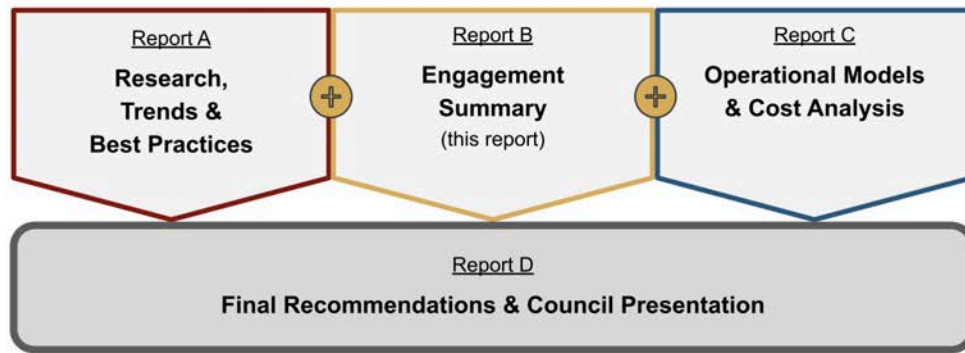
1. Understand heritage trends and best practices.
2. Gather community input on how to engage with heritage assets.
3. Explore operational models for Dr. Woods' House as a museum, including City-run, third-party, or adaptive reuse.
4. Provide cost estimates for different paths.
5. Recommend sustainable strategies that align with community needs and City goals.

Elevate the Path designed and implemented a process for Goal #2, gathering community input through consultation and engagement. This *What We Heard* report is one of several key inputs informing the final recommendations.

Key Steps

EM Museum Consulting and Elevate the Path partnered to deliver the required research, engagement, operational models and cost analysis, and final recommendations to help the City of Leduc develop sustainable, community-focused strategies for the future of Dr. Woods' House and Leduc's broader heritage landscape.

To develop relevant and meaningful recommendations, a breadth of information was examined and analyzed. The approach was guided by a performance-based framework developed by Aigwi et al. (2020), emphasizing a balanced evaluation of economic, social, regulatory, usability, and heritage preservation aspects.



Research, Trends and Best Practices in Heritage

The first report includes a comprehensive analysis of current trends in heritage management, particularly in municipalities with characteristics or heritage assets similar to Leduc. EM Museum Consulting, the project lead, conducted detailed research to benchmark Dr. Woods' House Museum against similar heritage sites across Alberta and Canada and, if necessitated by a lack of comparables, other Commonwealth nations (e.g., New Zealand, Australia). The analysis examines operational models, funding mechanisms, community engagement strategies, and best practices for sustainable heritage asset management. This research identifies heritage sites where adaptive reuse has been successfully implemented and assesses their economic sustainability, built heritage preservation, and socio-cultural impacts. The report provides a core foundation for understanding how Leduc's heritage assets can thrive within the broader context of trends and fiscal realities.

Operational Models and Cost Analysis

EM Museum Consulting also examined operational models and costs for managing Dr. Woods' House Museum, considering the heritage trends research and integrating the community feedback gathered through the engagement and consultation process. EM Museum Consulting evaluated models such as city-run operations, third-party or nonprofit management, and adaptive reuse or hybrid models. This analysis incorporates insights from stakeholders and the community to ensure the proposed models align with public expectations and the City's fiscal and operational realities. The exploration of operational models is structured around five priority aspects (Aigwi et al., 2020). These ensure evaluation for long-term viability and alignment with community and stakeholder needs:

- economic sustainability
- built heritage preservation
- socio-cultural aspects
- building usability, and
- regulatory requirements.

Engagement Summary

Perspectives and feedback on Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage assets in Leduc were gathered from partner and community organizations. Community aspirations for the future of these spaces informs strategic decision-making and planning, and ensures collaboration and understanding across different sites and groups. Importantly, input was gathered on operational models, funding, community engagement strategies, and sustainable heritage asset management.

Elevate the Path engaged with a number of groups:

- Heritage Groups
- Leduc City Council
- Relevant Agencies, Boards, and Commissions of Council
- City of Leduc Staff and Administration
- Leduc Community

This report summarizes the findings from these engagements.

The engagement was aligned with the City of Leduc's [Public Engagement Policy 11.00:29](#). The Policy identifies the value of public engagement processes and recognizes their value to support decision-making, noting the "City of Leduc values Public Engagement and recognizes that Stakeholder input plays a critical role in good governance and in providing the best possible information to support decision making by both Council and Administration. Council is committed to ensuring the appropriate level of Public Engagement is employed and adequate resources are allocated."

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Elevate the Path designed and delivered engagement sessions and consultations as a means to ensure rich feedback and diverse perspectives informing the final recommendations. The results of these consultations are captured in this report, reflecting broad stakeholder and community input on:

- how participants desire to engage with Leduc's heritage assets
- their ideas about Dr. Woods' House Museum, and
- their input on sustainable solutions for built heritage asset management.

Format of Engagement Sessions

In November and December 2024, Elevate the Path met with the groups identified on the previous page. The engagements were framed in three phases, with the first phase requesting participants to imagine an aspirational future for Dr. Woods' House Museum and Leduc's other heritage assets. Casting forward to 2029, attendees were asked to imagine what activities were taking place in Dr. Woods' House Museum and in Leduc's other heritage sites, and what they see, feel, and hear happening there. In this way, participants were encouraged to visualize desirable futures for these spaces, not constricted by current realities or challenges. It was an opportunity to generate ideas and creative possibilities for heritage in the City of Leduc.

Next, participants were asked to bridge this desired future state against four crucial considerations:

- Sustainability
- Funding
- Operating models
- Community engagement

Participants were asked to identify the actions and/or requirements needed to move from the current state to the future state. This exercise developed a bridge of collective critical thinking from 'where we are now' to 'where we want to be.'

Finally, in light of all that they heard and learned during the engagement session, participants were asked to use coloured dots to identify ideas that resonated with them. Through this process, attendees placed dots on the ideas with which they felt warranted focus or emphasis. The exercise served as a way to highlight insights, important considerations, and participant recommendations.

Of note, Elevate the Path advised participants that their input would help inform decision making, and that final decisions rest with the City of Leduc.

ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

The following table provides an introductory overview of key findings from each group:

Agencies, Boards & Commissions	Heritage Groups	Community	City Council	City Staff
New and enriched programming	Enriched and interconnected programming	New and enriched programming	Bring heritage under one umbrella	New and enriched programming
Operating model	Bring heritage under one umbrella	Funding and new revenue opportunities	Operating model	Local and regional collaboration
Infrastructure	Long-term and out-of-the-box thinking	Bring heritage under one umbrella	Long-term strategic approach	Funding and other revenue opportunities
	Funding and operating models		Promoting and managing Dr. Woods' House Museum	Operating models
				Archive and artifact protection and preservation

Agencies, Boards & Commissions

In early November, Elevate the Path hosted one session with City-identified Agencies, Boards and Commissions. The following key themes were heard:

New and enriched programming

Participants in the Agencies, Boards and Commissions session noted the need for new and more frequent programming designed to draw visitors to the space, including changing exhibits (i.e. rotating artifacts), educational programming, and more. They also suggested that all heritage sites in Leduc be considered as unique rental opportunities, for weddings, civic events, family photos, and more.

Operating model

Attendees contended that the City of Leduc should oversee all arts and heritage sites in Leduc and use its channels to coordinate the rental of available spaces. This model would also allow the City to have shared staffing for these sites, with different operating hours for each, to maximize resource allocation.

Infrastructure

Attendees noted the importance of infrastructure upgrades to Dr. Woods' House Museum in order to meet current accessibility standards. They noted, too, that current infrastructure across the city could also be used to better promote Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage sites via existing websites, electronic billboards, and improved signage.

Heritage Groups

Elevate the Path conducted facilitated engagement sessions with members representing a cross-section of heritage community groups, including: Leduc West Antique Society, Leduc and District Historical Society, Dr Woods' House Museum, Alberta Legacy Development Society, Leduc Hosting Society, Government of Alberta, and Edmonton's Bison Lodge.

Over two separate sessions, the following themes emerged:

Enriched and interconnected programming

Participants noted the need for more programming, events, and hands-on activities to attract more visitors to Dr. Woods' House Museum. Other suggestions included guided tours, special exhibitions, social programs, lectures, new artifacts, community events, digital displays, and experiential learning to attract repeat visitors to the site. At the same time, attendees noted the importance of cross-promotional opportunities, coordinating events at the museum with Leduc's tourism and sports tourism, connecting with the Chamber of Commerce, and building and sustaining a vibrant online presence. Attendees also noted an opportunity to promote the outdoor spaces at Dr. Woods' House Museum as a means to raise revenues through weddings, photo shoots, and more.

Bring heritage under one umbrella

Heritage Group participants identified the benefits of linking or bridging all of Leduc's heritage sites under one umbrella organization, noting the opportunities to reduce silos and alleviate competition for limited resources. When integrated, these heritage sites could share programming, advertising, operating models (opening hours, etc.) and more. Participants suggested that this entity could be City funded, with the municipality providing human resources, IT, and other financial supports, with volunteers or a volunteer board developing annual plans, programming, and advertising. Finally, a broader regional perspective was recommended, with participants noting that Leduc's heritage sites could partner with others in the region, including those in Leduc County, Millet, Wetaskiwin, and Camrose.

Long-term and out-of-the-box thinking

Heritage Group participants recommended that a business plan and operating budget be developed for Dr. Woods' House Museum or, if united with all other heritage sites in Leduc, both be developed for this larger entity. This business plan would define a vision, mission, and initiatives setting direction for the spaces over the longer-term. This business plan could also redefine these heritage spaces as “for impact” or as social enterprises (versus not-for-profit) as a means to shift traditional thinking and invoke new ways to boost revenues through non-traditional rentals, creative new partnerships (e.g. Boys and Girls Club, 4-H, etc.), and joint ventures with service clubs and community organizations (i.e. Regional Chamber of Commerce). Finally, some participants suggested either building a new Leduc museum or dedicating specialized space for artifacts and archives.

Funding and operating models

Heritage Group participants also highlighted the importance of researching and applying on available provincial and federal grants, noting the challenges of grant eligibility and approvals when certain designations to a museum or heritage site are applied. Other suggestions to increase funding included considering annual memberships, partnerships, corporate sponsorships, grants, and donations. They also advocated for ongoing human resource and financial support from the City of Leduc, with the municipality continuing to support volunteer training.

Leduc Community

Elevate the Path also met with 13 citizens over the course of two engagement sessions. These sessions were delivered on two separate evenings (6:30 - 8:00 p.m.) to help maximize participation, and both sessions were advertised via the City of Leduc's communication channels. Citizens who attended self-identified as having an interest in Leduc's heritage and, more specifically, Dr. Woods' House Museum. The following key themes were identified by this group:

New and enriched programming

Community participants emphasized frequently the need for new, enriched, and/or redesigned programming to attract more visitors to Dr. Woods' House Museum and Leduc's other heritage sites. Suggestions included children's activities, events timed to traditional or civic holidays, rotating and/or visiting displays, educational programming, and digital tools (e.g. holograms to QR codes). In order to align programming to the era represented by Dr. Woods' House Museum, attendees also stressed the importance of staff and volunteers dressing for the period (i.e. similar to Fort Edmonton Park).

At the same time, they emphasized that the space and programs need to be heavily promoted on social media, via Google searches, and at Leduc's tourist centre, with a focus not just on Dr. Woods' House

Museum, but on all of Leduc's heritage sites. They also noted that the outdoor space around Dr. Woods' House Museum could be better utilized for programming and revenue opportunities, through weddings, photos, and the hosting of events. Finally, there was a suggestion to focus broadly on Leduc's past and history, not just on Dr. Woods' House Museum.

Funding and new revenue opportunities

Participants in these sessions also suggested a number of ideas to broaden funding opportunities and increase revenue, including grants, sponsorships, annual memberships, partnerships, games, sponsorships, rental income, regular events, and even a gift shop. Noting the work involved to obtain new funding opportunities, they also highlighted the need for a dedicated staff member assigned to obtain funding, especially through the grants application process.

Bring heritage under one umbrella

Attendees identified a need to ensure all of Leduc's heritage sites and places were connected under one umbrella, with shared marketing, staffing, and more, noting further that this unity should incorporate all of Leduc's historical spaces, including downtown buildings and original street names. They also highlighted the opportunity to have shared human resourcing, with one or two employees rotating among all heritage sites, rather than multiple sites competing for the same (and limited) pool of resources. Participants further suggested that a City employee could oversee these staff and a collection of volunteers or a volunteer board, while also ensuring these volunteers receive governance, operating, and other required training to effectively manage heritage sites.

Leduc City Council

Elevate the Path also met with each of Leduc's City Council via 30 to 45 minute one-on-one conversations. These consultations incorporated a similar approach utilized in the broader engagement activities and included questions about dreams and hopes for the future of Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage assets, as well as insights and priorities regarding community engagement, long-term sustainability, funding, and operating models. Key themes arising from these conversations include:

Bring heritage under one umbrella

Leduc City Council members identified the need for broader systems thinking related to Dr. Woods' House Museum and emphasized the need for big, bold ideas regarding its future. Many said this begins with the creation of an overarching, community-driven board designed to oversee all of Leduc's heritage sites and to encourage these sites to work together for resources, rather than competing. This board would integrate community input and feedback on its priorities and activities, and there was a suggestion to invite prospective board members into an application process.

Operating model

All members of Leduc City Council expressed a commitment to Dr. Woods' House Museum and the city's heritage, and all noted the importance of heritage and heritage spaces for community wellbeing. As noted, there was also broad agreement on a future operating model for these heritage spaces, with all recommending the creation of an oversight body to manage all of Leduc's heritage spaces. There were varying perspectives, however, on the operating model required to activate this entity. Some, for instance, noted that the City should provide funding and other resources to an overarching heritage board, including resources to support grant applications, training, Indigenous teachings, and more to ensure the sustainability of all heritage spaces. They recommended City funding and staffing for these spaces. Others suggested the creation of an entity to provide short-term start-up or acceleration support, wherein the City provides space, training, mentorship and other resources to build momentum.

Other Council members, however, identified that while they support Dr. Woods' House Museum (and all heritage spaces in Leduc), the City simply cannot do it all. Available tax dollars are stretched, and, as such, the City should limit its financial support. Instead, they noted, Dr. Woods' House Museum and other sites should explore alternative funding models, including memberships, sponsorships, donations, naming rights, joint-use agreements, and strategic partnerships to strengthen fiscal sustainability. Some Councillors noted that situating management or governance of Dr. Woods' House Museum and other sites within the City structure could inhibit the ability to apply for external grants. As such, an external body was suggested by some to provide collective oversight of heritage operations, programming, and events, while ensuring access to funding.

Long-term strategic approach

Several Council members noted the need for a long-term vision and strategic plan for Dr. Woods' House Museum and all heritage sites in Leduc. This 5 to 10 year plan would feature a shared vision for these sites, common values, and collective initiatives designed to spark innovation, while emphasizing programming, space utilization, community desires and interests, sustainability tactics, and more.

Promoting and managing Dr. Woods' House Museum

City Council members noted the need for Dr. Woods' House Museum to fundamentally shift its current operating model and incorporate a number of new marketing tactics designed to boost visitors to its site. For instance, many noted the importance of modernizing the approach to promotion, ranging from marketing on social media to using digital tools such as QR codes to showcase artifacts and stories to reach a new, tech-savvy audience.

Others identified an opportunity to turn Dr. Woods' House Museum and other heritage sites into destinations of choice through new programming, particularly in conjunction with major sporting events through new signage, promotions, shuttle services, advertising, and more.

Council members also highlighted the importance of connecting with Leduc citizens who do not frequent Dr. Woods' House Museum to ascertain why they do not attend, with a subsequent plan to encourage this audience to more regularly visit Leduc's heritage sites. Many also felt that Dr. Woods' House Museum should reduce its operating hours, particularly over the winter months, and instead focus on timing its opening to civic holidays, major events, and to the summer months. Doing so, it was argued, will help maximize attendance and boost revenues, while optimizing overhead costs.

City of Leduc Staff

In early December, Elevate the Path held its final consultation sessions, this time with City staff from a broad range of portfolios and departments. City staff members shared their perspectives and feedback, and the following key themes were identified:

New and enriched programming

Participants noted the importance of diverse, dynamic programming - including displays, events, and activities - to grow attendance at Dr. Woods' House Museum specifically. They noted the importance of "telling the Leduc story" to add vibrancy and to capture the ever-changing history of Leduc. They also stressed the importance of ensuring Dr. Woods' House Museum is accessible to all, through enhancements to the physical infrastructure as well as well advertised programs emphasizing Leduc's Indigenous and settler histories.

City staff also highlighted the need for policy and strategic direction informing the retention and deaccession of archives and artifacts housed within Leduc's heritage locations which will, in turn, shape future programming opportunities.

Finally, they recommended taking the collection to meet people where they are at, through satellite museum offerings, artifacts in sports centres and facilities, celebrating the heritage aspects of Leduc's rich sports history, and even using promotional space within local transit to share the city's heritage and stories.

Local and regional collaboration

Noting the need for collaboration across organizations and spaces, attendees identified the importance of connecting heritage (and heritage spaces) to other economic development and tourism opportunities, including sporting activities and tournaments, the Leduc Sports Hall of Fame, recreation facilities, and local special events. In this way, a broader story about Leduc is painted and articulated, with heritage woven into the fabric of these other opportunities. Such an effort, it was suggested, requires development of a longer-term plan for Dr. Woods' House Museum and all of Leduc's heritage sites.

Attendees also encouraged furthering partnerships across library networks, and with other cities and heritage spaces, including Millet, the Devonian Gardens, Maskwacis, Wetaskiwin, and Beaumont.

Funding and other revenue opportunities

Suggestions on how best to ensure sustainable funding for heritage sites varied, with some articulating the importance of sources complementing City funding, including grants, event revenues, rental fees, sponsorships, individual donations, sales of books and art, and onsite coffee and food services. Others identified a requirement for City staff to have management or oversight responsibility.

Operating model

Attendees emphasized creating a unified board to oversee all heritage spaces in Leduc, funded by a variety of sources (as above), including committed City financing. A board or trust, participants noted, would allow these heritage sites to access grants and other funding mechanisms typically not available to the City and to partner with organizations like the Edmonton Community Foundation.

Importantly, however, it was also recognized that such a board or trust is not a panacea; expected outcomes will not surface overnight and building the next chapter for heritage requires time, investment, and capacity building. The ideal oversight mechanism identified by participants, then, was a non-profit or charitable board - in part funded and staffed by the City - leading a group of volunteers and tasked with addressing the most difficult governance tasks, including financials, human resource processes, strategy development, and more.

Archive and artifact protection and preservation

Attendees identified the importance of archive and artifact protection and, if possible, re-housing, noting that Dr. Woods' House Museum, while working on digitizing its collection, is currently quite full. Preservation requires proper protocols and processes to ensure artifact longevity, and, as such, additional storage space for the vast collection may be required. Digitizing the collection, while ensuring its long term preservation, also creates an opportunity for people, near and far, to interact with the artifacts in meaningful, innovative ways. Participants noted that investing in digital assets will also improve the materiality of the collection.

City staff also highlighted the importance of understanding, preserving, and sharing Leduc's Indigenous history and archives, noting that Indigenous histories are best told in partnership with community organizations, First Nations, and others outside of the city, including the City of Wetaskiwin and Maskwacis.

NEXT STEPS

This engagement summary and findings are one aspect of a multi-stage project.

City of Leduc staff are reviewing and considering all required components of this project, including the research, trends and best practices report, and the operational models and cost analysis, and this engagement summary. A recommendations report will be presented to Leduc's City Council for further direction and decisions. Future engagement opportunities may be available pending decisions of Council.

Elevate the Path appreciates participants' generosity of time and perspectives, and the City of Leduc for advancing this important community-building work.

Reference to Aigwi et al. (2020)

Aigwi, I. E., Ingham, J., Phipps, R. & Filippova, O. (2020)

[Identifying parameters for a performance-based framework: Towards prioritising underutilised historical buildings for adaptive reuse in New Zealand.](#)

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