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An Exciting New Chapter

Benoit Historic House Strategic Plan Proposal

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OBJECTIVE

To develop a strategic plan for the preparatory work, operations and implementation steps required to create the first-ever Museum in the Town of LaSalle, the former home of the first Mayor of LaSalle, Vital Benoit ("The Benoit House"). The development of this plan will reflect and respect the overall objectives of the Small Coast Waterfront Experience.

BACKGROUND

"LaSalle and Vital Benoit are synonyms. LaSalle was Mr. Benoit's idea, it is also his achievement." So reads the heady introduction to Monsieur Benoit's biography in "Men of Achievement, Essex County, Volume 1", written by Francis Chauvin in 1927. Vital, born in Pain Court, Ontario in 1857, was a unique and dynamic personality in the early days of LaSalle. An entrepreneur in every sense of the word, Monsieur Benoit was over the course of his career a weaver, farmer, storekeeper, real estate broker, hotel operator, and brewery owner, just to name a few. He was also known as a rum-runner and clearly lived an adventurous life in the years before, during and after LaSalle's official incorporation. According to "Men of Achievement", Benoit was not only chiefly responsible for the name change from Petite Cote, but also a principal factor in the development of the town, serving as its first and longtime Mayor.

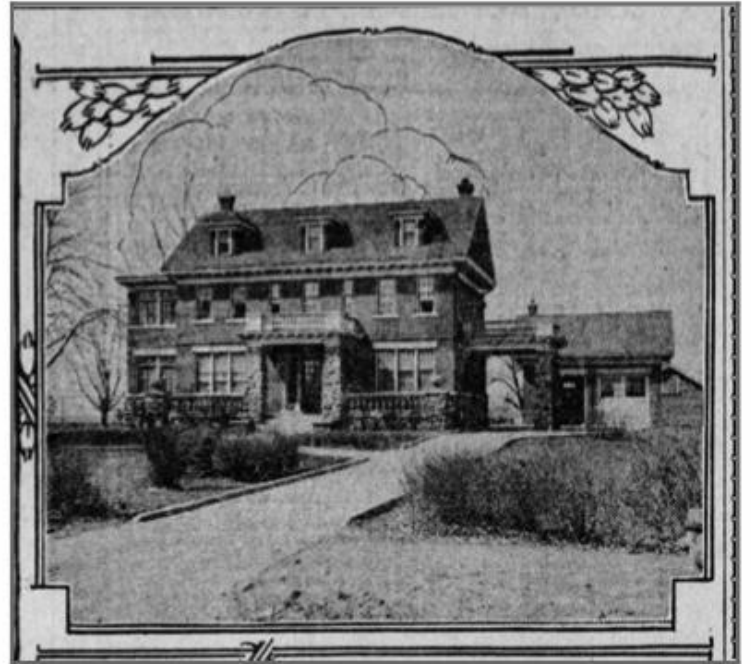


Located at 752 Front Road in LaSalle, Benoit built an impressive home for his family in the 1920s, befitting his status in the Town. In the decades since, The Benoit House has undergone a variety of changes and renovations, most has been subdivided into several apartments. The Town of LaSalle recently purchased the home and is now seeking to restore it in a sympathetic way to the era in which it was built.

Thanks to the vision and support of Council, Administration and the community of LaSalle there is a remarkable opportunity to celebrate, preserve, and promote the many layers of history that exist in this unique site and use it as a springboard for education, engagement and outreach for the entire property.

Why is this initiative important? Because culture is how we create meaning as human beings. What is a “museum”? It’s a broad definition. Museums are an integral part of their communities and can be many different things. Museums create and collect stories, objects, and ideas.

Museums create conversations. Museums have a deep history throughout civilization as places of learning, study, research. In the 21st century museums continue to change and evolve, as they should. They are social gathering places you can go with family and friends, unique locations for special events, forums for ideas and much more. Museums can be catalysts and drivers of economic growth, create educational opportunities, encourage tourism and bring a wide variety of benefits to its community.



GOALS

1. Create a three- to five-year strategic cultural plan for the development and creation of the Benoit Historic House, ensuring full integration into the LaSalle Small Coast Waterfront Experience.
2. Develop a vision and mission for the site with the community, Council, and administration.
3. Lay the foundation for the creation of a dynamic, engaging and interactive site that residents and visitors can enjoy for many years to come.

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4. Build and implement a comprehensive consultation plan to engage stakeholders throughout all planning phases to create a feeling of ownership, interest and excitement in the community to celebrate this achievement.
 5. Ensure the rich history of the buildings, the property and the wider LaSalle community is reflected wherever possible, including restoration, development, exhibitions and programming (this could include but is not limited to French, Indigenous, English, Black History and more).
 6. Investigate, interpret and advise on legislation and sector-specific issues to ensure planning and operations of The Benoit House meet all Provincial and Federal Ministry standards.
 7. Advise and assist in drafting an operating budget to ensure the facilities and grounds are sufficiently resourced moving forward.
 8. Advise on options for collections management policies for acceptance, registration, presentation, storage and conservation of artifacts.
 9. Identify and develop planning priorities for collections, exhibitions, education, outreach and other programming.
 10. Identify sources of funding and participate in the development and completion of grants and other sources of support to enrich both the project and the Town of LaSalle's heritage and cultural amenities.
 11. Ensure that plan can be expanded upon, while laying the groundwork for future phases of development and revitalization of the upper floors, coach house and garage.

TIMELINE

Week 0 - review of proposal with staff

Week 1 - departmental review + any revisions with consultant

Week 2 - Council report

Week 4 - Phase 1 begins

Weeks 4 - 8 - consult with relevant Ministries, review of public consultation, discuss current stabilization and security needs of the House

Weeks 8 - 12 - finalize terms of reference, scope of work, determine methods of engagement and consultation with stakeholders, development of draft initial work plan and recommendations for Phase 2

Weeks 12 - 16 - Completion of Phase 1; report to Council, review draft recommendations with stakeholders, plan revisions with Administration, begin development of specific timelines and deliverables

Weeks 16 - 26 - Phase 2 begins; development of specific work plans, roles and responsibilities, project management and reporting of Goals #4 - 11 created, situational analysis

Weeks 26 - 38 - begin drafting Phase 3 plan and next steps, consultation with stakeholders, development of initial communications plan

Weeks 38 - 52 - continue detailed project management, tracking and deliverables for Phase 2; Council Report and status update for Phase 2, preparation of Council Report for Phase 3.

Weeks 52+ - Phase 3 begins; timeline TBD based on resource availability, in consultation with Council and Administration.

PHASES

Phase 1 - Exploratory

Working with Administration to determine Terms of Reference, scope of work, roles and responsibilities of staff, consultant and other participants as appropriate, confirm methods of engagement with stakeholders, gathering stakeholder input and initial feedback from public consultations. Development of framework for timeline, next steps and prioritizing workflow for Phase 2.

Phase 2 - Operational Planning

Research, review and development of detailed road map incorporating Goals #4 - 11 highlighted above. This will include specific deliverables, desired outcomes, and timelines for Phase 3. Development of reporting, tracking and measurement processes to ensure goals and objectives are being met, while building in allowances for changing or unforeseen circumstances and ensuring the ability to pivot and proactively address any challenges or risks.

Phase 3 - Implementation

Begin implementation of deliverables including allocation of resources, staffing and volunteer needs, internal and external communication and operational needs identified in Phase 2. This will include specific project plans and work flows, desired outcomes, and budgets, timelines and contingency planning.

QUALIFICATIONS

With more than 20 years of diverse experience in project management, communications and consulting primarily in the arts, cultural and heritage sectors, Alysson has a deep knowledge of cultural planning along with the management and promotion of heritage sites. Highlights of note include her leadership role as Manager of Culture & Special Events at the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, where she was responsible for all aspects of Department operations for all municipal cultural facilities, which included two heritage homes in two different communities, a Museum, two theatres and two art galleries, studios and event spaces. Alysson has substantial experience in the management of historic homes, their unique needs, potential risks and individual characteristics. Alysson also played a primary role in the development of the Municipality's first-ever Municipal Cultural Plan as well as coordinated and facilitated the subsequent CK Cultural Implementation Plan. This comprehensive process included extensive public consultation and in-depth work with stakeholders and reporting. Alysson has an extensive and successful track record of advocacy and developing partnerships with the Provincial and Federal government, and secured substantial grant funding during her time with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. She managed the multi-year, multi-million dollar Tecumseh Parkway and Tecumseh Monument initiatives, two of the largest cultural initiatives successfully completed in CK in many years. She is an avid supporter of arts and heritage and believes strongly in the importance of engagement, consultation and working with stakeholders to ensure solutions reflect the needs, identities and interests of that community.

FEES AND PAYMENT TERMS

Phase 1 Exploratory - \$6000

Phase 2 Operational Planning - \$40,000

Phase 3 Implementation - \$50,000

Deposit of 20% of Phase 1 fee required to begin work. Payment terms to be agreed upon between both parties at regular intervals and deliverables. Amounts for Phases 2 and 3 are estimates at this time. These fees would be agreed-upon prior to the startup of each phase, since both could be affected or modified by the outcomes of the previous phase.

CONCLUSION

The planning and work done now will lay the groundwork for the next 50, 100 years and beyond to add incredible value and energy to the LaSalle waterfront, to the arts and cultural amenities for

residents and visitors, and to the community as a whole. By planning strategically for the future of The Benoit House as a vibrant community asset, we ensure that the rich history of this home, the history of the land and people who lived and visited here can be preserved, enriched, and celebrated for generations to come. The risk of doing nothing means once the home is gone, the memories will fade and the legacies of these people, the builders of our community, the rogues and rebels, adventurers and abolitionists, the visitors and residents will be lost as well. We are about to forge the key to open the door, walk inside and learn more about the rich history of LaSalle, while looking forward to the future. With a well-researched and detailed and progressive plan for The Benoit House, its future will be secure as a community asset for everyone to enjoy. This historic site can be one of the linchpins of the transformative Small Coast Waterfront Experience and build a legacy the Town of LaSalle can be proud of.