

# Whistler Museum Needs Assessment

(Updated March 2017, Draft v.3.2)

Whistler Museum

The logo consists of a dark blue horizontal bar with the text "Whistler Museum" in white. Below this bar is a brown horizontal bar, which is partially obscured by a small dark red square on the right side.

# Whistler Museum Needs Assessment

## 1.1 Introduction

The Whistler Museum has been in its current location since 2009. The building is the old library facility composed of four portables. As the building we are currently in is only a temporary structure and is thought to be already around forty years old the Whistler Museum & Archives Society believe that it is time to start planning for a new, permanent facility.

Since founding in 1986 the Museum has established itself as an important and valuable part of our community. We are the only organization in Whistler whose mandate is to preserve and protect our community's history and we act as the trustees of Whistler's heritage. It is vital that as the guardians of our archival and artifactual resources we work proactively to create a new facility that will serve as a permanent home.

In 2007 the Cornerstone Planning Group created a 'Master Plan' for a new museum for the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW). There are many good ideas in this plan, some of which we have already successfully implemented and others which we are planning to implement. However, it was generally felt that the size of the new facility the Master Plan recommended was too ambitious for a community of this size. The current Museum staff and board are in agreement with this sentiment. We wish for a sustainable facility that does not overstretch the resources of the Museum or the community.

The following document outlines the requirements for a new Whistler Museum & Archives. The report is a preliminary assessment conducted by the Museum's staff & board. The next stage in our proposal will be to conduct a feasibility study to further establish our needs, identify potential locations and to determine both operational and capital costs for a new facility.

## 2.1 Summary of requirements

The following table outlines a breakdown of the space in our current facility, the recommendations of the 2007 Master Plan and the Museum's needs as estimated in 2013.

Facility Requirements	Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
Visitor Services (Reception, Gift Shop, Foyer, Ski Hall of Fame)	308	1499	2200 (1500 without the WSHoF)	3500 (2500 without the WSHoF)
Programing Areas	432*	2801	240 (960 including dual purpose space)	440
Exhibit Areas	1516	5091	4500	4500
Collection Management (Archive & artifact storage)	1120	3875	2130	2000
Office space	588	1842	832	850
Research	0	611	100	160
Building Services	180	969	383	1345
<b>Total net assignable area</b>	<b>2880 (+ 976 offsite storage)</b> <b>TOTAL: 3856</b>	<b>16688</b>	<b>10385</b> (8609 if artifacts are stored offsite)	<b>12795</b>

\*288 ft<sup>2</sup> of the programming area has dual purpose use as exhibit space

### 3.1 Visitor Services Area

Visitor services include the foyer, reception desk & gift shop. Our proposed area is unusually large as we also propose that this space be used to house a “Whistler Sports Hall of Fame”. This exhibit would be free to the public and would serve as an attraction and an enticement into the new exhibit. This model has been successfully used in the Nanaimo Museum.

*What changes are required?*

- **Space for a workstation.** There is no workstation in the current reception area. A workstation is desirable so that staff manning the reception can also work on other projects. This would reduce the need to employ extra staff to man the reception as current staff and summer students could do it.
- **Space for school / coach groups to convene before entering the exhibit.** At the present time, gathering groups at the Museum is chaotic and impractical due to lack of this type of space.
- **Larger gift shop.** With increased admission we anticipate greater sales in the gift shop, requiring expanded space. Gift shops are an excellent source of revenue for Museums.
- **Whistler Sports Hall of Fame.** This could be exhibited in this area free of charge, it would draw people in and encourage them to pay for our other exhibits. The SHoF would take up roughly 1000ft<sup>2</sup>
- **Circulation Hallway.** This hallway will connect the visitor service area to the exhibit space.

Visitor Services Area:

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21)(ft <sup>2</sup> )
308 Foyer: 96 Gift shop: 120 Reception: 64	1499	2200 (1500 without WSHoF)	3500 (2500 without the WSHoF)

## 3.2 Programming Space

Currently the programming space consists of the “Board Room” (a 144ft<sup>2</sup> flexible space with sliding doors that can join the exhibit area) and 288ft<sup>2</sup> of exhibit space. When we hold events we put out chairs or tables. The space can comfortably sit 50-60 people, however, some of our events could have attendance of 70-120 people if we could accommodate them. Visibility is poor at the back of the room.

### *What changes are required?*

**Modular space** creating three different sized programming areas. The exhibit panels and cases in the main exhibit area should be moveable to accommodate more people as necessary (this method is used successfully in the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre). Having the programming space fully integrated into the exhibit is a bonus, not a disadvantage. Holding Speaker Series and other similar events within the exhibit space positively adds to the atmosphere, and makes our exhibits more visible to guests during events.

The three stages of our programming area would be as follows:

- 1.) A designated programming area that is separate from the exhibit that seats up to 35 people. School group presentations and other programs can take place in this area. It can be rented to external groups without interrupting visitors in the exhibit. It can also be used as a general work area, for example if there are lots of volunteers working on a collection project.
- 2.) Space can expand into the exhibit so 25 more chairs can be added. This can hold events of up to 60 people such as one of our moderately popular speaker series events
- 3.) Space can expand even further into the exhibit to seat 60 more people. This will allow us to hold events with up to 120 people. This will allow us to hold some of our more popular events in-house.

Square footage of the three stages:

$$35 = 240\text{ft}^2$$

$$60 = 200\text{ft}^2* (440 \text{ in total})$$

$$120 = 520\text{ft}^2* (960 \text{ in total})$$

- These areas would share their space with the exhibit so do not add to the total square footage.

## Programming Space:

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
432	2801	960	440

### 3.3 Exhibit Space

The current space is very small with low ceilings. Visitors are regularly deterred by the small size. We do not have enough space to display our larger exhibits. One of our best artifacts, Myrtle Philip's canoe, is displayed in the library because the Museum cannot host it. There is also no space for temporary exhibits. We currently only change a section of our permanent exhibits once every 2-3 years.

#### *What changes are required?*

- **A larger exhibit space** with 14ft ceilings in at least some areas to create more impressive exhibits and hang artifacts.
- **Space for temporary exhibits.** This space can be curated by the Museum and by other community groups. A key community group would be the Arts Council - there is talk of a need for a local art gallery in Whistler and this space could be the solution.
- A number of **traveling exhibits from national museums** available to smaller museums. They cost in the region of \$7,000-\$10,000 including shipping. At the time of writing it is possible to get grants to host such exhibits from Canadian Heritage. To do this we would need about 1500ft<sup>2</sup> and the space would have to be Class A Museum Space. Whether to make accommodation for such traveling exhibits will be one of the questions we need to answer in the feasibility study.

## Exhibit Space:

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements(ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
1508	5091	4500	4500

## 3.4 Collection Management

Storage of archives and artifacts is an essential behind-the-scenes function of all museums.

### Archive Storage

Our archive space is stored onsite in the Museum. It is currently 98% full and is growing at a rate of 6.5ft<sup>2</sup> of shelf space a year. The current archive room is not climate controlled, although other preservation methods such as metal shelving and acid free boxes are in place. There is currently office space in the archive room. This is only possible because of lack of climatic control in the area; proper archive storage space should be kept at a temperature that is too cold to work in.

#### *What changes are required?*

- **A larger archive storage space.** At the current level of growth 274ft<sup>2</sup> should cater for the next 30 years.
- **Proper climatic control.** This will ensure preservation of the archival materials.
- **Shared storage space with the RMOW.** We understand that the RMOW is in need of storage space for its archival material. If a properly climate controlled facility were to be built for the Museum it would make sense for the space to be made larger and the two organizations share the storage area. The RMOW could have its own locked section to address security concerns.

## Artifact Storage

Our artifacts are all stored off-site: 336ft<sup>2</sup> in the basement of the conference centre and 640ft<sup>2</sup> in shipping containers in the highways yard opposite Alta Vista. The space is approximately 75% full and expanding at a rate of 55ft<sup>2</sup> of shelf space per year. The shipping containers particularly are not considered appropriate for the long-term survival of artifacts.

### *What changes are required?*

- **A larger artifact storage space.** At the current level of growth 1976ft<sup>2</sup> should cater for the next 20 years.
- **Proper climatic control.** To ensure long-term survival the artifacts need to be taken out of the shipping containers and stored with proper climate control.
- **Onsite storage.** 1000ft<sup>2</sup> to ensure proper storage of artifacts that are more susceptible to environmental changes in temperature and humidity. 976ft<sup>2</sup> of offsite storage should be adequate for the next 20 years. Any expansion requirements should be as offsite storage.

## Quarantine Room

Donated items may have insect infestations, mold or other conditions that could contaminate the whole collection. Having a quarantine room would allow us to store new donations separately from the rest of the collection to be monitored for signs of infestation. This space does not need to be large, approximately 80ft<sup>2</sup> should suffice, and would be part of the 1000ft<sup>2</sup> onsite storage area.

### *What changes are required?*

- **An 80ft<sup>2</sup> area** stored separately from the collections.

## Collection Management:

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
1120	3875	2130	2000

### 3.5 Office Space

At present we have 3 full-time year-round staff members and one part-time staff member who works off-site. Our current office space is adequate for this number of staff. However in the summer we regularly employ 3 summer students through the Young Canada Works program bringing our staff to 6. We also have temporary project staff at other times of the year and often have volunteers. When there are more than three staff members our current office space is very over-crowded.

#### *What changes are required?*

- **Two more workstations @ 72ft<sup>2</sup>** each plus one workstation at the reception desk. This would allow 8 people to be able to work in the Museum simultaneously.
- 100ft<sup>2</sup> **extra storage space.**
- We currently have **kitchen space** for staff use. Kitchen should be its own room next to office.
- We don't currently have any **staff room** space. Kitchen could serve as staff room.
- **Separate collections workstations** to normal office workstations to prevent damage of archives and artifacts from food and drink etc. However, the collections workstations should not be *in* the archive storage room as they are today but adjoining them, so that the archives can be kept at the colder temperatures required. These workstations are included in, not additional to, the 8 total workstations.

## Office Space:

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
588	1842	832	850

## 3.6 Research area

At present we have no dedicated research area. If someone wishes to research in the archives they use either one of the staff workstations in the archive room or we set up a table in the board room.

*What changes are required?*

- **A research workstation** should be added to the room with the collections workstations. It is important that they be together as a member of museum staff needs to be present to ensure the security of the archives. Most of our enquiries are answered by staff so there is not a huge demand for research space - one large workstation area would be sufficient. The workstation should have a slightly larger than usual desk to take into account large format archives such as maps.

## Research area:

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
0	611	100	160

### 3.7 Building Services

This includes facilities such as bathrooms, elevator space, cleaning cupboards etc. At present we have two bathrooms, (one wheelchair accessible), a small cleaning cupboard and a foyer for the bathrooms.

#### *What changes are required?*

- **An elevator** if there is more than one floor in the new building.
- **Stairs** if there is more than one floor in the new building.
- **6 more restrooms** to cater for increased visitor numbers.

#### **Building Services:**

Current building (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2007 Master Plan recommendation (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2013 Estimated Requirements (ft <sup>2</sup> )	2016 Adjustments (Lot 21) (ft <sup>2</sup> )
168	969	383	1345

### 3.8 Offsite general storage

We currently have another shipping container in the Highway works yard that is used for non-collection storage such as space exhibit panels, cases and programming equipment.

#### *What changes are required?*

- The current situation is adequate depending on how the new museum is structured. It may be necessary to have further offsite storage. (For example for storage of temporary exhibit panels). It would be more efficient, but not essential to have the storage on our premises.