



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Capital Culture Lives Here Initiative Phase 2

WORKSHOP REPORT
MARCH 31, 2022

Canada

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I. Project description

A. Background

As part of its role of caring for and protecting historic buildings, landscapes and public places that are part of Canada's cultural heritage, the National Capital Commission (NCC) is committed to cultural development, enhancing art of the highest quality in the public realm of the Capital and supporting diversity through a collaborative approach to creative placemaking.

In keeping with this commitment, the NCC launched an initiative called "Capital Culture Lives Here" in 2020. This initiative aims to connect arts and culture organizations with Canadians through the animation of heritage sites under the NCC's stewardship.

In 2021, as part of this initiative, the NCC launched a pilot project to transform the historic Rochon Residence in Ottawa into a residence for artists. Located at 138 St. Patrick Street, the federally recognized heritage house is thought to be among the oldest buildings in Lowertown and was recently rehabilitated to create an ideal space for artistic creation and animation. The NCC's request for expressions of interest (REI) was successful, and in 2022 it launched a partnership with the SAW Centre Nordic Lab artist-in-residence program.

Building on the momentum from the pilot project, and the interest it received from various organizations, the NCC plans to launch new REIs for three other heritage sites:

- the iconic Strutt House, 1220 Chemin de la Montagne, Gatineau (Gatineau Park)
- the charming former farmhouse at 108 Pine Road, Chelsea (Gatineau Park)
- the McConnell House, a heritage farmhouse on a scenic property at 1055 Chemin d'Aylmer (Gatineau)

The NCC's goal is to seek proposals for these sites that will conserve their heritage value, build awareness of their historic and cultural significance and enhance the Capital experience. In keeping with its approach for the pilot project at the Rochon Residence, the NCC held a workshop in March 2022 with members of the public to inform the development of the REIs and generate ideas about inspiring new uses, projects and partnerships for the three sites.

B. About the properties

Strutt House: A mid-century icon set among the trees

The Strutt House was the residence of well-known Canadian architect James Strutt. Built in 1955–1956 as an experimental prototype for other residences he designed, it was designated a "recognized" federal heritage building in 2016. It is perched at the top of a two-level site on the environmentally sensitive Eardley Escarpment in Gatineau Park.

Part of the innovative modern movement in architecture of its day, it was designed to sit in harmony with nature. Nestled among the trees, it also benefits from the warm sun streaming in the windows and a beautiful view of the Ottawa Valley below. The Strutt House was once a popular destination for politicians, academics, artists and the design community. The site is not universally accessible due to the steep stair access, as well as the split-level building design.

The opportunity

Given its unique design and location (zoned as an “intensive nature conservation area” in the NCC’s Gatineau Park Master Plan, 2021), residential use of the site is preferred over a more public use. It would be an ideal site for an “in-residence” program for aspiring or professional artists, ecologists, scientists or architects among others. The NCC hopes to find a partner (or partners) to enter into a multi-year lease to develop and manage this type of program at the site. Periodic public access could be granted, but the intent is that the site be limited to smaller rather than larger groups of visitors.

Opportunities to exhibit work developed through the residency program could be showcased at the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre, located approximately five kilometres from the Strutt House.

The NCC will be undertaking the rehabilitation of the Strutt House in 2022–2024. At the end of the project, the house would be ready for occupancy and animation.

108 Pine Road: A nature-inspired experience in Meech Creek Valley

This attractive brick farmhouse with a wraparound veranda, surrounded by mature pine trees, was built in 1915 by the Cross family. The building is listed on the [Registre du patrimoine culturel du Québec](#). The house features heritage architectural details throughout the interior and exterior. It is currently vacant, and has had interior finishes removed to expose the framing and structure. Unlike the case of the Strutt House, no funds have been committed by the NCC to its rehabilitation.

The opportunity

Located close to trailheads for many types of recreational and nature activities, the property offers prime access to all that the Park has to offer. However, the house is in need of significant rehabilitation. Given its location near the NCC’s parking lot P16 and parking lot P15 at Meech Creek Valley, the site is ideally situated to easily access the Gatineau Park trail network and popular destinations for recreational activities.

Brimming with potential, and located in an area that can accommodate many possible uses, 108 Pine Road could be used for the following:

- residential purposes
- education and interpretive uses
- restaurants
- visitor amenities, such as rest stops and picnic areas, accommodations
- conservation and enhancement of built and landscape heritage
- events and gathering uses

McConnell House: A heritage gem located in a dynamic corridor

This 19th century farmhouse — now a “recognized” federal heritage building — sits prominently on open, pastoral land between the Champlain Bridge and downtown Aylmer, in the Aylmer district of Gatineau. It has modest wood siding, a gabled roof and a large front veranda that runs the full length of the front facade. The connected barn, considered a rare feature among Quebec’s agricultural heritage properties, provides ample space that can accommodate a variety of indoor activities. The surrounding property is quite large, and offers an opportunity for outdoor programming. However, the house and attached barn are in need of significant rehabilitation.

The building is currently vacant, and has had interior finishes removed to expose the framing and structure. Its location on a main transportation route between east and west Gatineau is ideal to connect the public to commercial activity. As with the property at 108 Pine Road, no funds have yet been committed by the NCC for the rehabilitation of the McConnell House.

The opportunity

The McConnell House is uniquely situated on open, pastoral land — a beautiful contrast to the urban backdrop. Given its location, the site benefits from high visibility, accessibility and nearby access to cycling facilities and public transit, with the latter set to improve in the coming years. The size of the lot and existing parking facilities also provide ample opportunity to accommodate multiple programs.

The Urban Lands Plan permits a variety of uses, which may include the following:

- education and interpretive uses
- restaurants
- visitor amenities, such as rest stops and picnic areas
- conservation and enhancement of built and landscape heritage
- events and gathering uses

Ideally, such uses will contribute to the animation and public enjoyment of the Capital, maintain a level of free public access to the site and respect its heritage and scenic character.

II. Engagement with the community

A. Overview

The NCC is seeking creative partners to animate three heritage sites under its stewardship in the Outaouais region: Strutt House at 1220 Chemin de la Montagne in Gatineau, the residence at 108 Pine Road in Chelsea and the McConnell House at 1055 Chemin d'Aylmer in Gatineau. As part of its efforts to explore partnership opportunities and better understand the needs and interests of potential creative partners, the NCC held a workshop in March 2022 with interested parties and members of the community.

a. Workshop objectives

The workshop objectives were as follows:

- to share the NCC's vision for partnerships for the three properties as part of the Capital Culture Lives Here initiative
- to hear the community's and stakeholders' ideas about potential uses and partnership opportunities for these sites

b. Date and time

- Thursday March 31, 2022, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am and from 6 pm to 8 pm (EDT).

B. Engagement approach

The two workshops were held via Microsoft Teams. They featured a bilingual presentation by NCC staff, followed by:

- a question and answer period
- a digital whiteboard exercise to identify existing programs and explore future uses for the three properties
- a plenary to report back on the ideas shared during the previous activity
- a discussion about the needs and requirements of potential partners
- a final comment period

At the end of the session, participants were invited to provide feedback on the event by using an online polling application.

NCC staff took notes throughout the meeting, and ideas provided via digital sticky notes during the whiteboard activity were saved as screenshots.

C. Invitation and promotion

An invitation was sent to approximately 250 stakeholders representing groups in the following sectors: arts and culture, architecture and design, community/resident groups, government (municipal/federal), heritage, Indigenous, nature conservancy, recreation and leisure, and science and academia. Former residents of 108 Pine Road and the Strutt House were also invited. In addition, the workshop was promoted on the NCC’s website, where interested parties were invited to sign up to participate.

D. Participants

a. Workshops

- A total of 24 participants

III. What we heard

Ideas for potential uses

As part of the digital whiteboard activity, participants were invited to post ideas about the types of programs they thought could be established in these properties. Ideas were grouped into two categories: existing programs and new ideas.

Existing programs and potential partners

Participants pointed to a number of examples of institutions with existing programs that could serve as inspiration for one or several of the properties. They also highlighted partners they believed would be a good fit for the Capital Culture Lives Here initiative. These included the following:

| Property | Existing programs and potential partners |
|--------------|--|
| Strutt House | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carleton University’s Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism• Cégep de l’Outaouais• The Gatineau region’s cultural community• L’Association des auteurs et auteures de l’Outaouais (AAAO)• La Filature• Le Centre d’exposition L’Imagier• Culture Outaouais• Grantham Foundation Artist Residency• The Tree Sisters• The Canadian League of Poets• DAÏMON Artist-run Centre• AXENÉ07 Artist-run Centre |

| Property | Existing programs and potential partners |
|-----------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Fab sur Mill Arts Centre • Farrellton Artists' Space • The Museum of Nature's Natural Heritage Campus • Centre d'artistes Caravansérail artist residency at the Maison Rioux • Québec-Ontario Artist-In-Residence Program with the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ) • The Québec Religious Heritage Council (CPRQ)'s Program targeting the repurposing of underutilized places of worship of heritage value • Canadian Centre for Architecture |
| 108 Pine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L'Université du Québec en Outaouais • Gatineau Valley Historical Society • Forillon National Park family history exhibit • Fogo Island Arts visiting artist program • Rideau Lakes Cottages — Beveridges Lockmaster's House • Université du Québec Institut des Sciences de la Forêt tempérée (ISFORT) |
| McConnell House | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Gatineau • Cégep du Vieux Montréal • Conseil des métiers d'art du Québec • Aylmer Heritage Association • Association des jeunes d'Aylmer • Université du Québec en Outaouais • Musée régional de l'Outaouais • Dérives urbaines • Gatineau cultural and heritage organizations • Salon du livre de l'Outaouais • Embassies with literary and writer-in-residence programs • Local community associations • Steckle Heritage Farm • Local developers |

New ideas

Participants put forward the following ideas about ways to animate the three properties:

| Property | New ideas |
|-----------------|---|
| Strutt House | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist bed and breakfast • Life-coach-in-residence / nature coaching • Artist- or architect-in-residence program • Scientist-in-residence program in collaboration with research institutions • Interpretation and educational centre for Canadian architecture and design • Architectural co-working space • Architectural display of James Strutt’s modern design through history • Doors open program • A space for professional tutorials in collaboration with a school of architecture or building science • Exhibit centre to promote the ecological and cultural importance of Gatineau Park through the medium of art • Nature coaching to offer experiences of outdoor training or experiential learning in a natural environment |
| 108 Pine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest school • Dark sky / astronomy program • Citizen science program • Interpretation centre to introduce visitors to Gatineau Park’s history, agricultural landscape and natural environment • Event venue for retreats and private events • Bird-watching and outdoor experience centre • Shelter or guest house for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing • Community-oriented use • Human history and built heritage interpretation centre • Bed and breakfast • Doors open program • Restaurant • Tea room • Gallery or studio space • Environmental education centre for all ages |
| McConnell House | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for urban agriculture • Heritage and history lab |

| Property | New ideas |
|----------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops on historical restoration with regional partners and craftspeople • Bike rentals • Exhibition and interpretation space on regional archaeological history and heritage • Community centre • Event venue in the property's barn • Repertory movie theatre • Restaurant • Doors open program |

In discussing potential uses and partners, some participants emphasized the following:

- Future uses for the properties should be respectful of their respective histories and surroundings, and should include elements that educate visitors about their past.
- The NCC should consider tearing down properties that are in especially poor condition, and put rehabilitation funds to other uses, such as the acquisition of lands to support ecological corridors.
- Future uses should highlight and value the built and natural environment in which the properties are located, such as the Chemin d'Aylmer and the ecological heritage of the Outaouais region.
- Gatineau Park is incredibly unique with respect to its biodiversity and, as such, conservation and habitat protection should be top of mind when animating properties within its boundaries.
- Public access to the properties should be supported, and private or commercially intensive uses avoided.
- The NCC should ensure that future uses do not involve developing the properties beyond existing building footprints or heights so as to protect natural spaces and ecological corridors.
- All efforts should be made to ensure none of the properties fall into ruin. Future uses should have a public component and be based on a community-oriented approach. For instance, rehabilitation could go hand-in-hand with apprenticeships and programming to create a sense of community.

Needs and requirements for potential partners

Participants were asked to share their views on the needs and requirements of potential partners. As part of this discussion, participants highlighted the importance of the following:

- having a space that is in good condition to be able to safely animate it and attract the community to its new vocation

- better understanding what could realistically be done with the space, in terms of permitted uses and physical dimensions
- ensuring that financial parameters are clearly defined so as to allow organizations to determine the viability of developing a proposal
- including more information about the property at 1224 Chemin de la Montagne that is adjacent to the Strutt House, which could complement efforts to animate the main property
- greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the NCC vis-à-vis the successful partner(s), as well as the anticipated timelines for funding and rehabilitation

Others made the following suggestions:

- involving partners, such as educational institutions, from the design stage of rehabilitation onward so that they can contribute to both the restoration and animation of the properties
- looking farther afield for potential partners and thinking outside of the box
- continuing to engage with individuals and groups who have a personal connection to the properties and who can help support and guide the Capital Culture Lives Here initiative
- extending the deadline for proposals to better reflect the time and effort required to secure funding and rehabilitate one or more properties for the purpose of animating them

Participants also expressed interest in sharing information about the Capital Culture Lives Here initiative with their respective contacts.

IV. Response to feedback

The NCC is grateful for the ideas and feedback shared by all participants. These perspectives have informed the approach taken for the Requests for Expressions of Interest (REI) for the three heritage properties, as well as the additional property at 1224 chemin de la Montagne.

The possible uses for these properties that were suggested at the workshop were considered in the development of the REIs. Participants also provided valuable recommendations about potential partners who did not attend the workshop and the NCC has followed up on several of those leads.

During the workshop, several key stakeholders and individuals with expertise expressed interest in the Strutt House rehabilitation. As a result, the NCC is looking at engagement opportunities for those groups that are distinct from discussions about property uses and animation.

V. Next steps

The REIs for the three properties will be launched on June 15, 2022. The closing date for the REIs is 11:59 pm (EDT) on September 30, 2022.

Upon receipt of an expression of interest that meets and/or exceeds the mandatory requirements, the NCC may contact the prospective partner to further develop the proposal for an agreement for one or several of the three properties.

Should more than one proposal meet the mandatory criteria, partnership opportunities that are most compatible with one or several of the properties and the Capital Culture Lives Here initiative will be considered in competition. To ensure fairness and transparency for all prospective partners who submit an REI, submissions will be evaluated on the basis of a standardized set of criteria provided in the REI.

Following evaluation, the NCC will engage first with the expression of interest that most closely fulfills the goals of the program. The successful partner(s) for the properties will be selected to launch the program in 2023 or subsequent years.