

George Forster Historical House and Barn Restoration

Funding Program: Infrastructure Stimulus Fund

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Between 2009 and 2011, Richmond Hill used a portion of its Infrastructure Stimulus funding to renovate the George Forster Historical House and Barn.

The George Forster House was built circa 1830 and is comprised of a two storey main building originally constructed of hand hewn timber logs. The building was modified over the course of the 19th century through the addition of an additional wing made of stone, the provision of cedar shakes for the roof, construction of a brick masonry fireplace and chimney and the provision of an exterior pine porch. The building is currently 2500 square feet, and both the exterior and the interior were historically designated by Richmond Hill in July 1996. Associated with the house is an 1850 square foot barn. The house and barn are set within the 89.5 acre Phyllis Rawlinson Park, a park dedicated to four season passive outdoor recreation and environmental education.

Although the George Forster House is an important part of Richmond Hill's history, the condition of the facility had deteriorated over the years to the point where significant capital investment was required to rehabilitate the house for continued use. The assistance of the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund allowed the Town of Richmond Hill to undertake a comprehensive restoration program of both the interior and exterior of the house. This restoration project was designed to respect the historical features of the house and barn while bringing it in line with current building, fire, and accessibility codes. The restoration measures included a renewable energy component in the form of geo-thermal heating, as well as energy efficient doors, windows, insulation, heating, and air conditioning systems. A general upgrade of the site works around the building was also undertaken.

Project Highlights:

Shared federal, provincial and municipal investment in restoring heritage properties

Upgrades include:

- Restoration of interior and exterior of building
- Installation of energy efficient equipment

Upgraded site uses include:

- Youth environmental and natural heritage programs
- Display of artifacts from the site's history
- Meeting space for community groups



The primary aim of the restoration project is to allow George Forster House to be used for both the delivery of expanded programs for school age children from Kindergarten to Grade 8, and a meeting space for local community groups.



The programs offered will focus on the area's natural heritage and environmental education, as well as outdoor recreation programs. The building will also be used to display artifacts and exhibits related to the site's history.



Richmond Hill, where people come together to build our community.

PROJECT FACTS



PROJECT BUDGET: \$2 276 000
COMPLETION DATE: March 2011

PROJECT BENEFITS

The restoration of the George Forster House and Barn has had many benefits to the citizens of Richmond Hill, consistent with the objectives of the Town's 2009 Strategic Plan:

Investing in Richmond Hill's Heritage

The George Forster House and Barn is one of the oldest heritage properties in Richmond Hill. The restoration of this building and the improvements to the surrounding lands represents an investment in preserving the unique spaces of Richmond Hill.



Unique Programming

The George Forster House provides a new community space focused on delivering environmental programs to youth, giving residents an opportunity to learn more about the area's rich natural heritage.



Environmental Awareness

In addition to the energy-efficient components added in the renovation of the site, the specialized environmental programs delivered at the George Forster House also contribute to enhancing public understanding of environmental issues.

Accessibility

This project brought the George Forster House up to current accessibility requirements, improving access for those with disabilities.

In addition to the long-term benefits realized by this project, the restoration of the George Forster House provided short-term economic stimulus through direct infrastructure investment and job creation.



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