



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

# Rochon Residence Creative Placemaking Initiative

WORKSHOP REPORT  
APRIL 9, 2021

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 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 has launched a new initiative called "Capital Culture Lives Here". This initiative aims to connect arts and culture organizations with Canadians through the animation of heritage sites under the NCC's stewardship.

The Rochon Residence has been selected as a pilot for this program. This NCC heritage building will be the first to host an artist-in-residence program offered by a creative partner organization. If this pilot is a success, we hope to build new creative partnerships for the animation of other heritage sites.

### B. About the Rochon Residence

The Rochon Residence is a small, two-bedroom house located at 138 St. Patrick Street in Ottawa's ByWard Market, across from the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica National Historic Site of Canada and the National Gallery of Canada. Its construction dates to the early 1830s, and the building is a vestige of Ottawa's early development.

The architecture of the Rochon Residence represents a traditional one-storey house of Lowertown in Ottawa, built with materials such as squared timber and wood siding. It was once the home of woodcarver Flavien Rochon, who is known to have carved the stalls and sanctuary of the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica in 1844, as well as interior features at the Library of Parliament.

The NCC has been renting the Rochon Residence to private entities for many years. We are currently undertaking [rehabilitation work](#) to protect and preserve the building's heritage components. The property will be fully renovated and ready for occupancy as part of the Capital Culture Lives Here artist-in-residence program in winter 2022.

## II. Engagement with the arts and culture community

### A. Overview

The NCC is seeking creative partners to establish an artist-in-residence program at the Rochon Residence, a recognized federal heritage building in the heart of Canada's Capital. As part of its effort to better understand the needs and interests of potential creative partners, the NCC held a workshop with members of the National Capital Region's arts and culture community.

## a. Workshop objectives

The workshop objectives for the artist-in-residence pilot project were as follows:

- Initiate a dialogue with the arts and culture community about creative placemaking ideas and partnerships in Canada's Capital.
- Share the NCC's vision for a pilot project at the Rochon Residence.
- Hear the community's ideas about potential uses for this site and other NCC properties.

## b. Date and time

- Friday April 9, 2021, from 10 am to noon

## B. Engagement approach

The workshop was held via Microsoft Teams. It featured a bilingual presentation by NCC staff, followed by a question and discussion period. During the discussion period, participants were split into two smaller English-speaking and French-speaking groups. A plenary session was held at the end of the workshop, during which each group summarized the points that had been raised in their respective breakout rooms.

NCC staff took notes throughout the meeting.

## C. Invitation and promotion

In preparation for the workshop, NCC staff compiled a list of stakeholder groups, including local and national arts and culture organizations, as well as community groups located in the area surrounding the Rochon Residence. Staff communicated with each of these stakeholder groups to gauge interest in the Capital Culture Lives Here initiative, and to inquire about any other groups that might also be interested in exploring partnership opportunities. An invitation to the workshop was sent to over 50 stakeholders identified as part of this process. The workshop was also promoted on the NCC's website, where interested parties were invited to sign up to participate.

## D. Participants

### a. Workshop

- A total of 23 participants

## III. What we heard

### General comments

- Participants were appreciative of the NCC's efforts in organizing this event, and enjoyed the bilingual format of the event.

- Participants shared their interest in the initiative and were attracted by the prospect of creating opportunities through partnerships in Canada’s Capital.
- Participants expressed interest in both the Rochon Residence and the other prospective NCC sites identified during the presentation.
- Several participants indicated that prospective partners who would require external sources of funding would need significant lead time to apply for funds to cover program costs.
- Participants were keen to inform partners and other organizations about the pilot project, even if their organizations decided not to submit an expression of interest.
- Participants were curious to know how they could stay informed about the NCC’s Capital Culture Lives Here initiative.

### **Pilot project timeline**

- Participants demonstrated a strong interest in the pilot project timeline. This was based primarily on concerns around access to funding (potentially through partnerships with other organizations) in order to develop and launch an artist-in-residence program by the winter of 2022.
  - One participant explained that the proposed timeline is not achievable for most not-for-profit organizations, because it would not leave sufficient time to apply for grants.

### **Terms of lease**

- Most participants were receptive to the NCC’s proposed vision for the Rochon Residence, though there were many questions concerning the terms of lease and the respective roles of the NCC and creative partner.
  - One participant pointed out that, since budget is the driving factor, the terms of lease must be clearly communicated from the outset to determine if the rental rate is feasible for their organization. This participant also highlighted the importance of clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved (for example, whether the partner or the artist will need to furnish the space).
  - Some participants expressed a preference for the Rochon Residence to be fully furnished, rather than having only basic appliances (typical of a standard rental unit), as this would lower the overall costs for their organization and, potentially, for the artist-in-residence.
  - Other participants suggested that adjustments to the rent or a subsidized rate would be significant considerations, as this would make it more viable for prospective partners. Many indicated that the market rate would be cost-prohibitive and that cost sharing, or other forms of assistance, would be necessary.
  - One participant suggested that the Rochon Residence be offered at a stable rate for shorter stays (e.g. an “Art BnB”), using a booking system for rotating artists.

This would be more attractive than staying in hotels, which have highly variable rates.

- One participant indicated that, if the Rochon Residence could be offered at below-market rate, their organization could fulfill their vision of providing a residency for artists from underserved communities.

### **Program and property management**

- Some participants explained that, although their organization could develop and manage an artist-in-residence program, the day-to-day management and coordination of the space would require additional resources.
  - One participant indicated that many prospective partners would likely seek additional capacity by way of a multi-partner arrangement to finance and manage the program.
  - One participant explained that, as the partner, they would need to secure funding to hire a management coordinator to oversee the property and/or rollout of the program.
  - Some participants said that partnering with several organizations to share management and operations of the Rochon Residence would be necessary or would present advantages.

### **Use of the Rochon Residence**

- Many participants expressed concerns about the viability of an artist-in-residence program due to the space limitations of the Rochon Residence.
  - One participant commented that, due to the building's size, an artist-in-residence program may be unrealistic for artists who practise visual arts, music or theatre. The participant suggested that the building be used as a residence only, and that another NCC heritage site could be used as a studio or workshop.
- There was some interest on the part of participants about the requirements and regulations relating to the use of the Rochon Residence and the surrounding NCC lands.
  - One participant inquired as to whether or not the NCC would be responsible for meeting code requirements for federal heritage buildings in the case of the Rochon Residence and, if so, whether or not the corporation has developed a strategy aimed at meeting all applicable code requirements.
  - One participant also asked if the NCC has a conservation and maintenance plan for the Rochon Residence, in view of its proposed use as both a residence and an artist's studio or workshop.

### **Focus on heritage**

- One participant inquired about what portion of the Rochon Residence's architectural and heritage features have been preserved over time and will remain after the rehabilitation is complete.

- One participant emphasized the importance of finding a use for heritage buildings because, if left unused, they are at risk of dilapidation, vandalism or arson, which is concerning for those who value history and heritage.

#### **Other programmatic visions**

- Participants shared an array of ideas for potential uses of the Rochon Residence apart from, or in addition to, an artist-in-residence program.
  - One participant shared their enthusiasm for the idea of adaptive reuse (e.g. pop-up shops/animation) of historic buildings.
  - Some participants suggested that the NCC promote the initiative as a COVID-19 recovery program, in light of the fact that many arts and culture organizations have been adversely affected by the pandemic and would be eager to take advantage of such a program.
  - One participant suggested that the exterior wall of the Rochon Residence could be used by artists in residence to temporarily display works or installations that would not affect the integrity of the building.
  - One participant proposed that the Rochon Residence could provide a space for rest, contemplation, meditation and spontaneous exchanges in the heart of the Capital.
  - Some participants emphasized the importance of public access (by means of open houses, gallery exhibits and so on) which could promote community engagement and enhance the Capital experience.
- Participants described a number of existing programs run by other federal entities and/or arts organizations that could serve as examples for the pilot project.
  - One participant mentioned programs that aim to have visiting artists stay for longer periods to avoid short visits that incur high costs and a larger carbon footprint.
  - Another participant referenced residences for artists offered by the Fonderie Darling in Montréal, including international residences that are partly funded by embassies and often see financiers purchase artworks created by the artists in residence.
  - One participant pointed to an example of pairing art and well-being: the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Douglas Institute offer meditation workshops that promote artistic creation, thereby creating a space that serves both an artistic and a social mission.

#### **Scope and criteria of the request for expressions of interest**

- There were general questions related to whom (e.g. artists) or which organizations the NCC is ideally inviting to respond to the request for expressions of interest (RFEI) for the pilot project.
- One participant shared that “art” has a broad definition and, for this reason, recommended that a clear set of parameters be included in the RFEI in order for interested parties to better understand the scope of the project and whether or not

their vision (e.g. ecological stewardship, heritage conservation) aligns with the NCC's objectives.

- One participant said that it would be important for the NCC to better define its vision, approach and parameters not only for the Rochon Residence, but also for all NCC properties. For example, the terms of partnership could be clarified with respect to funding, use, acceptable forms of artistic programming and so on.
- One participant suggested that defining the broader purpose of the pilot project — cultural, community-driven, commercial or other — would help prospective partners determine what kind of funding structure/partnerships would be most appropriate.

#### **IV. Response to feedback**

The NCC is grateful for the ideas and feedback shared by participants, which have informed the approach taken for the RFEI for an artist-in-residence program at the Rochon Residence.

Based on input provided at the workshop, we have clarified the scope of the pilot project, as well as the terms of the proposed partnership — both what the NCC will bring to the table and what we are seeking from prospective partners. To address concerns raised about costs, we have adopted a cost-recovery model for the project, with opportunities for alternative leasing arrangements, including rent credits in exchange for in-kind contributions.

We also intend to bring the feedback provided at the workshop to bear on initiatives involving other NCC heritage sites. We are currently working on a structured approach to solicit ideas for other properties that would build on the workshop pertaining to the Rochon Residence.

#### **V. Next steps**

The RFEI for the Rochon Residence was launched on June 29, 2021. The closing date for this RFEI is 11:59 pm (EDT) on September 17, 2021.

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 the Rochon Residence.

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

Following evaluation, the NCC will engage first with the expression of interest that most closely fulfills the goals of the program. The successful partner for the Rochon Residence will be selected to launch the program in winter 2022.