



Creative Spaces Case Study Series

The Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning



This Creative Spaces Case Study Series is supported by:



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Introduction

These in-depth case studies will serve as a resource for arts and heritage organizations embarking on a capital project to learn from the successes and challenges of others in the sector.

In these case studies, we will be analyzing the **why** (why they took on this capital project), the **what** (what were they building and creating), the **who** (who are they serving, who supported this project, who led this project and who they hired), the **how** (how was the project financially supported and what positions were created/how were they funded), and **the ongoing** (what happened after? How is the building maintained/operated? Is it sustainable? How is revenue generated?) behind each project.

We have engaged a wide range of spaces from across the province from varying operational models, size, location, project size and artistic discipline. The case studies will focus on each organization's respective process for completing each project; from the planning phase, to the building phase, to the operations and maintenance phase. Following the completion of all 20 case studies, a Best Practice Summary will be developed and released on ABO's website, free for all to access.

The case study series is supported by the Learning Series, which is a collection of webinars and workshops that support ABO's core programs. Webinars that highlight the capital projects featured in this case studies series will be made available throughout 2018 – 2020. Please check www.artsbuildontario.ca/learningseries for upcoming dates.

The case study series is supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage and Canada Council for the Arts.

ArtsBuild Ontario

ArtsBuild Ontario is the only organization in Ontario dedicated to realizing long-term solutions to building, managing and financing the sustainable arts facilities needed in our communities.

ABO offers tools, resources and programs that support arts organizations with their creative space projects. ABO's core programs include Accessibility in Creative Spaces, SpaceFinder in Canada, Arts Facilities Mentoring Network, and Asset Planner for the Arts.

The Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning

Interviewee

Nadine Baker, Facility Manager, The Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning

Mandate

Vision: Connecting people and communities through the arts.

Mission: A welcoming destination where artists, arts organizations, and the community come together to explore, create, and be inspired.

Mandate: The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning is a Not-for-Profit, charitable organization that operates an historic city-owned building on Kingston's waterfront. We provide professionally equipped and affordable space to artists and arts organizations for artistic creation.

We are home to 11 tenant arts organizations, eight resident artist studios, and three multi-use rentable public spaces. We are a dynamic arts hub that coordinates and creates high-quality, accessible, arts-focused programming for all levels of artistic abilities and experience.

Our partners include artists, arts and community organizations, The Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, and the City of Kingston's Department of Cultural Services.

As a unique cultural landmark for Kingston residents and area visitors, we enhance learning and public participation in the arts.

Historical Background

Situated along Lake Ontario, the Tett has a beautiful waterfront location. The building is close to Portsmouth Village and the Alwington and Sunnyside neighbourhoods as well as Portsmouth Olympic Harbour, Queen's University and downtown Kingston.

Both the J. K. Tett Centre, and the adjacent Stella Buck Building, originally formed part of the Morton Brewery and Distillery complex that was reputed to be the largest of its kind in North America during the mid-19th century. James Morton himself was involved in lumbering, shipping, the Grand Trunk railroad and a furniture business utilizing convict labour. The building and the site have also served as a military hospital, a regional headquarters for National Defense and office space for City staff. Most recently, prior to renovations, it served as the home to a number of cultural groups and not-for-profit organizations. This creative use of the site was initiated by John K. Tett, a former Director of Recreation for the City of Kingston, for whom the J.K. Tett Centre was named.

Project Summary

The City of Kingston supported the rejuvenation of the J.K. Tett Centre and be renamed the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning with a new mandate to serve the community as a creative hub. The building is owned by the City of Kingston, who completed a feasibility study and business plan with Artscape to create a sustainable model for offering below market rental space to arts organizations. The project took 10 years from inception to completion, with a feasibility study completed in 2005 and construction completed in 2015.

The Friends of the Tett and the Board of Directors for the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, worked closely with the City of Kingston’s Cultural Services to see this project to fruition. The building is now operated by the independent non-profit, the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning.

The “What”

Who owns and operates The Tett Centre?

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning (TCCL) is an incorporated non-profit charitable organization that operates the building. The heritage building itself is owned by the City of Kingston. The TCCL operates as an umbrella organization for the building and has a master lease with the City of Kingston’s Cultural Services. The TCCL has subtenant and licensees (for the creative studios).

What was The Tett Centre building and creating?

The former J.K. Tett Centre was operated as a *community* hub rather than a designated *creative* hub, and was functionally and ascetically in poor condition. Collective community programming was not offered as part of the space’s mandate and tenants operated mostly in a siloed environment.

In 2005, the results of an internal services review from the City of Kingston and the aspiration of Queen’s University to establish a new performing arts centre (the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts) led the City to reevaluate the role of the J.K. Tett Centre as a creative hub. Both spaces would establish an “arts cluster” and offer a multi-disciplinary range of opportunities designed to foster appreciation of arts and culture.

What is a creative hub?

The Department of Canadian Heritage’s Canada Cultural Spaces Fund has defined creative hub as “a multi-tenant facility which brings together professionals from a range of arts or heritage sectors and creative disciplines. Creative hubs feature diverse business models, such as not-for-profit and for-profit organizations and self-employed creative workers. Creative hubs provide multiple users with shared space, equipment and amenities; opportunities for idea exchange, collaboration and/or professional

development; and offer space and programming that is accessible to the public.” (Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund/application-guidelines.html#a25>)

In 2005-2006, Artscape facilitated a community visioning process for the space. In the initial business plan for the revision of the J.K. Tett Centre, five development principals emerged from the community engagement process:

- Create a sense of discovery and learning
- Maintain affordability and enhance sustainability
- Enhance collaboration and connectivity
- Develop role as a community-based creative hub
- Maximize strategic partnerships

Preliminary design work started in 2008-2009 as part of the City of Kingston’s Phase 2 Feasibility Study for capital improvements. Designs were created with the intention of enhancing the space to “facilitate collaboration, preserve heritage authenticity, enhance community participation and heighten its profile as a civic arts complex” (J.K. Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning Business Plan; February 2010).

While construction plans were underway, previous tenants of the J.K. Tett Centre had to find alternative space, and submit an expression of interest to be considered as a new tenant in the revitalized TCCL. In order to be considered, new tenants had to be non-profit arts organizations with a mandate that supported the vision of the rejuvenated TCCL as well as a strong business plan and commitment to offer arts programming to the wider community. Artscape and an Arts Advisory Committee evaluated the expressions of interest and identified prospective tenants to move into the TCCL.

Initially, the City of Kingston envisioned the building being operated by a tenant organization that would act as the Facility Operator. They would hold a 10-year master lease to oversee the building, raising additional capital and operational funding to develop the building and its programming. However, none of the organizations who expressed interest in the role of Facility Operator had the capacity to assume this responsibility. Instead, the City of Kingston opted to have the facility run by a separate non-profit organization, which is now the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning. They provide facility operations and programming, manage a rentals program, and encourage public participation in the arts with the space.

The “Why”

Why was this capital project taken on?

The community and the City of Kingston ultimately supported the rejuvenation of the former J.K. Tett Centre. Through community consultations and a feasibility study, it was evident that the community wanted a focal point for arts and culture that complimented Queen’s University. The City of Kingston, with support from The Friends of The Tett – a collective of community advocates that supported the rejuvenation of The Tett - brought the project to council who voted in favour of the restoration of The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning.

Why did The Tett Centre engage its community and make a case for the project?

The community’s vision for a new arts centre led to what is now TCCL. The Friends of The Tett and the City of Kingston focused on gaining support from community members invested in the arts. This ranged from strong supporters of to the arts, to those who attended local arts events or enrolled their children in arts programming. Notably, the City also held community consultations to inform the project and completed a feasibility study, which involved meetings around what “collaboration” meant among the TCCL’s tenants and the City of Kingston. This concept of collaboration and service of arts and culture to the community evolved into a business plan, led by Artscape. It incorporated community consultations and identified possible tenants that could deliver arts and cultural programming to the wider community – a requirement of all tenants at the TCCL. As a result, tenants provided art programming to the community in the form of art classes, performances, open studio hours, and open houses.

The “Who”

Who does the space strive to serve?

The TCCL serves its arts tenants, renters and the greater community. It provides creative space at below market rent for multiple arts disciplines including; dance, visual arts, pottery and weaving to name a few. Tenants provide programming to the wider community as part of their rental agreement. The TCCL also offers its space to the community through rentals, exhibitions, meetings, and workshops.

Who led the project?

The board of directors, tenants, and the City of Kingston’s Cultural Services were all collective drivers of the project. The Friends of the Tett were volunteers from the community who would meet regularly as part of the visioning committee with the City of Kingston and delegate to council throughout planning and construction. In 2011, the leadership of the Friends of the Tett transferred to the newly formed working Board of Directors of community members and tenants.

The board of directors was instrumental in developing policies and bylaws , and reviewing the master lease with the City of Kingston as well as informing how the space would operate - considering everything from chairs to kilns.

Who were they key partners in the project?

The tenants of the new TCCL were key partners in the project. By having a matching mandate and providing arts programming for the Kingston community, the tenants enabled the Tett to realize their aspiration of being the an arts centre for the community. They also have a 10 year lease with the TCCL. Tenants are responsible for the outfit of their space. Accordingly, any specific equipment or renovations needed in their specific space within the TCCL was funded by the tenant.

Who opposed the project?

While most members of the community supported the renovation of the former J.K. Tett Centre into a multi-disciplinary creative hub, there were those that challenge it. These included members of council and community who opposed the need for the creation of an arts centre funded by government. These oppositions were met with overall council approval and continued communications on how The Tett would be providing enriched arts experiences for the community. During construction of the Malting Tower (the TCCL's special event space) some neighbours complained about obstructed views of the lake, but through communication and in person meetings, relationships with affected neighbours remain positive.

Who was hired as additional staff?

The City of Kingston's Cultural Services hired a Project Manager to facilitate a smooth transition of operational leadership at the TCCL, including a draft budget and communications.

Who was on the project team?

The project team behind the rejuvenation of the TCCL included:

- Nadine Baker, Co-Chair of TCCL Board of Directors/current Facility Manager
- Patty Petkovich, Co-Chair of TCCL Board of Directors
- Brian McCurdy, Cultural Services with the City of Kingston
- Colin Wiginton, Cultural Services with the City of Kingston
- Rob Cruthers, Project Manager with Cultural Services, City of Kingston
- Bill Penner, Development Coordinator with Cultural Services, City of Kingston

Who was contracted for the project?

The City of Kingston tendered all necessary contractors for this project.

Architect Colbourne and Kembel was hired to review the J.K. Tett Centre's structure and recommend necessary improvements to the heritage structure for the new Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, including: health and safety upgrades as well as specific needs of long-term tenants and increased public use.

The "How"

How did the project go from concept to construction?

Following a feasibility study and proposed business plan for the rejuvenation of the J.K. Tett Centre, City Council approved \$13.2 million in funding for the capital project in 2008. At this time, the City of Kingston also completed negotiations for Queen's University to obtain abutting land and establish a world-class performing arts centre and education facility for music, drama and film/media departments.

How was a construction plan formed?

The City of Kingston led construction work, consulting the Board of Directors throughout the planning and building phases of the project.

The Board of Directors, which was made up of tenants of the new TCCL and community members, regularly met with the City of Kingston and the Project Manager to communicate their needs for the space; for example, the Kingston Potters' Guild brought a model of their space to a planning meeting.

How was accessibility included in the project?

Accessibility was incorporated into the design of the renovation project from the start. The new TCCL is a fully accessible facility, offering access to an elevator, accessible washrooms, assisted listening devices, signage with braille, and tactile floors on stairwells. The TCCL continues to grow its accessibility offerings and regularly meets with the AODA Kingston office and the City of Kingston around the needs of their patrons.

How was energy efficiency and the environment incorporated?

The newly retrofitted building still maintains its heritage status as a LEED certified building. Utility costs remain expensive, but all operating costs are balanced with revenue streams, primary through space rentals. Energy efficient heaters and doors were installed during the retrofit as well.

How were contingencies managed?

While the City of Kingston managed the building contractors and engineers, the Board of Directors worked closely with the Project Manager and Cultural Services over three and a half years of construction to mitigate contingencies.

Given the age of the building, planners were relying on the foundational structure to support the bulk of the renovation. However, the lime stone outer wall in the Malting Tower fell down during construction work. Extra support was built into the inner walls with steel beams to preserve the integrity of the building and adding a modern look to the new TCCL.

Vermiculite was found in the old ceiling tiles and rubble from the 1800s in the limestone walls; extra time and costs were allocated to remediate the asbestos and remove the rubble.

How were day-to-day operations impacted?

During the planning and building phase, day-to-day operations for the TCCL were not relevant to this project as the new mandated space had not yet been built.

How was the project funded?

The City of Kingston funded \$15 million, investing an additional \$1.8 million in the project from the initial \$13.2 million in 2008. The TCCL applied for funding through the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund and other grants to outfit the space with a projector and cleaning equipment to maintain the space.

New tenants of the TCCL, following a selection process in 2009, raised funds and/or applied for grants - mostly through the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund and the Ontario Trillium Foundation- to pay for their own fit ups. There was also an understanding among tenants to reimburse the City of Kingston for any work done on their behalf during construction.

How were programs managed during construction?

The new TCCL was being constructed out of a need for the community to experience arts and culture programming in one “clustered” part of the City. No TCCL programs were affected as they were waiting for the building to be ready. Previous tenant organizations needed to offer programs offsite of the J.K. Tett Centre during construction.

Plans for The Whole Shebang: The Tett Centre Grand Opening were underway. The opening involved eighteen months of planning from the Dreamwalker Dance Company and local artists to create an event that would celebrate the collaborative nature of the TCCL. The event featured performances, installation art and community participation.

The “Ongoing”

How did The Tett Centre project new financials?

As master lease holders and facility operators, the TCCL worked with the City of Kingston’s Research and Development department to create a budget for the building. The budget for the new TCCL was informed by sector research from consultations with arts and culture organization as well as other rental venues in the community. Space rentals and long term tenancy were going to be the core revenue streams for the TCCL.

The intent of the TCCL was to provide a long term sustainable model that offered arts and cultural organizations affordable space to work, collaborate and offer public programming. Through the feasibility study and tenant application process, it was apparent that arts organizations could pay on average \$6.18 per square foot, which is not enough to cover operating costs. The City of Kingston supported operation of the TCCL starting at \$125,000 annually and is decreasing support to \$100,000 per year over a 10 year time period.

Tenants are required to pay their rent and a portion of the operating expenses needed to maintain the building. These expenses fluctuate yearly, and include common area maintenance, insurance costs, real estate taxes and utilities.

Did the new space provide a new revenue source?

The construction of the new TCCL was built with sustainability in mind – through space rentals. In their report to the City of Kingston, the TCCL’s main sources of earned revenue was from sub-tenant rent, artist studio and café rent, room rentals and programming.

Room rentals and special events, such as weddings, were the second highest revenue source after sub-tenant rent. The TCCL offers scaled rental rates with corporate and non-profit pricing. They currently rent out the Malting Tower, Rehearsal Hall (1,500 sq. ft. with sprung floor), Activity Room (600 sq. ft.), Tett Gallery as exhibition space (1,000 sq. ft.), and eight Creativity Studios.

Were new staff hired after the new space opened?

The Board of Directors hired a Facility Manager to manage operations of the new TCCL. After eight months, the Board of Director realized the Facility Manager role needed to take leadership in realizing and sustaining a vision for the space, A new call was issued and former Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, Nadine Baker assumed the position. Three years into operating the space, she manages three staff, a bookkeeper and all contract staff needed to operate the facility.

Current staff operating the TCCL include:

- Facility Manager
- Marketing & Programming Coordinator
- Technical Director
- Facility Assistant

Only two staff were hired at the beginning of operations: a Facility Manager and a Community Engagement Coordinator. Building the current staff team at the TCCL was based on addressing the needs of operating the space – especially in response to a high demand for space rentals and special events. The TCCL is also supported by community volunteers.

How is The Tett Centre being maintained and operated?

As the building owners, the City of Kingston maintains the building while the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning operates it as an independent non-profit organization. All costs associated with facility maintenance are paid for by the City of Kingston, while any outfitting to tenant spaces is paid by the tenant.

Who are current Tenants at The Tett Centre?

- The Kingston School of Dance
- Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre (Modern Fuel)
- Kingston Handloom Weavers and Spinners
- Kingston Potters' Guild
- Kingston Lapidary and Mineral Club
- Joe Chithalen Memorial Musical Instrument Lending Library (Joe's M.I.L.L)
- Theatre Kingston
- Kingston Arts Council
- Juniper Café
- Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning
- Creativity Studio Artists

Lessons learned in the first 90 days?

Being prepared for a space rentals program was a key learning in the first 90 days of operating. After opening, the TCCL was overwhelmed with rental requests, forcing them to temporarily suspend their website. Between two staff, it was difficult to keep up with the demands of a rentals program (booking, payment, tours, contracts, set up, take down, etc...). Having a detailed rentals plan that encompasses rental logistics, big and small, can save time and streamline bookings.

They also learned that the community expected different programming from what the TCCL had planned. People were looking for a “drop in” experience – but programs were scheduled at specific dates and times during the week (For instance: “Weaving for Beginners, Saturday, Feb. 16 at 12:00 p.m.)

In this case, issuing a survey to the community around desired arts and culture experiences – and public programming hours - could have supported the TCCL in an educational campaign to the community and informed program delivery.

Lessons learned in the first year?

In terms of board make up throughout the duration of planning and construction, having members with expertise in legal and education/communication would have been asset. Within two to three years in operating, the board is now undergoing a governance review and looking towards fostering more objectivity among members by transitioning tenant representatives to a new tenant committee.

Having the café open when the building was completed would have provided tenants, renters and the community with a place for food and drink from the start. The café is a social point at the TCCL and creates a sense of community in the building. The café opened a year after the building reopened.

Currently, the TCCL continues to struggle with its perceived identity by the community. The confusion centres around the common misunderstanding that they are operated by the City. Often community members will mistake events that are happening at another City facility, and arrive at the TCCL instead of another city venue. In response, they have launched a “Did You Know?” campaign to correct misconceptions regarding programs and operations.

In reviewing all the lessons learned throughout the capital project, Nadine Baker shares her recommendations for others taking on a similar building project. She suggests using surveys before opening to the public to understand community expectations. Nadine also recommends setting aside a budget for investments in your space to keep responding to the needs of renters and tenants. Finally, don not rest on your laurels. Look ahead to what’s next, and focus on how you can make your space even better.

Case Study Summary

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning is an example of a successful partnership between a municipality and a non-profit organization, collaborating to build a creative hub for its community. Consultations with the arts community and a market analysis of space needs formed the foundation for the reconstruction of the J.K. Tett Centre. With support from the City of Kingston, the TCCL operates under a sustainable model with earned revenues from sub-tenants, rentals and programs. Together, the City of Kingston and the TCCL have established a successful model of a creative hub within their community.

Resources

The following resources below have been provided by The Tett Centre as additional information for readers.

Website

[The Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning](#)

Documents

- [2010 Business Plan](#)
- [Floor Plan](#)
- [Renderings](#)
- [2017 Strategic Plan](#)
- [2017 Interim Report to the City of Kingston](#)
- [Annual Reports](#)

ArtsBuild Ontario Webinar

- Capital Project Case Study: The Tett Centre
 - [Recording](#)
 - [Transcription](#)

Video

- [Tett Centre Construction Video](#)