

Historic Livery Theatre explores potential expansion

KATHLEEN SMITH

Editor

Over 75 years, The Livery Theatre in Goderich has demonstrated unwavering passion and dedicated to the fostering and performance of the theatre arts within the community.

Now, Goderich Little Theatre's Board of Directors are exploring the idea of a potential expansion project to increase usage of the space and increase revenue for the community arts centre.

David Armour joined the Goderich Little Theatre in 1992 while teaching drama at GDCI. Since then, he has been an active member of the theatre, as an actor and director for many productions.

For over four decades, the board of directors has been the ongoing stewards of the 145-year-old, local heritage site, commonly known as The Livery.

Over that time, usage has increased dramatically and now there is a demand for more space and better use of the facility.

"The Goderich Little Theatre is ready for the next stage of its growth, the fulfilment of a vision first conceived over 45 years ago," shared David Armour, Goderich Little Theatre President.

"From a small – but beautiful – auditorium, we hope to expand our historic home into The Livery Centre for the Arts, a workshop for community arts of all kinds, and a venue to present our shared inspiration."

According to Armour, the Goderich Little Theatre produces a full season of plays and has expanded to include a young people's theatre company, the TIFF Film Fest, a play reading group, and The First Time for Everything Summer Festival.

"Without a dedicated shop or storage area, each production ties up the auditorium for about six weeks, meaning we use the auditorium for roughly 42 weeks a year," explained Armour.

"If the auditorium could be used strictly for performances, that time could drop to just 14 weeks, freeing the space for other groups and generating more revenue."

The Livery also serves the broader community, hosting weddings, birthdays, celebrations of life and other special occasions. Community groups like the BIA, Ro-

tary, and the Celtic Festival use The Livery for meetings, fundraisers, markets and concerts.

More recently, the space drew outside promoters and brought in Grace 2, a Tragically Hip tribute band that sold out two nights in a row.

These other types of usage could expand and bring in more revenue for The Livery if the space was expanded.

Currently, as wonderful as the space is, it has limitations when it comes to mounting a production. These concerns include storage of materials, wardrobe, and properties, offsite storage rental and transportation costs, scheduling of events and added revenue stream.

"Our board has long believed that collaboration is key to our success," admitted Armour.

"More than 40 years ago they envisioned The Livery not just as a theatre, but as a centre for the arts. We proudly stand on their shoulders and remain committed to realizing that broader vision."

Armour explains the goal for the expansion is to build an arts space where everyone can come to learn, create and nurture arts, culture and entertainment.

The board would also like to preserve the heritage-designated building.

Over the past 40 years Armour has spoken with Mayors Deb Shewfelt, John C. Grace, Miles Murdoch and now Trevor Bazinet.

Every mayor Armour has spoke with on the idea of expanding The Livery has shown interest and support for a venue that showcases and supports the arts in this community.

"We hope that an expanded arts centre will become a space where people can meet, create, and present a wide variety of artistic offerings, not just theatre," said Armour.

"We want The Livery to be recognized as a cultural and community asset for both residents and visitors alike. In a world of streaming platforms and digital media, we don't need more passive entertainment. What we need is connection."

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JULY EVENTS

- | | |
|---------|---|
| July 11 | Live Music - "Maitland Hollar" - 5 p.m. |
| July 12 | Live Music - "Midnight Special" - 5 p.m., Meat Draw 5 p.m. |
| July 16 | Wake Up Wednesday - Tech Talk With Randy Carroll - "What Is Ai And How To Use It" - 9 a.m. |
| July 16 | Legion - Executive Meeting 7:30 p.m.,
Seniors Technology Summer Camp 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. |
| July 18 | Lobster Roll Fundraiser Dinner - 5 p.m. - RSVP At The Bar - \$25 |
| July 19 | "Car Show Cook Out" - 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. - \$10, Meat Draw 5 p.m., Karaoke 7 p.m. |
| July 19 | Live Music - "Speed Wobble" - 5 p.m. |
| July 23 | Wake Up Wednesday - "Bank Scams And How To Avoid Them"
- Tabatha Fisher, Libro Credit Union,
Seniors Technology Summer Camp 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. |
| July 26 | Live Music - "Jelly Bean Blue" - 5 p.m., Meat Draw 5 p.m. |
| July 29 | Ladies Aux - Executive Meeting - 5 p.m. |
| July 30 | Wake Up Wednesday - "Gateway Centre For Rural Health
- Rural Health Research Uncovered - 9 a.m.
Seniors Technology Summer Camp 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. |

Bingo Every Sunday Afternoon Doors Open @ 11:30 a.m.
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Jammers Every Wednesday Night 7 p.m. • Cribbage Every Friday Afternoon 1:30 p.m.
 • Every 4th Friday Wits & Giggles Trivia - 6:30 p.m.
 • 5 Card Bingo Every Friday 3:30 p.m.

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Master Gardener Native Plant Sale a Huge Success

LESLYE GLOVE

Master Gardener

The Tri-County Master Gardeners (Huron, Oxford, Perth) held their annual sale of native trees, shrubs and perennials on Saturday, June 14, in Stratford. Thanks to widespread support from native plant enthusiasts, all stock was sold quite quickly.

Master Gardeners promote planting native species to add to the biodiversity of the area, support pollinators, provide food and habitat for birds and small mammals and to mitigate climate change. We also supply gardening ad-

vice of all kinds. We are pleased to work with other organizations with similar goals and appreciate their backing.

The MGs are already making plans for next June's sale, and we promise to supply high quality native plants in greater quantities. We are sorry that some customers were disappointed to find their favourite plants were sold out.

The Tri-County Master Gardeners are hoping to have a native plant pop-up sale in the fall. Our Facebook page will have details. Is autumn a good time to plant perennials and shrubs? Absolutely! Stay tuned for an in-depth article with all the excellent reasons to do so.

In the meantime, how should you care for the native (or any) plants you may have purchased recently?

1. Plant them in the correct place. If you have a Lady Fern for example, it needs to live in a shady, moist area, not in the bright sun. For specific information about plants which you bought at our sale: <https://tricitymastergardeners.ca/native-plant-sale>

2. Make sure your new plants have adequate water. Native species are tough plants that don't need a lot of care – once they are established. They need to be watered throughout their first summer in your garden particular-

ly in drought conditions and high temperatures.

3. Native plants don't need fertilizing.

4. Keep the space around your new plants free of weeds. Ensuring your native plant doesn't have competition for at least their first year will help ensure they can grow into a strong and healthy plant.

Visit the Tri-County Master Gardeners' website for gardening information. You can submit questions to us via the website, too.

tricitymastergardeners.ca

Thanks to everyone who supported our native plant sale!

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Currently, the board is undertaking a comprehensive Feasibility Study in partnership with the Town of Goderich. This work is being led by McQueen Galloway Associates and is expected to be completed in November.

The study and business plan will explore the potential to transform the space into a more functional, safe, accessible, inclusive, and sustainable community artistic hub.

Initially, this study will assess a reimagined facility that meets the evolving needs of both audiences and artists. It will continue to serve as a unique and iconic facility for Goderich.

The consulting firm of McQueen Galloway Associates will lead the project,

along with technical and architectural experts, as needed.

Consultations with key partners and community members will help with concept development and provide information on operational considerations that could enhance the function of the facility.

"MGA are thrilled to be working in such a vibrant community that is truly passionate about The Livery as a cultural cornerstone with true historic value," said Tracey McQueen, Principal with MGA.

"We are aware of the need to balance preservation, vision, and financial realities. We are listening carefully to the community to create the best recommendations for next steps."

This exciting journey will explore the possibilities of a renovation that meets the evolving needs of both audiences and artists.

According to Armour, deliberate and thoughtful steps in pursuing this expansion have already been taken.

In the spring of 2025, the board held a retreat with Caldwell Consulting, which generously donated their services. From that retreat, the Goderich Little Theatre presented a proposal to the Town to co-fund a comprehensive Feasibility Study, each contributing \$30,000 toward the study.

Armour says the study will provide the board with a business plan that explores the project's viability.

"The Town of Goderich is pleased to

partner with Goderich Little Theatre to explore a possible expansion of the historic Livery," said Trevor Bazinet, Mayor of Goderich.

"We hope to see it grow into a community arts centre, a home for our vibrant and evolving arts community for generations to come, and an important attraction for visitors to Goderich."

Once the feasibility study wraps in November, both Goderich Little Theatre and the Town of Goderich will review the findings independently, before meeting to discuss next steps in early 2026.

For more information on this project, visit thelivery.ca where a dedicated page has been set up to keep the community informed on the Expansion Project.

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