

Title: The Future of Renton's History

Tagline: Big changes have Renton Historical Society leaving the Renton History Museum, and bringing Renton's artifacts to you!

Backstory: What follows is a brief review of the historical arrangement between the City of Renton (hereafter City), the Renton History Museum (hereafter Museum) and the Renton Historical Society (hereafter RHS). The City and RHS have been partners in the development of the Museum since it first opened in an old fire station in the Renton Highlands in the 1970's. Historically, the City provided two salaries for a Museum Director and a part-time Museum Assistant, as well as a floor of basic operating support. This included computer hardware and software, building and yard maintenance, basic printing, and mail services. RHS funded mission-related expenses. This included costs associated with funding exhibits, programs, publications, events, care for the collections and more. RHS also funded two positions, the Curator and the Volunteer and Education Coordinator (or sometimes Public Engagement Coordinator). As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, RHS has received grants in the past that served to support the Museum which were otherwise not available to the City.

In 2005, the City and RHS signed a Museum Management Agreement (MMA) memorializing that arrangement. It expired in 2015, but continued to guide the relationship until 2022, when discussions resumed regarding the next version of the MMA.

The City has grown significantly throughout the course of the aforementioned relationship, and in that time has developed more clearly defined rules surrounding its ability to collaborate with third party organizations. Most noteworthy is the fact that the City cannot provide financial or logistical support to any outside organization. This includes nonprofits like RHS. As a result of this change of City policy, RHS now manages its own administrative, financial and fundraising efforts. The contact at the City regarding this situation is Cailin Hunsaker, Parks and Trails Director, CHunsaker@Rentonwa.gov | (425) 430-6606.

Moving the artifacts: On January 7th, 2025, the City asked RHS to move the artifacts held in the Museum out of the building for storage elsewhere no later than July 15th, 2025. RHS does not have enough space to accommodate the artifacts at this time, and will need to secure a building to hold the artifacts as soon as possible. RHS will hold public question and answer sessions at the Renton library (100 Mill Avenue South) Thursday - January 30th, 2025 @ 2pm to 3pm, Sunday - February 2nd, 2025 @ 11am to 12pm, Tuesday - February 4th, 2025 @ 12pm to 1pm to gain public feedback on use of the endowment for the move.

Public access initiative: Thanks to the generosity of Renton residents, RHS is the beneficiary of an endowment now valued at \$6 million dollars. A portion of the interest of the endowment is used as a general operating fund. The endowment policy states the funds are to be used to preserve the artifacts, and ensure the artifacts are on display to the public. In order to remain compliant with the endowment policy during these changes, RHS is in the process of creating remote public access to the digital collection, free of charge. This will allow all Renton residents the opportunity to connect with their history without limitation, from any computer with internet access. We expect to launch this initiative in April 2025 via our website www.rentonhistory.org.

Doors Open Levy: RHS was awarded a three year ‘Sustained Support’ grant through 4Culture totalling \$170,030 for the public access initiative and general operation. Thanks to the recent passage of Doors Open legislation and continued Lodging Tax revenue, RHS is part of an inaugural round of historical levels of funding as a vital contributor to the social wellbeing and economic development of King County.

Quote: “We want to thank the Renton History Museum for decades of collaboration on preserving and showcasing Renton’s history. Renton is now home to two impactful historical organizations, both working independently toward a future that is strongly connected to the lessons of the past.” - President of Renton Historical Society, Christopher Howell

Quote: “Renton Historical Society has a deep gratitude to the community for the support received as we’ve taken on this separation. We hope readers consider joining us as we navigate these changes by joining our board of directors, becoming a member, or making a donation at www.rentonhistory.org.
- Treasurer of Renton Historical Society, Makenna O’Meara

Quote: “Free public access to Renton Historical Society’s artifacts represents inclusion, accessibility and a step toward a future where all Renton residents can see themselves reflected in the stories of the past. Renton’s artifacts have never been presented like this before, and we are thrilled to have the support of 4Culture as we develop this incredible opportunity.” - Renton Historical Society’s Director of Curation and Collection, Leigh Gath