



Report on Downtown Carbonear “Putting Heritage to Work” Workshop

December 2018



Heritage NL

Introduction:

Heritage NL's program, "People, Places & Culture" is designed to assist communities to identify their cultural assets and to consider ways to protect and develop them. It is based on a recognition that heritage/cultural assets are some of the strongest elements that a community has to: define its unique character; create new economic opportunities and; enhance the quality of life for residents and instill local pride.

The focus of this workshop, facilitated by Heritage NL, on November 5, 2018 was specifically on the town's historic waterfront and commercial district. The session titled, "Putting Heritage to Work," sought to look at the opportunities that exist for revitalizing the district, building on its distinctive history and heritage and complementing the Downtown Revitalization Landscape Plan. The workshop comprised two sessions: I) brainstorming on development opportunities for the area and development strategies and; II) identifying priorities and next steps.

Session I

Vision for Downtown Carbonear:

(What would you like to see downtown Carbonear like to 15 years?)

- like downtown St. John's
- shopping, walking, talking
- diverse businesses
- waterfront -boardwalk - more accessible
- vendors
- outdoor spaces to socialize, eat
- new way into Carbonear
- yacht club
- market space
- historic celebrations, festivals: Stationer's Festival; Tiddly Festival; car Show; Saltfish other food festival
- well maintained and accessible infrastructure
- green spaces
- infill buildings in some of the gaps create by fires, etc.
- businesses catering to local needs
- public wifi
- street lighting
- historical interpretation on Carbonear's history/stories (plaques, apps)



- hotel
- schooner -permanent
- things for youth
- clean
- facades restored



- increased investment and spending downtown
- active theatre
- housing, condos
- art installations - across beach breakwater
- good signage gets people downtown
- window displays
- artisanal shops
- gathering place for locals
- breakwater mural
- harbour activity
- adventure tourism
- mix residential & commercial
- affordable housing
- year-round activities -eg. Museums on weekends
- dress up breakwater -walkway
- walking tours
- good promotion
- driverless vehicles -public transportation



Realizing the Vision

(What Needs to Happen/What is Needed to Realize Vision for Downtown Carbonear?)

- Have a plan
 - -Action-oriented
 - -timelines/leads
- Reduce entry risk for new enterprise
 - -affordable space
- public washrooms
- greater communication between town & community partners
- plan to revitalize older bldgs. – grants/incentives
- utilize existing infrastructure for events downtown (e.g., boardwalk, pergola)
- public awareness campaign
 - -recruit more volunteers
- strengthen downtown business association.
- website updating town & region ->continued support
- support networking
- info on support for business devevelopment
- get out positive messages
- community-wide effort -partnerships
- parking a plus
- forum to bring all community together
- central info source -portal
- enhance signage
- take risks -try things out
- transparent/accountable
- define identity/brand
- inventory what exists
 - 41 businesses

Next Steps

- put in place a steering committee to explore next steps with representation from:
 - Kerri (EDO)
 - Town council
 - CDBA
 - CBDC
- Kerri to hold meeting of committee within 30 days to further develop priorities for downtown revitalization
- Communicate/share ideas with the broader community
- Full representation of stakeholders
- Develop buy-in/commitment from the community

- ID leadership/champions

Session II

5 December 2018

The followup session was facilitated by Dale Jarvis (Heritage NL) and Kerri Abbott (Town of Carbonear) with representation from the Town, the Historical Society, and local residents/business owners.

Dale Jarvis and Kerri Abbott presented a brief synopsis of the visioning session. The community had identified the following broad categories they wished to see in Carbonear's future:

- A Vibrant Downtown
- Active Heritage Waterfront
- Diverse Downtown Business Sector
- Better Signs and Promotions
- Bring Back Historical Celebration/Events
- Town Infrastructure Improvements
- Telling the Stories of Carbonear
- Heritage Building Conservation
- Arts and Culture
- Opportunities for Tourism Businesses/Experiences

Following this, Dale Jarvis led a session to prioritize the things identified in the previous meeting as being needed to achieve these goals, using a three-part ranking based on perceived importance, ease of implementation, and potential long term impact. The ranking came out:

1. Town Infrastructure
2. Marketing the Heritage District
3. Information on Funding Sources
4. Networking Support/Partner Communication

The first two, Town Infrastructure and Marketing were discussed in more detail, and a number of recommendations were made.

Action Plan

Strategic Area #1. Enhancing the Town's Infrastructure

Actions:

- Town to hold a public session to let residents and business owners know about the progress of the Water Street project, to be held Feb/March;
- Town prepare signage for the construction season, letting people know that the district is open for business, with info on available parking. This could include printed signs, and information on the updated Town website and social media;

- Town hold a celebratory event to mark the start of the redevelopment project (e.g. a sod-cutting/ribbon-cutting type of ceremony);
- Town provide regular updates on the progress of the work;
- A listing of available commercial properties for sale or lease to be prepared and shared.

Marketing the Heritage District

The following recommendations were made:

- Town compile a shareable central database/listing of historic resources (buildings and street feature) in the district, including information on historic uses, old photographs, and oral histories, incorporating some of the work previously done by local heritage groups;
- That this material be developed into individual marketing packages, that could be shared with current/potential building/business owners in the district for them to use to market their place in the historic downtown;
- That the Town investigate the potential of revitalizing some of the older local traditions and festivals, focused on the downtown area;
- That the Town and Heritage NL partner to deliver two workshops that would feed into this process, (1) a “Scanning Party” type event to collect photographs, and (2) a “Topographic Time” to start recording informal place names/knowledge about the street.

Kerri Abbott will convene a meeting to report back on these recommendations, to be held in January 2019. It was noted that more people attended the daytime session than the evening session, so the next meeting will be a daytime meeting.

Heritage NL Observations & Recommendations

1. With the development of the highway commercial strip and the decline of marine industries, Carbonear’s historic waterfront and Water Street experienced a gradual decline from its place as the commercial centre of not only the town but the entire region. While there was some success in revitalizing the downtown area through the Main Street program (1985-1989) the effort did not continue, largely through a lack of an ongoing organization to maintain the effort. In the last few years, business on the street has again begun to pick up, particularly with the opening of a number of craft, arts, and food-related businesses. This, together with a number of cultural venues (theatre and museums) provides a solid base on which to build and develop the downtown. Carbonear’s Water Street will likely never become the main shopping area if the town that it once was but through specialty services, community services and housing it could become a lively regional draw for the community.
2. The completion of a Downtown Revitalization Plan, with a focus on public improvements such as sidewalks, streets, landscaping, and waterfront enhancements, is an important step in bringing new life to the downtown. If done well, such improvements can make a downtown more attractive to residents and new businesses and support increased private investment in downtown buildings. Public improvements made on George Street

in St John's in the 1980s supported the development of the bar district. Enhancements to the sidewalks and waterfront in Bonavista helped spur private investment in building upgrades and new businesses. To be successful, physical improvements need to be accompanied by a multi-faceted strategy to attract new businesses and development, to animate the downtown through a variety of planned activities and special events, and through marketing.

3. Water Street once contained a fairly continuous row of buildings along both sides of the street that provided a distinctive sense of place. Through fire and demolition many holes in streetscape have opened up that take away from the continuity of the street giving it a "missing teeth" feel. A number of these gaps or vacant properties provide opportunities for infill in the form of new buildings that could serve a variety of community needs (commercial, residential, social, cultural, educational, light industrial and marine industries). The waterfront location should certainly contribute to the appeal for redevelopment of these properties. As per the Revitalization Plan, some of these gaps can be landscaped or serve as parkland and, ideally, as linkages to a waterfront made accessible through a harbour pier or boardwalk. Ideally, the revitalization plan should consider strategies for encouraging infill and business development that include:

- o Undertaking a needs assessment to determine community needs for housing (seniors, special needs, vacation rentals, et.), social and cultural services, commercial development
- o Developing concept designs/guidelines for infill that are of a scale and design that will respect the historic character of the area (but not necessarily be historic recreations)
- o A variety of incentives that could include: municipal tax incentives, waiving of development permit fees for new development, grants for heritage preservation/façade upgrades
- o A feasibility study to explore opportunities for building on the existing retail and service offerings of Water Street, particularly as an arts/crafts, entertainment and cultural district. Consideration should also be given to supporting activities such as related educational programming and tourism experiences
- o Development of a one-stop shop for potential new business operators to assist them through permitting and regulatory processes which could be done in collaboration with agencies such as the Trinity-Conception CBDC and Service NL

4. The development of inventories is an important early step that should include:
 - o Heritage assets (structures, landscape features, place names, stories, oral histories)
 - o Ownership and uses of all properties
 - o Building inventory including current condition and type of occupancy

These inventories will be very useful for:

- ☐ The development of heritage interpretive elements on the street
- ☐ Heritage tours

- ❑ The development of heritage tourism experiences
 - ❑ As a basis for planning and development
5. A strong organization with a long-term focus and a clear mandate is needed to plan and implement development strategies for downtown. Ideally, it would include a variety of groups with a stake in the downtown area (council, businesses, community organizations with partner groups serving in an ex-officio capacity). Leadership and champions are also critical as they will help drive the process forward.
 6. An effective strategy should include both long-term initiatives that will have a big, long-lasting impact and shorter-term projects (low hanging fruit) that are relatively easy to achieve, that will demonstrate initial success, and that will help build community trust and collaboration. It cannot be emphasized enough that a multi-faceted long-term development plan is critical to: a) keep the community focused; b) demonstrate to funders how each incremental project fits into a larger whole.
 7. A communications strategy is also important to ensure that all of the community is aware of what is happening. This could be as simple as a quarterly newsletter sent to households and stakeholders or distributed in electronic form. Ideally, communication will be a two-way strategy that allows the community to input their ideas.

