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Cultural Heritage Destinations and the Heritage Housing Industry

PROCEEDINGS FROM THE 2017 NOVA SCOTIA
HERITAGE CONFERENCE

Prepared by:

HRM Heritage Property Program
Planning & Development
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HALIFAX

The following focus area was presented for discussion at the 2017 Nova Scotia Heritage Conference:

Learn and discuss how we can work together to approach heritage as an industry to turn communities into attractive destinations while supporting a sustainable housing industry and a special kind of real estate market.

Around 50 conference participants from across Nova Scotia met after the presentations on Friday, November 3rd, 2017, to discuss cultural heritage destinations and the heritage housing industry. Cultural heritage destinations refer to the places, artifacts and activities within a community that authentically represent its stories and people of the past. The heritage housing industry refers to the development, construction, sale, renovation, and, especially the adaptive reuse of traditional building stock. The following paragraphs summarize much of the discussions:

Cultural Heritage Destinations Discussion

“Heritage sites can play an integral role in developing capacity for community leadership, economic sustainability and heritage skills preservation.”

- Panelist at the NS Heritage Conference, November 1st, 2017

What are the benefits of promoting communities as cultural heritage destinations?

Participants agreed that the distinctiveness of their community is an economic and social driver which can attract tourists and build a sense of pride within the community. Community pride encourages regular upkeep of the condition and integrity of properties. This desire to contribute to community life can lead to a stabilization or increase in local property values.

A community with a distinct form and identity can foster a common purpose which increases social cohesion and a desire to volunteer in the community. It can also invite curiosity about the cultural history of the community among both visitors and residents which can result in a greater interest in community and its history. Interpretive programs can capture and build on this interest to facilitate a greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of community, its history and character which can lead to a reduction in applications to demolish or negatively alter heritage buildings.

How can we support cultural heritage destinations?

Older buildings tend to be more affordable and thus more accessible than new buildings. Financial incentives programs should aim to maintain an affordable and accessible building stock by reducing economic as well as physical barriers inherent to these buildings. We should focus on illuminating disincentives that are already entrenched in the system, especially in the tax system.

We need to improve partnerships with the private sector and tourism agencies. We should encourage these sectors to play a leadership role in heritage conservation and promotion. There is a need to improve strategic coordination between local communities and different levels of government. Need to explore different kinds of financial incentives and other strategies to support cultural heritage including skills development with educational institutions to help develop traditional industries such as heritage carpentry and other crafts.

What can we implement to affect necessary changes?

Clear objectives under a built heritage strategy could only benefit efforts to establish communities as cultural heritage destinations. Key to such a strategy is to review section 18 of the *Heritage Property Act* which undermines this heritage legislation and makes it ineffectual by allowing someone to purchase a registered heritage building and to demolish or alter it even if the local municipality objects. Maintaining heritage registries in smaller municipalities is resource heavy and provincial and other kinds of support is necessary to make advancements.

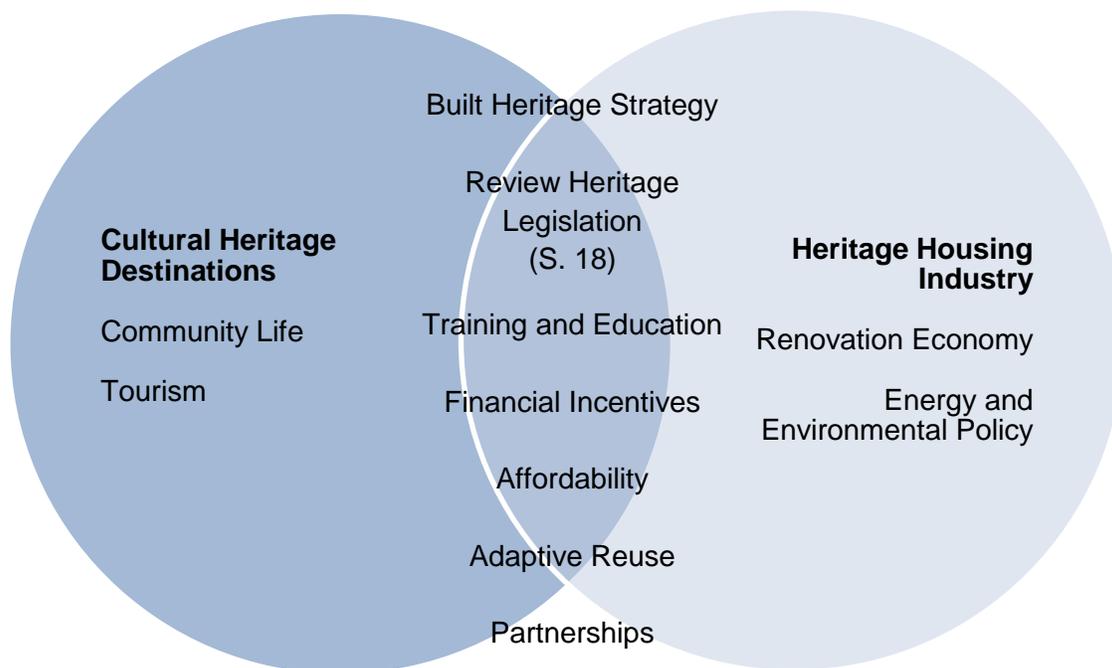


Figure 1: Ideas emerging from the 2017 NS Heritage Conference workshops reveal that cultural heritage destinations and the heritage housing industry share common objectives worth exploring.

Heritage Housing Industry Discussion

“Instead of thinking of “heritage” sites as just a collection of properties, why not think of “heritage” also as an activity, namely to return the property – or the street, or the entire district – to the appearance for which it was intended.”

- *Keynote Presenter, NS Heritage Conference, November 2nd, 2017*

How can heritage promote a sustainable housing industry?

Converting older homes can make good business sense but there are problems. These problems can be overcome, especially with the support of financial incentives and appropriate legislation. Adaptive reuse is more prominent elsewhere in Canada. People in Nova Scotia tend not to travel as much so they do not appreciate what we have here. Strict building code and lack of training and education are also hurdles to overcome. We need to connect property owners with the right information and with the right professionals who can help with conservation such as the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals (CAHP).

Future environmental policy may have an adverse effect on heritage conservation. Heritage conservation can save a building from a landfill and secure the energy and materials invested in an older building to save environmental costs associated with demolition and new construction. However, looming net zero policy for energy efficiency could encourage the demolition of older building stock that cannot be retrofitted over the next twenty years to spend less energy than they produce. Thus, older buildings may not be able to compete with new buildings in meeting future environmental requirements. We need a strategy to address this challenge.

What are the economic needs of our older building stock?

Individual historic buildings tend to operate at a smaller economic scale than new construction. We need to recognize the needs but also the benefits of this smaller scale economy which, as a whole, contributes to a renovation economy that serves the larger community. Taxation systems should encourage small scale investments in older buildings to support the renovation economy in local communities throughout Nova Scotia.

There is a great deal of know-how in Nova Scotia. However, all this knowledge in finances, conservation practice, government policy, etc. needs to be brought together to be effective. We need a comprehensive strategy to capitalize on our knowledge base and skill sets and to improve our approach to heritage conservation.

Background: Conference Presentations

Conference presentations provided background information for discussion. These presentations centres around the topic of cultural heritage destinations on the first day, November 1st, and around the topic of the heritage housing industry on the second day, November 2nd, described below. Presentations on the third day, November 3rd, centred around government heritage programs, financial incentives, and heritage home insurance. These presentations were followed by the workshops described above.

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

The Halifax Explosion and Its Legacy

Presentation By: Will Robinson-Mushkat, Municipality of the County of Kings, and Peter Nightingale, Municipality of the District of Chester

The Halifax Explosion, which occurred at 9:04 am on December 6, 1917, imposed significant impacts to the Halifax and Dartmouth communities. Approximately 2,000 people died and over 9,000 were injured due to the explosion and subsequent fires. Thousands were left homeless and lost businesses. Immediate assistance including food and shelter was supplied by nearby communities and from afar. Specialised training, including medical aid from Harvard medical students, was also provided. Approximately \$18M worth of relief efforts came from the Canadian Government.

In the afternoon of December 6, the Mayor called a meeting to begin discussing the reconstruction of affected communities, especially, the Richmond District. Thomas Adams was hired by the Town of Planning Board and the Halifax Relief Commission (HRC) to lead the reconstruction of the Richmond District. His ideas to improve planning in Halifax by realigning streets to improve connections and navigate around the city better, increase green space, define land uses, and create building setback lines were used to redesign the Richmond District. During this time, Halifax was also going through the reform period to improve infrastructure and sanitation for living conditions in the city.

The reconstruction efforts of the HRC ensured that no one benefited from the explosion – the thought was if you were poor before the explosion then you should remain poor after. Temporary and rental housing was offered while plans were being designed for the new houses, until 1922. Several different designs were planned but houses had similar elements. Buildings were constructed of stronger materials than the traditional wood as a form of permanent housing.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Halifax Explosion, there are several upcoming events and projects to remember the struggles of the community, the relief efforts of the HRC, and the reconstruction of the Richmond District of Halifax. One legacy project is the refurbishing of the Fort Needham Memorial Park. There will also be presentations at the library and public art portraying living memories and historical memories of the Halifax Explosion.

Past, Present, and Future of Turtle Grove

Presentation By: Chief Bob Gloade, Millbrook First Nation

The legacy of the Millbrook First Nation community that settled in Turtle Grove near present day Tufts Cove is explained through their historical traditions, lifestyle and culture. The Mi'kmaq were nomadic and lived off the land. Hunting, fishing, and gathering were among their main activities. They had rich stories told through strong oral tradition, art and crafts, and petroglyphs.

Homes and canoes were constructed of birch bark and spruce root which made them easy to disassemble for travel. The hockey stick originated from the Mi'kmaq community and was hand crafted by a variety of wood including black ash. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Starr Manufacturing began manufacturing hockey sticks.

Over 100,000 Mi'kmaq community members lived through the Atlantic Region, prior to European contact. The region was divided into seven areas, remembered through the Mi'kmaq star. Seven points of the star represent the seven Atlantic districts and the people. After European contact, an eighth point was added to represent the relationship between the community and the Crown.

Toward the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, the Mi'kmaq were pushed out of Tufts Cove. They were forced to settle further inland from the Harbour and away from communities. Approximately seven families remained in the Tufts Cove area. A small school house was constructed. In 1917, the Halifax Explosion that occurred directly across from Turtle Grove destroyed the school and homes. Some members of the community were killed; the rest were forced out. The Halifax Relief Commission that was appointed by the Federal Government to provide relief to those affected by the explosion would not help the Tufts Cove Mi'kmaq community. Since the government wanted to move the community out of the area prior to the explosion, the HRC would not offer any assistance.

The community was forced to move to areas including Ship Harbour, Ingram River, Sambro Harbour, Millbrook and Shubie. For the past 15 years, the Mi'kmaq community has been working toward purchasing 8.9 acres of land in Tufts Cove. The community is working with different levels of government to develop the lands for residential, commercial and recreational purposes that will offer a self-sufficient and self-sustaining neighbourhood. Approximately \$200M is invested in a community benefit for the site.

African Nova Scotian Heritage Places and Post-Explosion Africville

Presentation By: Craig M. Smith, Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia

Like the Mi'kmaq community, the traditions, culture and legacy of the African Nova Scotian community is mainly told through stories, art, and music. Only since the 1980s have people been documenting the history of the Black Nova Scotian Community. Nothing much was documented about the challenges the African Nova Scotians experienced due to the 1917

Halifax Explosion. Since impacts to the North End Rail Line to Rockingham Station were documented, it is expected that the Explosion severely impacted Africville.

Around the time of the Explosion, African Nova Scotians were mainly treated as second class citizens. For example, they could not fight in the war until 1916. The boundaries for the areas that would receive relief for damages caused by the Explosion initially included Africville; however, Africville was later removed from the relief efforts. Mr. Preston who established one of the first Baptist churches helped provide relief to the African Nova Scotian community.

While there are many negative and uncomfortable historical stories about the experiences about the African Nova Scotian community in HRM, this community has a rich history and important stories to tell and learn from. There is not much built heritage that tell the stories of the community but we need to reconnect with African Nova Scotian communities to learn what groups settled and where they settled. The Black Cultural Centre has some information. Whitney Pier is another example of an African Nova Scotian Heritage Place, which has West Indies roots and a connection to Marcus Garvey.

Providing markers in public spaces to note important historical places for the African Nova Scotian community is a way in which we can build an inventory, which can educate people about the history of the city and be used in tours attractive to the tourism industry. Places like Garry Street (now Buddy Day Street), where many people gathered from the community could have a marker and would be an interesting site to include in a tour. We need more monuments and heritage registrations that represent the African Nova Scotian community. There is still work to be done!

Heritage Destinations in the HRM Eastern Shore

Presentation By: Gordon Hammond, Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society

The preservation and maintenance of heritage buildings along the Eastern Shore have been dependent on tourism development with volunteers and community support. Attempts to grow businesses in the area have failed due to a lack of customers. Grouping the heritage destinations and advertising them as the Memory Lane Village tourist tour have proved to be more successful. Economic development increased and the sites have come alive – showing people why these sites are interesting.

The community came together to include other heritage sites and assist with other projects to promote the tour, which, in turn, helps preserve these sites. Volunteers from the community have helped create calendars to sell in other areas, create and update the Eastern Shore museum website, coordinate archives, and collaborate with other museums' photo databases.

The Memory Lane Village team developed a strategic approach to keep things going. They have a mission and mandates in place to ensure the continued protection of the Eastern Shore heritage buildings and destinations.

Ross Farm Museum and the Sustainability of a Rural Nova Scotian Community

Presentation By: Lisa Wolfe, Ross Farm Museum with Stephanie Smith and Craig MacDonald, Nova Scotian Museum

The Ross Farm Museum is one of 28 Provincially registered museum heritage sites. It is both directly managed by the Provincial Government and locally managed by the community. New Ross is rural and agriculturally based. The Ross Farm Museum is considered the centre of the community and celebrates and preserves the tangible and intangible heritage of the farm. Examples of intangible heritage are the farming and carpentry techniques that are still practiced in the community. Only local crafts and treats are sold in the gift shops.

With collaborative efforts of the community, a strategic plan was developed that presents a vision for what the community wants to achieve. The building is dependent on NSTIR for repairs. There is a shop on-site to do the repairs and the workers are sub-contracted to do other restoration projects in the community. These efforts preserve the traditional skills and allow museum workers to be viable all year. The learning centre also encourages and educates the community to get involved and learn about the history of the farm and culture of the community.

Cultural Heritage Destinations and the Heritage Housing Industry

Presentation By: Keynote Address by Marc Denhez

Looking at heritage as an activity gives us a new perspective on how we can preserve, restore, rehabilitate, and conserve our heritage. Over the years, there have been different opinions of old buildings and what we should do with them; some have viewed them as sources of shame, perverted and criminal or pathological cases that we should wipe out to build more modern and futurist buildings. Heritage buildings were demolished instead of restored due to economic demands. Less money was spent on rehabilitation versus replacement.

Around the 1970s, people began recognizing the importance of protecting and conserving heritage buildings. Older buildings were deteriorating. Rehabilitation was perceived as more challenging and costly than new construction. Toward the 1980s, the government offered economic support for rehabilitation. In St. John's Instead of demolishing a building, an expert committee presented a heritage counter proposal where the city would cover the difference in the cost of renovating the building. It was soon realised that the city support was not needed as rehabilitation was proven to cost less than demolition. Heritage can be viewed as an activity, to return a property's appearance for which is was intended, and as an industry.

History in View: How Photography Changed the Face of Halifax

Presentation By: Sharon Murray, HRM Archives

The HRM Archives have a collection of over 4,000 historical photographs, some of which are available online. The collection includes photos of road works, building projects, and unsightly conditions from inspector reports. A 1945 Master Plan shows the areas where growth should occur: between the Citadel and North Street, a portion of Barrington Street, and Africville. Economist Gordon Stevenson prepared a report around 1957 that identified slums and houses that he believed should be demolished for new commercial or "proper" development. Stevenson was highly dependent on photographs for his research. Minimum standards were established which helped him identify the buildings to be demolished. Many people were displaced. Landlords were responsible for the poor living standards. Between 1958 and 1965, over 2,000 buildings were demolished for commercial redevelopment. This period, known as the urban renewal, was what "progress" looked like.

Saving the Morris House: A Unique Collaboration

Presentation By: Dylan Ames and Andrew Murphy, The Morris Project

Tourists come to Halifax to see our heritage buildings and learn about the rich history of the community. The Halifax tourism industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry. The adaptive reuse of our heritage buildings helps protect and preserve the buildings from demolition, and contributes to the growth of the tourism industry. There have been several redevelopment projects for

heritage buildings in Halifax, where the heritage components are restored and sustained through reuse of the property. For example, the Morris House was moved to a new location and restored to protect the building from demolition. Moving a heritage building can be challenging. Due to the age of the building, it is quite fragile. Streets need to be shut down because the width of the house is larger than a traffic lane. Electrical wires also needed to be raised. While there were some inconveniences to the public, the Morris House project brought the community together as people gathered around the move and cooperated with the street closures. Other heritage redevelopment projects in Halifax include the United Memorial Church in the North End and the Dennis Building on the corner of Granville and George Street.

Cultural Mapping in HRM: crafting a Data Framework, designing Engagement Tools, and Reaching Under-represented communities.

Presentation By: Leticia Smillie, Cultural Planner and Mapfumo Chidzonga, Engagement Specialist

We need to do a better job of recognising heritage and culture in our community. By presenting an African song and inviting attendees to participate in an African dance, the presenters reminded us that we should celebrate, share, and engage in our community's diverse heritage and culture. Our heritage comes in many forms including living heritage, built heritage, cultural landscapes and facilities. We need to improve access to our heritage and broaden the scope and our understanding of heritage. Our heritage is dynamic, with tangible and intangible components. Our cultural diversity and heritage gives us a sense of our community, identity and belonging. Learning from our past gives us a stronger future. HRM is working on a cultural mapping project as a community resource to develop a stronger knowledge base for culture and heritage. The mapping can create a baseline which can help us identify priorities and opportunities, what is missing, and what is at risk. This knowledge base can inform planning and policy, support economic and tourism development, expand access and participation in the community.

Preserving and Enhancing our Building Heritage

Presentation By: Jen Corson, Renovators Resource Inc.

Some builders and developers are recognising the benefits of using our existing building stock and reusing local materials. Renovating and refurbishing these buildings and materials optimise our aging building stock. Integrating contemporary design with elegant traditional architecture allows for the adaptive reuse of older buildings. This is more efficient than demolishing and constructing a new building. It also presents an opportunity to maintain traditional skills to repair older buildings to their intended condition. There are many options to consider to protect and rehabilitate an aged building before tearing it down. First, try to renovate the building in its place. If it cannot be repaired in situ, consider moving it whole or panelising it and moving it in parts. Many building materials from aged buildings can be salvaged. Demolition should be the absolute last resort.

Heritage Housing Industry

Presentation By: Austin Parsons, Dalhousie School of Architecture

The Dalhousie School of Architecture is teaching students the skills and knowledge needed to preserve heritage buildings in Nova Scotia. Recognising a need for a trans-generational transfer of knowledge, students are encouraged to engage in projects where they will experience all the problems faced with heritage building conservation. We need legislation for permanent heritage to ensure there is work for future generations to continue the practice of heritage architecture and construction. Traditional design and construction techniques can be applied to contemporary buildings and can prepare students to build and maintain a career in architecture in Halifax. The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada require a marginalised skillset where emphasis is placed on repairing rather than replacing character defining elements. Sustaining and preserving historical construction techniques and practices is important. To support a heritage carpentry industry, we should consider changing Standard 10 to remove “repair rather than replace character-defining elements” as a key principle.

Training our Future for the Past

Andrew MacAdam, NSCC Faculty of Heritage Carpentry

The Nova Scotia Community College offers a heritage carpentry program to teach students basic carpentry skills as well as unique skills for the rehabilitation and preservation of historic buildings. Courses offered include construction safety, hand tools, foundation, concrete forms, building science, history of architecture, roofing, stairs, and restoration methods. The courses focus on using traditional materials to prepare students for the Nova Scotian construction industry. Students are sometimes hired during the course to work directly on heritage projects. One recent example is the construction of park cabins in Kejimikujik National Park. Students designed the cabins to resemble ones that previously existed at the park. They were constructed of local wood materials, which gave students experience to apply the skills and techniques they learned for heritage construction. The cabins are available for rent during the summer to encourage more people to visit the park and to help with the cost of maintaining the cabins.