

The Historic Places Initiative in a Rural Context: The Rideau Heritage Initiative and the Rideau Canal

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The Rideau Heritage Initiative – A Case Study

- The Historic Places Initiative
- The Rideau Heritage Initiative



Ha Nguyen

RHI objectives: Community Engagement and Identifying Community Capacity



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- Methodology and Approach
- Diverse range of heritage resources in Rideau Corridor
- Four Municipality Models of Heritage Stewardship
- Challenges

1 – Understanding the Historic Places Initiative



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- Opportunity to showcase local heritage
- Use as a local memory tool
- Engage community members
- Encourage planning processes

2 - Scepticism about the Benefits of Heritage Designation



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- Designation is prohibitive
- Designation hurts property values
- Designation versus Adaptive Re-Use

3 - Municipal Heritage Committees - Essential Capacity Building Blocks

- **Urban Areas:** Municipal Heritage Planners oversee nominations of properties to the CRHP.
- **Rural Areas:** One Town Planner with multitude of portfolios. Heritage planning is not always a priority.



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4 -Linking Heritage and Economic Development: A Double-Edged Sword

- Heritage tourism is often seen as *the* solution for economic and rural community development. Efforts must be made to include rural communities within this approach as it is not universally popular.

“...Heritage-in-service-of-tourism can become too closely linked to economic development...when the historical message offered in such projects is geared primarily to an 'outside' market or transient visitor, then it does long-term disservice to its own community members and their sense of the past.”

Friesen J. (1990)



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Conclusions:

- The collaborative nature of the project, which brought governments, community members and students together in a mutual exchange of ideas and skills, led to insights into potential impediments — as well as potential opportunities — for the further implementation of the Historic Places Initiative in rural areas
- One of Rideau Heritage Initiative's most striking insights was that heritage stewardship is not necessarily more effective in municipalities that have the most tools at their disposal.



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- Continued efforts are needed to look for dynamic and creative solutions — incentive-based heritage conservation, formal recognition of non-designated heritage properties, exploration of adaptive reuse principles for rural heritage structures, and sustaining organic community stewardship.
- The Historic Places Initiative, with its flexible and collaborative governance model, proved an excellent catalyst for this discussion.