

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

BETTER MUNICIPAL BUSINESS PRACTICES: Heritage Conservation District The Town of Carberry

The Town of Carberry is a growing urban municipality located 45 kilometres east of Brandon with a population of just over 1,500 residents. Council is committed to building a progressive and forward-thinking community that provides a great place to live for all of its citizens, and agree that preserving the Town's unique municipal heritage is an important step in achieving this goal.

Council recognized the historic value and the potential of 39 buildings, many of them being over a century old, situated on two blocks of the Town's Main Street. Although many had fallen into disrepair, and some had been covered by modern building materials such as tin or vinyl siding, Council agreed that the buildings provided a unique and irreplaceable asset to the Town. Council believed that, by revitalizing Main Street, the Town could increase property values and renew investment in their downtown, as well as increase civic pride and create a unique tourist attraction.

In early 2006, the Economic Development Officer and the local archivist attended a heritage building workshop sponsored by Manitoba Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport's Historic Resources Branch. Through discussions at the workshop, they learned about protecting historical municipal assets through the establishment of a Heritage Conservation District. Council supported the idea and met with representatives of the Historic Resources Branch to discuss the process and the benefits of establishing a Heritage District.

Heritage Districts are established by municipal by-law under the *Manitoba Heritage Resources Act*. The by-law stipulates the improvements and changes that can be made to a designated building in order to preserve its historical value. Through its by-law, a municipality also establishes a Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee that is responsible for administering municipal grant funding and considering applications from property owners for building improvements and alterations within the Heritage District.

The Town of Carberry Council recognized that its historic buildings provided a unique and irreplaceable asset to the Town and worked to establish a Commercial Heritage District – the first of its kind in Manitoba.

Heritage Districts are established by municipal by-law and are intended to protect historically sensitive buildings.



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Before proceeding with the Heritage District project, Council met with the Main Street building owners and received their support to move forward with the proposal. The Town then hired an architectural communications firm to lead a visioning process to identify the benefits and goals of establishing a Heritage District.

The firm held two town-hall style meetings, one to listen to and receive input from Council, the Main Street property owners, the Economic Development Officer, and the Planning District, and the second to present to a strategy based on the input from the first meeting to the entire community.

Feedback from the town-hall meetings was positive and, in late 2006, Council voted to proceed. On June 12, 2007 the by-law establishing the Main Street Heritage Conservation District was passed. Council established its Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the Council, the Planning District, building owners, and the local archivist. They also applied for and received a grant from the Historic Resources Branch to hire a structural engineering firm to inspect individual historic buildings and assess their structural integrity.

To preserve and improve the District, the municipality grants \$10,000 each year to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and the Committee in turns provides five \$2,000 grants to help District building owners undertake cost-effective and historically sensitive renovations to their buildings. The dollar value of the grant must be matched by the property owner. The Town has also developed a Heritage Park on a corner lot in the centre of the District and intends to continue in the future with public space improvements in the heritage theme.

In the three years since the Heritage Conservation District was established in 2006, eligible property owners were eligible to receive \$30,000 in funding from the municipal grant program to make improvements to their properties. This has resulted in an overall improvement to the properties in the area, and is a positive step in reestablishing the Town's Main Street as a desirable area for residents to visit and do business.

Carberry is proud to be the first municipality in Manitoba to create a Heritage Conservation District and believes that its process could be used as a template for other small communities looking to preserve historical buildings.

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Council believes that its Heritage District project will provide a sense of place for citizens, increased civic pride, renewed investment in Main Street, and create a unique tourist attraction.

For more information on better municipal business practices, Successful Municipal Practices, and the Tools for Change program, see the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' website, at www.amm.mb.ca.