

Session 7.2 – Mighty Sites: Strategies for Viable Historic Places

Session Description:

Ensuring the viability of an historic place in 2017 comes with many challenges, but these are being met with excitingly creative solutions that throw out the traditional model of how historic sites can operate. What are the strategies that others are following to save or renew an historic place? What lessons can be shared between places that are owned by small not-for-profits, large public entities and Trusts, and commercial enterprises? Come hear the lessons learned from remarkable regeneration initiatives in Canada, the US and Australia!

Session Chair: Robert Pajot (Project Lead, Regeneration, National Trust for Canada)

Session Speakers:

- **Mark Perdiguera** (Student, Cal Poly Pomona) – Sustainable Preservation of America’s Historic Post Offices
- **Fiona McKean** (Owner, Opinicon Lodge) – The Opinicon Resort – A recipe for social enterprise.
- **Matthew Rowe** (Prince’s Charities Canada) and **Kathy Gastle** (Norval Community Association) – Reinventing the Home of L.M. Montgomery as a Literary Center and Museum
- **Lizz Thrasher** (A/Executive Director, Diefenbunker: Canada’s Cold War Museum) – A is for Apiculture, Z is for Zombies: Sustainability and Regeneration in Cold War Bunker
- **Martin Green** (Cultural Engagement Manager, National Trust for Australia, Victoria) – Reinventing National Historic Sites in Victoria, Australia.

Session Learning Objectives:

Session Participants will:

- Understand the scope of regeneration challenges faces by multiple types of historic places.
- Learn of the successful (and not so successful) regeneration strategies followed by different types of historic site owners, including small not-for-profit organizations, private sector entrepreneur, public Trust.
- Benefit from the lessons learned from sites in Ontario, the US, and in the State of Victoria, Australia.

7.2 Session Presentations:

Sustainable Preservation of America's Historic Post Offices, Mark Perdiguerra, Student, Cal Poly Tech

Since 2008, the federal government has decommissioned over 200 U.S. Post Offices, with over 50 of these listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This decommissioning caused by the United States Postal Services' budgetary constraints and the decline of the use of postal services in recent decades poses a growing concern for local community groups and the preservation community because these buildings have historically defined the downtowns of many cities across the country and provided each community a tangible link to the federal government. These post offices expressed this role through the civic presence of these buildings, the high artistic merit of their architecture and art, and the economic stimulus provided by their construction, maintenance, and operations.

Through adaptive reuse, many of these historic post offices can continue to play a vital role in their communities. The post offices have several shared characteristics in their location, siting, and design that provide opportunities for new interventions to meet contemporary needs. One example of this is the Santa Barbara Post Office, which this paper will use as a case study to demonstrate the feasibility of adaptively reusing these buildings and deriving design strategies applicable to future adaptive reuses of other historic post offices.

The adaptive reuse of these post offices would also provide an opportunity to explore the value of "sustainable preservation" anchored by the four pillars of the environment, economics, social equity, and cultural heritage. Their quality and durability of the materials, flexible planning, opportunities for additions, downtown locations, and the architectural merit of the original building make them capable of accommodating contemporary uses within this four-fold framework while retaining the historic post offices for their communities.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the importance of the historic post offices and the reasons why they should be preserved
- Learn the common features of post offices and possible design strategies based on those common features
- Evaluate the post offices and develop a basis for the adaptive reuse

Provide adaptive reuse designs based on the shared characteristics of the historic post offices

The Opinicon Resort – A recipe for social enterprise. Fiona McKean, owner, Opinicon Resort, Chaffey's Locks, ON.

Start with a remote Canadian landscape: a tiny hamlet along the Rideau Canal with memories almost forgotten of tourism heydays of yore. Add expansive vision and capital investment to a community's deep connection to history. Mix vigorously with creative minds and knowledgeable craftsmen. Sprinkle liberally with setbacks, doubts, perseverance and triumphs. Serve under hot timelines in a manner no one dreamed possible.

Learning Objective:

- Understand the challenges and opportunities present when tackling a historic renovation through the lens of social enterprise.

Reinventing the Home of L.M. Montgomery as a Literary Center and Museum, Matthew Rowe, Prince's Charities Canada, Kathy Gastle, Norval Community Centre

Prince's Charities Canada works to support and expand the Canadian charitable work of HRH The Prince of Wales. Working with The National Trust, The Government of Saskatchewan and the Heritage Foundation of Halton Hills, PCC managed a pilot project where The Prince's Regeneration Trust in the UK prepared business cases and plans for three heritage properties in Canada.

One of those properties was the Lucy Maud Montgomery Manse in Norval, Ontario. In 2016 the Heritage Foundation of Halton Hills and The Lucy Maud Montgomery Society of Norval a subcommittee of the Foundation were approached by representatives of the Norval Presbyterian Church and Union Presbyterian Church joint owners of the former home of famous Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery (1926-1935). A pre-confederation cottage and barn also located on the site of the Gothic Style church (built 1878) became available.

The purchase of the Heritage buildings provide an opportunity for Heritage Regeneration of the village of Norval. The project will honour the author with a Museum and Literary Centre, establish a community and educational centre, generate tourism and continue to work with established partners The Prince's Regeneration Trust, UK, the Prince's Charities Canada and the University of Guelph.

A is for Apiculture, Z is for Zombies: Sustainability and Regeneration in a Cold War Bunker. Lizz Thrasher, A/Executive Director, Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum, Carp, ON.

Re-purposing and re-imagining a former military bunker as a historic site and museum is both challenging and rewarding. The Diefenbunker has explored many ways to

sustainably generate revenue and engage our community, while protecting and preserving the original structure. From collaborative apiculture to zombies, the Diefenbunker will share its experiences in programming, preservation and partnerships.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- Understand that events and programming can serve as revenue generators and sources of visitor engagement, and remain on mandate.
- Realize that our attempts in preserving the past have value outside the heritage and cultural sector and can be leveraged, not just as revenue, but as a form of community involvement, and as part of unique partnerships.
- Expand their understanding and appreciation of building uses beyond that of culture and preservation.

Reinventing National Historic Sites in Victoria, Australia. Martin Green, Cultural Engagement Manager, National Trust for Australia, Victoria

Can you change the house museum model in the 21st Century to engage with visitors and be financially sustainable? The National Trust in Melbourne, Australia shifted focus from artefacts to visitor needs. The Old Melbourne Gaol, Polly Woodside Tall Ship and Rippon Lea mansion provide examples of practical and low cost approaches. This includes programming, interactive interpretation and design to reconnect with diverse audiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Engaging through changing perspective – being visitor focussed not object focussed.
- Education programming that brings contemporary issues into an historic environment.
- Planning interpretation of an historic interior using Frank Vagnone's Anarchist tags.
- Public programming ideas that work inside a domestic space.