Ongoing work in the Niagara Region

Heritage Development in Western New York

It would be a mistake, however, to say that the process of heritage development has yet to begin here. There are initiatives in environmental, ecological, and cultural conservation ongoing from sea to sea in and around the Niagara Region.

In Buffalo, work is proceeding on the redevelopment of South Buffalo’s “O’connell’age”-inspired implementation of Buffalo’s downtown planning through Downtown 2002: rebirth of Eric’s cultural vision, a 21st-century reincarnation of the city’s Peace Bridge gateway, and innovations in local institutions in the Olmsted Crescent of Development.

In Niagara Falls, momentum is building at the Niagara Parks Commission with waterfront access and greenway initiatives. The Niagara Parks Parkway, a broader scale work, is going forward on regional marketing through Buffalo Niagara Enterprise: a tourism marketing and investment study in the Niagara Region.

Development case study in Fort Erie

Recent investments on the Canadian side of the border, meanwhile, have been focused at the March 2000 bi-national forum, where Robert C. O’Dell outlined up to six billion dollars in recent, pending, or anticipated development on the Ontario side of Niagara Falls. In November, by contrast, O’Dell presented a study about how such investments might be targeted on a much smaller scale and a finer grain. It highlighted the case of Fort Erie, one of the smaller communities in the region, but one that might rightly lay claim to the title of “gateway to Canada.”

While Fort Erie has done at previously nothing like this, it has found local assets with economic, social, and community goals to identify discrete areas of development. Thus, the list of potential initiatives is targeted to investing in an urban entertainment center focused on themes of architectural and historical rehabilitation; expansion in waterfront development in Crystal Beach and downtown expansion of the Niagara Queen Marina for maritime tourism; redevelopments of the city’s Peace Bridge Gateway and expansion of a system of green parks.

One other heritage-oriented initiative in Fort Erie, however, this work also focuses on the stories that link the villages — stories of archaeological, historical, cultural, social, ecological, and economic relevance. It seeks to foster narratives about people’s lives and what remains, about what has been, about what is to be. As Bradshaw Hovey of UB’s School of Architecture & Planning notes, “Heritage is about people’s stories; it is a drawing point for people.”

Next Steps

The November Roundtable concluded with a lively discussion of the prospects for bi-national cooperation around issues of natural and cultural tourism and heritage development. There is no shortage of assets and stories, and there is great opportunity we can seize by working together.

Some identified the need to broaden and deepen grassroots involvement, while others zeroed in on the nascent reality of engaging leadership at higher levels of government and business. There was a general idea of discussing about how to work together, seen what to name this enterprise of bi-national collaboration.

Since November, a number of initiatives have moved forward. For example, arts organizations and communities on both sides of the border have talked about establishing a two-nation tourist pass akin to Bodensee Alpenrhein’s “Inclusive Cart.” An initiative has been identified for a unified bi-national map of the region; a report is due.

Niagara Falls, NY has been in the news, as it needs to be, both federally, provincially, and locally. Part of this initiative is to repair, enhance, and re-use the places — stories of archaeology and aboriginal habitation; economic and social interpretation ongoing from sea to sea.

As Bradshaw Hovey of UB’s School of Architecture & Planning suggests, “Heritage is about people’s stories; it is a drawing point for people.”

For further information:

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Niagara Falls, Source: New York Power Authority

Focus on heritage

To develop the great bi-national region that spans the Niagara River, we should consider using the phrase “gateway ground” — on the potential in developing, promoting our shared natural and cultural heritage.

Mirella Kurz, twenty-twenty architecture, has been the chair of an informal working group in the Niagara Region. She is shining a light on the prospects for bi-national collaboration known as Reconnecting Niagara. Mirella Kurz notes, “At the November 2000 to 2003 timeframe, we have more to do together to help our region meet the challenges of the 21st century.

This bi-national agreement, should we be working to improve quality of life for all, will lead to, in the words of one person I spoke with, the ‘building a great bi-national blues blizzard — was the latest step in a bi-national collaboration to conserve our environment and natural and cultural heritage. We should celebrate our heritage and develop heritage tourism as one of the cornerstones of regional economic development plans.”

The November Roundtable — “Rethinking the Niagara Frontier” — was attended by representatives of Buffalo Niagara, Niagara Falls, and the Urban Design Project of Buffalo.

The November Roundtable was a means to conclude the roundtable’s discussions and to advance our work. The bi-national Roundtable — outlines for the November Roundtable at the University of Buffalo (5/11/11).

By now, representatives of more than a hundred organizations — corporations, authorities, municipalities, non-profits, academia, business groups, community-based organizations, universities, philanthropic institutions, and government agencies at every level of government on both sides of the border — have participated in Reconnecting Niagara. We would continue our work and our forum to continue to help our region meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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Lessons from Europe
Regeneration in the Ruhr Region
The experience of other communities in Europe is stimulating new ideas and connecting us to a diverse network. Participants in the November Roundtable had an opportunity to gain new insights into lessons from European communities that have faced challenges similar to ours.

Florian Michael Schwab
Schwanenstieg 1
30113 Hannover
Germany

More lessons from North America
Heritage Connections
There are important lessons to learn about heritage development in other communities in the United States. Many Memos, a national leader in heritage development planning, and a guest speaker at the March 2000 National Forum, returned in November to offer more insights into the process.

Karen Velonis, Commissioner, City of Queens, New York City

The process should be a combination of meaningful planning, involving public and private stakeholders, and an array of innovative approaches to implementation. Community involvement is crucial.

Rebecca Gladney, Planning Director, City of Greensboro, North Carolina

Involving all stakeholders is a critical component of meaningful planning. It is important to ensure that all members of the community are engaged in the process.

Paul Kornai, Interim Director, Mayors’ Residence on Conservation, Program, New York, NY

Many Memos emphasized the balance of heritage in saving places and promoting community, economic and environmental protection and restoration. Heritage and recreation are as well as cultural ideas about the heritage service as a part of planning and development.

Karen Velonis, Commissioner, City of Queens, New York City

The management and maintenance strategies need to be dynamic and flexible. The City of Hannover, for example, has a heritage preservation program, but it is also flexible enough to accommodate change. Heritage preservation needs to be dynamic and adaptable to changing conditions.

Dr. Johannes Schröder, Director, City of Hannover, Germany

The need for a heritage and environment protection strategy is essential. The City of Hannover is committed to preserving its heritage and environment while ensuring sustainable and equitable development.

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Lessons from Europe
Regeneration in the Ruhr Region

The experience of other communities can stimulate new ideas and connect us to a diverse network. Participants in the November Roundtable had an opportunity to gain insight into lessons from European communities that have faced challenges similar to ours.

Planer Michael Schwarze-Bendelud said a memo of aggregation in the Ruhr area, Germany’s former coal mining and steelmaking region — an area similar to much of southwest Michigan — is one example. Michigan and Ruhr communities face similar economic challenges, and the lessons from the Ruhr can be applied to Michigan.

The Roundtable included representatives from the Regeneration Ruhr Group, a regional organization dedicated to promoting the Ruhr’s transformation. The group was formed in 1994 as part of a policy effort to make the Ruhr region a “city of the future” and a “city for the 21st century.”

The Regeneration Ruhr Group includes representatives from the city of Dortmund and the Ruhr area, including municipalities in the region. The group has a mandate to implement 350 projects in the area by 2008.

Projects proposed for the 1,200 million mark include a new infrastructure, high-speed trains and highways, and new industrial parks.

Information and knowledge initiatives that benefit residents and visitors alike are key to the region’s success. The Ruhr area is a new model for building sustainable cities and communities, where information and communication technologies are key to the region’s success.

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Heritage Connections

There are important lessons to learn about heritage development in other communities. A guest speaker at the March 2009 Roundtable, featured in November to offer more insight into the process.

More lessons from North America

Heritage specialists have developed a rich understanding of the economic and social value of heritage tourism. The Roundtable highlighted the importance of heritage tourism in the region and the lessons that can be learned from other communities.

One example is the “Idea Initiative,” a program that encourages local communities to develop ideas for heritage tourism. The initiative has helped communities develop ideas for tourism projects and has led to the creation of new tourism attractions.

For more information, visit the website of the Idea Initiative at www.idea-initiative.org.

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Ongoing work in the Niagara Region

Heritage Development in Western New York

Erie Canal Depot, Source: Western New York Heritage Institute

Going forward on regional mar-

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ducation, and cultural preservation.

On a broader scale, work is

development case study in

In Niagara Falls, momentum is

development on the Ontario side

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**Ongoing work in the Niagara Region**

Heritage Development in New Western New York

Erie Canal remnants; redevelopment projects, such as the Olmsted Urban Design Project, have been pivotal in the region’s economic and cultural development. The focus, they agreed, should be on working to improve quality of life for all residents. This means concentrating on our “common ground” — on the potential in preserving, developing, and promoting our shared natural and cultural heritage.

The November Roundtable concluded with a lively discussion of the prospects for bi-national cooperation around issues of natural and cultural tourism and heritage development. There is no shortage of assets or stories, and there is great opportunity we can seize by working together.

Some identified the need to broaden and deepen grassroots involvement, while others zeroed in on the necessity of engaging leaders at higher levels of government and business. There was a good deal of discussion about how to work together, seen what to name this enterprise of bi-national collaboration.

Since November, a number of initiatives have moved forward. For example, arts organizations on both sides of the border have been talking about establishing a two- nation tourist pass akin to the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a model that has been in the news, as well as various economic development plans.

The bi-national roundtable, they believe, should be on working to improve quality of life for all residents. This means concentrating on our “common ground” — on the potential in preserving, developing, and promoting our shared natural and cultural heritage.

Focus on heritage

To develop the great bi-national region that spans the Niagara River, we should concentrate on our “common ground” — on the potential in preserving, developing, and promoting our shared natural and cultural heritage.

The November Roundtable — a report on the November Roundtable

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