

Best Practice

The City of Humboldt's Heritage Values

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THE PRACTICE

The Humboldt Heritage Values Project (HHVP) was completed in 2010. This project was led by the Humboldt & District Museum and Gallery and was developed to meet many needs within the community. The museum had identified several heritage issues as a result of a community analysis conducted during its strategic planning process. One of the issues identified in the analysis was the need for a plan for heritage and cultural development in the city. This idea was the basis for the HHVP. This project would help to determine on what basis decisions would be made to determine what would be preserved for the future.

Heritage values include:

- Historical values (connection to people, events or themes)
- Cultural/social values (traditional, symbolic, spiritual, sense of time and place)
- Architectural values (construction, style, design)
- Scientific values (knowledge, information)
- Aesthetic values (craftsmanship, beauty, design)

This project also demonstrated the city's role in encouraging heritage conservation by raising public awareness and understanding of the numerous aspects of community heritage – such as artwork, artifacts, language, culture, architecture, archaeological sites, stories and natural spaces. In this way, community members can better understand the complexity of city council's decisions in trying to conserve the many aspects of the community's heritage, rather than focusing on one or two individual projects.

THE PROCESS

Three primary strategies were employed to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to participate in some way. The first strategy was a public survey which asked residents for their perspective on Humboldt's identity, stories that had meaning for them and heritage resources that captured their imagination. The survey was available in a number of public places such as the library, museum and community arena, as well as online through the museum's and city's websites. The survey was sent home to each family with students in elementary schools. It was also distributed to all the homes in the city as an insert in the free community newspaper. Surveys were distributed at the public and private seniors care homes, and through the Immigration Gateway for new residents.

The second strategy was a series of five facilitated workshops, including four at the museum, and one at the high school. Approximately, 125 invitations were sent to individuals in all parts of the city. The workshops were designed to explore and discuss the information gathered from the public surveys.

The third strategy was to conduct interviews with 16 individuals whose backgrounds could contribute information about historic subjects that required further exploration. The findings from the survey were organized into twelve thematic statements expressing values based on what was important and had meaning to the respondents. The participants in the workshops expanded the number of themes to twenty-eight with accompanying heritage resources.

Once the information had been gathered, the Advisory Committee evaluated the value-based themes and accompanying resources against a set of criterion. The same evaluation process was used to assess the heritage resources to ensure that the accompanying resources were the most appropriate expressing a particular theme. The results of the heritage values project were communicated to the community by the Advisory Committee through a series of town hall meetings. The results were then approved by the museum board and presented to city council.

The museum board will then integrate the results into the City of Humboldt's heritage management plan, which will include the following components:

- Creating statements of significance for individual resources
- Considering municipal designation of individual resources
- Matching values to physical resources and site characteristics
- Analyzing threats and opportunities
- Making policies and taking action

Heritage management is an ongoing process of managing change in the community while conserving its heritage values.

THE RESULTS

The results of the heritage values project were twelve value-based thematic statements and a list of heritage resources that interpret the themes and include examples. The themes are not only topic statements but statements embedded with values that the residents of Humboldt hold about their community.

The heritage resources are things the community collectively believes best represent the values and history expressed in the thematic statements. The community believes this type of resource has meaning and should be preserved and protected.

The project was evaluated by the Advisory Committee and the Museum Board. It was determined that the resources selected reflect the community's heritage values because they were defined and selected by the community in a consultative and transparent manner.

One of the primary benefits of this project was that there was an increase in the public's understanding and involvement in community heritage. Another benefit was the validation of the listing of heritage resources.

The project brought together diverse heritage groups within the municipality that can sometimes work in isolation. The increased citizen participation created a project truly based on the community's opinion.

LESSONS LEARNED

This project was an exercise in community collaboration. It stimulated discussions between new residents and long time community members. One of the key lessons learned was to provide adequate resources for the project. Another key lesson was that the project provided an engaging and thought provoking process for the residents.