

"We've got everything you could possibly want in a big city but it's all located together in one spot." KATHY WILSON



CINDY WILSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

The courtyard at the entrance to CenterBeam Place, featured in Heritage Magazine, a publication of the Heritage Canada Foundation.

National spotlight shines on CenterBeam Place

Recognition Article in magazine seen benefiting heritage preservation efforts in city

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TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN — CenterBeam Place in the city's uptown is being called a model of what can be achieved if the federal government and concerned citizens work together to preserve local heritage.

An article about the renovation of the block-long heritage complex is the cover story for the current issue of Heritage Magazine, a national publication by the Heritage Canada Foundation.

The eight-page story, written by local writer Jo Anne Claus and businessman John F. Irving, includes a dozen photos and details the complicated process involved in revitalizing the area.

Editor Carolyn Quinn said the property was chosen for the cover story because it's an example of what can happen if the federal government provides funding to preserve commercial heritage buildings.

"It's not just about preserving a building, it's about revitalizing a streetscape,"

she said. "Fixing buildings like these gives a shot in the arm to other buildings in the area, making other people want to fix them up."

CenterBeam Place was an early recipient of money from the federal Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund, which has since been cancelled.

"More people need to hear about (CenterBeam Place) so they can see what that kind of money and support from the community can do," Quinn said.

The magazine, published four times a year, is distributed across the country to the foundation's members as well as most members of Parliament, heads of federal and provincial departments related to heritage and mayors of major cities — more than 5,000 people in all.

Quinn first heard about the revitalization of the area after attending a provincial heritage convention last fall and sharing a dinner table with Irving, president of Commercial Properties Ltd., which owns the buildings.

"It was such an extraordinary story," said Quinn. "With all the challenges they had to face — that hill and those interiors."

Kathy Wilson, president of the New Brunswick Historical Society, said any time high-ranking politicians are made aware of Saint John's heritage, the city benefits.

"The more politicians hear about us, the more likely it is that they'll see it's important we get more funding," she said. "These places don't come cheap but if you ignore them and they completely fall down there's no way to get them back."

Wilson said the article will also help promote tourism to the area.

"We've got everything you could possibly want in a big city but it's all located together in one spot," she said. "Any time tourists can see that and realize everything they can get here, that can only do good."

Quinn said the magazine often looks to New Brunswick for story ideas and plans to include a story on the South House, the restored historic building on the campus of Rothesay Netherwood School in its next edition.