

Heritage awards recognize contribution to Port City;

Most people don't think about heritage areas until they walk by what was once a crumbling building or decrepit structure, and notice that it has been restored to its former glory.

The City of Saint John recognized the folks that work behind the scenes to preserve the city's inventory of more than 6,000 19th century properties.

Jim Bezanson, heritage development officer for the Port City, says the awards recognize people in the area who have helped preserve the city's architecture and heritage.

"It's either through work on building or commercial or store fronts," said Mr. Bezanson.

In Joan Pearce's case, she took home the Advocate award. Since the early 1970s, before heritage conservation was in vogue, Mrs. Pearce organized walking tours that focused on King Street East. She and two other friends began Saint John Heritage Trust.

"We've had a lot of ups and downs being advocates for heritage," said Mrs. Pearce. "The recognitions was important. I'm really pleased that people want to live in heritage buildings and like the beauty because architecture is almost like art. It's really lovely."

Mrs. Pearce said the city didn't always listen and her group didn't always win the battles. What started her on her crusade was the loss of the oldest home in the city in the early 70s. The Fort Howe Hotel now sits on that site.

Dan Tanaka and Kerry Jo Parker won in the residential category for the work on their home at 6 Queen Square; Tom and Dale Szeliga also won in the residential category for construction of a entry stairway at their 54 Orange Street building; in the storefront category Henry Birks and Sons Ltd. were recognized for rehabilitating the storefront at 20 King St.; in the commercial category Peter Smit and Judith Mackin of Happinez won for the work on their bar at 42 Princess St.;

Commercial Properties Ltd. got the nod for the work on buildings at King and Prince William streets; the Marketing and Promotion award also went to Commercial Properties Ltd. for its work on CenterBeam Place. The Special Recognition award went to Malcolm Harris, chairman of the Preservation Review Board.

Deputy Mayor Michelle Hooton said that heritage and the people that fight for its preservation add immeasurably to the quality of life in the Port City.

"They're investing in something they believe in," said Mrs. Hooton.

"It's a niche asset that Saint John has, that no other city in North America can boast such a large inventory of 19th century architecture."

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