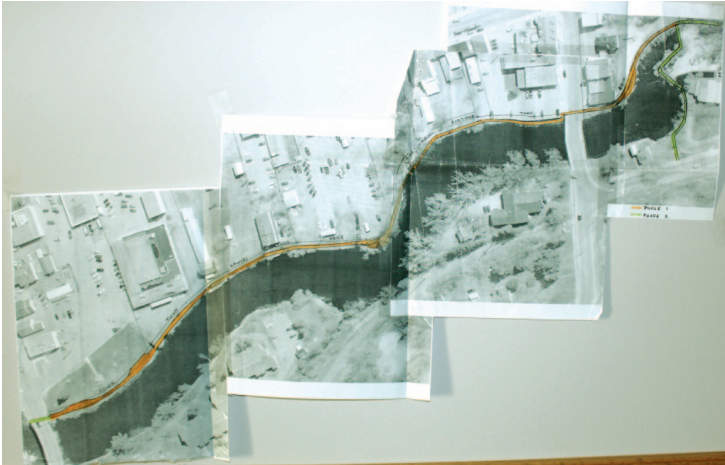


Boardwalk showcasing Bancroft in a whole new way



By Nate Smelle

Since construction of the Bancroft Boardwalk began in the Spring of 2012 a team of volunteers, private investors and members of the local business community have been working hard to change how people look at the town. To reorient people's view of the downtown the Bancroft Boardwalk committee, led by Burke Chamberlin have dedicated their time, energy and money to building Bancroft's first ever riverfront walkway along the York River. The idea behind the initiative is to encourage residents and visitors to spend more time, and hopefully money, in downtown Bancroft, by simply highlighting the natural beauty discretely flowing behind the main street.

This idea to refocus the downtown to draw visitors and residents to the picturesque view along the river is not a new one, says one of the project's many supporters, Bancroft's Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins.

"The boardwalk was part of the build Bancroft project but the idea actually originated 25 or 30 years ago with a document that Trevor Hessling did in a design dialogue," said Bancroft's Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins, a supporter of the project on Council.

"It wasn't drawn out to this extent that it did show a pathway to walkway along the waterfront; so this really has been a community-based project for a long, long time. Finally people have come forward finally people of color forward and are getting it done."

Construction of the boardwalk started on a piece of riverfront property owned by Chamberlin behind a building of his on Bridge Street in Bancroft's Theatre District. It has since travelled up the hill beside the dam, across Bridge Street and behind Price Ford, Stedman's and Dairy Queen. This past summer another section along the riverside in Cenotaph Park was also completed.

Chamberlin said the community has been a huge support and that it seems like people are taking pride in the project as well.

"Before I built this boardwalk this was all garbage back here," he said.

"Since I put this here, and there are now people like us standing and walking around there is no more garbage."

Having raised most of the funds for the boardwalk—almost \$200,000—from private investors in the community, Chamberlin says support for the project has been overwhelming. An additional \$49,000 from a Trillium Fund grant of \$88,850 has also been spent on the boardwalk. This brings the total cost of the project to date up to approximately \$250,000.

The growing list of contributors to the project include: Jan Woodlands Lebel/Cambium, Wilsons Timber Mart, Trent Timber and their suppliers Pastway Planing and Micro Pro Sienna, Leveque Brothers Aggregate, LBR Contracting, Whitfield Plumbing & Heating, Birds Creek Concrete Finishing, WSP, Bierworth Redi-Mix, RONA, Freymond Lumber, Terry Prentice Logging, Brad Fraser Logging, Lloyd Trolley Logging, Beacon Construction, Home Hardware and Pepin's No Frills. So far the Town of Bancroft has not had to contribute any money.

Aside from the funding, Chamberlin says the project's expansion has also been dependent on the riverfront property owners' permission for the boardwalk to be built across their land. With only two property owners yet to commit, the boardwalk committee is hopeful they will get on board with the project once they see how it can create opportunities for economic development in downtown Bancroft.

Describing the boardwalk as a work in progress, Chamberlin says the committee has big plans for other future expansions. If Chamberlin's vision for the expansion of the boardwalk comes to fruition it will stretch along the York River from one end of town to the other without any interruptions. Eventually he would like to see it extend all the way to the Riverstone Residence, crossing the river by the dam and connecting with the trail systems in Vance Park and at the Eagle's Nest Lookout.

"This is part and parcel of what we hope is going to become something much bigger," said Chamberlin.

"The more people we get on board with this, the more ideas and opportunities for economic growth it could create."

"It's not the boardwalk to nowhere it's the boardwalk to everywhere, because of the possibilities that are going to spin off from this," added Jenkins.

The boardwalk committee is currently looking for people to help with finishing touches such as solar lighting, commemorative plaques and signage, seating, horticultural improvements and waste receptacles.

Anyone who would like to help with making such improvements to the boardwalk are asked to contact committee members Gord Krieger 613-334-2841, Steve Huszarik 613-332-1991 or Burke Chamberlin at 613-332-3831.

On Tuesday, Oct. 13 the Town of Bancroft will be hosting a community gathering to celebrate receiving the Danby Award for the Bridge Street Bridge project and a project milestone for the boardwalk. The celebration will begin at the Bridge Street bridge and will travel along the boardwalk to Price Ford. Following the presentation the group will head over to the Club 580 in Bancroft for refreshments and to visit with Council and special guests. To RSVP or for more info contact the Town of Bancroft at 613-332-3331, or at info@bancroft.ca.