

Downtown Charlottetown Inc.

Adopt a Corner Story;

The little project with the big impact.

DCI promotes, manages and grows our Adopt a Corner Project. We refer to this as “the little project with big effect. The program began in 2007. The major Streetscape renovation had just been completed on lower queen Street. The new sidewalk and interlocking brick parking areas looked great but the area around the newly planted trees look less then appealing in its current state of mud. One of our board members and local architect . . . who had an office on that street, called Karen at city Hall to ask if he could plant some flowers in his newly acquired muddy patch to try to *spruce up the area*. Of course Karen said sure. DCI felt this was a good idea that could easily be applied to the rest of the BIA. We’d seen a similar project applied to the street in Charlotte, SC and so we had a vision for what could happen if we opened up downtown Charlottetown corners to local businesses to adopt. A quick call to City Hall to seek permission to put the rest of the corners up for adoption and our program was born “Adopt a Corner”.

The DCI office began right away calling on our members and placing ads to encourage business and property owners to adopt their corners, or the corner around the corner, or any grassy knoll in the BIA.

Now here’s the beauty of Partnering with the City. DCI has few resources for staffing but our partners at City Hall came on board to say that they would; 1. Dig the garden plot and prepare the soil of planting and 2. Maintain the gardens throughout the summer having their staff weed and water each corners. This took a huge responsibility off the property owners. The businesses that choose to adopt a corner needed only to purchase whatever plant material they liked and as much as they wanted. Most made the planting a fun team event on a Saturday or warm June evening. DCI plants a prominent “Garden Adopted by. . .” sign in each garden to promote the adopting company. Still the sales pitch to participants wasn’t an easy one as there was a worry

that they might make this investment only to have their plants pulled out or gardens trampled by late night summer party goers. That first year we were able to get 7 corners adopted and there were no lost or trampled gardens. The next year we had 20 and last year we had 49.

Here's another bonus we found with our garden project. Never before were store and property owners able to contribute to the beautification of not only their property but the city core to this extent. It gave these folks ownership of their portion of the project. . . and pride in their accomplishment. This truly is a fully shared project for the entire downtown business community. A real "feel good" win win process.

These little pocket gardens add so much to the beautification of the City. We receive compliments from locals and visitors. The gardens are photographed often sometime because they are so beautiful and unique sometimes to take the idea home. No two are alike and there are no restrictions on what can be planted. If you position yourself just right on one street corner and look around you – you can see as many as 12 different gardens.

This year we already have 5 new requests for garden spaces and not just from our members, for example the Women's Institute see this as a way to contribute to the City Beautification, IODE is celebrating an anniversary this year so they want to commemorate that date with a garden . . . the Charlottetown Rotary Club would like to have a larger prominent garden on Queen Street. Now we are in the position . . . along with our devoted partner at the City, Jerry Mac, to look for additional space that we can dig up for gardens.

We can't say enough how important partners are in this wonderful little project. Everyone likes a little completion and nothing makes you want to step things up a notch more than seeing what your neighbour has done. The more participants that come onboard the grander the gardens become. Then there's the big completion, the Communities in Bloom judging. The City has graciously added the Adopt a Corner Program as a category for the annual Communities in Bloom completion. During the

City's *Make Charlottetown Bloom* Awards the best Adopted Corner Garden is presented with an award!

And speaking of awards, you may be familiar with the International Downtown Association; Founded in 1954, the International Downtown Association has more than 650 member organizations worldwide including: North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. During their annual conference they host the Award of Distinction ceremonies. Last year we are pleased to announce our Adopt a Corner project was among the winners;

The project was one of 77 award submissions IDA received last year as part of its Downtown Achievement Awards. "The number and breadth of entries made judging a difficult task," said Jane Jenkins, chairman of IDA and the awards program. "The awards jury was impressed with the accomplishments of the winners and is pleased to honor The Downtown Charlottetown Inc. Adopt a Corner Project among them."

This really is the little project with a big impact and it is doable in any City Center large or small.

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