

Jim Bezanson, Saint John, New Brunswick

Jim Bezanson has simultaneously been a passionate heritage advocate, educator, conference speaker, volunteer, architect, planner, heritage consultant and building contractor for over 35 years.

He grew up on the east coast of Nova Scotia and worked there on the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings in 1975. He was later employed by Parks Canada's Restoration Section dealing with projects throughout the Atlantic Provinces. From 1980 to 1990, Mr. Bezanson lived in Vancouver, where he worked with the first Heritage Conservation Program; he helped establish the first award-winning heritage trades program at Vancouver Community College and was its principal instructor. He later launched his own architecture and planning practice, which specialized in the sensitive redevelopment of heritage buildings and a number of projects won awards.

Jim Bezanson



As Heritage Development Officer for the City of Saint John, New Brunswick since 1990, Jim Bezanson has played a key role in shaping the city's heritage movement. In that capacity he has provided guidance on over 3,000 heritage conservation projects and has been instrumental in saving a number of buildings from demolition, including the first Carnegie Free Library in Canada. Through his efforts, a number of heritage designated districts were created in the city and hundreds of sites of cultural significance added to the Canadian Register of Historic Places. Mr. Bezanson was a strong proponent in having the City of Saint John recognized as a Prince of Wales Prize community in 2004.

Mr. Bezanson's Heritage House



Jim Bezanson' hands-on experience as a heritage building contractor and developer has helped him to demystify the work of preserving and adapting heritage buildings to new uses. The much requested *Practical Conservation Guidelines*, prepared under his direction, received an award from the American Association for State and Local History. With his commitment to finding solutions to conservation problems, he focuses on offering owners of historic properties technical and design options that enable preservation, rather than focusing on what cannot be changed or altered. His ingenuity and creative approach has resulted in flexible conservation solutions.

Mr. Bezanson's substantial contribution to the development of the national Standards and Guidelines for the

Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and the Certification Program for the national Historic Places Initiative, have benefited communities across the country. His extensive technical knowledge and balanced approach to safeguarding Canada's cultural assets have made him a highly sought-after speaker and adviser countrywide.

Jim Bezanson is serious about putting his beliefs into practice. In 1992, he purchased a six-unit building in the Orange Street Heritage Conservation Area of the city to use as a "living laboratory" where he could demonstrate how to resolve technical issues and share knowledge with other property owners. In 2004, he bought a city block of 130-year-old buildings to rescue them from demolition. He also manages two dozen rental apartments, as well as the work of his construction company, which specializes in sensitive heritage conservation and development. When demolition does occur, he can be seen in his 1955 Dodge Truck salvaging bricks, hardwood flooring, doors, light fixtures, stair balusters, newel posts and other heritage building components, which he shares freely with property owners restoring or repairing old buildings.

A Walking Tour in Saint John



Mr. Bezanson Working on a Heritage Property



Throughout Jim Bezanson's career he has proven to be a dedicated, passionately driven and energetic advocate for heritage conservation across the country. He has willingly invested countless hours of his own time helping community groups in the Maritimespersuade municipal councils and private building owners to invest in preservation over demolition and has extended his support to individuals facing a wide range of restoration challenges, from repairing masonry to restoring historic windows.

Jim Bezanson has served on local and national boards, including that of the Heritage Canada Foundation, where he was chair from 2003-2005. He holds degrees in Architecture, Environmental Design, and Planning.

Jim Bezanson was nominated by Harold E. Wright.