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The face of downtown revitalization

Andrea Raymond takes the helm of downtown revitalization project as intern

July 14, 2009

BY LAURA MUELLER



Andrea Raymond *Laura Mueller*

Andrea Raymond is new in town, but she is hoping people will soon recognize her as the face of downtown revitalization in Perth.

As the downtown revitalization committee's intern, she will spend the next six months working with business and property owners, residents and visitors to come up with strategies to keep the downtown section of Perth vibrant.

Last week was her first week on the job, but it wasn't the first time she has been to Perth.

"I have a great respect for Perth and its heritage," Raymond said. "I always make a point to come through Perth on my way to Ottawa."

Having taken a walking tour of the town, toured the museum and caught a play at the Studio Theatre, Raymond was familiar with downtown Perth's charms before she moved here. But she says she wants to make sure others will find the same charms.

"Once you get downtown, it's hard to leave," she said. "But driving on Hwy. 7, you might miss that character."

To that end, putting signage on Hwy. 7 direct visitors to the downtown will be one of Raymond's priorities.

During the six months she serves as the downtown revitalization youth intern, Raymond will meet with as many people as possible to get feedback about the state of the downtown area, as well as current and proposed programs to improve it.

She will also be involved in a "gap analysis" to be conducted through Queen's School of Business Monieson Centre in order to identify unfilled business opportunities in the downtown core.

A community improvement plan, developing a visitor survey, attending festivals, recommending advertising opportunities and investigating a possible heritage designation for the downtown area are also on Raymond's agenda.

Perth needs to invest in ways to keep the downtown beautiful and prosperous in the future, said Karen Rennie, a

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member of the downtown revitalization committee and the town's heritage manager.

"Perth has done a lot of wonderful things, but we can't sit on one project," Rennie said.

Perth's bustling tourist market and thriving downtown are seen as an example of what small towns should strive for, but Rennie said Perth has a responsibility to live up to that reputation.

"We're 20 years out of the Main Street Program," she said, referring to the initiative led by John Stewart in the 1980s that revitalized Perth's downtown core. "We need to preserve what we've had in the past and look towards the future," she said.

Raymond brings a varied work experience to her new role in Perth. She holds degrees in history and education from Queen's University and the University of Western Ontario, respectively. She worked in retail for several years, including as the manager of a Running Room store.

Raymond has also spent time working at historic sites, including a role as the education co-ordinator at Myrtleville House in Brantford, where she worked with Rennie, who was the executive director at the time.

Most recently, she was the education co-ordinator at Ruthven Park National Historic Site, where she did outreach with different age groups, attended conferences and developed a marketing strategy for the sprawling park and archeological site.

Her role in Perth will capitalize on that marketing knowledge, but she says she will need help from Perth residents and business owners.

"It's sort of a ground-up approach," she said, adding that she has already begun to meet with business owners.

While her position is temporary, Raymond and her husband decided to relocate to Perth. She is originally from Paris, Ont. which has a population of approximately 9,000 people.


"I love that small-town feel," she said.

Rennie, for one, is pleased to welcome Raymond as one of Perth's newest residents.


"We want to attract that younger generation that wants to settle here," she said.

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