



# TRANSITION TEAM UPDATE

Transition Team Newsletter : Issue 5

July 17, 2016

## **“A Second Day of Discovery – Who are our Neighbours?”**

The first Preliminary Interim Goal for this period of Interim Ministry is to review our history, consider the present, and define a vision for the future. The congregation completed the part of this goal by reviewing our history and discovering who we are as Trinity United Church.

The second part of achieving this goal is to consider the present by understanding who our neighbours are. To this end, the Transition Team led another workshop on January 24, 2016 to reflect and make observations as to who our neighbours are within the community of Smiths Falls.

It should be noted that there was some difficulty in interpreting the data owing to the subjective nature of the input from participants. A more controlled method where input is not verbal, but based on numeric grading, check boxes etc. would provide more consistent entry/analysis. In order to get a clear picture of the makeup of Smiths Falls, it will be necessary to seek out more empirical information.



### **Our first goal:**

*“Review our history,  
consider the present,  
and define a vision for  
the future.”*

### **Who are the people who make up Smiths Falls?**

The population of Smiths Falls is somewhat diverse... for the most part Caucasian, with small numbers of other members of the community being of other racial origins. The age distribution of the community is also wide ranging... from young children to retirees. In the past few years more retirees have chosen to move into the area. A mixture of young married couples with children to single parent families. It is common to see many generations from the same family tree living in the community.... although many young adults have to leave Smiths Falls to find employment... family ties remain strong within the community. Economically speaking, the population of Smiths Falls have had it pretty rough of the past decade as many of the large

employers have departed for other locations or have just shut their doors. There are many people living on social assistance.

### **What are the Land Use Patterns in Smiths Falls?**

The older part of town... **north Smiths Falls**, is where the majority of the commercial, financial and small retail businesses are located. The Smiths Falls medical community and services are also located here as well the majority of religious, recreation, cultural and arts facilities. There are fine old residential districts in the north end of town... some areas need work but the majority are well looked after. Unfortunately, it is this older part of town where you will find many vacant business buildings along the main and side streets.

**South Smiths Falls**, which is located south of the Rideau River, is the newer (50 years past) part of town. It is where most of the expansion of housing and retail business is occurring. There are assisted living retirement facilities for the elderly and group homes for former residents of the Rideau Regional Centre. South Smiths has of course the High School and a great recreation area known as Lower Reach Park. Regrettably the closure of larger manufacturing business has taken its toll on the retail business sector as two malls in the south end of town are virtually empty.

**South East Smiths Falls** is located on the north side of the Rideau River, along Hwy 43; on the eastern boundary of town were four or five large businesses that closed as well as a Provincial Hospital. Fortunately, there has been some uptake in several of



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the properties which have some promise for the future... The Old Hershey plant is being transformed into several different business platforms and Rideau Regional Centre now know as the Gallipeau Centre is blossoming as a multi-faceted business, recreation and residential park.

## Condition of Town Streets

The first impressions are not good. Most of the streets require work... particularly the main thoroughfares... Brockville St, Lombard St and Beckwith St and William St. Regrettably these are the streets that people travelling through town get to bump along on. This is always a work in progress.

## Condition of Properties

Mixed Bag – some extremely well cared for properties, some middle of the road and some in terrible shape.

In the old part of town, absentee land owners seem to be contributing to the run down condition of properties.

## Changes over time

The loss of employment seems to show in the outward appearance of Smiths Falls, through street maintenance and property vacancies and upkeep. Notwithstanding, there have been a lot of upgrades and improvements to the infrastructure of the town with an essentially new hospital, new water treatment plant, a new high school, new community center (arena), new housing. One's hat has to go to many civic minded business people and philanthropists who have seen that the public library, arts, recreation and cultural facilities are revitalized. In several cases, they have brought back to life buildings that could have eventually gone under the wrecking ball.

## Features for Newcomers

Beckwith Street's noticeably wide structure, beauty of Victoria Park, the operating Rideau locks located in town, the river walk between Victoria Park and Lower Reach Park, Ever Green Avenue, good recreation, cultural and arts facilities.

## Features not noticed when traveling by car

See **Features for Newcomers...** plus beautiful old homes which are located off the main thoroughfares.

## Next Steps

**It is recognized that the foregoing are the reflections and observations of the participants who attended the workshop. This was a valuable exercise as the participants thought about and discussed the various questions presented.**

**The next step however, is to validate the information gathered during the workshop. The Transition Team will seek help from the Town of Smiths Falls to obtain more data as to the demographic, economic and social structure of Smiths Falls.**

**The Transition Team needs Council and the congregation to continue to take ownership of the process, so we will have an outcome that will be enthusiastically supported, in thought, word and deed.**