

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the proper reuse of Great Lakes lighthouses by analyzing them against evaluation criteria for different categories of reuse.

A large number of lighthouses were sampled based on the following selection qualifications: 1) adaptive reuse for part or all of the light station other than its original purpose, 2) location on the Great Lakes, 3) readily accessible for site visits. There were four categories of reuse: 1) lodging, 2) museum, 3) interpretive centre, and 4) park centrepiece. Number of visitors and occupancy rates were used to identify ten successfully reused lighthouses. They were then analyzed against six criteria drawn from literature: 1) access, 2) settlement distance, 3) site size, 4) building size, 5) complementary tourism, and 6) openness to the public.

Information was gathered through direct observations, interviews, photos, and site plans. Direct observations assisted in gathering information on access and other tourism in the area. Interviews revealed the measures of success, settlement distance, and openness to the public. Site plans were used to calculate the site and building sizes. Photos complemented and confirmed the information from the other sources.

It is clear through the examination of the data that some lighthouses are better suited to other reuse options than their present ones. It is also clear that light stations with dwellings are more flexible and can perform more functions than stand-alone lighthouses. Dwelling and site size play significant roles in determining the appropriate reuse option. This is especially true for reuse as a museum, which requires ample space to relate its story to visitors. Based on attendance, urban lighthouses have a significant advantage over their rural counterparts. Their locational advantages permit access to a larger market and greater tourism opportunities. They scored considerably higher in all analysis criteria.

As lodgings require space to accommodate guests, smaller and stand-alone lighthouses are usually unsuited to this purpose.

For successful reuse as a museum, the entire site should be open to the public. This means visitors can access the lighthouse tower, the keeper's dwelling and the grounds, etc, in order to enjoy a complete experience.

Interpretive centres need a large site and structure to adequately accommodate visitors and day-to-day operations. Smaller sites and those without ancillary buildings are limited in the type of interpretation facilities that they can offer.

Park centrepieces are distinct because they function better with stand-alone lighthouses. Based upon their prime urban locations and the benefits derived from other park related activities, they draw more visitors than any other use. Site size is critical, because it must be large enough to accommodate the activities and visitors the lighthouse generates.

Based on the analysis in this report, the following recommendations are presented for consideration:

1) Lodgings must have a suitable amount of space for the guests. The larger the dwelling the more guests and services can be accommodated. The site should also have good access and be close to tourism facilities in the area. Stand-alone lighthouses should be reused in other ways requiring less space and services.

2) Museums must be as open to the public as possible. Visitors need to be able to experience the complete site. When part of the site is off limits, it detracts from that experience. They also require space for exhibits and services and therefore necessitate an ancillary building. Museums attract more visitors when they are located in urban areas, with good access and plenty of area tourism. Lighthouses without access to the light or dwelling should not be museums.

3) The key characteristic for an interpretive centre is a large enough site to accommodate the planned activities. Many interpretive centres have re-enactments of battles, cannon firings, and other period activities which require space for both those involved and those watching. Having a structure to house the interpretive displays and illustrative panels is also important. Therefore, lighthouse with small sites or no ancillary buildings should not be considered for reuse as interpretive centres.

4) The two essential criteria for park centrepieces are: a) the park has to be large enough to handle the increased flow of traffic and, b) access to the site must be good. These criteria are essential to any park; it must be capable of accommodating all potential uses and users. Therefore, a larger site will give the flexibility necessary to fulfil this function. Access is also crucial, whether it be pedestrian or automobile. Visitors must be able to

reach the site and then navigate around it. Lighthouses with small sites and poor access will require different uses.