

# Heritage

What attributes convinced UNESCO that St. George’s is of “Outstanding Universal Value” and hence is worthy of the World Heritage Site designation?

In a February 2021 Bermudian Magazine article, Bermudian archaeologist Dr Charlotte Andrews, the author of a recently drafted update to the Bermuda World Heritage Site management plan, shares that these have recently been defined to clearly articulate and provide focus on what the plan must seek to protect:

“Three headline attributes were defined as:

- the intact and continuously occupied town with its historic townscape, vernacular architecture and living community;
- the related fortifications and military heritage including the forts themselves, their artillery and historic garrison community; and
- the maritime heritage in terms of Atlantic influence, marine environment and living maritime traditions.”

In sharing these definitions Dr Andrews clearly communicates that the World Heritage Site is not just about historically important buildings and artefacts, it includes the people and their way of life – the “living community” and “living maritime traditions” along with the environment in which they live. Having carefully assessed these factors and the current state of St. George’s she shares:

*“More than ever, we need community engagement that goes beyond token gestures and asks people what they actually need. We must tell more of the World Heritage story, and ensure different voices are telling it. We have not only an opportunity, but a responsibility to involve more of Bermuda in managing and imagining our World Heritage. Doing so will do much to maintain our UNESCO status, elevate the East End and benefit all of Bermuda.”*

The World Heritage Site Inscription does not appear to have led to increased economic activity in St. George.

**65%**  
of St. Georgians don’t feel that the World Heritage Status designation has been used effectively to promote the town as a destination.

Re-purposing of derelict buildings was ranked as the top most important factor in the future development of St George. But to accomplish this, we need to understand why the owners of

valuable properties leave them unoccupied and decaying?

Owners of historically listed buildings can apply for interest free loans to restore their properties

The St George’s Preservation Authority can give notice requiring owners of listed properties falling into a state of disrepair to conduct such works as are necessary to fix the property, and if nothing is done, can arrange for the work to be done at cost to the owner.

### What people said ....

*“Marketing of St. George in general, and the WHS specifically, has not taken place in an organised manner”....*

*“The community doesn’t value the designation.”*  
*“Bermudians don’t even know what (WH) means”*

*“It is obvious from the number of rundown and unfinished construction, lack of grounds care and inappropriate add-ons that WH status is not considered important by many residents.”*

*“The cost of upkeep of the historical buildings is an issue”*

*“(WHS) Started well but has lost its way”*

*“We should look at other parts of the world that are making a viable living with historical sites and events and put some of their ideas into practice.”*

*“Promotion of the designation itself is not the issue. We need more products that focus on heritage.”*

*“The Corporation needs to commit fully to the WHS project and make it a Town priority. School projects and visits, cultural projects, historically focused events could all be done at much higher levels. Integrating BTA, BHA, BNT, SGF, philanthropic and other resources in the service of increasing visitorship and delivering historic content should be a priority of both the WHS and Corporation.”*

*“This designation should be used in all advertising and all correspondence when it relates to St. George. We should no longer just say St. George.”*