



The Oasis on the Horizon: Preparing Falmouth for Development

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Executive Summary

Falmouth, Jamaica is undergoing change, and this change could lead to two different futures. There is reason to be fearful of a future where, as a gentleman from Falmouth put it, “the wharf will be disconnected from the rundown town.” We want to avoid this possibility of tourism development that is segregated and exploitative because Falmouth could also have a very bright future. It has the potential to be a wonderfully vibrant example of heritage tourism – one that honors existing cultural assets of history and agriculture, integrates locals and tourists in a mutually beneficial relationship, stimulates the local economy and empowers residents with pride in their place. We are interested in helping Falmouth realize this potential.

“Wharf will be disconnected from the rundown town.”

Survey Respondent, M, 60s

“It will be clean and beautiful if promises are kept.”

Survey Respondent, M, 30s

The following is a multidisciplinary study of the social, cultural, historic and economic implications of the Royal Caribbean and IDEA, Inc. wharf development project in Falmouth, Jamaica. Our goal is to identify best practices in sustainable heritage tourism,

and then outline and explain recommendations for Falmouth in the hope that the town can be a tourist destination that engages the local community in a meaningful way and respects and communicates the historic significance of the town. Proper management and preservation of the town is imperative to sustain its existing physical, cultural and social fabric. This report was an independent academic exercise, but we hope it can be a resource for development stakeholders: developers, local and national government, private non-profit entities, and local residents.

Our research uncovered two existing conditions that must be addressed for the wharf project to successfully integrate with the town. We consistently noted an imbalance in power over decisions and miscommunication between constituencies of development priorities. And secondly, multiple people mentioned the issue of time-sensitivity – there is a limited window of time before it will be too late for the town of Falmouth to realize all potential benefits of this development.

Our recommendations are based on a shared vision of Falmouth as a community where:

- development can help preserve the historic character of the town,
- tourism benefits are accessible to Falmouth residents,
- a culture of stewardship is instilled in visitors and residents,
- the tourist and resident communities comfortably coexist in a shared landscape, and
- history is presented wholly and accurately by appropriate entities.

Recommendations: Recreate Water Square as a “hinge”

We propose the creation of a community “hinge,” using Water Square, the current center of Falmouth culture and commerce, to connect the new wharf development to the greater historic district of Falmouth (similar to the geographical and cultural “hinge” functioning in Marseille, France). Water Square can act as a center of social and economic exchange and dissemination of public history, meeting needs of both

tourists and locals. Because of its geographic proximity to the new wharf development, Water Square offers an ideal opportunity to encourage land and cruise-based tourism, revitalize the historic fabric of Falmouth and foster meaningful interaction between tourists and local residents.

Our specific recommendations for Water Square fall into three categories:

1. Public History

Recommended Goal 1: Ensure that publicly-presented Falmouth history is told by Jamaicans.

- Develop a partnership among Jamaican heritage NGOs and agencies to review interpretations.

Recommended Goal 2: Interpret the diverse post-emancipation history of Falmouth in and around Water Square.

- Interpret political and legal history of the town at the Courthouse.
- Highlight the importance of commerce, and women in commerce, at the Albert George market.
- Highlight the historic importance of access to and supply of water to Water Square.
- Explain the history of vernacular board houses in Falmouth.
- Organize a community group to oversee cultural programming.

2. Built Environment

Recommended Goal 1: Ensure Water Square and surrounding areas remain open, accessible and welcoming environments for both residents and tourists.

- Improve pedestrian use and access through the square while maintaining low volume vehicular traffic.
- Create a street cleanup and improvement program with emphasis on Water Square and the Historic District.
- Create clear spatial and programmatic connections between the wharf and Water Square.
- Create a public performance and musical heritage interpretation space on Water Square.

Recommended Goal 2: Ensure new development and changes to historic structures within and near Water Square adhere to historic character of Falmouth.

- Enforce and update Jamaica National Heritage Trust Historic District Guidelines.

3. Social and Economic Development

Recommended Goal 1: Create Water Square Business Association (WSBA) to offer the locally-owned downtown business community cooperative access to wharf-related economic opportunities.

- Ensure that member businesses, including storefronts, kiosks and carts have access to additional, reasonably priced advertising outlets geared toward tourists.
- Use the WSBA to offer a single point of contact within the business community for interactions with entities involved with the development, including national and local agencies; private interests; non-governmental organizations.
- Provide new and existing business owners access to micro-credit for business improvements.

Recommended Goal 2: Protect local social and economic presence in Water Square so that the square continues to serve as a main social and shopping district to the residents in the midst of tourist-related development pressures.

- Obtain or maintain a physical office presence in Water Square business district for at least two

- social service organizations related to wharf-focused economic development.
- Preserve the local business presence in the Albert George market by offering preferential rental rates to locally-owned commercial ventures aimed at tourists.

Further considerations: Community support needed throughout greater Falmouth area

Creating community support is a common thread connecting all of our recommendations. Our report focuses on the Water Square district, but it cannot stand in isolation, and there are significant considerations that should be addressed in the greater Falmouth area. Further supporting actions by all constituencies are integral to the success of our vision for Water Square and Falmouth as a whole.

Because of the timing of the development and Falmouth's distinct historic context, the Historic Falmouth Jamaica development offers a unique opportunity to illustrate how sustainable practices can be applied in a cruise industry context to directly benefit the local community, in contrast to some existing tourism developments. The community and the developers must move quickly to enact change within the narrowing window of opportunity now available.

Key Action Items by Recommended Action Leader

Preparing Falmouth for development is a potentially lengthy and complicated endeavor. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is a fairly short window of time before cruise ships begin arriving in town. This report is designed as a focused approach to preparing Falmouth for the arrival of tourists and development. The action items listed below are the key actions, organized by recommended action leader, included in this report that this team feels are vital to preparing Falmouth for the changes the town is about to experience (Also See Appendix 9)

Falmouth Heritage Renewal

- 1) Tell the story of vernacular board houses in Falmouth through historic sign posts and outdoor exhibitions. (See page 24)
- 2) Plant palm trees along all pedestrian walkways as well as in the center of Water Square. (See Page 29)
- 3) Create an educational brochure pertaining to repairs to historic structures. (See Page 35)

HEART

- 1) Open an office in the Water Square business district for tourism-related classroom space. (See Page 41)

IDEA, Inc

- 1) Allow Jamaican entities to interpret Falmouth's history. (See Page 19)
- 2) Throughout all wharf development phases located back of house operations and parking away from area between Water Square and wharf. (See Pages 26 and 44)

Institute of Jamaica

- 1) Develop a partnership between the Institute of Jamaica, the Jamaican National Heritage Trust, and Falmouth Heritage Renewal which oversees and reviews all moments of historic interpretation. (See Page 20)

Jamaica National Heritage Trust

- 1) Establish a permanent presence by opening an office in Falmouth and local review board to better regulate and enforce the current guidelines. (See Page 35)

Royal Caribbean

- 1) Establish preferential approval, hiring policies, rental rates for local businesses within the wharf complex. (See Page 43)
- 2) Partner with WSBA to identify commercial opportunities so that the Water Square offers a diverse commercial selection for the local and tourist markets, and posts these opportunities – including at the library, information center and Courthouse. (See page 39)
- 3) Do not build a physical barrier between wharf and town. (See Page 44)

Social Development Commission

- 1) Establish Water Square Business Association (See Page 38)
- 2) Partner with WSBA, MIDA and Friends of Trelawny (or Hands Across Trelawny) to introduce local funding program for small business improvements with starting balance sufficient to offer 5-10 businesses initial loans of not more than \$1000 in the first year of operation. (See Pages 39-40)
- 3) Maintain office location and organization presence in Water Square. (See Pages 40-41)

Tourism Product Development Corporation

- 1) Implement recommendation from Falmouth Redevelopment Report to improve aesthetics in Water Square. (See Pages 28-29)
- 2) Install clearly marked signage that indicates direction to historic buildings, taxi stalls, history of the square, etc. (See Pages 28-29)

Trelawny Parish Council

- 1) Use displays and exhibitions in the front loggia and upper floor of the Courthouse, to tell the stories of emancipation, independence, and the political history of the town. (See Page 22)
- 2) Offer preferential rental rates in Albert George Market to locally-owned businesses. (See Pages 41-42)
- 3) Secure funding or donations to supply business owners and residents with paint and supplies for façade improvements. (See Page 31)

Urban Development Corporation

- 1) Construct sidewalks and pedestrian walkways in front of store fronts in Water Square and where possible, along streets surrounding Water Square. (See Pages 28-29)
- 3) Construct sidewalk and pedestrian walkways along main thoroughfares connecting the Wharf and Water Square. (See Pages 28-29)