



Meet Pita Rosback.

The seed was already in local business owner Pita Rosback's mind. But it was not until after Port McNeill held their town meeting with an international development expert that her idea really took life.

"We do all our talking in the grocery stores," says Pita, who runs the three ShopRite and Rona stores in this small North Island community. "It can take me an hour just to buy a jug of milk!"

After attending the downtown revitalization workshop, Pita was sure her vision of transforming the large empty parking lot, at her marina-based store, into a public space was needed.

"We don't sell our town very well," admits Pita, who runs the family-owned business initially started by her late father-in-law in 1956. "We don't talk about our trails. We don't talk about our history. We don't even have proper signs. We need to build on what the locals love – a space that doesn't need to be manned and isn't necessarily commercial, but that will draw people together. Then, the visitors will come."

The 53-year old mother of three has a very clear plan of how she would like to create an environment where people can "just grab a coffee and go for a walk along the water". She plans to clear out the property, put in picnic tables and an ice-cream shack that will employ students in the summer, then set up some planters with trees. She also envisions black and white photographs decorating the waterfront on panels that showcase this historic logging town.

"Curb appeal. Signage. Green space. These are just some of the little things that you don't notice when you actually live here," says Pita, who was born and raised on the North Island. "For me and my businesses, these are easy steps I can take to help make our area more appealing."

With an influx of new remote workers and younger families moving or returning to Port McNeill, the demographic change is also pushing a shift in mentality and a rethink of its community identity.

It's time to get with the times and be proud of where we live," says Pita. "We need to 'up our ante', but I don't think our town needs to be much different than it is. It's just about fixing up what we already have, bringing in new ideas and working hand-in-hand with one another."

A Community Story from Port McNeill

Downtown Improvement Plan Builds on Community Assets