

## **Municipal Heritage Properties Would Be Placed at Risk by HRMbyDesign**

A generation ago, the City of Halifax wisely established height limits where there were concentrations of heritage buildings. In some locations these were absolute heights, of 35, 45, and 52 feet. These heights meant that, if someone tore down a heritage building, they would not be able to build a higher building. In some areas the City also limited the percentage of a lot that could be covered by a building. Since repair of a heritage building is less expensive than demolition and new construction, owners have taken the less expensive route, and have kept the heritage buildings.

In other locations, the City set “as-of-right” heights of 25 or 40 feet. Here, if an owner wished to build a taller building, he or she had to apply for a development agreement. This could only be approved after a public hearing and only if the development complied with the policies in the Municipal Planning Strategy, and this Strategy had strong policies protecting heritage buildings.

These height limits and policies have worked well. Owners have seen the advantages of retaining and repairing heritage buildings and have been willing to have their buildings municipally registered under the Heritage Property Act. Only three registered heritage buildings have been lost in 29 years in downtown Halifax. One was lost through fire; one was demolished after the roof was damaged. The Sackville Street Service Station was a one-storey building in an area with a 75-foot height limit; it was demolished and replaced by a larger building. This proves the point that, in order to retain heritage buildings, height limits should be similar to the actual heights of the heritage buildings.

Unfortunately, HRMbyDesign proposes to substantially increase these height limits. This would undo all the good work of the past generation, and would put the heritage buildings in downtown Halifax at risk. It would do this in the name of increasing density, even though there are a million square feet of vacant land in downtown Halifax, where development can occur without threatening our heritage. HRMbyDesign says it would promote “vibrancy”, but, in fact, it threatens the historic character that makes downtown Halifax unique.

The following table illustrates this problem. It lists the civic addresses of heritage buildings that would be placed at risk by HRMbyDesign. The second column gives the heights in feet of these buildings, where available. In most cases, these are the heights above grade of the tops of the buildings, but in some cases they are the heights of the cornice above the sidewalk. The third column lists the as-of-right heights (25 or 40 feet) or absolute heights (35, 45 or 52 feet) that protect the buildings in the current Land Use By-law. The last column gives the “pre-bonus” heights proposed for these properties by HRMbyDesign. If HRMbyDesign were adopted, an owner could apply to demolish a municipally registered heritage property, wait a year, demolish the building, and build a replacement building of the height given in the last column.

In most cases, the heights in the last column are substantially greater than those in the second and third columns. The height increases would provide a financial incentive for demolition and replacement of the heritage buildings by taller buildings.

Heights of Municipal Heritage Buildings in Downtown Halifax, outside the proposed Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District, with Current As-of-right Limits and Limits Proposed by HRMbyDesign: The letter c indicates the height of the cornice of the building.

<b>Building</b>	<b>Actual Building Height (feet)</b>	<b>Current right Limit</b>	<b>As-of-Height</b>	<b>HRMbyDesign Pre-bonus Height</b>
<b>Argyle Street:</b>				
1557, Tartan Building		40		72
1669, Carleton Hotel	45	40		72
1706, Dr. McHattie's House	38	40		72
1726, Uniacke-Clarke House		40		72
1740, National School, 5 Fishermen	44	40		72
<b>Barrington Street:</b>				
1253, Heritage House Inn		45		72
1259, Old Halifax Academy		45		72
1261, James Thompson House		45		72
1265, Rueben Hart House	37	45		72
1333, Thomas Jeffrey House	31	45		72
1349, Dr. Michael Carney House	28	45		72
1355, New St. Matthew's Manse		45		72
1359, Stoddard House		45		72
<b>Bedford Row:</b>				
1679, Old Fire Station, McKelvie's	35	25		85
<b>Bishop Street:</b>				
5170, Ed. Gorham House	40	45		72
5174, L.W. Travis House	40	45		72
5178, C.H. Willis House	40	45		72
5182, W.M Fraser House	40	45		72
<b>Brunswick Street:</b>				
1556, Royal Artillery Park		40		52
1697, Halifax Visiting Dispensary	45	40		75
<b>Duke Street:</b>				
5159, NSCAD Library	46	40		72
5162, Champlain Building		40		160
<b>George Street:</b>				
5075, Dockyard Clock				
5171, Bank of Commerce	48	40		160
<b>Grafton Street:</b>				
1521, St. Mary's Girls School		40		72
St. Mary's Boys School		40		72
1544, St. David's Church		40		72

<b>Building</b>	<b>Actual Building Height (feet)</b>	<b>Current right Limit</b>	<b>As-of-Height</b>	<b>HRMbyDesign Pre-bonus Height</b>
<b>Granville Street:</b>				
1724, Acadian Recorder		40		72
1796, Macara-Barnstead Building	39	40		160
1813, Smith Bros. Drygoods	36c	40		160
1819, Old Merchants Bank		40		160
1854-94, Prince of Wales Block		40		72
1855, Split Crow Building		40		72
1855, P. Power & Company		40		72
1860, H.R. Vaux Drygoods		40		72
1861, A.M. Bell and Co.	49	40		72
1865, Romans and Grant	49	40		72
1866, John Silver & Co.		40		72
1869, Robert Taylor & Co.	49	40		72
1870, Granville Mall		40		72
1871, A.M. Bell & Co.	49	40		72
1873, Granville Mall	49	40		72
1882, A.A. Bliss Boots and Shoes		40		72
1883, J. Harold and Co.	49	40		72
1886, Thomson & Co.		40		72
1890, J.R. Jennet & Co.		40		72
1889, Granville Mall	49	40		72
1891, Granville Mall	49	40		72
1895, John Duffus Jr.		40		72
<b>Hollis Street:</b>				
1222, Hon. William Annand House	35	45		72
1240, Forman-Uniacke House	40	45		72
1284, William Pryor House	29	45		72
1325, Gate-Young House	38	25		72
1328, Alexander McLean House	34	45		72
1346, William DeBlois House	29c	45		72
1348, James Tremaine House	29c	45		72
1350, Thomas Boggs House	29c	45		72
1472, Black Binney House		35		72
1475, Keith Hall	43	25		72
1674, London Drug Store	32c	40		128
1682, Halifax Club	52	40		128
1695, Sarah Howard Building		25		85
1820, Flinn Building		40		160
1855, Shaw Building	41	25		72
1861, Fishwick Express	36	25		72
1865, Harrington Warehouse	39	25		72

<b>Building</b>	<b>Actual Building Height (feet)</b>	<b>Current right Limit</b>	<b>As-of-Height</b>	<b>HRMbyDesign Pre-bonus Height</b>
1870, A. MacDougall Grocer		40		72
1877, Morse's Teas	59	25		72
<b>Lower Water Street:</b>				
1496, Keith's Brewery	37	25		72
1684, George J. Mitchell		25		85
Robertson's Hardware	34	25		75
<b>Morris Street:</b>				
5131, Andrew King House		25		72
5133, Almon-Black House		25		72
5137, Vass-Taylor House		25		72
5139, William Donaldson House		25		72
5145, E.B. Strickland House		25		72
5147, J.B. Young House		25		72
5168, Lithgow-Blackadar House	28c	45		72
5172, Lithgow House		45		72
5178, Pryor-Lithgow House		45		72
5184, Halliburton House		45		72
5186, Doctors Mathers & Doull	33	45		72
<b>Prince Street:</b>				
5136, Geldert Building		25		85
5138, Novascotian Building		25		85
5144, Heffernan Furniture Building		25		85
<b>Upper Water Street:</b>				
1860, Imperial Oil	28	25		72
1865, Pickford and Black		25		72
1865, Carpenter's Shop		25		72
1869, Collin's Bank		25		72
1869, Privateer's Warehouse		25		72
1869, Simon's Warehouse		25		72
1869, Red Store		25		72
1869, Sail Loft		25		72