

Keeping the Barrington Heritage District Alive



Captions: Above: Buildings on the east side of Barrington from Prince to Sackville in the Heritage Conservation District; 6-storey brick Roy Building is second from the right. Below: Elevation to same scale of proposed 16-storey high-rise with imitation façade and with Vogue Optical at right.

The Threat:

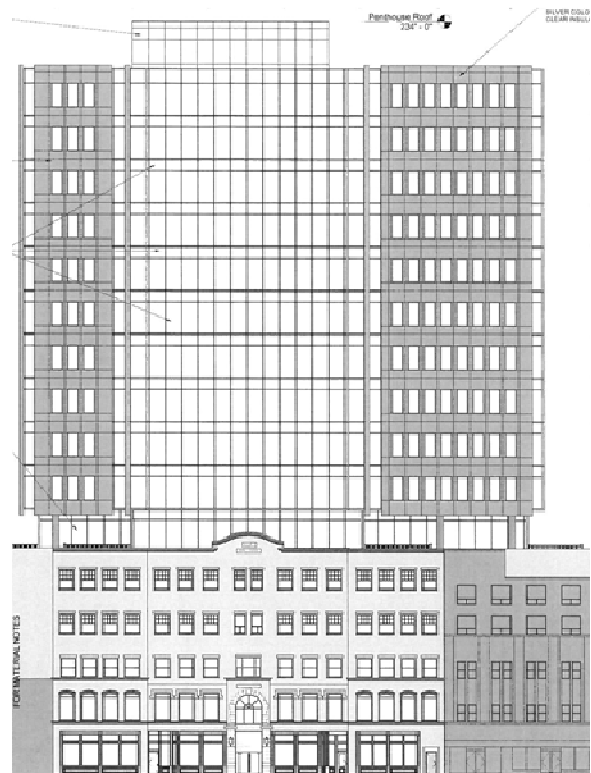
Halifax Regional Council is considering two developments that would jeopardize the new Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District.

The proposed developments would involve the complete demolition of the Roy Building and the construction of two high-rise towers in the middle of the Heritage District. The low scale, of three to six storeys, is the unifying characteristic of the District, which has a 72-foot height limit. The proposed towers of 14 and 16 storeys would completely negate the low scale of the fledgling historic District and would threaten the future of the District.

Background:

The Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Plan is the result of more than six years of effort by Council, the Heritage Advisory Committee, and the Barrington Street Historic District Steering Committee. The Plan was formally passed with the HRMbyDesign project in June, 2009.

In 2008, a developer (778938 Ontario Limited) applied for a development agreement to demolish the Roy Building and construct an office tower on the site. In early 2009, another developer (1595 Investments Limited) applied for a development agreement for the property now occupied by the Discovery Centre. HRM Council amended the Barrington Plan, and these applications will be judged under the pre-District rules (“grandfathered”). Separate public hearings will be held on the two applications. If the applications are not approved, the developments will not proceed and the Plan will govern these properties.

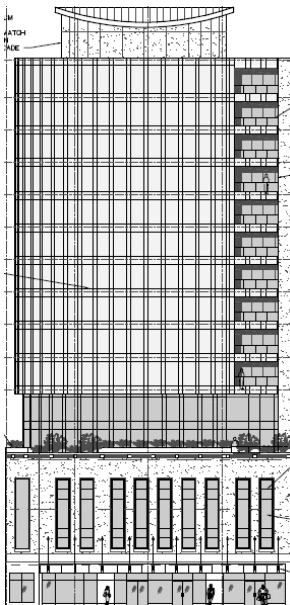


Breaking the Rules:

Central Business District Policy 7.2.1 is specific: “The exterior architectural design of new buildings should be complementary to any **adjacent** ones which are **designated** as being of historic significance or important to the character of the CBD; in such instances, the careful use of materials, colour, **proportion**, and the rhythm established by surface and structural elements should **reinforce** those same aspects of the existing buildings.” Clearly the proposed towers would not reinforce the proportions of the neighbouring buildings and the Council should not approve the applications.



Captions: **Above**, Buildings on the east side of Barrington Street between Sackville and Blowers Streets in the Conservation District; the 3-storey Discovery Centre is at the left. **Below**, Elevation at the same scale of the Discovery Centre with the proposed 11-storey tower above.



Economics:

Heritage conservation districts increase business activity and improve property values in hundreds of communities in North America. However, heritage conservation districts only work well when the rules are applied firmly. Creating exemptions means that the economic benefits of the district are lost.

There is a million square feet of vacant land downtown, which can be developed without interfering with the Heritage Conservation District.

Developments approved but not constructed could supply 1,900,000 square feet of space, enough to satisfy demand for a decade. There is no need to approve these two applications.

The HRMbyDesign rules would allow construction of 10 to 13 million square feet of space downtown. This is enough to satisfy demand for 50 to 70 years. There is no need to allow these two applications to step outside the rules.

If Council approves these applications, trying to avoid the rules could become the norm.

Applications have been made to revitalize **twelve other properties** on Barrington Street in conformity with the Heritage Conservation Plan. The Plan is beginning to work and should be given a chance to prove its worth.

Nasty winds drive away customers. There have been no calculations of the effect on winds of

placing two towers on opposite sides of Sackville Street.

Demolition:

The Roy Building is the largest building in our only Heritage Conservation District. One development application would allow complete demolition of this significant building. This potential demolition would add a huge amount of waste to landfills, and would be environmentally irresponsible. Many tenants would be displaced.

For more information see:

www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict/documents/BarringtonPlan.pdf, www.halifax.ca/planning/Case01172Details.html, www.halifax.ca/planning/Case01231Details.html, www.htns.ca, Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, 1588 Barrington Street, 423 4807.

You Can Help:

Public hearings will be held by Regional Council on **Tuesday, May 10** at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Written submissions may be forwarded to the Mayor and Council by e-mail to clerks@halifax.ca, or by mail to P.O. Box 1749, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 3A5, or by fax to 490 4208. Written submissions must be received before 3 p.m. on May 10.