

# HERITAGE PROTECTION INITIATIVES

## Overview

The protection of heritage buildings is a key component of HRMbyDesign's Downtown Plan.

The heritage conservation strategy has several components:



- a. Utilizing the authority of both the *Municipal Government Act* - for planning policy, design review, and development control - and the *Heritage Property Act* - for heritage property registration, heritage district designation, demolition control, and financial incentives.
- b. Establishing heritage conservation districts with strong demolition control, guidelines for alteration, and financial incentives to encourage conservation and enhancement of district character.
- c. Conserving registered heritage resources outside of heritage districts by means of strengthened demolition control, improved incentives, and guidelines for new development next to, or integrated with the heritage resource.
- d. Updating the inventory of potential heritage resources in the downtown and encouraging new individual heritage registrations and heritage district designations.
- e. Implementing a height bonus system that will generate funds for, or encourage actions in support of heritage conservation.
- f. Enhancing heritage districts with complementary public realm improvements.

## Heritage Conservation Districts

Heritage district designation has a high priority in the Downtown Plan as it is the most effective means to protect registered heritage buildings and non-registered buildings that contribute to district character.

When a heritage district is established, HRM is able to implement firm, ongoing demolition controls and provide financial incentives for the restoration of all properties in the district. These tools, combined with public realm improvements and design guidelines for alterations and new development, will ensure that the designated district evolves in a manner that reinforces its key heritage attributes. Heritage district designation is also recognized as a powerful tool for tourism development and downtown economic revitalization. The Downtown Plan identifies three potential heritage districts as follows:



## *Barrington Street Historic District*

The Barrington Street Historic District has been under consideration for many years and is now integrated into HRMbyDesign's Downtown Plan. The district will be officially established in parallel with the new Downtown Plan, through formal adoption of a heritage conservation district plan and by-law. The Barrington Plan includes a restoration grant and tax credit program worth \$3 million over five years, which is expected to generate in excess of \$15 million in private investment. Public realm improvements to enhance pedestrian amenity, street furnishings, and transit facilities will also be undertaken.

### ***Historic Properties & Barrington Street South Districts***

Upon completion of the required background studies and public consultations, other heritage districts may be established at Historic Properties (between Granville St. and the waterfront) and in the southern Barrington and Hollis Street area (between Bishop St. and Cornwallis Park).

## **Heritage Protection Outside of Heritage Districts**

### ***Strengthened Demolition Control***

In addition to the buildings included in the three proposed heritage districts, there are roughly 40 stand-alone registered heritage buildings in the Downtown Plan area. Currently, these have only limited protection through the one-year demolition delay provision of the *Heritage Property Act*. However, as part of the HRMbyDesign process, HRM has requested provincial legislative amendments to lengthen this delay period to two years. It is anticipated that these amendments will be in place by the time the new Downtown Plan is adopted.

### ***Design of Abutting Development***

Alterations to registered heritage properties are governed by HRM's *Heritage Building Conservation Standards* and the *Design in Heritage Contexts* section of the Design Manual to be adopted under the Downtown Plan and Land Use By-law. The Manual also includes requirements respecting design of development on properties abutting registered heritage properties. This ensures greater compatibility of development near registered heritage properties.

### ***Inventory of Potential Heritage Properties***

All existing heritage property registrations are supported by historical research, much of which was compiled in heritage inventories undertaken in the 1970s and 80s. However, within the Downtown Plan area there are numerous other buildings with potential to be registered as heritage properties. HRMbyDesign calls for a formal inventory of potential heritage properties to be established, which will include historical research and information on heritage value and

character defining elements.

### ***Heritage Registration Campaign***

As the inventory of potential heritage properties is developed, HRM will proactively encourage new heritage property registrations by means of publications, workshops, and direct contact with property owners.



## **Heritage Registration Incentives**

### ***Financial Incentives***

Through the existing Heritage Property Program, HRM has a grant program available to all residential or commercial heritage properties in the Municipality. Through its Community Grants program, HRM also provides grants to registered heritage properties owned by non-profit organizations. It is anticipated that the ongoing availability of these programs will continue to encourage new heritage property registrations.

### ***Bonus Zoning Incentives***

The new Downtown Plan and Land Use By-law include provisions that enable developers to receive a height bonus in exchange for preservation or enhancement of heritage buildings. This will provide an incentive for developers to register and retain heritage buildings, and to incorporate them into redevelopment plans, rather than demolishing them. For sites containing heritage resources, no bonus will be granted unless the heritage resource is preserved.

For more information:

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