

Downtown Halifax Business Commission
Halifax Regional Municipality
Province of Nova Scotia



Downtown Barrington

*A Strategy for the Rejuvenation of Barrington Street
Halifax*

Final Report
November, 1998

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Barrington Street in its heyday (circa 1950)

Executive Summary

1. Overview

- The economic and physical decline of Barrington Street is now two generations old.
- Without a broad focus of interest and energy there will be more or less a continuation of the status quo.
- Because of the central location of the street within downtown and the region, its proximity to major civic commercial and cultural institutions, and its significant heritage streetscape, it is in the interest of the entire region to markedly improve Barrington Street and to re-establish it as the Heart of the Downtown.
- The accomplishment of this goal requires the public sector at all levels and the private sector to work together.

2. Strategy

- Both because of existing strengths and budget limitations, the recommended strategy is to build on what is here .
- The strategy must be multi-faceted to have a broad economic and physical impact leading to rejuvenation. The four strategic directions are:
 - Transportation planning
 - Special district designation
 - Use and marketing
 - Urban design

- The negative impact of excessive transit and traffic on pedestrian use of the street must be reduced through traffic calming. It is recommended that this be done through the following means:
 - Reduce the impact of transit vehicles by reducing the number of transit trips, re-routing some routes, reducing the number of stops, and switching downtown route buses to propane.
 - Reduce traffic volume and speed through the provision of parking on one side of the street, allowing left-turns, and the elimination one-way cross streets.
 - Improve the accessibility of Barrington Street by quickly moving ahead with the proposed Granville Street parking structure.
- The collection of heritage buildings must be recognized as a unique asset and protected and enhanced. It is recommended that this be done through the adoption of:
 - Special District designation for the limited area of those properties fronting onto Barrington Street between Spring Garden Road and Duke Street.
 - Enforceable but flexible design guidelines for signage, storefronts,

additions, and new construction, and limited demolition control, all with recognition of the stylistically diverse nature of the architecture on the street.

- Incentive mechanisms aimed at encouraging signage, storefront, and building repair, restoration and maintenance.
- Increase private sector investment confidence.
- Actively work, through business recruitment and other means, to establish a market niche in the area of 'experience retail' with a leisure goods focus, including national stores. Also, enhance and encourage arts and entertainment, cultural, commercial, office, and residential uses in the area.
- Enhance the public realm (street, sidewalks, and public areas) to develop an environment which is enriching and fun through the following means:
 - Enliven the overall pedestrian zone with increased amenity and distinct character.
 - Create sidewalk activity areas at the midpoint of each block containing information kiosks, benches, bicycle racks, vending areas, mid-block crossings, etc.
 - Encourage the 'infoling' of sidewalk areas into built space and conversely, the outflow of commercial activity onto sidewalk areas.
- Provide connections into and through existing buildings and spaces to adjacent areas and activities.
- Reduce the 'canyon effect' of the street and provide increased amenity through encouraging appropriate sidewalk canopies.
- Soften the street visually and environmentally through the introduction of appropriate trees.
- Improve street lighting and ambience with new and more appropriate street lamps (on existing bases), bollard lighting, building lighting, and feature lighting.
- Continue to examine future possibilities for the street and adjacent areas including the following:
 - Future alternate uses for the Cogswell Interchange including parking in the short term.
 - Appropriate, perhaps public sector, uses for the Birk's Site.
 - Future more efficient transportation systems such as light rail to service downtown and intermodal facilities at the Cogswell Interchange and the new Granville parking structure.

- Give the area a fun and distinctive new popular name, e.g.
 - Downtown Barrington
 - The Light & Power District
 - The Parade District
 - B Street
- Establish a broadly-based Implementation Action Group/Task Force with mandate, sub-committees, and budget to clarify directions, establish priorities, set timetables, initiate activity, and galvanize energy.
- Take the following immediate steps:
 - Experiment with transportation, transit and parking modifications.
 - Clarify regulatory questions regarding recruitment, tax incentives, etc..
 - Publicize successes and build media awareness.



Upper floors of the N.S. Furnishings Bldg and the Wright Bldg.

1 Introduction

Why should anyone care about the disinvestment that afflicts the downtown core? The health of a downtown is an important indicator of the economic health of the entire metropolitan community, affecting everything from property values in surrounding locations to a community's ability to attract investors to its economy. A number of studies have shown that the health of an entire region is tied to the economic health of its core. In other words, the image of downtown determines the image of the region as a whole.

Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl
Richard Moe and Carter Wilkie
Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1997



Barrington Street looking south from Prince St. (1998) - the traditional Main Street of Halifax and the Region

1.1 The Context

Barrington Street, as it runs through the Central Business District of Halifax, is the historic main street of the city and the region. Since the founding of Halifax almost 250 years ago most of the political, economic, cultural, and social life of the city and the larger geographic area it served has centred here. Barrington Street was *the* address, the site of significant places and events, and a source of civic pride. There could be a long list of major functions that once took place on Barrington Street that for numerous and often valid reasons, have moved elsewhere. Some of these functions still remain on the street, and a few, notably the Neptune Theatre, have grown. Still, the street as a whole has not quite found its footing in the latter part of the 20th century.

Despite numerous articulate statements of the problem, a widespread public concern, and many potential strengths, Barrington Street remains lacking. Perhaps, given time, a more robust economy, and the efforts of a few pioneers, a substantial improvement may take place 'on its own'. On the other hand, it may be that the factors which led to the physical and economic decline of Barrington Street may be more structural and systemic and will require greater co-ordinated effort from both public and private sectors to achieve an acceptable level of revitalization. It should be remembered that the current somewhat stagnant quality of Barrington Street is now approaching two generations old. Anything short of a concentrated and co-ordinated effort may result in an indefinite perpetuation of more or less the status quo.

1.2 Study Development

Following a planning and strategy session of the Board of Directors of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission in January of 1997, at which the revitalization of Barrington Street was identified as a major challenge facing the Downtown, a Barrington Street Committee was established. This Committee met several times during 1997 and spawned 'Terrorist Groups' which attempted to impact specific properties and areas on the street needing attention. Feeling that

a more concentrated examination was required to provide alternatives for consideration by the Committee, this study was commissioned by the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, the Halifax Regional Municipality, and the Province of Nova Scotia, to "develop long-term solutions for the enhancement and revitalization of Barrington Street". The Study Team met regularly during the course of the study with an Advisory Committee consisting of:

Dr. Patricia Ripley, Deputy Minister of
Municipal Affairs

Mr. Bernie Smith, Deputy Minister of
Finance
Mr. Dan Norris, Heritage Planner,
Halifax Regional Municipality
Mr. Frank Palermo, Professor of
Architecture and Planning,
Faculty of Architecture, Daltech,
Dalhousie University
Ms. Kate Carmichael, Executive
Director, Downtown Halifax
Business Commission

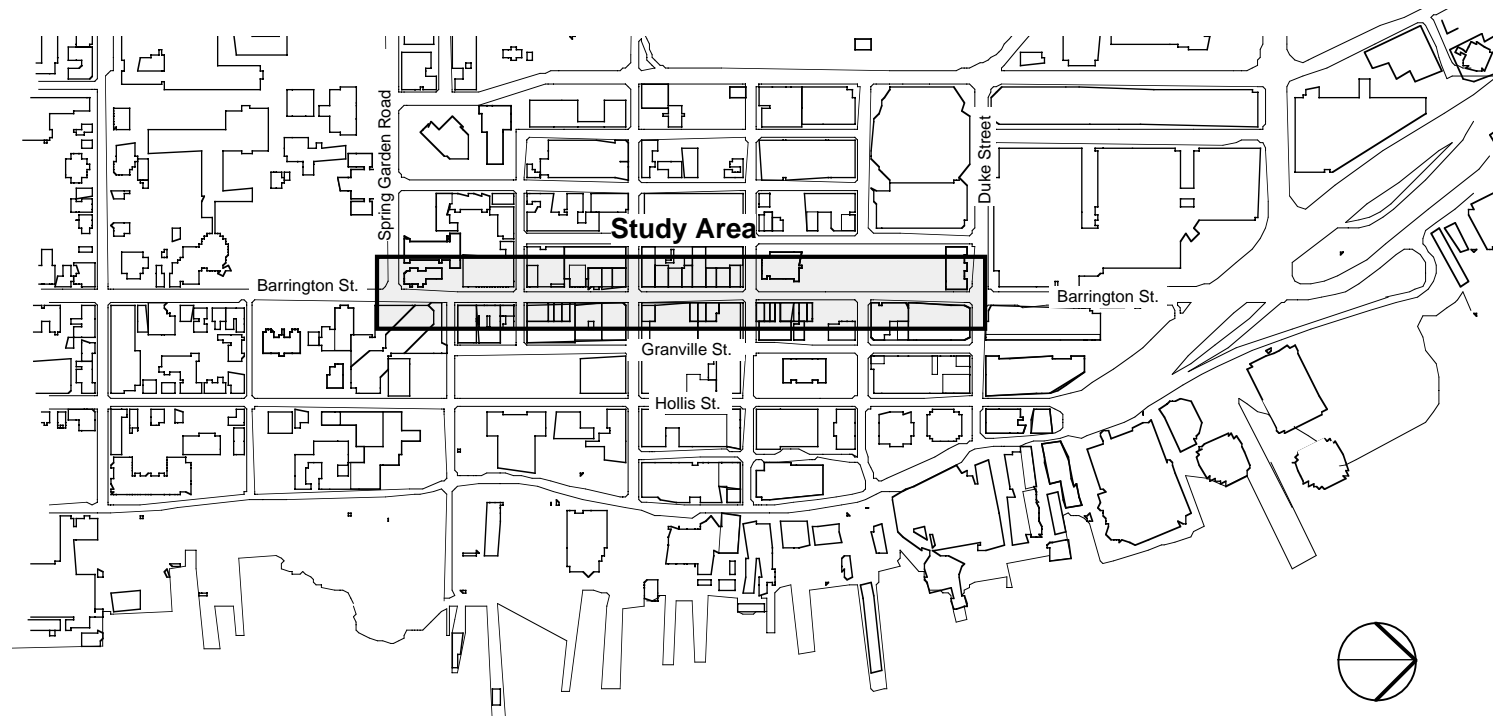


Figure 1.1 Study Area and Vicinity, the Central Business District of Halifax

In addition to these meetings, the Study Team held a general public meeting attended by approximately forty people, a meeting with a group of eight Barrington Street retailers, a design workshop attended by about fourteen people, a meeting with several members of Halifax Regional Municipality staff, numerous individual meetings and discussions with Municipal and Provincial staff, and numerous discussions with individual Barrington Street stakeholders.

1.3 Study Parameters

The terms of reference of the study identify Barrington Street between Spring Garden Road & Duke Street as the focus for examination. Although adjacent streets, areas, and activities in all directions impact on the Study Area, the five block area of Barrington Street between Duke Street and Spring Garden Road forms an identifiable and cohesive functional, architectural, and problematic whole and requires focused analysis and strategy.

A full examination of the adjacent areas of Barrington Street at either end of the Study Area, specifically the Cogswell Interchange and south Barrington Street beyond Bishop Street, while important, is beyond the scope of this study, although recommendations are made for minor short-term modifications to the Cogswell Interchange in the *Transportation and Movement* section. These two areas are important and hopefully a full examination of their future use and development potential will be undertaken in the near future.

1.4 Study Organization

The study document is organized into five sections: *Introduction, Analysis, Strategy, Conclusions and Next Steps*, and *Appendix*. The *Introduction* sets the context for the study, its process, parameters, and recommendations. The *Analysis* reviews the strengths, difficulties, and challenges of the study area as a backdrop to the recommendations contained within *Strategy*. The *Strategy* section includes the main areas of examination for the study: *Use and Marketing; Transportation and Movement; Special District Initiatives; Urban Design; and Conclusions and Next Steps*. Finally the *Appendix* contains general information pertinent to the development of the study, profiles of the Study Team, a catalogue of buildings within the Study Area, a review of all post-1945 studies related to Barrington Street, a Summary of Recommendations, and a bibliography.

It should be noted that the revitalization of deteriorating downtowns, traditional main streets and commercial areas is a fact of late-20th Century urban life everywhere. Lessons have been learned, perspective gained, and successes achieved in literally hundreds of downtowns across North America and Europe. In an attempt to convey some of that knowledge and experience, we have chosen to include excerpts from selected materials in the text of the report (in this typeface).

1.5 Evolution of the Street

Laid out in 1749 as the city's central, north-south thoroughfare, Barrington Street developed first as a fashionable residential and institutional avenue. Commercial activity was concentrated initially on the lower streets near the waterfront but by the mid 19th century Barrington Street, too, had become more commercial with shops mixed in among its houses and institutions.

In the late 19th century, many of the original wooden buildings were replaced by new structures of brick and stone, and new building technologies enabled taller buildings to be erected. In 1896, the electric street car system was developed and Barrington Street became a major public transit artery adding to its municipal stature. Over the ensuing decades, the street matured as the city's main shopping area, attracting a wide variety of retail, cultural, entertainment, office, and institutional establishments.



Barrington Street looking north (circa 1870)



Barrington Street looking south at George Street (circa 1900)

In its heyday, between the 1890's and the 1960's, Barrington Street was home to a wide variety of retail businesses including furniture stores, dry goods stores, hardware stores, clothing stores, music stores, drug stores, department stores, tailors, jewellers, as well as lawyers, dentists, doctors, architects and other professional practices. The names of many early Barrington Street businesses and building owners are still visible on present-day building exteriors, e.g., Roy, Keith, Wright, "Z", for Zellers, Colwell's Buckleys, MacGillivray's, Tip Top Tailors.

There were movie houses - the Nickel Theatre (later the NFB), the Majestic/Capitol Theatre (demolished in the 1970's to make way for the Maritime Centre), and the Orpheus/Paramount Theatre (still standing). There were institutions - the YMCA, the Freemasons' Hall, (the only institutional use still on the street) the St. Mary's Young Men's Abstinence and Benevolent Soci-

ety Hall, the Church of England Institute, and the City Club. The Halifax Electric Tramway Company (later the N.S. Tramway and Power Company) had its offices in what is still known as the Tramway Building. Other diverse activities included consulates - in the St. Paul's Building, publishers - George Wright and his successful "World Directory", and inventor's - Marconi, with his experimental broadcasting station in Wright's Marble Building.

After recovery from the war in the late 1950's and early 1960's the growth of suburbs and shopping malls in Metropolitan Halifax drew the major retail outlets such as Eaton's from the core of the city to the new auto-oriented destinations. Barrington Street's position as a first-class location quickly deteriorated.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the development of major mall and office towers at either end of Barrington Street (Scotia Square and the Maritime Centre, the latter at the expense of the much-loved Capitol Theatre), rather than giving the street two anchors, did little to improve and perhaps accelerated the loss of both retail and office uses as stores and professionals migrated to the new buildings, leaving both the ground and upper floors of many buildings vacant.

The late 1980's saw a second wave of retail migration. This involved the movement of numerous retailers such as Cleve's Sporting Goods, Shopper's Drug Mart, and numerous clothiers to Spring Garden Road, spurred by the development of ample and accessible surface parking by the City of Halifax. Spring Garden Road

also benefited from a wider street width (by 10'), fewer regulations on traffic movement (resulting in calmer traffic), a building height limit of 55' (resulting in greater sunlight), continuous building frontages available for active, retail uses, and the often-mentioned east-west orientation.

1.6 The Present Setting

In Fall, 1998 Barrington Street is showing signs of gradual improvement. Street level retail vacancies are down, a large residential and retail development (Barrington Gate) has proven to be successful, new commercial entrepreneurs are coming to the Street, (e.g. Salter Street Films and other film industry offices) numerous small information technology offices, and new retail uses, particularly 'themed' food and beverage establishments.



Barrington Street looking north at Blowers Street (circa 1950)

Ground Floor Vacancy - Summer 1998

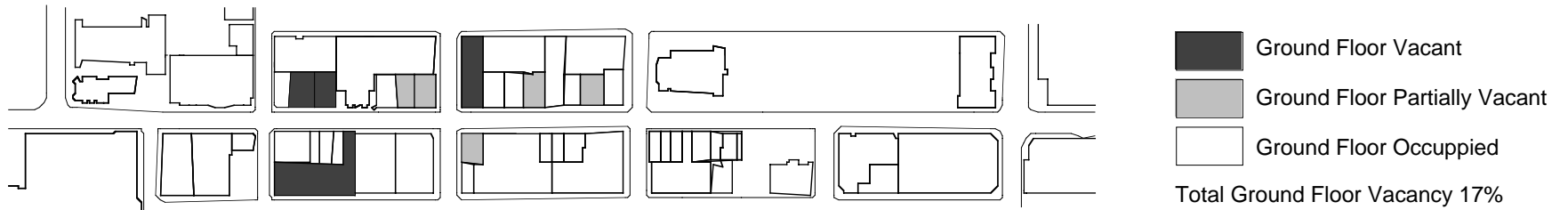


Figure 1.2 Ground Floor Vacancy (Spring 1998)

Upper Floor Vacancy

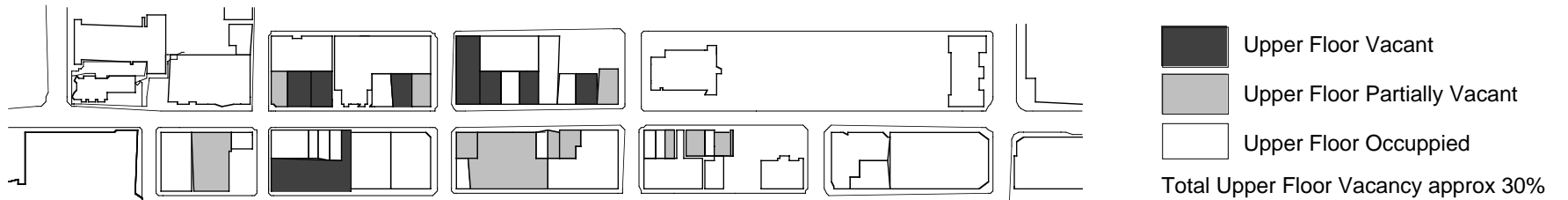


Figure 1.3 Upper Floors Vacancy (Spring 1998)

Buildings At Risk

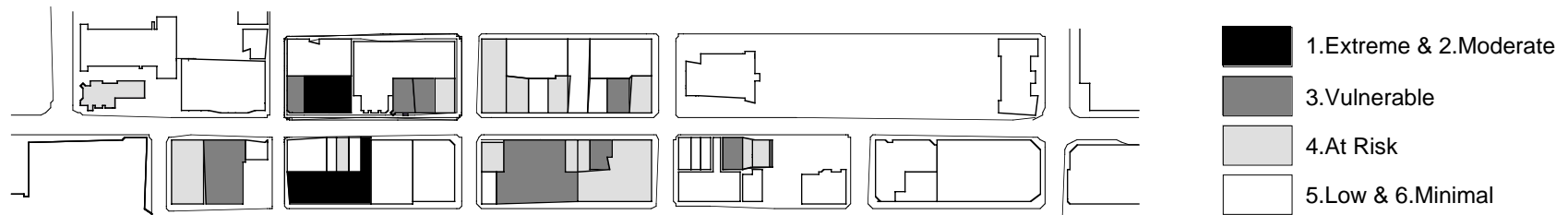


Figure 1.4 Buildings At Risk (see chart on facing page)

Building Risk Category Analysis

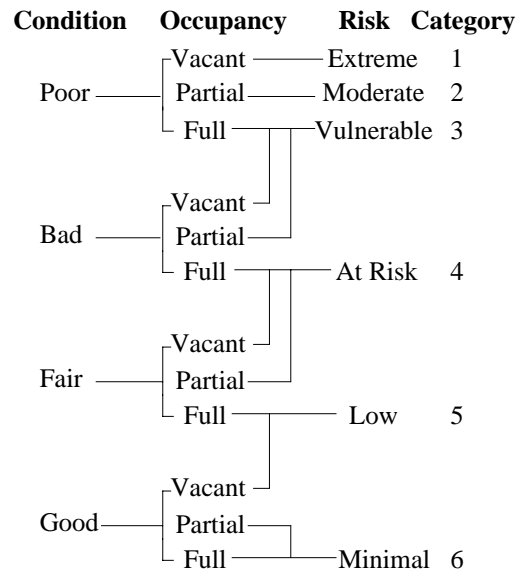


Figure 1.5 Risk Category Analysis

The Halifax Regional Municipality, or HRM, has invested significantly in heritage and cultural institutions, specifically the Neptune Theatre expansion, the Khyber Arts Project (former Church of England Institute), and the stabilization of the National Film Board building facade. The Municipality has also assembled lands for a new parking structure on Granville Street adjacent to Barrington Street and is in the process of locating a developer.

The revitalization of historic quarters involves both the renewal of the physical fabric and the active economic use - or utilization - of buildings and spaces. Accordingly, there is a need for both physical and economic revitalization.... because ultimately it is the productive utilization of the private realm which pays for the maintenance of the public realm.

Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters
S. Tiesdell, T. Oc, T. Heath
Architectural Press, Oxford, England, 1996

Still, substantial problems persist. The significant hole at Barrington and George Streets (the old Birk's site) remains. Three large buildings (the Antiques building, the NFB building facade and the Paramount Theatre) remain empty and deteriorating. Numerous other buildings are 'at risk' due to poor condition and partial vacancy, and the upper levels of many buildings continue to be under-utilized or vacant. Many retail uses are marginal and retail turnover continues. Signage still goes on buildings inappropriately, contributing to image problems; vehicular transportation dominates the street level, and so on.

1.7 Vision Statement

In order to give a basic orientation and direction to early discussions, the following Vision Statement was formulated by the Study Team and reviewed with the Advisory Committee.

Vision Statement:

Barrington Street at the turn of the 21st century is a lively and thriving historic urban street. It is the centre of a rapidly expanding arts, culture, business, and entertainment sector in the heart of a growing municipality. Its rich stock of heritage buildings are being restored to their former elegance and are being supplemented with attractive and sympathetic contemporary additions. The area serves as the transportation hub of the municipality but traffic has been calmed and the amenity-filled sidewalks are filled with pedestrians, many of whom live in the area and many of whom have travelled great distances to get here.

The Vision Statement was presented in an article about the study in *The Coast* magazine with a fax-in response sheet. Of the thirty-nine respondents, thirty-six "shared" the vision statement, none "preferred something else", and none felt Barrington Street "currently resembles this vision". Generally *The Coast's* survey indicated that respondents agree with the idea that Barrington Street needs to be improved and share in a vision of the street in an upgraded, revitalized state.



Kaizer building

1.8 General Recommendations

The Study Team has adopted a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at the functional, physical and economic revitalization of Barrington Street. While these recommendations are broad, and in some respects may be challenging, all are driven by the basic strategy to build on what is here. All recommendations are extensions of existing uses, transportation patterns, and municipal policies. Radical breaks in direction are not envisioned.

The basic direction is to create a district of special ambience, infused with fun and richness, and built upon the heritage assets of the street. The basic strategy is to increase private sector investor confidence while making public realm improvements. General Recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. Transportation & Movement

- **Maintain Barrington Street as a two-way auto and transit corridor, with substantially calmed and reduced traffic speed and volume in order to achieve a greater pedestrian balance.**
- **Eliminate no left turning, some one-way streets, and reduce through traffic.**
- **Introduce parking, loading and transit stops on one side of Barrington Street.**
- **Reduce the number of daily transit trips on Barrington Street.**
- **Eliminate transit express routes through the area and replace them with a propane-fuelled shuttle service running through downtown to Spring Garden Road and connecting to a new transfer facility adjacent**

The basic direction is to create a district of special ambience, infused with fun and richness, and built upon the heritage assets of the street. The basic strategy is to increase private sector investor confidence while making public realm improvements.

to Scotia Square.

- **Speedily develop substantial short-term parking on the Granville site.**
 - **Provide 'at grade', enclosed access from the new parking facility to Barrington Street.**
 - **Give full consideration to long-term non-auto-oriented access improvements to downtown, e.g. light rail on existing lines.**
- ### 2. Special District Initiatives
- **Establish a Special District on Barrington Street district aimed at encouraging the protection and enhancement of the heritage resource and the stimulation of economic activity on the street.**
 - **Limit the size of this district for maximum initial impact to only those properties fronting onto Barrington Street between Spring Garden Road and Duke Street.**
 - **Achieve clear, flexible and broadly understood design guidelines aimed at developing a character and district with special ambience.**
 - **Establish an office to develop awareness**

and co-ordination of the objectives of the district and its programs, and assist the private sector in moving forward.

3. Use & Marketing

- Establish Barrington Street as an 'experience retail' destination with a leisure goods niche identity and increase of national stores.
- Adopt an overall arts, cultural, and popular entertainment policy for downtown Halifax encouraging the further development of these uses and venues downtown.
- Integrate residential uses as an integral and desirable ingredient of downtown .
- Develop business recruitment means, initiatives, procedures, and materials.
- Develop and promote an upbeat name for the area which recognizes a new identity and connotes "fun".

4. Urban Design

- Enliven the overall pedestrian zone with increased amenity and distinct character.
- Provide expanded sidewalk areas for street activity: kiosks, bicycle racks, trees, vendors, mid-block crossings, etc.
- Improve street lighting through new fixtures similar to the new fixtures on the Grand Parade, bollard lighting at activity areas, and architectural lighting.
- Reinforce connections through the street with storefront infoldings, connectors to adjacent areas, and the utilization of currently inaccessible spaces.
- Enhance the district character through appropriate fixtures and street furnishings, gateway features, information signage, etc.

Downtown holds together the most varied mix of economic, civic, and social functions. It is the place where everyone can meet and interact, where monuments are located, where speeches are made, where parades are held and crowds are entertained. More than anyplace else, downtown gives a community its collective identity and thus its pride. It is the keystone that keeps the other pieces of the city in place. Downtown is the heart and soul of the metropolis.

Changing Places; Moe & Wilkie, 1998



Upper floors of the Kaizer and G.M. Smith buildings

2 Analysis

Nobody should try to revive a downtown with the rallying cry “remember when?”, because today there is a whole group of people of a certain age who have only lived in malls and have never spent any real time in a downtown. They don’t remember when because for them there never was a when... communities need not appeal to nostalgia for what is gone. They simply need to see their own potential and invest in what they have.

Strengths, Difficulties, Challenges

The strengths, difficulties, and challenges of Barrington Street contain both present limitations and future possibilities. As mentioned in the General Recommendations, the basic strategy recommended by the Study Team is to build on what is here. The following *Analysis* section broadly examines what is here, both positively and negatively, and what qualities must be re-infused if a significant revitalization is to occur.

Changing Places; Moe & Wilkie, 1998

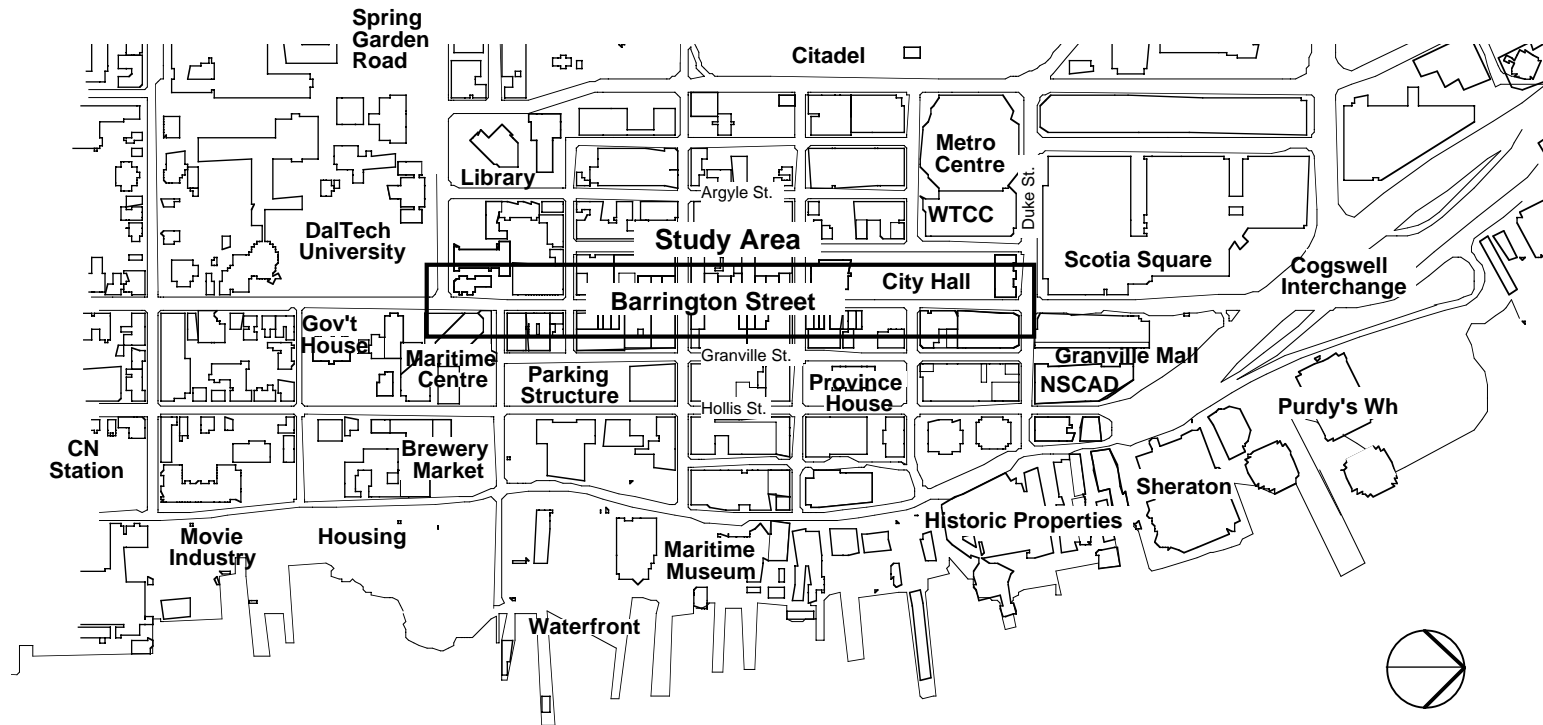


Figure 2.1 Central Business District of Halifax showing the central location of Barrington Street

2.1 Strengths

A. Central Location

Barrington Street is geographically the heart of downtown. It is bounded on all sides by significant and active uses including Historic Properties, the Casino and Purdy's Wharf Area, Scotia Square, the Metro Centre/World Trade and Convention Centre, Citadel Hill, Spring Garden Road, Daltech University, Government House and the Waterfront. Barrington Street is the hub around which the entire CBD revolves. It is a major transit corridor for the downtown, and even though it has numerous 'dead zones' it is still a major pedestrian link downtown. As well, the CBD itself is centrally located within the peninsula of Halifax and the larger metropolitan area and is in close proximity to established residential neighbourhoods.

B. Built Heritage

Barrington Street has a distinctive heritage character. Its unique stock of late Victorian, Edwardian, and early Modern buildings comprises one of the most interesting and significant historic commercial streetscapes in Canada. Of the forty-six buildings which front on Barrington between Duke Street and Spring Garden Road, thirty-nine were built before 1940 and twenty-five date from the 1890-1920 period when commercial construction on the street was at its peak.

On Barrington Street one can see outstanding examples of Victorian Gothic, Romanesque Revival, Classical Revival, Italianate, Beaux Arts, Chicago School, Neo-Gothic, Art Deco, and plain Maritime Vernacular commercial styles, all in a variety of groupings and juxtapositions. The

variation in styles and the high degree of architectural integrity of the buildings is particularly apparent when one looks above street level to the upper stories which, in almost most all cases, are substantially intact and unaltered.

Of the thirty-nine pre-1940 buildings on the street, twenty, or just under one-half, are registered heritage properties. The other nineteen are significant in themselves in many cases, but significant also for the contextual support and the contribution that they make to the overall herit-



St. Paul's Church, the oldest Protestant church in Canada

age character of the area. As in many historic districts, it is the overall fabric or 'critical mass' of all heritage buildings, both registered and supportive, that creates ambience. This is not the case in areas of isolated 'monument' buildings, even if there is a relatively large concentration of them.

Also, when Barrington's historic commercial streetscape is considered in combination with the adjacent historic precincts of the Grand Parade (including St. Paul's Church and Old City Hall), and the Old Burying Ground (including Government House, the old Courthouse, St. Mary's Basilica, and St. Matthews Church) it is apparent that the street functions as a significant heritage axis within the downtown.

Barrington Street's heritage buildings comprise one of its most valuable assets. They create a unique atmosphere and a distinct district or quarter which has great potential to serve as a foundation for the street's economic revitalization. There is no other place in Nova Scotia or Canada quite like Barrington Street and in that uniqueness and scarcity lies tremendous value. Photographs and information on the history, architecture and contextual value of all buildings on the street are included in the Appendix.

C. Arts, Culture, and Popular Entertainment

Downtown Halifax remains the main location for arts, culture, and popular entertainment in the region. Major arts facilities such as Neptune Theatre, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft & Design, as well as developing arts facilities such as the Khyber Arts

Project, Eye Level Gallery, and speciality shops such as Fireworks and the Ceilidh Cafe contribute to an established and expanding “arts scene”.

There are also rapidly expanding industry offices in film, music, cultural federations, applied technologies, photographers, designers, publishers, etc. A recent statistics Canada report released early in 1998 notes that Nova Scotia far out-paces the rest of Canada in cultural sector employment growth, and that this section already employs more people than fishing, mining, logging, agricultural, construction, transportation and wholesale industries.

The Metro Centre continues to be the single Halifax venue for large popular entertainment activities from hockey to pop stars. There are many smaller musical venues, primarily in pubs and restaurants and the nightlife scene continues to remain popular with expansions and new additions such as the Economy Shoe Shop, Backstage, and Rye’s Deli on Barrington Street.

D. Intangible Qualities

The presence of beautiful and stately civic and church buildings, a significant public square, the sudden lift of densely packed, tall, turn-of-the-century commercial buildings, the movement of traffic, the backdrop of taller towers, and occasional views to the harbour all clearly indicate to any first-time visitor that regardless of its present condition, something special once happened on Barrington Street. This was, and perhaps still is, the main street of Halifax. There is an unmistakable feeling that something should be happening here.



Barrington Street looking south from Grand Parade

For native Haligonians, and Nova Scotians generally, Barrington Street has a special spot in their collective memory: of trolley cars, diverse cultural activities, the Capitol Theatre, and the finest range of goods, services, and entertainment the city had to offer. These intangible perceptions and memories are significant to note in considering the Study Area. Pride of place can be a substantial strength in motivating public support for revitalization, as well as capturing visitor interest.

***This was, and perhaps still is,
the main street of Halifax.
There is an unmistakable
feeling that something should
be happening here.***

2.2 Difficulties

A. Functional Obsolescence

The difficulties of Barrington Street may be most broadly described as a functional obsolescence. New uses, customers, owners, etc. have not replaced the old quickly and sufficiently enough to engender enthusiastic new investment, respectful maintenance, adequate repair, or sympathetic replacement of the physical fabric from building interiors to signs, storefronts, and entire buildings. It is largely because of this functional obsolescence that Barrington Street remains in many ways the most difficult area of downtown environmentally. Its earlier intense retail, commercial and institutional activities have not been replaced to the same degree other commercial activities have been replaced in other areas of downtown.

B. Poor Image

Although there are many well-maintained properties and strongly presented businesses on Barrington Street, there are many which have a poor image. Unsympathetic storefront additions,



Under-utilized corner adjacent to NFB Building (1998)

poor quality and inappropriate signage, vacant buildings and properties, crumbling facades, under utilized and in many cases empty upper floors, all contribute to negative image problems. Other factors which contribute to the negative image are a lack of high quality retail, poor quality street lighting, poor quality trash bins, perceived night time safety concerns, a lack of pedestrian amenity and so on.

C. Excessive Traffic & Transit

Barrington Street is structured to serve as an arterial street, a traffic mover. The swift movement of high volume traffic and transit is the primary aim. There are few left turns allowed, no day-time parking, and no stopping during peak periods. There are approximately 750 transit trips per day on Barrington Street (versus 450 per day on Spring Garden Road). This speed and volume, along with the narrow street width (30 ft. versus 40 ft. on Spring Garden Road) and tall buildings combine to create an environment which is dominated by the movement of traffic but which needs to be more in balance with pedestrian needs if significant revitalization is to occur. Spring Garden Road offers a better model for successful integration of traffic and pedestrians, where traffic moves slowly and more appropriately for a pedestrian environment. Ironically, while Barrington Street is heavily transit and traffic oriented, it is not an auto-accessible street for retail or other uses. Parking is restricted in the area, and the diligence with which it is monitored by officers is disturbing to all.

D. Unfriendly Pedestrian Environment

In addition to the conflict between pedestrian



Articulated bus at the Grand Parade

requirements and high speed traffic, there are other factors that contribute to an unfriendly pedestrian environment. There is little visual interest at street level. There are numerous sidewalk dead zones where empty lots or buildings, unrelieved building frontages, non-retail uses, or poorly presented stores leave little to capture the eye and interest the mind. There is also a lack of softening elements such as awnings, trees or even parked cars, to shelter the sidewalk and counter the dominance of noisy, high speed vehicles.

While amenity can come in many forms - street activity, storefront display, people to watch etc., its lack on Barrington Street is particularly noticeable. The grandeur of the scale of the upper levels of the buildings is not matched by concentrated activity or amenity in the pedestrian environment, the sidewalks and street levels of buildings.

E. Low Investor Confidence

The single main difficulty of Barrington Street is the low investor confidence which has plagued the street since the 1960's. There has been limited private sector investment in building maintenance, repair, and upgrading, and quality retail improvements for many years were the exception rather than the rule. Poor quality storefronts and signage continue to be placed on many buildings, even registered heritage buildings.

While the Halifax Regional Municipality has recently invested substantially in the Neptune Theatre, the Khyber (Church of England Institute) Building, and land for a new mixed-use parking structure on Granville Street, downtown Halifax, and particularly Barrington Street, has seen little public sector investment since the



Entrance to the vacant Paramount Theatre

early 1980's, when utilities were put underground, the sidewalks widened, and new street lighting added. The G-7 improvements in 1995 helped but were limited in scope.

2.3 Challenges

A. Return Commercial Viability

If the most significant difficulty facing Barrington Street has been a lack of investor confidence, its greatest challenge then is to return it, and the basis for that is to return commercial viability. Given the proper conditions, this may happen 'on its own', but it can also be encouraged and nurtured.

This challenge is being faced by downtowns, commercial districts, main streets, and heritage quarters in the latter part of the twentieth century everywhere. From St. John's to Dublin, Seattle, New Orleans and New York City, districts in urban areas are re-inventing themselves. No two places are alike and there are no ready-made formulae. Again, the overall direction for Barrington Street identified and detailed in this Study is for the Street to build on its heritage assets, alleviate its transportation problems, develop a special ambience, and encourage and promote a retail niche consistent with that ambience.

Beyond clarifying the direction, it will be important here, as it has been elsewhere to stimulate and nurture revitalization by making public realm improvements; establishing incentive programs; promoting a niche market; and clarifying recruitment possibilities and responsibilities. All of these activities need to be undertaken

in order to re-establish investor confidence and commercial viability.

B. Balance Traffic and Pedestrian Needs

If a successful and significant revitalization of Barrington Street is to occur, the street must be a place where people want to be, not just pass through. A key element will be the extent to which a special ambience is created, and a key component of that will be a better balance of pedestrian and traffic needs.

A successful pedestrian environment does not necessarily mean a pedestrian mall, nor does it necessitate the complete removal of transit vehicles. It does, however, mean the reduction of the negative impact of noise, fumes, vibration, and physical danger produced by excessive traffic volume and speed. This can be achieved by significantly reducing the number of transit trips per day, expanding the use of propane buses, and slowing and calming traffic through the introduction of left turns and on-street parking. Assuming that a successful balance can be achieved and a special ambience created, the street, and particularly its retail uses, can benefit substantially by the ongoing, appropriate presence of traffic and transit.

The most visited and prosperous main streets are actually the ones which have undergone enormous change. They are not the main streets of yesterday, but the main streets of tomorrow.



Barrington Street looking north from Prince Street

Pedestrians also require greater amenity. As pointed out earlier, this amenity can take many forms - street activity, people, window displays, etc., but it must be present. Given the present nature of Barrington Street, with a number of non-retail uses, unrelieved building frontages, and an imposing street wall, added built amenity in the pedestrian realm is an absolute necessity.

C. Improve Image

The list of functional and physical improvements needed on the street is long but not unduly. Vacancies in properties, buildings, upper levels, storefronts, under utilized areas, etc., must be filled. Crumbling facades must be fixed. Poor quality and inappropriate signage and storefronts must be improved. Public realm improvements must be made for everything from street lighting to trash bins. Two generations (or more) of neglect need to be reversed.

We are not, however, starting from zero. Numerous properties have been maintained and improved, but many have not. The street as a whole needs a substantial and coordinated fix-up.

D. Create a Unique Identity and Ambience

Beyond filling and fixing, the street must capitalize on its many aforementioned strengths to create a unique ambience. The view of the Study Team is that this ambience can best be accomplished by building on the strong heritage character of the street, providing greater amenity, moderating traffic, developing a niche market of experience oriented retail, and creating a fun and vibrant street scene that draws from the arts and entertainment focus of the area.

Perhaps the most controversial and challenging aspect of realizing this view will be adopting appropriate means for the increased conservation and utilization of heritage buildings. This is always a difficult issue, particularly where complex commercial interests are at stake. The clarification, discussion, and resolution of this issue will be a key aspect of infusing life and giving form to the area. The view of the Study

Team is that identity, ambience, and economic success are closely tied and that the future of Barrington Street lies in a strong and appropriate utilization of its heritage assets. The models for this type of success are widespread in North America.

The identity of the area must also be promoted. It should be given a name, such as “Downtown Barrington”, or “The Light and Power District”. This identity should begin to be developed early in the process rather than at the end, and should be supported with signifiers and feature elements on the street.



Looking north along sidewalk in front of Fireworks Jewellers

3 Strategy

Debates have been raging about what to do with America's downtowns. There's been a lot of talk about ways to create "community" and about processes such as visioning to help provide a means by which downtowns can be planned according to lifestyles people will be living. So far, most of the thinking tends to envision America's downtowns as entertaining, visually stimulating, 24-hour environments, built to pedestrian scale that offer a little something for everyone - in short, a type of metropolitan village that is the living room of the region.

"The Chrome Village", Kristina Kessler, Urban Land, Feb 1998, The Urban Land Institute.

The following section details a strategy for the revitalization of Barrington Street. Although presented in four separate sub-sections, *Transportation and Movement*, *Special District Initiatives*, *Use and Marketing*, and *Urban Design*, it should be seen as a single strategy: to enhance and revitalize the street through the creation of a district of unique identity and special ambience; capitalizing on its heritage resources; utilizing, not suppressed by its traffic and transit; drawing on a market niche of experience-oriented retail; and reinforcing downtown as the arts, culture, and popular entertainment focus of the region.

.1 Transportation & Movement .2 Special District Initiatives



.3 Use & Marketing



.4 Urban Design



3.1 Transportation & Movement

The time is approaching in many cities when there will be every facility for moving about the city and no possible reason for going there.

The City in History: Its Origins and Transformations and Its Prospects, Lewis Mumford, 1938



Buses heading south on Barrington (1998)

Barrington Street operates as a major connector. It parallels the harbour carrying automobile traffic from peninsular north and mainland Halifax through to Spring Garden Road and the high employment area of peninsular south. The street is also a major corridor for transit vehicles heading further along Barrington Street, up Spring Garden Road, and to Brunswick Street. Thus the street carries a high volume of through-traffic that is only interested in transiting Barrington Street as fast, as conveniently, and as safely possible but which is detrimental to the pedestrian development of the street.

A Street Signage & Traffic Control

The signage and traffic control on Barrington Street is designed to accommodate through-traffic. Left turns, which tend to impede traffic, are not permitted at either Prince Street or Sackville Street. Parking is not permitted except in the evening and on weekends. Stopping is discouraged and loading/unloading areas are limited in number. In the jargon of the traffic engineer, the 'friction' along the street is reduced as much as possible. All of this tends to encourage through traffic to move quickly. The rapidly moving through-traffic, however, does not serve local retail and entertainment uses very well and creates an inhospitable environment for pedestrians. Transit vehicles are large, tend to move fast, are noisy, and give off a strong smell of diesel fuel - all of which adds to the inhospitable nature of the environment. It is interesting to note that during the transit strike in July 1998, Barrington Street was a vastly quieter and more pedestrian friendly street, a fact which was duly noted by the general public and the business people in the area.

B. Street Inappropriate for High Traffic Volumes

Barrington Street is quite narrow and the buildings are relatively high which creates a ‘canyon effect’. This tends to accentuate street level noise and gasoline/diesel fumes are slow to dissipate. Because of the narrow street, delivery vehicles often park with one side of the vehicle up on the sidewalk area. Also, because there is no parking permitted on the street, the sidewalk area feels unprotected which adds to the discomfort of pedestrians. Because of their size, noise of operation and travelling speeds, transit vehicles and large delivery trucks are particularly intimidating to the pedestrian.

C. Pedestrian Use Balance

There is a need to strike a more equitable balance between the needs of traffic and the needs of pedestrians. This can be achieved through measures designed to calm traffic, by reducing the number of buses using Barrington Street as a through route, by increasing the separation between the pedestrians and traffic, by developing more pedestrian amenities, and by allowing some on-street parking. The allowance of on-street parking will not only better serve local business activities but will also contribute to traffic calming and a sense of pedestrian comfort and safety.

All of these items will be discussed in more detail later in Section 3.4 and they are essential considerations if Barrington Street is achieve significant revitalization.

There is a need to strike a more equitable balance between the needs of traffic and the needs of the pedestrians. This can be achieved through measures designed to calm traffic, through a reduction of the number of buses using Barrington Street as a through route, by increasing the separation between the pedestrians and traffic, by developing more pedestrian amenities, and by allowing some on-street parking.

D. Traffic Calming

The traffic calming measures recommended here are presented in order of immediacy. The early recommendations are designed for immediate implementation. Some of the later recommendations will require more detailed planning prior to implementation.

Steps should be taken immediately to turn Sackville Street into a two-way traffic street, at least from Barrington Street to Argyle. An analysis should immediately be undertaken of the overall traffic impact of allowing two-way traffic for the entire length of Sackville Street. Either option would permit full left turning movements

from Barrington Street onto Sackville Street and these should be instituted immediately.

The analysis of the Sackville Street traffic impact mentioned in the previous paragraph should be extended to also include Prince Street as a two-way street. In the meantime, left turns should be permitted from Barrington Street westward onto Prince Street.

The number of transit stops on Barrington Street should be reduced and replaced by designated loading areas and/or on-street parking. This would also permit the widening of sidewalks at strategic points, as described in Section 3.4. The widened sidewalks would reduce the street crossing width for pedestrians and allow for the introduction of street level amenities, all of which would make the street more pedestrian friendly.

The section of Barrington Street adjacent to Scotia Square presents an interesting opportunity to calm traffic on Barrington Street, contribute to the rationalization of transit stops (see figure 3.1), develop interesting street level business opportunities, and generally contribute to a more pedestrian friendly environment. This transit stop and interchange is also described in more detail in Section 3.4. This section of Barrington Street could remain open or be closed to automobiles except for access to the Delta Barrington. In the latter case, automobile drivers heading south on Barrington Street would be forced to make a choice as they approach downtown and either use Hollis Street or divert to Brunswick Street. The end result would be a substantial reduction in through traffic on Barrington Street. This change, combined with a reduction in the

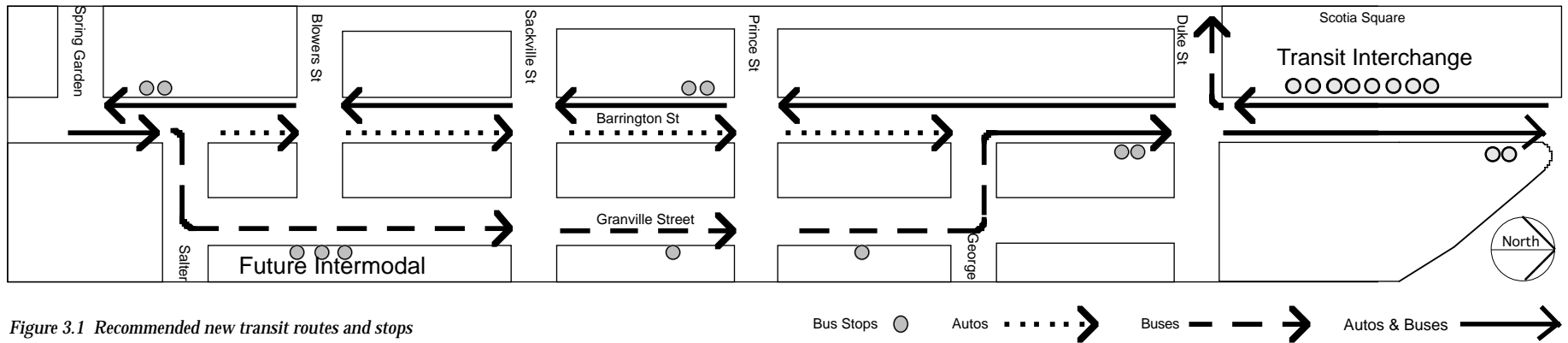


Figure 3.1 Recommended new transit routes and stops

number of transit vehicles on Barrington Street would substantially calm traffic. Barrington Street would be used to provide access to the businesses and not as a through street.

E. Transit Reduction and Rationalization

A target should be set for reducing the number of transit vehicles currently using Barrington Street. The number should be reduced by at least one-third and preferably more. One way of achieving this would be to divert northbound transit vehicles from Barrington Street to Granville Street, at least from Salter Street through to George and possibly to Duke Street. Another significant reduction could be achieved by eliminating the loop many buses make to Spring Garden Road returning via Brunswick. This loop could be replaced by a rapidly circulating, propane-fuelled downtown collector bus, stopping at the Scotia Square transit interchange. This would allow numerous buses to turn right at Duke Street and avoid Barrington Street.

Other transit diversions are possible but it will be necessary to undertake a significant study of transit routes in order to identify specific changes and is beyond the scope of this study. However, the Metro Transit corporation should be given specific reduction targets and asked to provide recommendations as to how those reductions could be achieved.

The number of transit stops on the west side of Barrington Street could be reduced by clustering a number of stops. This would also provide an opportunity to improve passenger amenities at these more intensely used stops.

As a final measure, the use of more propane-fuelled buses in the downtown area would substantially reduce the noxious odours and fumes generated by gas and diesel powered buses. The program of conversion to propane power should be accelerated with priority for the use of these buses given to the downtown routes.

F. Increase Parking

There is a need for an increase in the amount of short-term parking in and around Barrington Street. This has been well documented in previous studies and some action has been taken by the acquisition of the majority of the properties between the Tex-Park and Salter Street and the issuance of a proposal call to private developers for the construction of a mixed-use parking facility on the assembled lands. This process needs to be accelerated.

On-street parking can and should be provided on Barrington Street (this is also described in Section 3.4). Additional opportunities should be explored on the adjacent streets as part of an ongoing program and dialogue between the DHBC and HRM parking authorities.

The Cogswell Interchange may present an interesting and immediate opportunity to provide additional street level parking at the entrance to the downtown (see '8' below).

G. Light Rail Transit

In the longer term, the ongoing accessibility of Barrington Street and the CBD as a whole, without negatively impacting the neighbourhoods of the peninsula, is a vital concern.

The CNR tracks serving the Ocean Terminal and the Railway Station present an interesting opportunity for the implementation of a light rail transit system serving downtown and the 'nodes of intensity' along the way. These nodes include Dalhousie University, St. Mary's University, the DalTech campus, and the Central Business District. This idea is currently being explored and the continuing discussions should be encouraged and an action plan developed for implementation. Similar opportunities exist along the north Barrington Street edge of the peninsula.

H. The Cogswell Interchange

This interchange was originally constructed as part of a four-lane roadway system that would connect to the Ocean Terminals. The only other part of the roadway system that was constructed was in front of the Law Courts. Two of the four lanes constructed in front of the Law Courts are now used for a transit stop with small retail uses lining the edge. Further construction of the four-lane roadway was halted by the citizenry in order to protect the historic buildings that now form part of Historic Properties (particularly notable in this regard is the Morse Tea Building) which would have been destroyed by construction of the four-lane roadway along with a number of other significant historic buildings. The obsolete part of the four-lane roadway in front of the Law Courts has been successfully

integrated into the urban landscape. The Cogswell Interchange still remains, however, and it is redundant.

A detailed study should be undertaken of the interchange and the land on which it sits. In the meantime, the diversion of northbound traffic to the lane currently used for in-bound traffic heading for Hollis Street (making this section two-way) would permit the vacated roadway (the northbound lanes) to be used for parking. Preliminary analysis indicates that traffic would continue to flow freely with this modification to the interchange.

I. The Proposed Parking Structure - Granville Street

The parking structure proposed for Granville Street (Tex Park to Salter Street) may also present an opportunity for intermodal transfer, particularly if transit vehicles are diverted to Granville Street and/or a light rail transit system is developed using the CNR tracks as previously discussed. This idea needs more study and evaluation.

Transportation Recommendations

1. **Turn Sackville Street into a two-way street, at least from Barrington Street to Argyle Street, and permit full left turning movements at the Barrington Street/Sackville Street intersection.**
2. **Initiate a study of the traffic and parking implications of turning Prince Street into a two-**

way street. If the decision is made in the first recommendation, to only make the Barrington to Argyle section of Sackville Street two-way, then the study should be expanded to include turning all of Sackville Street into a two-way street. In the interim, immediately allow left-turning movements from Barrington Street west onto Prince Street.

3. **Reduce the number of transit stops on Barrington Street, limit the number of designated loading areas to the minimum necessary to serve the adjacent business uses, and allow on-street parking on one side of the street.**
4. **Establish a joint study group to examine the possibility of turning the part of Barrington Street between the Cogswell interchange and Duke Street into a transit precinct. One option would be to only permit full vehicular access to the Delta Barrington Hotel and delivery access to Scotia Square but otherwise restrict access to transit vehicles. This change would also reduce the number of automobiles using Barrington Street as a throughway.**
5. **Set a target for reducing the number of transit vehicles using Barrington Street by at least one-third and ask the Transit Corporation to bring forward a proposal designed to meet this target. One way of achieving this would be to divert the northbound transit vehicles to Granville Street from Salter Street to George Street. Another way would be to collect the express bus passengers by**

propane powered buses, bring them to Scotia Square, and eliminate the express buses from transiting Barrington Street.

6. Initiate a program of converting the buses that travel on Barrington Street from diesel power to propane power.
7. Accelerate the process for constructing the parking facility to be located on the property between TexPark and Salter Street. Construct it as a municipal facility, if necessary, with a design that allows for the addition of business uses at a later date as market demand materializes.

For the longer term encourage the following:

8. A study of the Cogswell interchange with the view to eliminating parts of the interchange and rationalizing the street system. This could provide opportunities for gaining land for development and the creation of an intermodal transportation facility. An immediate short-term option would be to make the in-bound (Barrington to Hollis) lane two-way, divert the Lower Water Street traffic into the (now two-way) in-bound lane, and turn the outbound lane into a parking lot.
9. Encourage the current initiative regarding the examination of the feasibility of utilizing at least one of the CNR tracks serving the Ocean Terminal for Light Rail Transit linked into the Central Business District.

The recent history of Portland shows that core city revitalization, neighbourhood conservation, and suburban growth are not separable options. A metropolis that works is one that has given equal attention to all of its pieces.

Carl Abbott, Portland City Historian



Barrington Street (1998). One lane of parking and two lanes of moving traffic, a common evening

3.2 Special District Initiatives

Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any... Liveability is not some middle-class luxury. It is an economic imperative.

Robert Solow, Nobel Prize winning economist



Upper floors of the Nova Scotia Furnishings Building and the Wright Building (1998)

A. Why Establish a District?

Barrington Street is an identifiable district within the downtown. It is well-recognized in the public consciousness as Halifax's historic main street. Its many Victorian, Edwardian and Early Modern commercial buildings give it a unique heritage character which is quite different from that of adjacent streets.

Barrington Street is also recognized as the street which has suffered most from contemporary change in the downtown retail market, and the effects of traffic and transit. Once the bustling heart of the city, it is now economically and visually diminished. There is widespread public concern about its economic health and a widely acknowledged recognition of the need for its revitalization.

There is a pressing need to re-establish private sector confidence in the street and create an environment which encourages private investment. There is a need to enhance its heritage character and physical attractiveness through building facade, storefront, and signage improvements, public realm developments, and sympathetic new buildings. There is also a need to expand commercial activity and to promote and market the street as a commercial destination.

While some of these needs and challenges might be met spontaneously through individual initiatives, the wide range of actions necessary to successfully revitalize the street on a broad scale will demand coordinated, focused effort by both the private and public sectors. The most effective way of doing this is through designation of the street as a Special District where actions and incentives are implemented in a co-ordinated fashion.

B. What Kind of District?

The Terms of Reference identified three district options for exploration. These were:

- Economic Development District
- Heritage District
- Capital District

While these could be viewed as mutually exclusive options, they are best regarded as interrelated building blocks which reinforce each other in the overall revitalization effort. The components of each and the manner in which they build upon and complement each other are discussed below.

C. Economic Development District

An Economic Development District is an area where a program of public realm improvements, development incentives and organizational assistance is put in place to trigger private investment and encourage business. This approach to business development has been used most re-

Many cities have quarters that convey on them a sense of place and identity through the historic and cultural associations they provide. They are often an integral part of the city's charm and appeal, and their visual and functional qualities are important elements of the city's image and identity.

Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters
S. Tiesdell, T. Oc, T. Heath
Architectural Press, Oxford, England, 1996

cently by the City of Halifax in the Bayers Lake Business Park in a focused initiative to attract 'big box' retailing to the city. A Barrington Street Economic Development District could be similarly established as a focused initiative to meet the contemporary challenge of downtown revitalization, and could include the following elements.

• Public Realm Improvements

Proposals for public realm improvements are described in detail in other section 3.1 and section 3.4:

- Traffic calming measures
- Reduction of bus traffic & rationalization of transit stops.
- Introduction of on-street parking at selected locations.
- Development of new off-street parking facilities and associated pedestrian connectors.
- Development of pedestrian amenities - trees, benches, weather protection, improved pedestrian crossings, kiosks, improved lighting, information signage, etc.
- Development of 'gateway' features, architectural lighting, etc., to enhance district image.

• Incentives

Public realm improvements should be complemented by financial and other incentives to encourage private investment. Incentives which are commonly used elsewhere and which could be adapted for use on Barrington Street include:

• Grants

- Performance grants, subject to satisfaction of criteria for design and quality of work.
- Discretionary grants.



Cabot Building and Kaizer Building

Grants could apply to exterior building restoration, storefront improvements, interior rehabilitation, or signage and could be made on a cost-shared basis up to a maximum amount. Design and performance criteria could be adapted from existing HRM guidelines for alterations to registered heritage properties, or could be crafted anew.

The availability of grants can encourage property owners to carry out basic work or more extensive or higher quality work than they might otherwise undertake. Successful applicants gain a direct and relatively immediate subsidy for their rehabilitation or restoration work, and the resulting reduction in project debt generally improves cash flow and prospects for viability in the post-investment period. This can ultimately lead to improved long-term economic viability and increased property value, and increased municipal revenue from higher property and business occupancy taxes.

- **Loans**

- Direct loans.
- Loan guarantees.
- Revolving funds/Loan pool

Loans are particularly useful as a development incentive in cases where, because of perceived risk, conventional lending institutions are reluctant to become involved or where a project is unable to secure sufficient commercial financing at a reasonable cost. Loans could be offered at below market interest rates, either as interim or long-term financing and could be made available on an entitlement basis (i.e. running with inclusion in the district), on the basis of performance criteria, or on a discretionary basis in exceptional circumstances. Loans could also be offered in conjunction with grants.

A revolving fund or loan pool could be financed from general municipal revenues, dedicated tax revenues, or partnerships with non-profit organizations or the corporate sector. Barrington Street could be designated as a tax re-investment district, where property & occupancy taxes, deed transfer taxes, and building permit fees, from within the district are invested in a fund dedicated to the improvement of the district. This could be supplemented by funds contributed by non-profit organizations such as the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia or the Halifax Foundation which have a potential interest in the revitalization and restoration of the street. Similarly, loan funds could be seeded by corporations with a significant real estate interest in the street, e.g., Sobey's, Empire Group, CIBC, TD Bank, NSP, etc.

- **Tax Relief**

- Property tax exemptions and deferrals.
- Tax credits/tax rebates.

Tax relief measures can encourage private investment in restoration, rehabilitation, or sympathetic new development by reducing operating costs in the period immediately following the investment.

Generally, other cities which use this type of incentive grant full or partial tax relief for a limited time period (e.g., five years) following the investment, with full taxation returning at the end of the prescribed period. Relief can be granted in the form of an exemption from payment or as a grant equivalent to taxes paid.

As an example, a tax relief program implemented in Winnipeg (for listed heritage buildings only) provides full tax exemption for up to two years during the construction period, followed by exemption for five years after completion of construction in an amount equivalent to any increase in taxes due to the improvements undertaken. In addition, tax credits of up to one half of the cost of eligible work can be applied to property taxes, business occupancy taxes, or amusement taxes over a ten year period following construction.

As there is some uncertainty over the statutory authority of HRM to implement tax relief measures under the HRM Act, this incentive might best be implemented under the Heritage Property Act, which enables municipalities to provide financial assistance for restoration or renovation

of properties in heritage conservation districts upon such terms and conditions as the council deems fit. Amendment of the HRM Act may also be necessary.

- **Other Incentives**

- Fast track approvals and reduced permit fees for rehabilitation projects.
- Preferential public sector leasing of space in heritage buildings in the district.
- Measures to encourage organizations which receive public funding (e.g. arts and culture organizations) to lease or purchase office space in heritage buildings in the district.

Fast track approvals and reduced permit fees function as financial incentives by reducing development costs. Preferential leasing by the public sector would benefit the street on several levels by signalling public commitment to the district, adding to the critical mass of arts and culture activity, assuring rental income for property owners, and contributing spin-off spending for other businesses.



Barrington Street looking south at Prince Street (1998)

• **Business Recruitment, Management, Co-ordination, Promotion & Marketing**

As described in Section 3.3 of this report, Barrington Street is emerging as, and will best be developed as, an 'experience' retail and arts, culture and entertainment district. These types of businesses are most suited to the contemporary downtown economic environment. In developing Barrington Street as a special district and maximizing its chances for successful revitalization, it will be necessary to attract businesses which fit within this vision, which complement each other, and which re-inforce the image of the street as the place to go for this type of niche activity.

Business recruitment is a common practice elsewhere and has been successfully undertaken recently in the Bayers Lake Business Park. Recruitment is not presently considered to be within the mandate of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, however, and it will be necessary to determine how and by whom this particularly important initiative is to be implemented on Barrington Street.

Similarly, promotion of Barrington Street as a special district within the downtown will be a key component of the revitalization effort. The large number of heritage buildings, the variety of architectural styles, the commercial heritage and historical associations, and the central location of the street are all tremendous assets which can be used as promotional vehicles, both in the local and regional retail and entertainment market and in the cultural tourism market.

The specifics of this recruitment and promotion

initiative would include:

- Attracting new 'experience' retail and arts, culture and entertainment business to the district and developing projects and business relationships that fit within this vision.
- Working with property owners to improve, rehabilitate or restore their buildings and storefronts so as to improve their image and attractiveness for speciality retail business and to enhance the overall image and attractiveness of the street.
- Developing awareness of assistance programs and incentives.
- Developing an effective promotion and marketing campaign for Barrington Street in collaboration with the DHBC in keeping with the overall promotion and marketing scheme for the downtown, e.g., Barrington Street as the 'Heart of the Downtown'.

Partnerships & Corporate Sponsorships

Revitalization of Barrington Street will require action on the part of both the public and private sectors and, in some cases, it may be most effective if both sectors work together in partnership.

An opportunity exists, for example, at the old NFB site, where the property is privately owned and the municipality has funds invested in stabilization and preservation of the facade. This site is presently an eyesore but has great potential to be turned into a showcase feature that marries heritage conservation with exciting new development.

Similarly, the vacant Birk's site offers a unique and challenging opportunity for a public-private partnership to develop one of the most valuable

pieces of real estate in the downtown while framing the significant Barrington & George street intersection and complementing the heritage character of the adjacent Grand Parade and Province House precincts.

Another idea is that of involving the corporate sector in sponsorship of amenity improvements on the street, e.g., landscaping, trees, outdoor seating, special lighting, etc. One idea suggested in the course of the development of this study is to develop and promote Barrington on a 'Light

Promotion of Barrington Street as a special district within the downtown will be a key component of the revitalization effort. The large number of heritage buildings, the variety of architectural styles, the commercial heritage and historical associations, and the central location of the street are all tremendous assets which can be used as promotional vehicles, both in the local and regional retail and entertainment market and in the cultural tourism market.

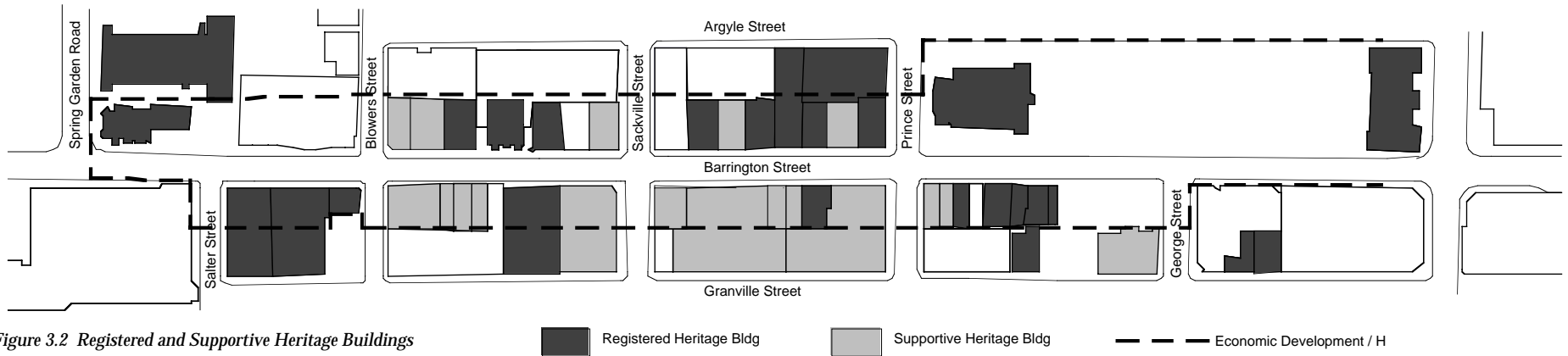


Figure 3.2 Registered and Supportive Heritage Buildings

& Power’ theme based on the historical link between the development of electricity and late 19th century commercial development on the street, particularly the tall ‘Chicago Style’ buildings with their electric-powered elevators and the electric-powered street car system which used Barrington as a major route. Special lighting could be developed to illuminate the street and its heritage buildings at night and special illuminated ‘gateway’ features could be constructed.

Boundary of Economic Development District
In order to focus revitalization effort on Barrington Street and limit the applicability of incentives programs and other organizational and promotional initiatives to Barrington Street, the boundary of the district should be drawn to include only those buildings and public spaces that front onto Barrington Street.

D. Heritage Conservation District
The establishment of a heritage conservation district on Barrington Street would complement the

economic development initiatives outlined in the previous sections and support the goal of protecting, enhancing and promoting the special character and ambience of the street.

A heritage conservation district is an area where all heritage buildings, both registered and unregistered, may be protected from unwarranted demolition or unsympathetic alteration, and where new development may be required to fit sympathetically with the existing architectural context. The Heritage Property Act provides communities with a wide range of options for development and design control in heritage conservation districts and would enable Barrington Street property owners and business people to work together with HRM to develop guidelines and regulations suited to their needs.

In addition to significantly furthering the goal of establishing the area as a district of special ambience, the benefits of establishing Barrington Street as a heritage district are discussed in the

following subsections as well as some considerations regarding design guidelines.

- **Clear District Boundary Definition**
District designation based on Barrington Street heritage would provide a clear rationale for a firm, well-defined boundary, thus eliminating

The establishment of a heritage conservation district under the Heritage Property Act in the Study Area would build upon the economic development initiatives outlined above in several ways and significantly further the goal of establishing the area as a district of special ambience as a basis for its economic revitalization.

any pressure for extension of incentives programs into adjacent street or areas. There are twenty registered heritage buildings on Barrington in the four blocks between George and Spring Garden, and almost as many more of supportive heritage value. This dense concentration of heritage buildings clearly distinguishes Barrington Street from nearby downtown streets and provides logic for drawing the district boundary tightly around the buildings that front upon the street, as shown on figure 3.2. This closely-drawn boundary would focus financial incentives and organizational programs on Barrington Street alone.



Barrington Street looking south at Sackville Street

• Improved Property Values

Generally, throughout North America where heritage districts have been established, property values have risen, and this would be expected to occur on Barrington Street. Property values rise in heritage districts as a result of enhanced amenities, increased attractiveness from restoration, an increased sense of uniqueness, and increased investor confidence in the economic viability and stability, commercial potential and marketability of the district.

• Additional Financial Incentives

Heritage district designation would also open the possibility of financial assistance from the provincial government. Under a recently instituted program, the municipality could receive assistance towards the cost of preparing the necessary conservation plan, conservation bylaw and design guideline documents. Once the district is established, property owners could receive assistance towards the cost of architectural fees for restoration and rehabilitation projects.

• Security of Investment

The establishment of a heritage conservation district would enable the municipality and the business community to work together to adopt development guidelines for protection and enhancement of Barrington Street's heritage character on an ongoing district-wide basis. These guidelines would be enforceable and would provide a secure environment for private investment in the district by requiring that any changes to buildings in the district must be compatible with the heritage character of the street.

• Applicability of Alternative Building Code

Establishment of a heritage conservation district would bring additional aspects of the Alternate Compliance Methods of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations into effect for all buildings. The Alternate Compliance provisions make it easier for existing buildings to meet code requirements for fire safety, fire escapes, spatial separations, height and area of rooms, window areas, washroom facilities, etc., and can make a great difference in the economic viability of heritage building rehabilitation projects. Designation of a heritage conservation district would enable the

Alternate Compliance Methods to be applied more broadly, particularly if undergoing change of occupancy.

- **Increased Promotional Value**

Heritage district designation would increase the cachet of Barrington Street and raise its status in the public eye. “Heritage” is a powerful word in marketing, and the designation of the street as a heritage district would be a major promotional tool, not only in the speciality retail and arts and culture markets but also in the heritage tourism market. Heritage designation would enhance the marketability of both the street and the downtown as a whole.

- **Examples From Elsewhere**

The benefits of heritage district designation are widely recognized in Canada, the United States and Europe. The combination of protection, enhancement and promotion of heritage buildings in a downtown setting is a powerful tool for economic development that has been successfully embraced and utilized by hundreds of communities.

In the Maritimes there are downtown heritage districts in St. John, Charlottetown and Fredericton. There are dozens of heritage districts in Ontario and Quebec, both in the major cities such as Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City and Toronto, and in smaller communities. There are heritage districts in Winnipeg and Regina, and in many cities and small towns in Alberta and British Columbia, including Vancouver (e.g. Gastown) and Victoria. While districts have tended to be established most easily, i.e., with less controversy, in residential areas, approximately

one-third of the heritage districts in Canada are situated in commercial areas - a fact which suggests that heritage designation is seen by many business people as a commercial advantage. A recent study of the impact of heritage revitalization programs in British Columbia concluded that “heritage revitalization - when properly planned and supported, serves as an important catalyst for community economic development.”

Similarly, in the United States, there are hundreds of heritage districts, many of which are situated in downtown commercial areas. Some of the oldest heritage districts, established decades ago in cities such as New Orleans, Charleston, and Savannah, are models of successful commercial and heritage tourism development. In more recent

The benefits of heritage district designation are widely recognized in Canada, the United States and Europe. The combination of protection, enhancement and promotion of heritage buildings in a downtown setting is a powerful tool for economic development that has been successfully embraced and utilized by hundreds of communities.



Colwell Building

years, many American cities have established heritage districts as a means of raising the status and promotion value of their downtowns, good examples including Annapolis, Maryland; St. Paul; Boston; and Denver. In many if not most cases, downtown heritage districts are established as integral parts of main street revitalization programs.

In the U.K. there are thousands of heritage districts (conservation areas) situated in the hearts of villages, market towns, small cities, and major metropolises such as London, Glasgow, Dublin, and Edinburgh. In many cases, conservation areas in the UK are established hand in hand with

special area enhancement programs such as the “Town Scheme”.

In considering the possibility of establishing a heritage district on Barrington Street, Halifax would be in line with contemporary downtown revitalization practice throughout the western world. Also, given the relative infancy of heritage district designation in Nova Scotia, the Municipality would be placing itself, appropriately, in a leadership position. To date, there are heritage conservation districts in the Village of Maitland, Hants County and in the Town of Yarmouth. There are also districts at various stages of consideration in the Town of Lunenburg, the Village of Grand Pré and the Town of Truro, but these are all predominantly residential in character. If designated, Barrington Street could be the first exclusively commercial heritage district in the province.

• Heritage District Designation Process

There are two vehicles for formalized heritage district designation in Nova Scotia - the Planning Act and the Heritage Property Act. Of the two, the Heritage Property Act offers greater flexibil-

Citizens and property owners can and should be directly involved in the planning process and in debating and helping to formulate the development policies and design guidelines that will apply in the district.

ity, a greater range of possibilities for innovative design guidelines, more effective, longer term protection for all heritage buildings in the district, and clear authority for the municipality to establish financial incentives for conservation and enhancement. It also has the added bonuses of making provincial financial assistance available and expanding the applicability of the Alternate Compliance Methods of the Building Code.

Under the Heritage Property Act, a heritage district is established through the adoption of a ‘tailored’ conservation plan and bylaw, following a thorough process of public consultation. Citizens and property owners can and should be directly involved in the planning process and in debating and helping to formulate the development policies and design guidelines that will apply in the district. Once the district is established, citizen involvement can continue through the appointment of a district advisory committee which may advise the formal municipal heritage advisory or planning advisory committees on matters pertaining to the ongoing administration of the district.

The conservation plan sets out the rationale for the establishment of the district and articulates the conservation and development policies that will apply. The plan can also include policies for enhancement of the district through public works, the relationship of the plan with other economic development initiatives, and any financial or other incentives that may be established. This plan could also contain review periods during which the success of the district measured in economic terms could be gauged.

The conservation bylaw establishes the administrative framework for implementation of the conservation plan, and may include guidelines and approval procedures for demolition, building alterations, and new development. The act is very flexible, and enables development guidelines to be tailored to the specific circumstances of the district, with citizen involvement.

• Design Guidelines

The preparation of graphically and verbally detailed development guidelines for Barrington Street is beyond the scope of this report and it would also be premature to detail these guidelines without more extensive public discussion.



G. M. Smith Building

The viewpoint of the Study Team is that the guidelines would be most beneficial in both protecting the unique character of the district and allowing its ongoing evolution if they were to include the following elements:

- **Demolition**

In order to protect the heritage character of the street, it will be important to establish a process for consideration of proposed demolitions, not only of registered heritage buildings but supporting heritage buildings as well, and to introduce consideration of the architectural character of replacement buildings.

At present, without heritage district designation, demolition control applies only to registered heritage buildings and is limited to a one-year delay. Establishment of a heritage district could enable the one-year delay to be replaced by ongoing demolition control equivalent to that given to provincially-designated buildings. Registered heritage buildings (perhaps classed as Category A buildings) could be subject to ongoing demolition control and unregistered buildings (classed as Category B buildings) could be subject to a one-year delay. Demolition policy could require that no demolition shall occur unless there is an agreement to construct a replacement building of acceptable design within a certain period. This would prevent, for example, a repetition of the current situation on the Birk's site, where a demolition site has remained vacant for years as a gaping hole in the heart of the downtown.

- **New Buildings**

New development could occur on Barrington Street on either of the two existing vacant sites -

the old Birk's site and the NFB site - or on other sites through redevelopment of existing buildings (following consideration of the merits of their demolition). It would be important to establish design criteria to ensure that any new buildings on these sites will complement and enhance the existing character of the street.

At present, the municipal planning strategy, in Section III-7, establishes criteria for the scale and design detail of new construction in the entire downtown. These criteria are articulated as general references to factors such as massing, texture, materials, building lines, colour, proportion and rhythm. In a Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District, it would be necessary to expand these general references into more articulate guidelines, specifically tailored to the street and based on an analysis of existing architectural characteristics and forms.

Given the predominance of traditional building forms on the street, guidelines could require new buildings to follow the traditional massing arrangement of a distinctive street level base, a definable middle section, and a well articulated top section capped by a cornice. Guidelines might also include references to factors such as the rhythm of facades, the treatment and frequency of entrances, and the articulation, proportion and recessing of windows. Given the varied nature of the street from block to block, it may also be advisable to develop guidelines for new development on a block-by-block basis, based on the specific character of buildings on each block.

With regard to materials, guidelines could express a preference for masonry materials, based



Wright Building

on tradition, but could also allow the use of other materials, given the stylistic diversity of the street.

In general, guidelines for new buildings should illustrate the broad parameters by which new buildings may fit into the existing context, while leaving room for contemporary architectural expression.

- **Building Height**

At present, there are three overlapping rules governing building heights on Barrington Street. The Municipal Planning Strategy establishes an as-of-right limit of 40 ft., but allows this to be exceeded by development agreement. The Land Use Bylaw establishes a limit of 80 ft., but allows this to be exceeded by stepbacks. The View Planes Bylaw establishes limits on some parts of the street but not on others. In some cases, per-

missible heights under the View Planes Bylaw significantly exceed existing building heights.

The issue of permissible building heights on Barrington Street is crucial for several reasons including sunlight penetration, maintenance of pedestrian scale noise, and protection of the setting of heritage buildings, and it is recommended that more sensitive height guidelines should be developed.

It is suggested that the 80 ft. height limit before stepback should be reduced to 55 ft., the same as the limit for new building heights on Spring Garden Road.

• Facade Alterations

Major alterations to the public facades of buildings in a heritage district, such as the insertion of horizontally proportioned windows in an upper storey where once there were tall, vertically proportioned windows, can significantly affect the architectural integrity of a building and diminish the streetscape.

Design guidelines should allow for reasonable change, but should require alterations to express continuity with original architectural character through factors such as window proportions, solid/void relationships, and some details.

• Storefront Alterations

The extent of unsympathetic storefront alterations is a major issue on Barrington Street and there is a pressing need for improvement. In many cases, storefronts have been renovated and altered without any regard for the overall architectural character of the building, with the result

that there is often a jarring disjuncture between the renovated street level and the architecturally intact upper storeys.

As with other facade alterations, design guidelines should require storefront alterations to exhibit continuity with other aspects of the building design. Usually this will mean retaining or

The extent of unsympathetic storefront alterations is a major issue on Barrington Street and there is a pressing need for improvement. In many cases, storefronts have been renovated and altered without any regard for the overall architectural character of the building, with the result that there is often a jarring disjuncture between the renovated street level and the architecturally intact upper storeys.

restoring features such as recessed entrances, base panelling, transom windows, cornices, expressed columns, and lintel signboards. Overall, the goal should be to join the building and storefront together in a pleasing and complementary wholeness, while allowing for sympathetic contemporary treatment.

• Signs

The quality and appropriateness of signs is another important consideration in a heritage district where promotion and image development are dependent on the street and the heritage environment looking as good as possible. Just as storefronts should look like they belong on a building, so should signs complement and not conflict with architecture.

The Municipality presently has signage guidelines which it applies to registered heritage properties. It has also commissioned various studies and signage manuals which are quite comprehensive in their recommendations for stronger requirements but which, to date, have been applied in an advisory manner only. These existing guidelines and manuals should be combined into a new set of signage guidelines for Barrington Street to ensure that signage on the street enhances the architectural character to the highest degree possible. Signage guidelines should apply to all buildings within the district not just to registered heritage buildings.

• Flexibility

Development guidelines should not freeze development, prevent change, or 'pour resin' over what presently exists. Nor should they require restoration to false Victorian, Edwardian or other stylized 'heritage' themes. Rather, guidelines should allow for continuation of the stylistic diversity that presently characterizes Barrington Street and should be flexible enough, both in their wording and in their administration, to allow for innovative new design and bold architectural expression.

E. Capital District

The idea of designating Barrington Street as a Capital District, or as part of a Capital District, has its origins in recent HRM staff participation in the emerging Canadian Capital Cities Organization. This organization, which is administered through the National Capital Commission in Ottawa, has a mandate of “developing and strengthening the political, economic, and symbolic importance of Canadian Capital Cities to reflect the pride, unity, history, democratic traditions and aspirations of the people of Canada...” and has a small budget to assist capital cities in implementing projects which further this mandate.

To date, the Capital Cities Organization has provided funding for small interpretive, landscaping and beautification projects in symbolic settings in cities such as Fredericton (landscaping and lighting around the legislature), Charlottetown (the Confederation Birthplace Commemoration Park), and Yellowknife (the Park of the People). It has also supported educational projects that help school age children to understand the idea of ‘capital’ in the context of their own communities. One such project was sponsored by HRM over the past spring in local schools.

The application of this program to Barrington Street at a small scale could include some form of interpretive signage display, say at the Grand Parade, commemorating the historic capital function of the city centre. The interpretive material could include a map identifying the historic seats of government and other capital functions, e.g. Province House, Old City Hall, Government

House, the old Courthouse, etc., and could include reference to Barrington Street as a the historic ‘central street’ that connected (and still connects) these activities and historic precincts. Alternatively, a slightly larger interpretive park could be envisioned, say in the green space between St. Paul’s Church and Barrington Street. The park could include several interpretive plaques or signs commemorating a broad range of capital functions, from the birth of the city (with St. Paul’s as the earliest church), to the Grand Parade (as the historic, central gathering place), to the various nearby government sites (Province House, City Hall, etc.), to the function of Barrington as the historic commercial ‘Mainstreet’ of the capital, all of which would be visible from the site.

A project of this nature would fit within the mandate of the Capital Cities Organization and could benefit Barrington Street by adding a new cultural tourism attraction on the street.

The capital city idea also has a larger dimension, however, namely that of developing a much broader ‘Capital District’, perhaps encompassing the entire urban core area of the Municipality.

A good model for this is the Charlottetown Capital Commission, which was formed in 1995 with a mandate of expanding tourism and economic development in the P.E.I. Capital City Region, building on the theme of Charlottetown as the Birthplace of Confederation. The Commission has a five-year funding agreement shared by the three levels of government, the Charlottetown Development Commission and the Confedera-

tion Centre for the Arts, and an annual budget of almost \$1,000,000. It runs festivals, carries out historical re-enactments, and runs historic walking tours and heritage-related lectures, all supported by a combination of public funds and private sector sponsorships.

Charlottetown has had a heritage preservation district in place since 1979, encompassing a twelve-block area in the historic city centre and is currently in the process of expanding the district to include almost the entire downtown area. The Charlottetown Capital Commission has a broad geographic mandate covering the entire Greater Charlottetown area but has recently stated that the focus of its activities is the heritage conservation area defined by the City, because this affords the greatest potential as a setting for capital-related activities, events and promotions.



Farquar Building with new “Venus Pizza” sign

At present, HRM has entered an agreement with the Halifax Foundation to pursue the idea of developing a Capital District in the municipality. While no formal arrangements have been made, the idea seems to be emerging to consider the entire urban area surrounding Bedford Basin as the Capital Region, thus including the former City of Halifax, the former City of Dartmouth, and the former Town of Bedford in the vision.

The designation and revitalization of Barrington Street as a heritage conservation district could fit very well within this larger picture. As stated earlier, Barrington is the historic mainstreet of Halifax and the amalgamated municipality and, while somewhat diminished from its former glory, still retains the feeling of being 'at the centre' and of being the place in the downtown where one expects to find the amenities of a capital city.

The restoration of Barrington Street, both in its buildings and in its life and activity, should be an important, if not central, part of any plan to develop a Halifax Regional Capital District.

Special District Recommendations

1. Establish Barrington Street as a Special District within which a program of development incentives, urban design improvements, traffic calming measures, and niche marketing and promotion initiatives will be undertaken with the goal of revitalizing and rejuvenating the street.

2. Include within the District all buildings and spaces fronting on Barrington Street between Spring Garden and Duke Street, as shown on Figure 3.2.

3. Establish a working group of property owners, business operators and representatives of HRM and the DHBC ("Implementation Action Group/Task Force") to develop detailed policies for revitalization of the district.

- **Develop consensus on the need for additional protective mechanisms and design guidelines.**
- **Resolve the question of whether to incorporate such mechanisms and guidelines into the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw, under the Planning Act, or designate the area as a Heritage Conservation District under the Heritage Property Act.**
- **Endorse the recommendations of the**

Study Team to establish the District under the Heritage Property Act, which provides for flexible design guidelines, demolition control, and financial assistance, none of which are enabled by the Planning Act.

- **Note that the Heritage Property Act also provides the strongest rationale for a well-defined district boundary for a focused beginning.**
- 4. Explore possibilities for establishment of a Halifax Regional Capital District with the Halifax Foundation, the Greater Halifax Partnership, the Provincial and Federal governments, and the corporate sector.**
- 5. Direct HRM staff and/or engage a consultant to prepare a draft conservation and development plan with design guidelines for the district, in consultation with the working group and in consideration of the fol-**



Greenspace between Barrington Street and east side of St. Paul's Church

lowing:

- Facade and storefront alterations - allow for contemporary expression while respecting historic character and design intent of original building.
 - Demolition - adopt a policy which provides registered heritage properties with ongoing protection from demolition but which limits the protection of non-registered, supportive buildings to a one-year delay only; also require agreement for construction of sympathetically designed replacement building(s) before approving any demolition.
 - New buildings - develop guidelines for height; bulk; massing; facade treatments; rhythm and frequency of entrances; articulation, proportion and recessing of windows; materials.
 - Building height - reduce height limit to 55ft before setbacks.
 - Signs - consolidate past reports, studies and recommendations into an up-to-date set of signage guidelines for the street, emphasizing quality and respect for architectural character.
6. Establish a program of financial incentives specifically geared to the Barrington Street district, including:
 - Tax relief/exemptions/deferrals/credits/rebates
 - Loans & loan guarantees
 - Grants
 - Address and overcome any statutory or regulatory impediments which may exist to this initiative.
 7. Establish the Barrington Street District as a dedicated tax re-investment District where a portion of revenues from property taxes, business occupancy taxes and permit application fees are placed in a special revitalization fund to which property owners may apply for assistance towards building maintenance, restoration and rehabilitation.
 8. Explore possibilities for corporate contribution to a revitalization loan fund and corporate sponsorship of selected public realm improvements.
 9. Work with arts organizations, non-profit organizations and other agencies which receive financial assistance from municipal, provincial or federal government sources to encourage them to stay on or move to Barrington Street, to re-inforce the image of the street as a special district.
 10. Ensure that the marketing and promotional strategy for the District highlights and utilizes the special heritage character of the street.
 11. Actively pursue partners for development and use of vacant properties.
 12. Work with HRM building department, Province of Nova Scotia, and property owners to ensure that the Alternate Compliance Provisions of the Building Code Act are fully understood and utilized in relation to building rehabilitation projects on Barrington Street, and to encourage the appropriate au-

thorities to broaden the scope of the Alternate Compliance Provisions.

13. Establish a Barrington Street District development office to co-ordinate and promote revitalization activities and administer programs.

In the postindustrial economy, a downtown's public realm, it's built environment - the public face of building and surrounding streets - will take on greater importance as structures become valued as much for how they look as for what takes place inside them. Distinctive places will continue to attract people drawn for the experience of that particular place. Historic districts will only become more vital, both for the city's identity as well as for its economic advantage.

Changing Places; Moe & Wilkie, 1998

3.3 Use & Marketing

A. Commercial Revitalization

Two key factors that are important to understand when developing a commercial revitalization plan for Barrington Street are the process of revitalization and the polarization of retail.

• Spiralling to Greatness

Rather than viewing urban revitalization as a series of events along a chain, a better way to portray the steps involved in the process is using a three dimensional spiral. The steps first begin in a circular movement directing the decision maker to each subsequent task. This circle starts to lift in an upward movement as small improvements lead to an ever growing momentum to success.

The process begins with getting the facts and continues along the spiral through: developing a retail recruitment strategy, including choosing a niche; managing the retention of retailers and retail recruitment activity; performing an audit to understand the successes and failures of the current program and then moving this process one step higher. Begin gathering the facts again and continuing to refine the retail recruitment strategy in light of current successes.

Barrington Street has been through a fair amount of retail turnover in the past and is currently moving up along this spiral. By beginning to assess the previous years' successes and failures and gathering additional information, a further

refinement of the retail recruitment strategy and niche development for Barrington Street will lead to movement higher along the spiral.

B. Polarization of Retail

Currently, retailing is changing dramatically. As retailing changes, so does the real estate development that contains retailers. In the past, the main purpose of retailing was to get enough product to supply demand. The emphasis was primarily placed upon production and distribution with the ultimate objective being to deliver product to the consumer faster. This retailing phase first manifested itself in the familiar forms of markets, and then in department stores, and in a later version, shopping malls. All of these examples strove to be better by distributing their products more efficiently to the ultimate consumer.

Today, we have entered an 'age of glut', where experience has now become the product. Distri-

Experience-focused retailing creates an experience as a value added to the product. The end result of this shopping option is that the customer receives the product and an enjoyable experience.

bution systems have become so efficient that retailers, in order to remain competitive, have had to add more to their product to make it interesting to buy.

What has developed is a polarization of retailing. At one end there are the product-focused retailers and at the other end the experience-focused retailers.

The product-focused retailer's main role is to get product into the hands of the consumer at the lowest cost. The shopping trip is meant to be efficient not entertaining. An example would be Wal-Mart or Costco where their operations de-



Figure 3.3 Polarization of Retailing

In the past downtowns did dominate everything in terms of product, culture, and experience. Today however, they are less product focused but they are still very much experience and culture focused.

liver large assortment of products, low prices, and minimal experience.

Experience-focused retailing creates an experience as a value added to the product. The end result of this shopping option is that the customer receives the product and an enjoyable experience. An example of this type of retailing would be Mountain Equipment Co-op (Canadian based outdoor clothing and equipment store). The customers do not receive the cheapest products but they receive the added bonus from being able to shop with like-minded individuals in a store that encourages them to test the products right there. Another example would be Chapters Bookstore. The store does not simply deliver books to its customers but delivers an experience that includes a coffee shop, book readings, and comfortable chairs to read possible book purchases.

Using this framework, a broad continuum of retailers has evolved. While Warehouse Clubs would be entirely product focused and movie theatres would be entirely experience focused, malls would be located somewhere in between

these two points. There is not a substantial amount of experience associated with mall retailing and they cannot afford to be the lowest cost operator. That leaves them somewhere in the middle. It is evident that they are attempting to move towards the more experience-focused side of retailing by adding entertainment vehicles but many cannot match the customers' demand for interesting unique experiences.

• **Real Estate Implications:**

A successful product-focused retailer requires: low land costs, efficient highway/transportation systems, and low people costs. Given these key success features it is easy to see why they are ideally suited for suburban areas. There are large blocks of land at relatively cheaper prices and quicker access to an assortment of fast highways.

• **Experience-focused retailing requires:**

Centrality to a large population, an experience environment, intense management, and land costs tend not to be an overriding concern.

As a result, it is evident that these retailers are more compatible in downtown locations. There are physical, cultural, and historic settings which create a favourable environment for experience-focused retailing. In the past downtowns did dominate everything in terms of product, culture, and experience. Today however, they are less product-focused but they are still very much experience and culture-focused. This is a strong foundation upon which to build retail endeavours.

Barrington Street is a classic case of a street in transition. There is an evident healthy shift in re-

tailing towards leisure retailing activities. Food and leisure retailing fit in well with experience-focused retailing as opposed to drug and convenience driven products. In addition, Barrington Street has an interesting collection of historic buildings to assist in creating a dynamic, experience-focused retailing environment. Entertainment facilities such as the Neptune Theatre and the Discovery Centre further reinforce this environment.

C. Retailing on Barrington

Retailing is such an integral part of Barrington Street that for the reasons listed below a discussion of the revitalization of the street without retail would be incomplete.

- Retail has been a very important element to the street and continues to be a major reason why people walk on Barrington Street.
- A vibrant retail atmosphere will create visual appeal with lots of interesting things to see as people walk the street.

The current trends in retailing fit in well with what is happening on Barrington Street. Barrington Street is an ideal place for experience-focused retail because it has the environment, the culture, the historical buildings, and it has a place in the hearts of Haligonians.

- Successful retailing will add energy to the street in terms of people activity. As more people are drawn to the area, it will attract even more people. Vibrant downtowns have an electric feel about them that exists day and night.

Barrington Street is an ideal place for experience focused retail because it has the environment, the culture, the historical buildings, and it has a place in the hearts of Haligonians. Also, the current base of retailers and facilities located in the downtown, such as the Discovery Centre, are already focused on experience.



Fireworks Gallery

• Current Conditions

A retail inventory count was conducted along Barrington Street in April 1998 to document the changes in retailing activity which has occurred since the previous inventory count conducted in 1992. The latest inventory count in 1998 demonstrates the retail areas in which Barrington Street is strong and should build upon.

The retail inventory count of Barrington Street in 1992 revealed a predominance towards apparel and food service retailing; the inventory count in 1998 showed a strong tendency towards food service and leisure retailing.

National retail specialists see new hope for historic downtown retail districts. For one thing, historic Main Streets can age gracefully while aging shopping malls can only lose their appeal they had when they were new. The malls' share of the retail marketplace is already shrinking in the face of new competition from discount stores, mail-order catalogue sales, home shopping networks on television, and even sales over the Internet. The amount of time Americans spent in malls dropped by 75% during the 1980s, from an average twelve hours per month per person in 1980 to four hours in 1990.

Barrington Street Retailers Retail Activity Comparison 1992:1998

Apparel	13:7
Drug & Beauty	1:0
Financial Services	3:1
Food Services	16:15
General Merchandise	0:1
Home Furnishings/Gallery	7:3
Leisure	5:12
Personal Services	5:4
Retail Food	1:0
NFB Building	1:1
Vacant	7:5
Total	59:49

Definitions:

- Apparel: clothing, footwear, and accessories*
- Drug & Beauty: cosmetics, toiletries, drugs, and other beauty aids*
- Financial Services: financial institutions open to the public, e.g. banks*
- Food Services: eating and drinking establishments, e.g. restaurants, pubs*
- General Merchandise: stores that offer a range of non-food products, e.g. variety stores*
- Home Furnishings/Gallery: purchases for the home. e.g. furniture, appliances, and housewares*
- Leisure: type of products people buy to use in their leisure time. e.g. books, photography*
- Personal Services: professional services bought for customer's own needs. e.g. Hair Salon*
- Retail Food: grocery store food items including candy and beverages*
- Vacant: buildings that are not currently occupied*

While the number of apparel stores almost halved, the number of leisure stores more than doubled. In fact, most department store type merchandise retailers (apparel, general merchandise, home furnishings/gallery) experienced a decrease in their number of stores. Food services continue to maintain a significant number of locations along the street. Vacancies remain almost the same. With few exceptions, the retail spaces that are currently vacant were vacant in 1992.

D. A Retail Niche for Barrington Street

A viable niche for Barrington Street is to become the centre for experienced-based retailing and entertainment in the region. This niche builds on the existing strength on Barrington Street among leisure product retailers and unique food service operators. This niche is complemented by the existing entertainment facilities that are on Barrington Street or very close by. Together, this combination will create a lively, interesting environment for all Halifax citizens and visitors.

The underlying strength of this niche and the synergy that it builds between business will ensure that businesses become stronger by benefiting from increased pedestrian traffic. These stronger businesses will generate higher rents thus providing the building owners with the means to renovate and improve their buildings.

Adopting this niche means that Barrington Street is positioned as being very different from, and complementary to Spring Garden Road. Spring Garden Road will be the speciality fashion shopping area thus complementing the Barrington Street niche and strengthening all of Downtown.

The underlying strength of this niche and the synergy that it builds between business will ensure that businesses become stronger by benefiting from increased pedestrian traffic. These stronger businesses will generate higher rents thus providing the building owners with the means to renovate and improve their buildings.

• Retail Base Improvement

While Barrington Street is improving and moving towards the niche described above, the retail base needs improvement in a number of different areas including:

• Minimum Standard

The range in quality of operations from highly professional/first class to very poor. The existing operations should be brought to a minimum standard of operation. Investment in the physical aspects of the operation e.g. outdoor signage, indoor treatments, fixtures etc. is only part of the upgrading that needs to take place. Creating more interesting environments within the store and providing better information on use of products are some areas where many of the smaller existing retailers can improve.

• Chain Operations

The retail base should expand to include more chain operations. Chain stores tend to be more professional in their operations and provide good models for independent stores. The ideal would be for Barrington Street to be the single Halifax location for a national chain. This would help make the street more of a destination and would ensure that it has a truly unique quality to its retail mix.

• Leisure Retail

The retail mix should retain and expand the emphasis on leisure retailing and entertainment. This is a current strength and can become a viable niche for the street. Examples of businesses that could expand this mix include:

- More hobby stores, e.g. trains, model aeroplanes etc.
- Outdoor enthusiasts store, e.g. camping, hiking, etc.
- Educational toys/Teacher's idea store
- Multi-screen theatre complex
- Speciality theatres, e.g. cult classics, foreign films
- Restaurant/electronic games/virtual reality centre, e.g. Playdium

• Existing Store Improvements

Existing stores must get the message about creating an experience within the store. There are many opportunities within most of the stores on Barrington to add more experiences for the customers and to create opportunities for those customers to interact with each other on these interests. This can be done inexpensively through demonstrations, events and environment touches such as music and pictures.

E. Environment

While businesses at street level, i.e. the retailers, are critical to the creation of the niche, the environment of Barrington Street is also very important in ensuring that the niche endures. The experience-based niche will invite customers to relax and spend time on the street - to come there for several hours of enjoyment. Customers will not be encouraged to enjoy the whole street rather than simply going to one business unless the street can also provide an experience.

The buildings on Barrington as well as the historic aspects of the areas close to the shops, e.g. the Grand Parade and the Old Burying Ground, provide the basis for a very fascinating environment. Issues such as streetscape design, historic building renovation and traffic calming which are covered in Section 3.4, are all important elements in creating the environment that will support the experience based retail and entertainment niche.

F. Actions to Grow A New Retail Niche

There are a number of actions that can be undertaken to reinforce the move of Barrington Street to its new niche position. It is important to recognize that this move has already begun to take place and that the following actions are meant to reinforce the current trend.

- **Promote The Niche**

Communications of the niche that Barrington Street occupies is very important. While it is a reality, it is not well recognized. Communications to promote the niche can vary from actions such as giving the street a positioning statement, e.g.

“Halifax’s place to play” to creating promotions that focus on the unusual and entertaining aspects of the street. All elements of the street including the historic buildings, the entertainment facilities and the businesses located there are should be highlighted. Also events can be held in downtown to educate landlords and leasing agents.

- **Educate Landlords & Leasing Agents**

While this may be considered part of the communications action, it requires a very concerted effort to get the message out to the people who have the most influence on the leasing of buildings. Actions like communications breakfasts, one-on-one meetings, and peer calling committees will help get the message out that there is an opportunity to build on Barrington Street’s strength.



Sievert's Cigar Store (1998)

- **Educate Existing & Potential Retailers**

Not all the existing retailers are maximizing their potential to create an entertaining atmosphere in their businesses. A training program that promotes the concept of an entertaining store should be launched to encourage these business owners to grow their business. This same program could also help new retailers who may be looking for help in creating and detailing their concept.

- **Set Up A Data Base of Vacancies**

Training partners such as the St. Mary’s Small Business Advisory Service can set up a data base of vacancies and work with the local landlord and leasing community to help develop a database of building availability. This database can be used along with the communication of Barrington Street’s niche to help new businesses identify the best opportunities for their business and the street.

- **Recruit New Businesses To The Area**

The issue of recruiting new businesses to the area is a complex task. Recruiting should be undertaken with the niche of Barrington Street in mind. The means and responsible agency will need to be clarified and identified. These kinds of businesses should act as anchors to the street, e.g. a multiplex cinema, a large entertainment complex.

- **Encourage Redevelopment of Problem Sites**

There are three problem properties on the street: the old NFB Building, the Paramount Theatre site, and the vacant lot across from the Grand Parade. These sites are unlikely to be redeveloped in the short term without considerable con-

tribution from the public sector in terms of planning and financial assistance. They represent important potential to develop a larger scale project that does not exist elsewhere on the street. In order to redevelop these sites, the City would have to put together a package of 'carrots and sticks'. Incentives could be offered at the same time that design guidelines are brought to bear.

G. Downtown Arts and Entertainment

A concentrated arts and entertainment district is a popular element in the revitalization of downtowns in North America. These uses bring evening and weekend activity, associated offices, and help contribute to a lively ambience. Recent developments have begun to challenge the traditionally successful role of Downtown Halifax in this area. Among these developments are: the expansion of entertainment venues (particularly the Imax Theatre) into Bayer's Lake Business Park; the Dalhousie University initiative to double seating capacity of the Rebecca Cohn Theatre; the recent rejection of a strong proposal to reopen the Paramount Theatre as a mid-range (800 seats) performance venue; and office space pressures leading to relocation away from Barrington Street of significant arts organizations (Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia and Scotia Festival of Music to name two).

An effort should be made, through policy and recruitment to expand arts, culture and popular entertainment in the Downtown area. Of special importance is providing a significant mid-range performance venue, perhaps in the vacant Paramount Theatre space. The need is well documented and acknowledged; the spin-off business

to the area would far exceed that of other uses (retail, housing, office); and its contribution to a special district ambience would be considerable.

H. Downtown Housing

Downtown Halifax needs residents to broaden its offerings, soften its edges, keep an eye on its streets, lobby for its needs, and for many other important tangible and intangible reasons. These residents should be from across the social and economic spectrum and include families.

Further work needs to be done to balance the needs of residential and entertainment sector uses. It is noted that the initial discussions of these issues vis-a-vis the Blues Corner and Barrington Gate were not satisfactory to either party.

Still, the long-term interests of Barrington Street and Downtown Halifax will best be served by a mixed balance of uses: institutional, commercial, cultural, office, retail, entertainment and housing.

The current trends in residential development downtown are for new residential projects at the periphery (Lower Water Street and Brunswick Street) and large-scale conversion projects at the core (Pacific Building and possibly the Canada Permanent Trust Building). This should be expanded to include new residential projects and smaller scale conversion projects closer to the core; the latter through supplementing of the scope the Alternate Compliance methods of the Nova Scotia Building Code to allow greater flexibility for residential conversion.



Sam The Record Man record store

A concentrated arts and entertainment district is a popular element in the revitalization of downtowns in North America. These uses bring evening and weekend activity, associated offices, and help contribute to a lively ambience.

Use & Marketing Recommendations

1. Bring existing retail operations to a minimum standard of operation through the following means:
 - Exterior and interior improvements encouraged by incentive programs and lease hold improvements.
 - Training programs aimed at growing individual businesses and promoting the concept of an entertaining store.
2. Educating landlords and leasing agents to market niche directions and the need for district improvements through communication breakfasts, one-on-one meetings, peer calling committees, printed materials, etc.
3. Solve the business recruitment conundrum. Determine an agency from the public or private sector with mandate to recruit speciality business to the street. Develop a recruitment strategy. If DHBC remains unable to carry out the task due to limitations in its bylaws, then either establish a special Barrington Street organization with recruitment powers or enlist the assistance of a broad-based economic development & promotion organization such as Greater Halifax Partnership.
4. Work with training partners such as St. Mary's Small Business Advisory Service or the Nova Scotia Government's Open For Business Program to set up data-bases and programs to develop businesses.
5. Expand the retail mix through recruitment to include more national chain operations, particularly in the area of leisure retail.
6. Communicate the new niche of Barrington Street highlighting the new directions, special qualities and the businesses of the street.
7. Examine the possibility for a new major development in the vicinity, e.g. a multiplex cinema, a large entertainment project, etc.
8. Re-open the Paramount Theatre as a performance venue with pedway connection to the new Granville Street parking structure.
9. Continue to expand residential uses downtown and on Barrington Street in the following ways:
 - Balance needs of the residential and entertainment sectors.
 - Achieve a new residential project in the downtown core.
 - Achieve greater flexibility for residential conversion in the downtown core by supplementing provisions of the Alternate Compliance Methods of the Nova Scotia Building Code.

Traditional downtowns may not be the cheapest or most convenient places to do business, but their historic districts, converted waterfronts, and concentrations of cultural institutions and amenities make them not only engaging places in which to live, but also interesting places to visit. Some critics pooh-pooh urban tourism as if it were inauthentic or insubstantial. In many cities, tourism is currently the major industry.

*Urban All Over The World
Essays On The Millennium, MacLean's Magazine;
Witold Rybczynski, September 15, 1998*



Foreign Affair clothing store

3.4 Urban Design

There is magic to great streets. We are attracted to the best of them not because we have to go there, but because we want to be there. The best are as joyful as they are utilitarian. They are entertaining and they are open to all. They permit anonymity at the same time as individual recognition. They are symbols of a community and its history; they represent a public memory. They are places for escape and romance, places to act and to dream. On a great street we are allowed to dream; to remember things that may never have happened and to look forward to things that, maybe, never will.

Great Streets, Alan Jacobs, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993



Water Street, Gastown Vancouver

Barrington Street has the potential to become a great street. In spite of its difficulties, it has many more strengths and tremendous potential. It has suffered a period of decline brought about by a poverty of re-investment, vision and will, but it has tremendous qualities and strengths on which to build. It is geographically the centre, you could say the heart, of downtown Halifax; it contains, and is adjacent to significant political, cultural, and commercial institutions; and it has a rich stock of heritage buildings.

Alan Jacobs, in his seminal book *Great Streets*, states that certain physical qualities are required for a great street and that these qualities are designable. Among them are: comfort, safety, livability, publicness, definition and detail. These qualities, mixed with both commercial and leisure activities, attract participation. People love streets with these qualities.

Many of these qualities can be seen in Vancouver's Water Street in Gastown, which has often been compared to Barrington Street, at least in the latter's potential. Both streets are similar in size and contain a mixed stock of late 19th century and early 20th century buildings. The similarities end there, however. While Gastown's Water Street has been rejuvenated, Barrington Street remains in need of serious attention.

It is difficult, and perhaps impossible to pick a street or area to serve as an example of what Barrington might become. Climate, geographical,



Water Street, Gastown Vancouver



"Infolding" on Water Street, Gastown Vancouver



Granville Street, Vancouver

cultural, and financial factors are all extremely variable, and as stated before, no two places are alike. However, on many levels, Water Street in Gastown, Vancouver, is a worthy Canadian example for Barrington Street; even though Water Street is not the heart of its city but a secondary area, perhaps overly dependent on tourism for its success, and only tangentially connected to the area around it. Still there are many qualities on Water Street which are worth noting and studying.

In the 1970's Gastown was provincially designated as an historic district, given a new name, and invested in substantially by both public and private sectors, particularly by the latter. Today, it is a substantial success, with street lamps and furnishings, sidewalk treatments, canopies and awnings, feature elements, trees, an engaging collection of complementary new buildings, appropriate signage, speciality shopping, and a pending major \$25 million new adaptive re-use project.

The sidewalks on Water Street offer a comfortable pedestrian zone, protected from the street by parking, trees, and bollards, and protected from the elements by numerous and varied canopies. The street is softened by trees and flowers. Signs are varied but appropriate and not garish or out of character with the buildings on which they are placed. The sidewalk storefront wall is penetrated by generous openings into covered courtyards and out into sidewalk activity areas; feature elements add focus and fun; transportation is calmed; and the upper floors of buildings are thoughtfully restored, cared for, and filled with uses. These elements form the core of the recommendations of this section of the study for Barrington Street.

They begin with the relationship between the transportation zone and the pedestrian zone. If Barrington Street is to be successful as a place to be and not just to pass through, it must make concessions to the sidewalk. Specifics of the transportation strategy were discussed in detail in

Section 3.1 and focus on traffic calming and restoring a balance to the traffic and pedestrian mix. The strategy for the sidewalks on Barrington Street is to enhance them everywhere, and particularly on one alternating side with mid-block, amenity-filled sidewalk extensions. This arrangement is shown in figures 3.4a, b, and c, on pages 48 and 49 and in the sketches on pages 50 and 51.



Water Street, Gastown Vancouver

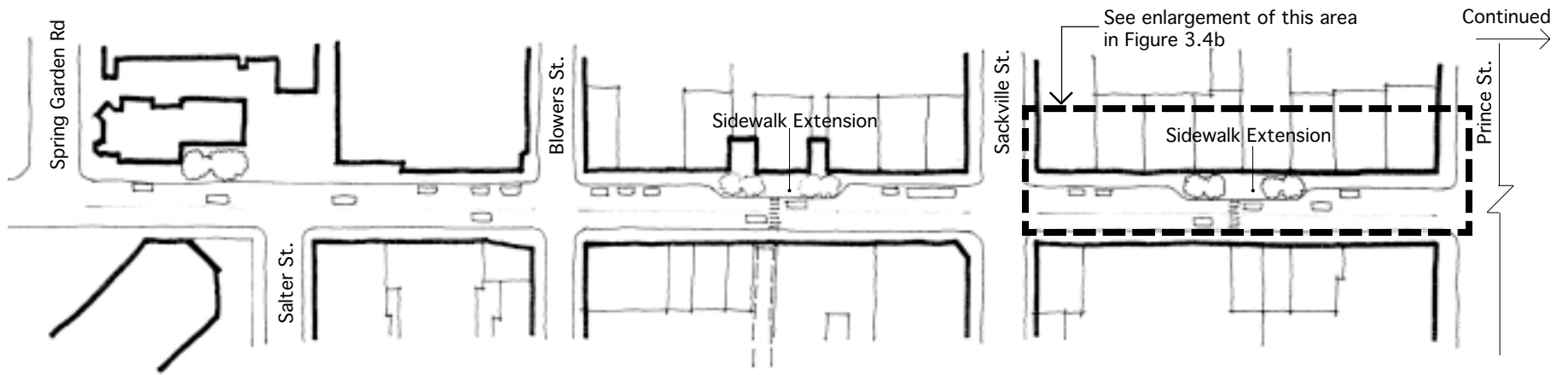


Figure 3.4a Barrington Street Plan (continued on next page)

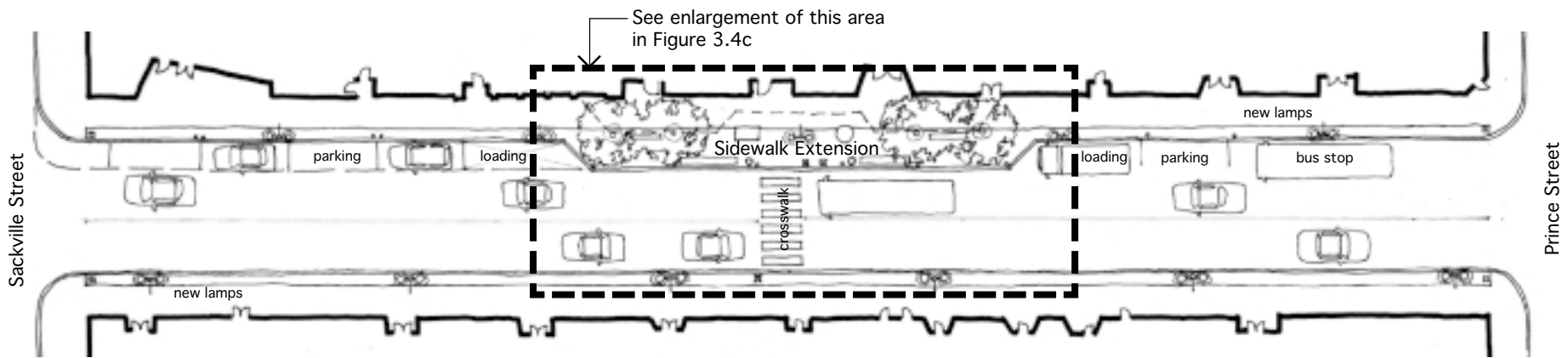


Figure 3.4b Typical Block Plan with sidewalk extension (Block from Sackville to Prince shown)

A. The Street & Sidewalk

Figure 3.4a shows parking, loading, bus stops, and extensions along one alternating side of Barrington Street. Within that area sidewalk extensions are shown at mid-block points. This compression of the street and expansion of the pedestrian zone allows for expanded sidewalk uses, street trees, benches, vending areas, information kiosks, bicycle racks, mid-block pedestrian crossings, etc.

As well as slowing traffic, these extensions can be “tailored” to the specific block in which they are located and are only presented here in a generic, conceptual way. These extensions are given more detail in figures 3.4b & 3.4c

B. Street Trees

Street trees are used in urban areas everywhere as softening elements. They break up the wind,

give texture to sunlight, frame views, and soften the built environment. Street trees planted appropriately and at significant size can flourish in even the most extreme environments, and currently can be found in many areas of downtown Halifax. The type chosen would need to be appropriate for streets, quick growing, and not too full; perhaps a white birch or paper birch.

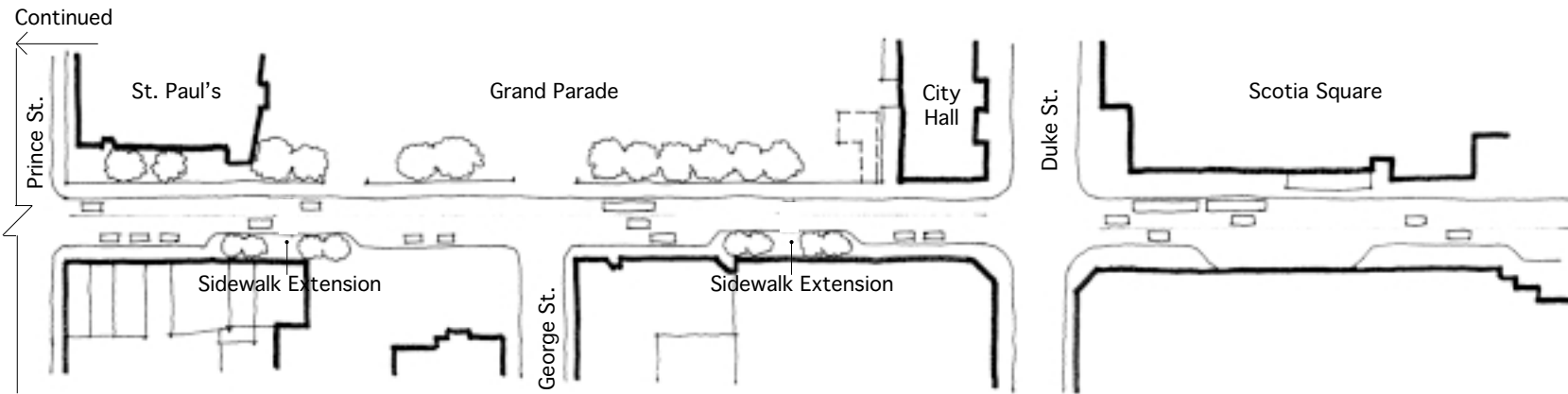


Figure 3.4a Barrington Street Plan (continued from previous page)

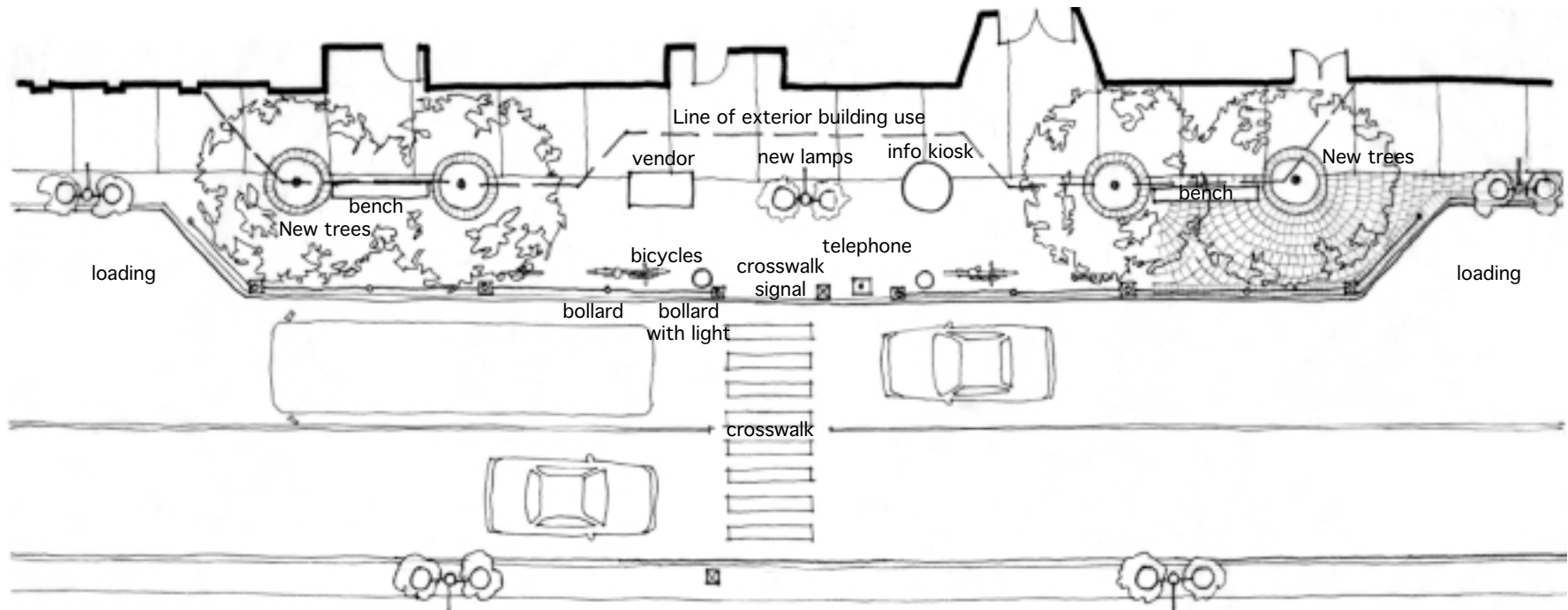


Figure 3.4c Typical sidewalk extension or activity area



View of typical sidewalk extension shown is in front of the Nova Scotia Furnishings Building)



View of typical sidewalk extension (extension shown is in front of the Nova Scotia Furnishings Building)

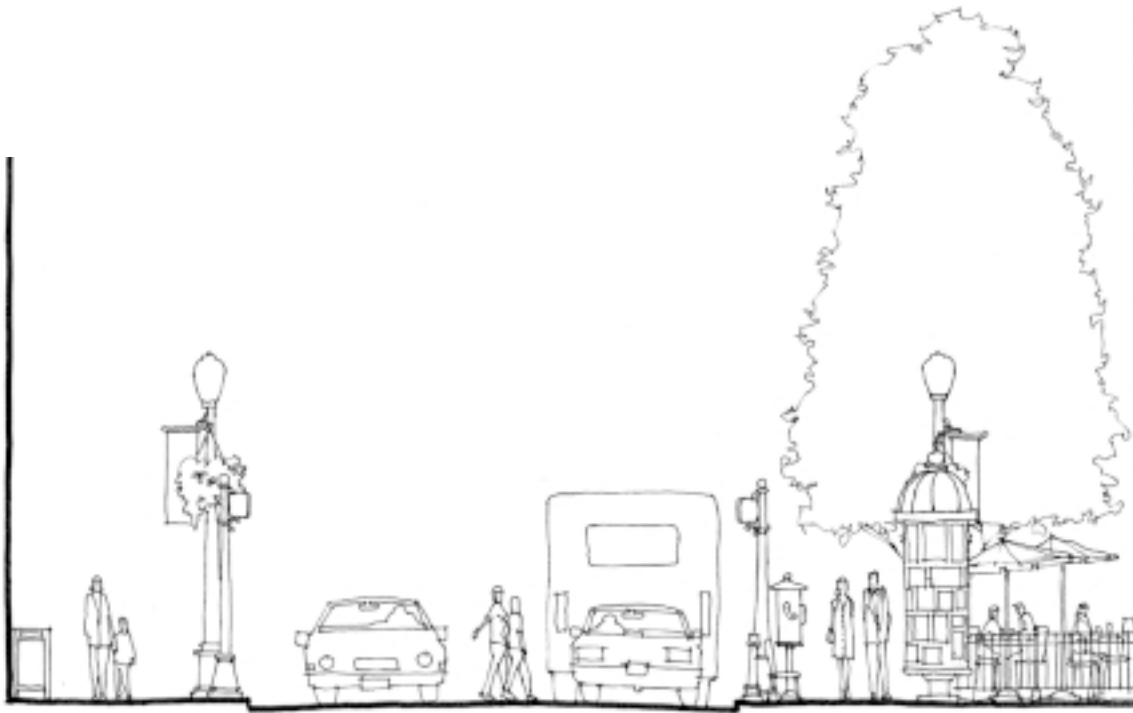


Figure 3.4d Section through Barrington Street at a typical sidewalk extension



Barrington Street lamp post

C. Street Lighting

The importance of good street lighting is also widely recognized in the establishment of a popular street. The existing Barrington Street lighting should be replaced with lighting which is better quality (whiter and brighter), more appropriate to pedestrian use (lower), more flattering to buildings and trees (up-lighting as well as down-lighting), and more historically accurate (see photo).

This recommended fixture would be the same as those recently put into the Grand Parade and also similar to the older fixtures in the Public Gardens. The new street lights would go onto the existing post bases and the existing fixtures could then replace the tall “cobra-head” lights

in other areas of Downtown such as Argyle Street and Hollis Street.

New bollard lighting could supplement overhead lighting in high-use areas, particularly at the sidewalk extensions.

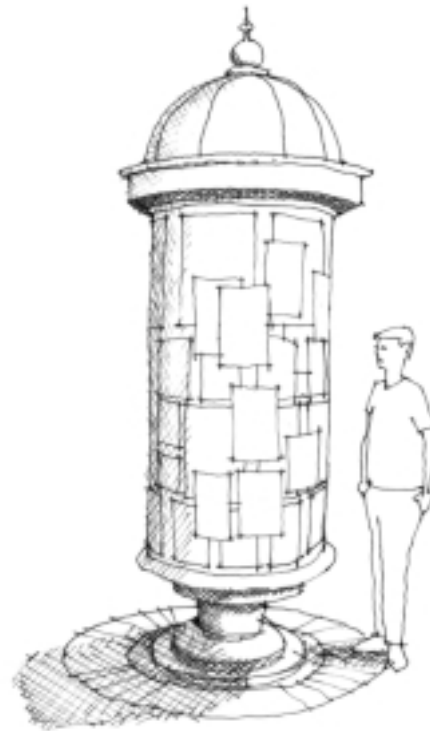
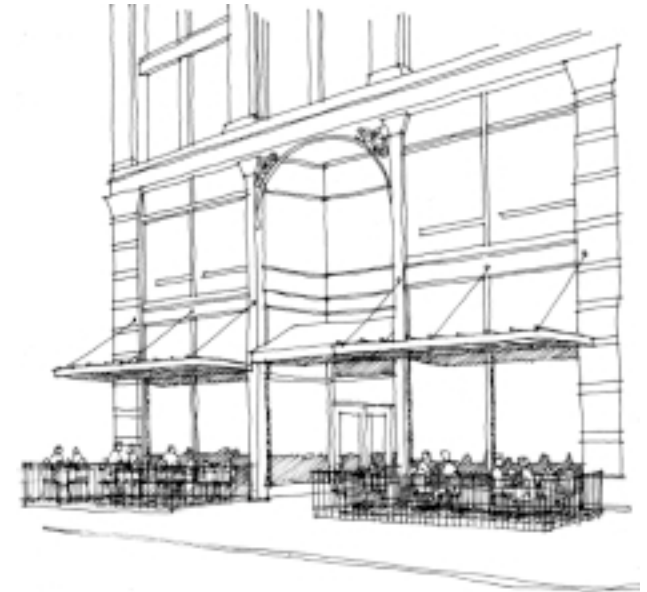
Another method of enhancing the street lighting would be to establish a program to light buildings. This would both highlight significant buildings and give additional indirect light to the street. This lighting could be installed on the buildings themselves or on opposite buildings. Sponsors from the private sector, particularly Nova Scotia Power, may wish to participate in this program.



Barrington Street light fixture (circa 1935).



Bollard with light

*Bench**Information kiosk**Permanent steel and glass canopy*

D. Amenities

As an arts and entertainment district, downtown Halifax, suffers from a lack of appropriate places to post announcements concerning events. These necessary but troublesome papers end up on lamp posts, doors, empty store windows, and worse. The information kiosk shown above is a popular device to communicate information. An expanded sidewalk would allow these and other amenities such as benches, bicycle racks, vending areas, mid-block pedestrian crossings, expanded retail uses, etc. to be placed there.

E. Canopies and Awnings

Canopies and awnings were a traditional feature of Barrington Street and continue to be so on urban streets everywhere, particularly in areas of inclement weather. They serve a necessary dual purpose: to shelter pedestrians and stores, and also to give a base to the building on which they are hung. Collectively they can soften a streetscape, adding a visual and practical extension of the base of building face into the pedestrian area. The absence of awnings can leave a streetscape looking denuded and harsh, as is the case on Barrington Street today.

On Barrington Street awnings and canopies could appropriately be either traditional retractable or fixed canvas awnings, or suspended permanent steel and glass canopies such as that shown on the sketch above. Wrapped plastic awnings, particularly internally illuminated awnings used as inexpensive signage are not appropriate on heritage buildings, or in a district such as Barrington Street, as is pointed out in the Halifax Regional Municipality Signage Design Guidelines.

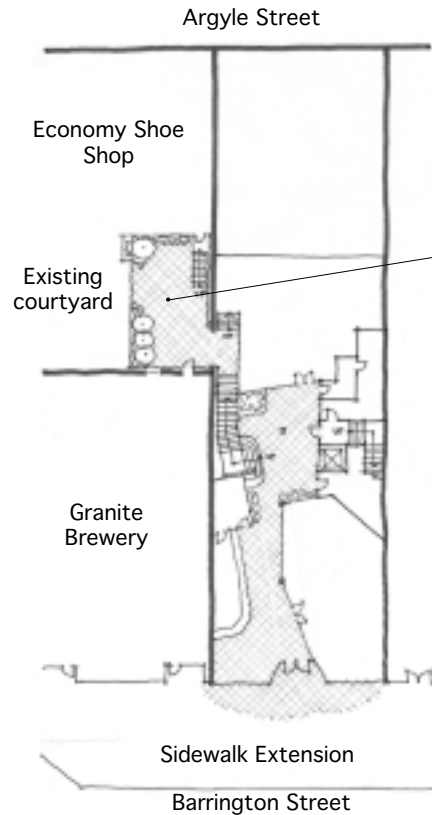


Figure 3.4e Plan of proposed stair through the Nova Scotia Furnishings Building to existing courtyard



Existing courtyard

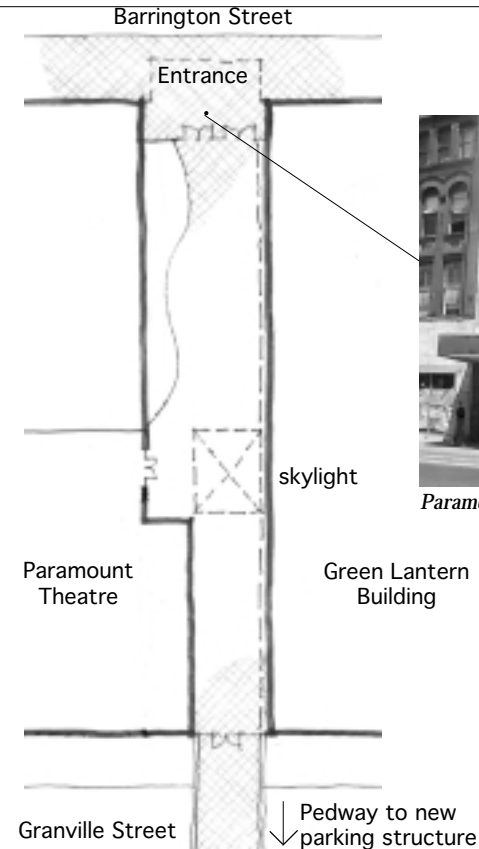


Figure 3.4f Plan of access to future parkade through existing Paramount Theatre.



Paramount front entrance

F 'Infoldings'

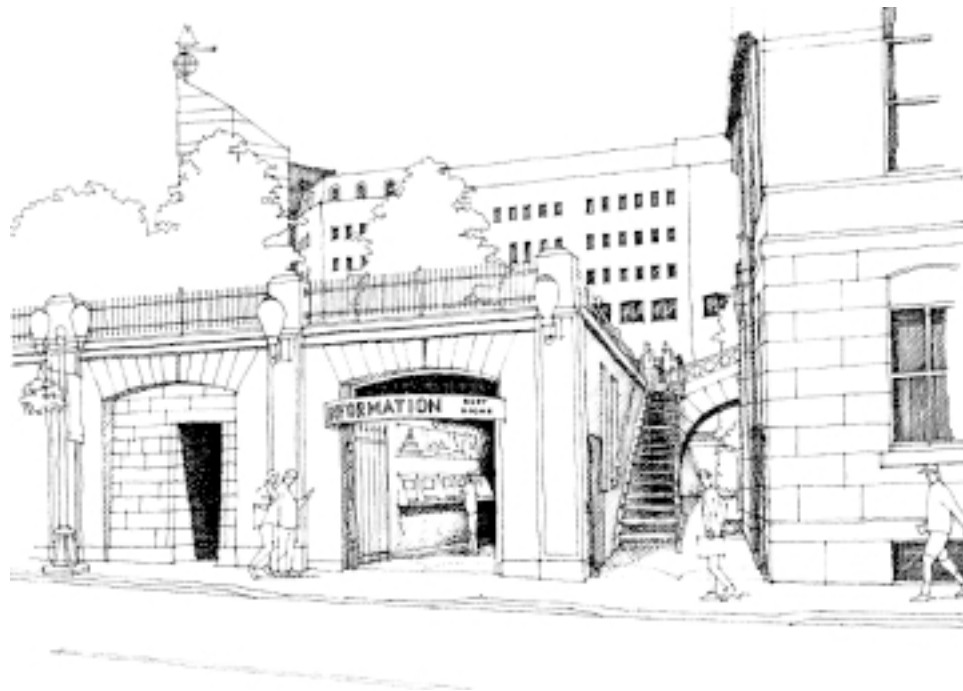
The street wall of the buildings of Barrington Street could be enlivened considerably and the 'canyon effect' reduced with openings of the street wall into adjacent areas and the incorporation of those areas and spaces into the activity space of the street. These areas may be of several types: expanded sidewalk retail (figure 3.4e), pedestrian connectors (figure 3.4f), building or mall entrances (figure 3.4h), service area entrances (figure 3.4g), or even under-utilized exterior areas which could be special places. The

basic idea of these spaces is to expand the street wall and to expand activity areas of the street. A few are discussed below as examples of how the activity area of the street can be expanded and connections made to adjacent areas thus reinforcing pedestrian movement downtown as a whole.

- **Nova Scotia Furnishings Bldg.** (Figure 3.4e) There are currently many paths through buildings on Barrington Street, and this is an example of one of them. This path could be enhanced considerably if it also connected with the nicely pro-

portioned courtyard on the second level of the Granite Brewery Building.

- **Paramount Theatre** (Figure 3.4f) This space offers an extraordinary opportunity to provide an at-grade access from Barrington Street to the HRM-proposed parking structure on the Granville Street site. This access would also considerably enhance the attractiveness of the Paramount space, particularly for a performance venue.



View of proposed stair, information gallery, and rest rooms at the Grand Parade

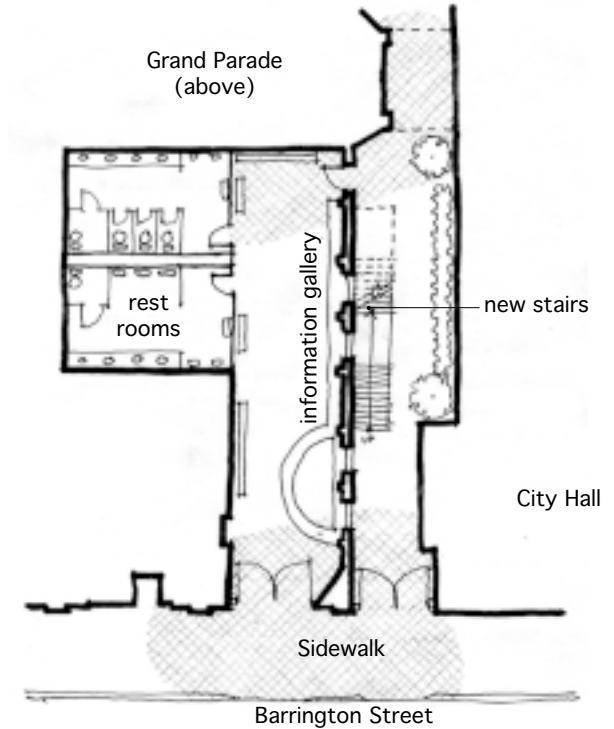


Figure 3.4g Plan of proposed stair & information booth at the Grand Parade

• **Grand Parade** (Figure 3.4g)

The long granite wall at the base of the Grand Parade between City Hall and the mid block entrance to the Parade (at George Street) is both a wonderful example of rusticated masonry and an ominous length of street wall. Behind this wall is a considerable amount of enclosed space presently used for storage and other uses.

A portion of this space could be activated by converting it to badly needed public washrooms and an information gallery.

The area between the Parade Ground and City Hall could also be activated by providing a needed third Barrington Street entrance to the Grand Parade, thus making the front entrance to City Hall accessible from the area around the intersection of Barrington and Duke Street. These improvements would both provide needed public uses and access and enliven an important area of the Barrington Street sidewalk. Consideration, of course, would have to be given to appropriate signage and entry systems.



Long granite wall at the base of the Grand Parade

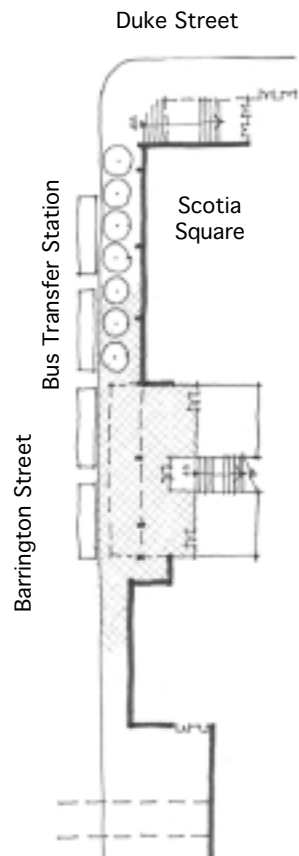
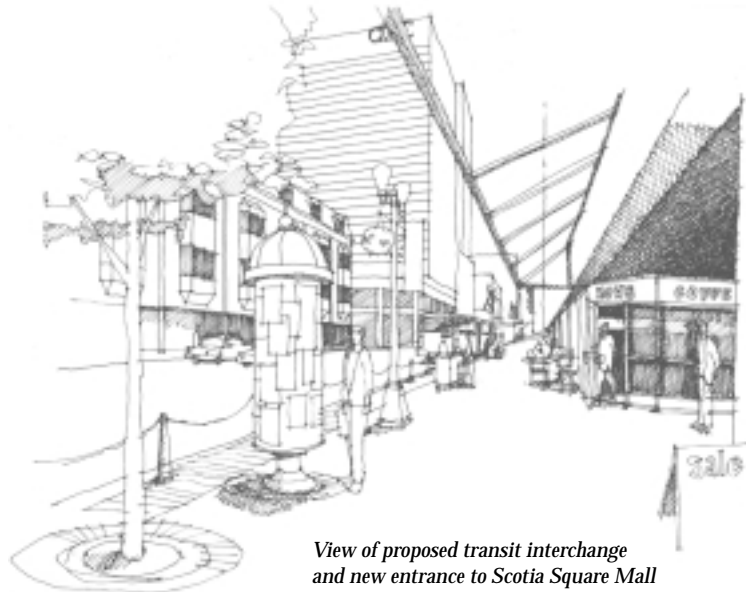


Figure 3.4h Plan of proposed transit stop in front of Scotia Square Mall



View of proposed transit interchange and new entrance to Scotia Square Mall



Gateway signage

• **Scotia Square Transit Transfer / Mall Entrance** (Figure 3.4h)

The Barrington Street face of Scotia Square has long been noted as unfriendly to the street. It offers no physical shelter, visual interest, or openings, and until the recent addition of banners, gave little clue to the unaware visitor of what is housed inside. There is the opportunity, as shown on figure 3.4h, to provide a Barrington Street entrance to the mall (which is one level above). This opportunity would become particularly interesting if a transit interchange were to be provided on Barrington Street in this area (see discussion in section 3.1D). This would achieve the enlivening of a currently 'dead' area of sidewalk, a potentially significant Barrington Street access to Scotia Square, and a reduction of transit vehicles on Barrington Street.

• **Gateway Elements & Signage**

Signifiers, such as gateway elements (an example of which is illustrated above), descriptive signage on buildings and sites, or feature signage ('Gassy Jack's' statue, with narrative plaque in Gastown) are important elements in communicating the who, what, where and why of a place and giving it special identity. A program of such signage should be developed for Barrington Street, telling its stories, describing its buildings and defining it as a special place.



Existing transit stop in front of Scotia Square Mall



NFB/Neptune Theatre Corner

G. Exterior Spaces

In addition to working with the street wall through 'infoldings' as described in the previous section, there are many under-utilized areas on Barrington Street which, with resourcefulness and creativity, could be enlivened to become contributing spaces to the ambience of the street rather than just forgotten spaces or worse, 'dead' zones. Just a few of these spaces are discussed below.

It should be noted that on successful urban streets such as Water Street in Gastown, all areas of the street, even small pockets and side areas contribute to the energy and life of the street as can be seen on the photo above. It could be said that spaces such as these either contribute to the life of the street or draw from it. This is particularly true on Barrington Street where large sections of sidewalk already are given to non-active uses.

- **NFB/Neptune Theatre Corner**

This is a very striking example of an under-utilized space contributing little to the life of the street. A large reason for this is the absence of



Gastown, Vancouver

use in the old NFB space, but will the designers of this space consider uses and perhaps even access through this area? Will building officials allow access through unprotected openings on a lot line?

- **St. Mary's Service Entrance**

This area currently serves no more than as a service entrance to St. Mary's Cathedral, but it is an intensively used transit area (see Transportation Recommendations) and could become an interesting public space with generous planting, contributing to an inviting transit shelter.

- **St. Paul's Church Fore Garden**

The area between St. Paul's Church and the Barrington Street sidewalk is another lovely, but virtually inaccessible garden, which was obviously accessible at one point, given the attractive gate at the corner of Prince Street and Barrington Street. This area could also contribute to the life of the street with a small flower garden, informational material about St. Paul's Church, and a bench or two.



St. Paul's Church Fore Garden



St. Mary's Service Entrance

H. Other Initiatives

In this time of shrinking budgets, expanding public sector debt, reduced public services, and expanding infrastructure needs, it is hard to contemplate large projects. At the same time, it could be said that downtown Halifax has been too timorous to dream, to propose a significant project (since the World Trade and Convention Centre) or even to ask for a small return on the hundreds of millions of tax dollars it has generated in recent decades. Two such possibilities are discussed below.

• The Old Birk's Site

Except for the G7 period in 1995 when this corner rocked with huge digital display screens, outdoor seating, great food, and huge crowds, this site has been a dead zone and thorn-in-the-side of Barrington Street for close to ten years. It is time to ask what **should** happen here? The view of the Study Team is that the best use for this property is public use, and that the property should be bought by a combination of the Municipality and the Province of Nova Scotia.



The Old Birk's Site, Barrington & Prince

In the very short term, the hoarding could be removed and an archeological dig take place. Following that, two levels of parking could be built accessed from Granville Street, serving Province House and City Hall, freeing the Grand Parade and Province House grounds for more appropriate public uses. The upper deck of this structure (roughly at grade with Barrington Street) could then be used as a temporary park. Following that, at some point in the future a large, light-filled glass enclosed atrium space could serve as an indoor version of the Grand Parade and include some of the qualities that made the G7 use of the site so exciting, and perhaps other, as yet to be determined uses, e.g. Council Chambers, etc.

The alternatives are unclear. An office tower would bring needed use to the site but could have an unfortunate impact on light and scale at the Grand Parade and could further enclose Barrington Street.

• Barrington Street Canopy

A number of people have expressed considerable enthusiasm for a large canopy over Barrington Street or at least a portion of it, perhaps between Prince Street and Spring Garden Road. This canopy would protect the street from weather (at least precipitation) and provide a dramatic backdrop to the events of the street. This could be amplified by removing more, if not all, traffic and creating further attractions and excitement at street level, perhaps trolley cars on tracks and expanded sidewalk activities.

There are difficulties with this scheme. Unless the canopy was at least partially closed on both



Barrington Street canopy

ends, the street would still be subject to cold, wind, and traffic problems. Also, connections to, or over the existing buildings would be difficult given the wide range of building heights and architectural treatments; the appropriateness of columns, braces, and framing obscuring a heritage streetscape is very questionable; and, of course, it would be expensive. Still, enthusiasm has a way of overcoming obstacles, and enthusiasm on a large and broad scale is the ingredient most needed on Barrington Street today.

Urban Design Recommendations

1. Enhance the public realm (street, sidewalks, and open spaces) to develop an environment which is enriching and fun thus contributing to the creation of a district of unique character as described in Section 3.3 *Use & Marketing*
2. Develop design guidelines for signage, storefronts and additions and new construction as discussed in detail in section 3.2, *Special District Initiatives*.
3. Enliven the pedestrian zone by creating sidewalk activity areas at roughly the midpoint of each block containing information kiosks, benches, bollards, bicycle racks, vending areas, mid-block crossings, etc.
4. Soften the street visually and environmentally through the introduction of large, appropriate trees in the sidewalk activity areas.
5. Improve street lighting and ambience with new and more appropriate lamp fixtures on existing bases, bollard lighting in activity areas, building lighting and feature lighting.
6. Reduce the 'canyon effect' of the street and provide increased amenity and protection through encouraging appropriate sidewalk building canopies.
7. Encourage the 'infolding' of sidewalk areas into built space, and conversely, the spillage of commercial activity onto sidewalks.
8. Encourage through-block linkages to adjacent areas and facilities.
9. Add to the life of the street by activating currently 'dead' and under-utilized side areas, open spaces, etc.
10. Provide public washrooms under the Grand Parade.
11. Encourage the purchase of Birk's Site the Municipality and by the Province of Nova Scotia for the following uses:
 - Short-term: archaeological dig for history and interest.
 - Mid-term: Two levels of limited-access parking for use by Province House and City Hall (freeing those grounds for more appropriate public uses) and a temporary park at the Barrington Street level.
 - Long Term: Limited-access parking plus a large, enclosed, public atrium, and as yet to be identified public uses, e.g. Council Chambers, 'International Cafe' type activities (G7), etc.

The image of the successful central business district assiduously cultivated by city planners in the 1970's and 1980's with glamorous skyscrapers and exciting cultural showplaces, has turned out to be a false measure of urban health.

City Life, Urban Expectations In A New World, Witold Rybczynski, Scribner's, New York, 1995



View of typical sidewalk extension

4 *Conclusions and Next Steps*

The people of cities understand the symbolic, ceremonial, social, and political roles of streets, not just those of movement and access. Regularly, if they are aware of what is being planned, they protest widening, as well as new streets, particularly if those improvements will mean dislocation of people or more traffic on their streets. On the other hand, proposals to improve existing streets, to make them special, "great" places, are common and are regularly approved by voters who tax themselves to achieve this end. Over two-thirds of the voters of San Francisco agreed, in 1967, to spend \$24.5 million - a lot of money then - to make Market Street into a great street. It was not to buy or tear down properties or to build buildings, but to make the street beautiful. And it was to be designed to accommodate parades. Time and again, the city has asserted that Market Street should be a great street. Other cities do the same. Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis, Santa Cruz, Sacramento, Toledo, Iowa City are but a few of hundreds of large and small cities that have only recently been concerned with the design of important streets.

Great Streets, Alan Jacobs, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993



Looking south on Barrington Street from the Grand Parade

Barrington Street is the street on which residents and visitors alike expect to find entertainment, arts and cultural activities, speciality shopping, stimulation, places for relaxation, and a well-maintained visual legacy of the community. In short, they expect it to be enriching and fun. The challenge for Barrington Street stakeholders and the community as a whole is both to broadly recognize that this is presently lacking and needed and to galvanize the means to achieve it. Many other communities in North America and Europe have successfully faced and met this challenge in recent years, and this community can as well.

4.1 Conclusions

The strategy outlined in Section 3 reflects the consultants' conviction first, that a 'do nothing' approach will not lead to revitalization, and second, the following four strategic directions are required for it to occur:

- **Transportation must be calmed and its impact reduced.**
- **Economic vitality and the appropriate care of the historic built fabric must be seen to be linked.**
- **A market niche drawing on the ambience of the area must be promoted.**
- **The public realm must be improved and given amenity.**

These strategic directions outline a revitalization strategy leading to the following three conclusions:

- **Build on what is here.**
- **Increase private sector confidence.**
- **The four strategic directions are interdependent.**

A. Building On What is Here

Barrington Street has many strengths which can be utilized in the revitalization effort. It is at the heart of Downtown; it is serviced by a transit artery; and it has a remarkable collection of heritage buildings and settings which have the potential to be improved to create a special ambience and attract new retail, entertainment, arts, and commercial clientele.

Highly radical breaks in direction such as a com-

plete removal of traffic, transit only, enclosing the street, etc. are not envisioned, nor are they likely in the current economic climate. As stated by Christopher Alexander in *A New Approach to Urban Design*, each intervention must help heal the fabric of the street. The rest will take care of itself.

B. Increasing Private Sector Confidence

This is not a question of 'making a market'. As recent commercial trends in office space leasing, new arts and entertainment sector openings, and a new economic optimism have shown, downtown Halifax is ready to take another step up the "spiral to greatness" mentioned in Section 3.3. Still, there is considerable caution by property owners who have endured years of high taxes and lost revenue. Encouragement from the public sector through street improvements, incentives, tax and regulatory relief, and other means would make a dramatic difference.

As was pointed out in Section 3.2, investments by the public sector in revitalization efforts in North America and Europe routinely lead to investment of many times their amount in private sector investments. It is this latter investment which will make the revitalization effort successful, and which ultimately, will lead to the stabilization and growth of the tax base on Barrington Street.

As discussed in Section 3.2, public sector involvement does not simply need to be direct through capital improvements and incentive grants. It can also be indirect through loan funds, assessment freezes, tax abatements, and other means. There

has been an indication that at least three other provinces have recently changed their tax policies to allow tax-related mechanisms to stimulate investment and growth, and Nova Scotia can as well.

Public sector involvement and encouragement can also be through regulatory mechanisms and which do not cost money.

With the Halifax Regional Municipality currently facing a massive harbour clean-up project, a very large waste disposal project, and other worthy projects, its capital improvement budget is severely strained. However, it should be noted that public sector involvement in the many forms that it can take to stimulate growth and lead revitalization is the norm in civic redevelopment efforts in North America and Europe today. A costly local example of that is the Bayer's Lake Business Park where the City of Halifax invested approximately half of its annual capital budget, or

These strategic directions lead to a revitalization strategy resulting in the following three conclusions:

- ***Build on what is here.***
- ***Increase Private sector confidence.***
- ***The four strategic directions are interdependent.***

close to \$10 million per year for several years to redevelop this perhaps overly successful retail-entertainment park.

C. Interdependence of The Four Directions

In the vision of this report, the establishment of a special urban ambience through traffic reduction, environmental enhancement, and market niche focus is the direction through which a significant, cost-effective revitalization of Barrington Street will occur. This strategy was elaborated in the four sub-sections of Section 3:

- **Transportation & Movement**
- **Special District Initiatives**
- **Use & Marketing**
- **Urban Design**

In the view of the Study Team, the accomplishment of all four Strategic Directions is necessary to achieve a successful rejuvenation of Barrington Street. A failure to accomplish all four will lead to limited improvement but not a full revitalization.

4.2 Costs

The achievement of the improvements and initiatives recommended by this Study will require financial commitment by both the public and private sectors. Public sector funding could come from a combination of Municipal, Provincial and Federal sources, both from existing programs and from special funding allocations. The private sector funding will come from investment by building owners and business operators, assisted by lending institutions, as well as from the broader corporate sector through sponsorship of specific projects.

It is beyond the scope of this study to provide detailed budget costs for the envisioned improvements discussed in this report, or to make specific recommendations regarding funding. However, it should be noted that few of the core recommendations of the report are expensive, and that many can be accomplished with minimal financial expenditure.

For example, in the first year an initial public sector budget (from three levels of government and corporate sponsorship) of \$500,000 could achieve all of the transportation and transit modifications; an initial exterior improvement incentive program (signage, storefronts, etc.); and detailed design work for street and sidewalk improvements. Again, if patterns established in other revitalization efforts continue (including Halifax) this investment will trigger a private sector investment of several times that amount.

Similar levels of financial involvement, combined with other types of programs such as revolving loan funds, tax incentives, private sector and foundation sponsored programs, etc., over a five-year period could achieve the core recommendations outlined in the report and take strong steps toward the rejuvenation of the street.

4.3 Next Steps

A. Consensus Building

The recommendations of the report need to be read, understood, discussed and, endorsed by the immediate sponsoring organization, the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, through its Board of Directors. There should then be a period of consensus-building involving Barrington

Street stakeholders, Halifax Regional Municipality Staff and Council, representatives of the Province of Nova Scotia, and members of the larger community.

This report will be a helpful tool in catalysing thought, clarifying discussion, and leading to specific solutions. It should be remembered that studies have a limited period of usefulness. If this study is to lead to action, concrete steps will need to be quickly taken to move in that direction.

B. Action Group/Task Force

This report is a discussion paper and set of recommendations built around the four Strategic Directions listed above and detailed in Section 3. Core recommendations of this report pertain to recommendations with immediate impact on the rejuvenation of the Study Area. Additional recommendations are provided addressing both secondary and larger issues of both the Study Area and Downtown as a whole. This report is a Strategic Plan with a range of recommendations

In order to move to an action phase for the revitalization of Barrington Street, an Implementation Action Group/Task Force should be established with mandate, sub-committees, and budget to clarify directions, establish priorities, initiate activity, galvanize energy, and direct progress.

and options, it is not an Action Plan. The Action Plan will need to be developed through a clarification and consensus-building process with substantial involvement from a broad cross-section of both public and private sectors. Representatives of the later should include Sobey's, Empire Group, CIBC, TD Bank, NSP, MT&T, Salter Street Films, and other corporations and organizations with a significant investment or interest in the street.

This Implementation Action Group/Task Force should be established with mandate, sub-committees, and budget to clarify directions, establish priorities, initiate activity, galvanize energy, and direct progress.

C. Immediate Steps

In the meantime, immediate steps can be taken to clarify questions, test recommendations, and bring the process to the attention and consideration of both the Barrington Street community and the larger community. One of the first of these steps could be to give the area a fun and distinctive new name such as the following:

- **Downtown Barrington**
- **The Light & Power District**
- **The Barrington Parade**
- **B Street**
- **The Parade District**

Other immediate tangible steps would be to at least temporarily make the transportation, transit and parking modifications; clarify questions regarding tax mechanisms, recruitment possibilities, etc.; begin the consultation process with political bodies; build media awareness; as well as publicize recent successes and new developments.

Beyond functional purposes of permitting people to get from one place to another and to gain access to property, streets - most assuredly the best streets - can and should help to do other things: bring people together, help build community, cause people to act and to interact, to achieve together what they might not alone. As such, streets should encourage socialization and participation of people in the community. They serve as locations of public expression. They should be physically comfortable and safe. The best streets create and leave strong, lasting, positive impressions, they catch the eyes and the imagination. They are joyful places to be, and given a chance one wants to return to them. Streets are places for activity, including relaxation. The best streets continue, are long-lived.

Great Streets, Alan Jacobs, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993

