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Item No. 3
Halifax Regional Council
September 30, 2008

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Dunphy".

Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

DATE: August 12, 2008

SUBJECT: **HRM by Design - Extension of South Barrington Precinct 2**
(Potential Heritage Conservation District)

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

July 8, 2008 - Regional Council requested a staff report on the idea of adding Hollis Street, south of Bishop Street to South Street, and the block north of this area encompassing the area of Salter Street and Bishop Street, to the list of potential Heritage Conservation Streets which HRM by Design has commenced.

In addition, Councillor Walker requested that staff also address the issue of parking lots in the report - will they be heritage properties as well or left empty?

BACKGROUND

The HRM by Design draft Downtown Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (DHSMPS) is structured around nine precincts, three of which are identified as Heritage Districts or Potential Heritage Districts (see Attachment 1). One of these - Precinct 5 (Barrington Street between Duke and Bishop Streets) - will be formally established as a Heritage Conservation District at the same time that the DHSMPS is adopted. The others - Precinct 2 (the South Barrington/Hollis Street area between Bishop and Green Streets) and Precinct 7 (the Historic Properties area between Granville Street and the waterfront) - are identified as Potential Heritage Conservation Districts which will be established through additional background studies and public consultation following adoption of the new DHSMPS. Council's motion pertains specifically to Precinct 2 - the South Barrington/Hollis Potential Heritage Conservation District.

DISCUSSION

Council's motion has three elements, as follows.

1. Add Hollis Street between Bishop and South to Precinct 2

Much of Hollis Street south of Bishop Street is already included in Precinct 2, with the exception of the modern office building at the corner of Hollis and Terminal Road and the forecourt area of the Halifax Westin Hotel at the corner of Hollis and South (see Attachments 1 & 2). These properties, along with the Westin Hotel and Via Rail Station, are currently included in the adjacent Precinct 1 (Waterfront South) due to their similarity to other properties in that precinct in terms of lot size, scale, built form and development capacity. However, staff acknowledge that the Westin Hotel and Via Rail station perform an important function as landmark buildings framing Cornwallis Park and see merit in including these properties in Precinct 2, as suggested in the Council motion.

2. Add the block bounded by Hollis, Salter, Lower Water and Bishop

This block is presently split between three precincts (again see Attachments 1 & 2). On Hollis Street, the properties south of Keith Hall are included in Precinct 2 (South Barrington), whereas Keith Hall and the properties to the north (the modern office addition to the rear of Keith's Brewery, and the modern Salter's Gate development) are included in Precinct 4 (Lower Central Downtown). On Lower Water Street, the Keith's Brewery and the lower portion of Salters Gate are also included in Precinct 4, while the parking area at the corner of Lower Water and Bishop - the site of the approved Halkirk/Alexander development - is included in Precinct 7 (Southern Waterfront).

Staff agree that it is appropriate to extend the boundary of Precinct 2 slightly north on Hollis to include Keith Hall and Black Binney House (directly opposite Keith Hall on the west side of the street). Both of these buildings are registered heritage properties and mark the beginning of the heritage streetscape that proceeds south along Hollis and includes Benjamin Weir House (south of Keith Hall) and the rear of Government House (south of Black Binney).

However, staff consider that the properties north of Keith Hall and Black Binney House - i.e., the 1970s office addition to Keith's Brewery, and Salter's Gate - should remain in Precinct 4 (Lower Central Downtown) due to their modernity and similarity of urban form with other Lower Central Downtown buildings. Staff also consider that the rest of the block should **not** be included in the South Barrington Precinct, for the following reasons.

- The recently approved Halkirk/Alexander development has more in common with other buildings and approved developments in the Southern Waterfront Precinct than it does with the South Barrington Precinct.
- The modern Salter's Gate development has more in common with the Lower Central Downtown Precinct than it does with South Barrington.

- The Brewery, while of great importance as a registered heritage building, presents its face to Lower Water Street rather than Hollis and South Barrington and is physically and visually separate from the South Barrington/Hollis Precinct. This separation will be emphasized once the Halkirk/Alexander development is constructed. The Brewery will of course remain protected as a stand alone registered heritage property.

6. Parking Lots

Council has raised the question of whether “parking lots [in the potential heritage district] ... will be heritage properties as well or left empty.”

There are presently a number of parking lots in the South Barrington Precinct, ranging from large parking lots such as the Atlantic Superstore lot abutting Cornwallis Park and the lot immediately north of the Terminal Road office building, as well as numerous smaller parking areas behind buildings on the interior parts of the blocks. Heritage district designation would not change these sites into registered heritage properties per se, nor would it require any change of use or require that they be built upon. But what it would require, if they are built upon, is that the new development be sympathetic and complementary to the heritage character of the district.

Referral to Urban Design Task Force (UDTF)

Council’s motion raises the potential for slight changes to proposed precinct boundaries. Staff will refer these to the UDTF for consideration following conclusion of the current round of public consultation, along with any other suggested changes that may result from further public input.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

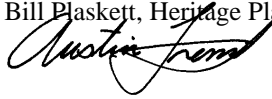
This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Copy of Map 2, Downtown Precincts, from proposed Downtown Plan showing areas discussed relative to Council Motion of July 8, 2008.
- Attachment 2: Larger Scale Detail of Areas and Properties Identified in Attachment 1.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by : Bill Plaskett, Heritage Planner, 490-4663

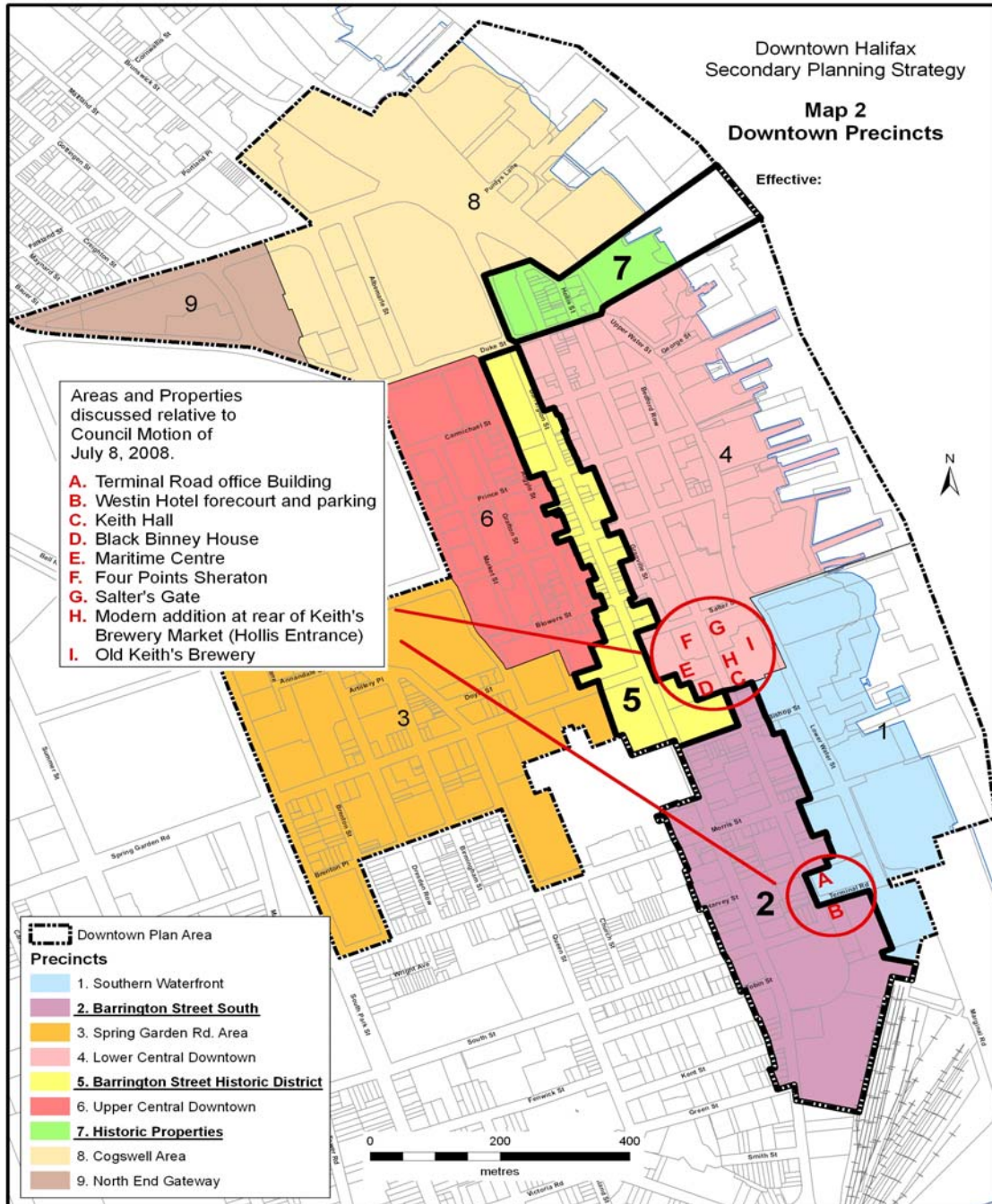


Report Approved by:

Austin French, Manager, Planning Services, 490-6717

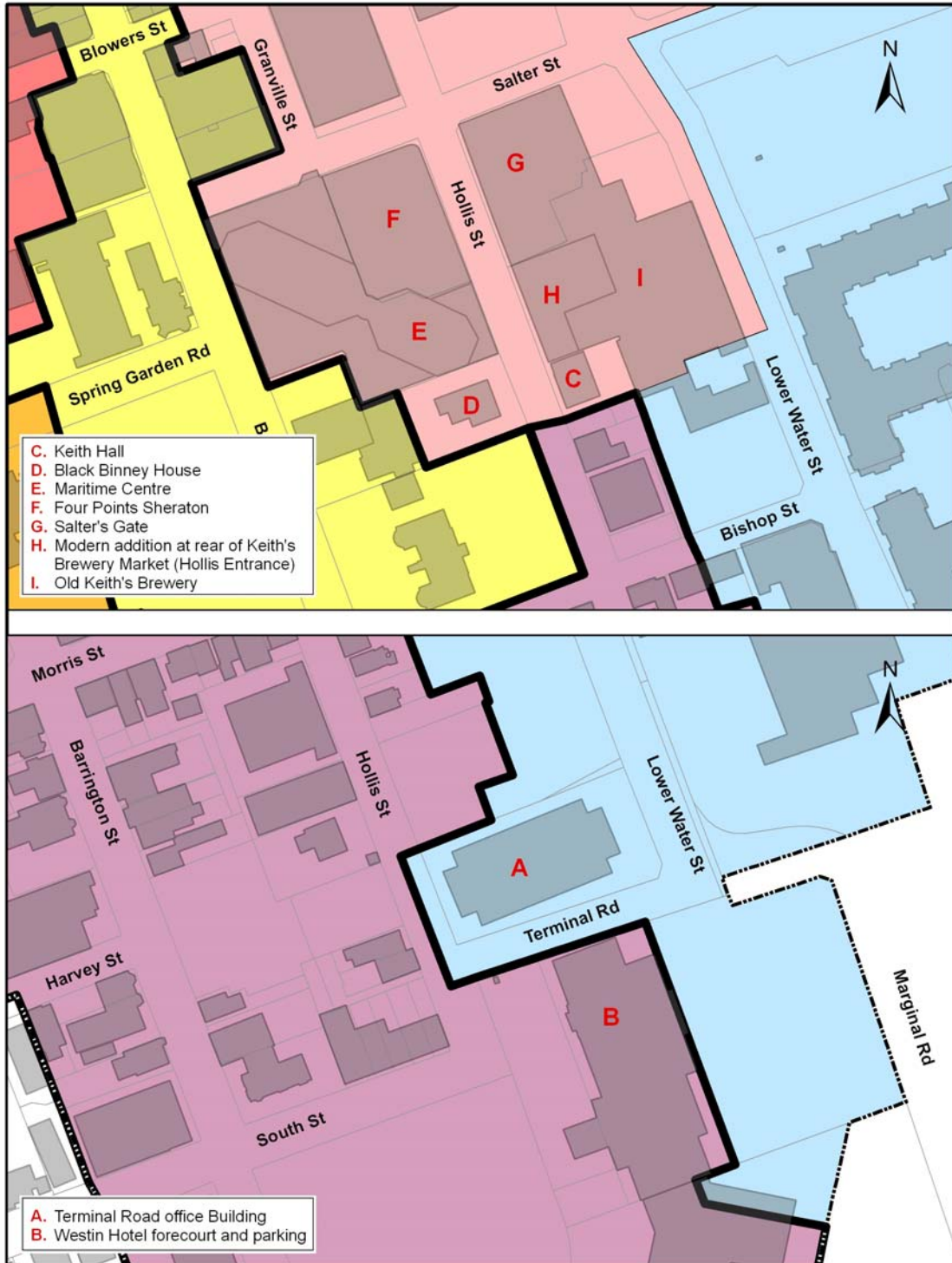
ATTACHMENT 1

Copy of Map 2, Downtown Precincts, from proposed HRM by Design Downtown Plan showing properties discussed relative to Council Motion of July 8, 2008



MENT 2

Larger Scale Detail of Areas and Properties Identified in Attachment 1



HRM does not guarantee the accuracy of any representation on this plan. Effective date does not indicate date of data creation.