

P.O. Box 1749 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 10.2.1
Halifax and West Community Council
March 29, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Halifax and West Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director, Planning and Development

DATE: February 16, 2016

SUBJECT: Case 20185: Appeal of Variance Refusal – 1548 Henry Street, Halifax

ORIGIN

Appeal of the Development Officer's decision to refuse a request for a variance.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Charter; Part VIII, Planning and Development

RECOMMENDATION

The question before Halifax and West Community Council is whether to allow or deny the appeal before them.

BACKGROUND

A variance request has been submitted for 1548 Henry Street (Maps 1 and 2), Halifax to convert a single unit dwelling to a duplex (two unit) dwelling. In order to facilitate this project, a variance has been requested (Attachment A) to relax the required minimum left side yard setback.

Property Details

Zoning: R-2 (General Residential) Zone

Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law (Peninsula Centre Secondary Plan Area)

Zone Requirement Variance Requested

Left side yard setback: 5 feet 0 feet

For the reasons detailed in the Discussion section of this report, the Development Officer denied the requested variance (Attachment B). The applicant subsequently filed an appeal of the refusal (Attachment C) and the matter is now before Halifax and West Community Council for decision.

Proposal Details

The subject property, located at 1548 Henry Street, Halifax, is developed with a single unit dwelling that is situated less than one foot from the left side yard property line. The original main portion of the building exists as a non-conforming structure, and in 1989, was enlarged through the construction of a two storey addition at the rear.

While the R-2 Zone allows older single unit dwellings to be internally converted into duplex dwellings notwithstanding that they may not meet certain zone standards, the by-law also requires that any such building is not to have been increased in height or volume or that its external dimensions changed since October 25, 1985. As the building was altered in 1989, this provision is not operable and the required five foot side yard setback applies. Therefore, a variance to relax the required left side yard setback has been requested.

DISCUSSION

Development Officer's Assessment of Variance Request

In hearing a variance appeal, Council may make any decision that the Development Officer could have made, meaning their decision is limited to the criteria provided in the *HRM Charter*. As such, the *HRM Charter* sets out the following criteria by which the Development Officer may <u>not</u> grant variances to requirements of the Land Use By-law:

"250(3) A variance may not be granted if:

- (a) the variance violates the intent of the development agreement or land use by-law;
- (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area:
- (c) the difficulty experienced results from an intentional disregard for the requirements of the development agreement or land use by-law."

In order to be approved, any proposed variance must not conflict with any of the above criteria. The Development Officer's assessment of the proposal relative to each criterion is as follows:

1. Does the proposed variance violate the intent of the land use By-law?

It is the Development Officer's opinion that the proposal violates the intent of the land use By-law.

Throughout the Land Use By-law, there is a correlation between residential unit density and lot standards. This intent is clearly established by requiring larger lots for developments containing larger numbers of dwelling units. For example, the standard lot area requirements of the R-2 Zone are 4,000 square feet for single unit dwellings, 5,000 square feet for duplexes, and 8,000 square feet for three and four unit dwellings. Side yard setbacks are also increased along with unit density, from four feet for single unit dwellings, five feet for duplex dwellings and six feet for three and four unit dwellings. For low density residential development, it is clear the By-law intends to restrict higher numbers of dwelling units to lots with comparatively larger lot areas and greater open space between the buildings and side lot lines.

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Within these standard requirements, there are also a number of exemptions that reduce these requirements based on the character of sub-areas throughout the peninsula area of the city. In the case of the subject property, the standard lot requirements have been reduced, through the Peninsula Centre Secondary Plan, to allow a minimum lot area of 3,300 square feet with 33 feet of frontage for duplex dwellings. However, with the exception of the internal conversion provisions described earlier, there is no reduced standard for the five foot side yards which are required for duplex dwellings.

In every case for low density residential development, it is clear the By-law intends to restrict higher number of dwelling units to lots with comparatively larger lot areas. Given that the intent of the by-law in this case is clear, and noting that buildings in this area are already subject to reduced requirements, the Development Officer believes that further reduction to allow an additional unit would violate the intent of the By-law.

2. Is the difficulty experienced general to the properties in the area?

In considering variance requests, staff must consider the characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood to determine whether the subject property is unique in its challenges in meeting the requirements of the land use by-law. If it is unique, then due consideration must be given to the requested variance; if the difficulty is general to properties in the area, then the variance must be denied.

The majority of nearby properties in the R-2 Zone are single unit dwellings that would not be able to meet the setback requirement for a duplex dwelling use. Many of these single unit dwellings are also non-conforming, being built to or over the property lines in many instances. Staff determined that of 49 residential buildings in the neighbourhood, only three would be in compliance with the 5 foot side yard setback requirement for a duplex dwelling use: 1560 and 1617 Henry Street, both single unit dwellings, and a duplex at 1572/1576 Henry Street.

The fact that only three out of 49 residential buildings in the subject neighbourhood would be able to meet the minimum side yard setback requirement for a duplex dwelling use means that the difficulty experienced at 1548 Henry Street is in fact general to the area.

3. Is the difficulty experienced the result of intentional disregard for the requirements of the land use by-law?

In reviewing a proposal for intentional disregard for the requirements of the Land Use By-law, there must be evidence that the applicant had knowledge of the requirements of the By-law relative to their proposal and then took deliberate action which was contrary to those requirements. That is not the case in this request.

The applicant has applied for a variance in good faith and prior to commencing any work on the property. Intentional disregard of By-law requirements was not a consideration in this variance request.

Appellant's Appeal

While the criteria of the *HRM Charter* limit Council to making any decision that the Development Officer could have made, the appellant has raised certain points in their letter of appeal for Council's consideration (Attachment C). These points are summarized and staff's comments are provided in the following table:

Appellant's Appeal Comments	Staff Response					
The variance request does not violate the intent of the By-law						
The by-law specifically makes provisions for properties in my area of Halifax in R-2 zoning to complete duplex conversions (Section 41 of the R-2 zoning).	The subject property does not meet the requirements of the LUB for an internal conversion exemption for the side yard setback requirements as an external modification to the structure was completed later than October 25, 1985. The occupancy permit for the addition was issued April 5, 1989, nearly four-and-a-half years past the cut-					
My house has been in existence since approximately 1915 and it is the main portion of the house, not the addition (which was constructed in 1989) which violates the side-yard requirement. This portion of the house has been grand-fathered in as it pre-dates the land use bylaw. My point is that the portion of the house which I would like to convert to the 2 nd unit is the addition which complies with the zoning side yard requirements of five feet. The conversion of the addition to an apartment will have no negative effects on my neighbour as the addition does not infringe on the side yard area and the intent would be to have the access/egress points on the side of the main house where the side yard provisions are met.	off date (Attachment D). A yard setback is measured as the shortest line that can be drawn from the property line to the closest exterior wall of a building. Setbacks apply to the building as a whole and additions are not separate structures for the purpose of determining setbacks. The fact that the addition was constructed further from the side lot line is irrelevant and does not change the established setback of the dwelling. The effective left side yard setback of the entire house is that of the older portion of the structure, which is less than one foot (Map 2).					
I would contest that although the addition was built post 1985 this request generally complies with the intent of the land use bylaw and should be given consideration for acceptance through the appeal process. As described, the only variance we require is the side-yard provision, and the requirement is not to have 0 feet of side-yard as listed in the rejection letter, but the existing 2 feet that is present. Acceptance of this variance request will permit additional density on the peninsula which I understand is an objective sought for the city.	The requirements of the Land Use By-law pertaining to interior conversions are clear and specific. The proposal does not meet these requirements as an addition was constructed on the dwelling after October 25, 1985 (Attachment D). The existing structure is situated less than one foot from the property line (Map 2). Staff therefore made the decision to consider and ultimately refuse a variance of the side yard requirement to 0 feet. Pursuing density goals must be balanced with preserving the character of established neighbourhoods with respect to the regulations set					
The difficulty experienced is general to properties I visually surveyed the property on Henry Street from Coburg Road past Bliss to Binney Street. This is the portion of the street that is most consistent with our home. The later part of the street approaching Jubilee Road presents less single-	out in the existing land use by-law. The proposal does not meet the requirements of the Land Use By-law which are intended to preserve existing neighbourhoods. So in the area. The vast majority of properties in the area mentioned by the applicant do not meet the minimum 5 foot side yard setback that would be required for a duplex dwelling. A site visit was conducted by staff on November 23, 2015 to					

family units and is often occupied by students presenting a different feel. On my portion of the street there are approximately 25 homes between Coburg/Bliss/Binney. Of those homes I only count 3 properties which present situations where the sideyard is less than the 5 foot requirement of the bylaw. In my opinion, this number does not present a significant enough percentage that it could be called **general** to properties in the area. This is a small percentage and my issue is specific to my property

examine the properties on Henry Street between Coburg Road and Binney Street, as well as those located on the east side of Vernon Street between Coburg Road and Watt Street, Based upon staff's site visit and on current mapping, only three out of 49 residential buildings in the neighbourhood would meet the 5 foot setback requirement for a two-unit dwelling use (Attachment E). These buildings are mostly single unit dwellings that would face the same challenge as the subject property in meeting the setback requirement (Attachment F). The difficulty experienced in this case has to do with the side yard requirements which are not achievable or met by the vast majority of properties in the area. For this reason, the Development Officer made the determination that the difficulty experienced at 1548 Henry Street in meeting the minimum side yard setback requirement for a duplex dwelling use is in fact general to the area.

Conclusion

Staff has reviewed all the relevant information in this variance proposal. As a result of that review, the variance request was refused as it was determined that the proposal conflicts with the statutory criteria provided by the *HRM Charter*. The matter is now before Halifax and West Community Council to hear the appeal and render a decision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this variance request.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement, as described by the Community Engagement Strategy, is not applicable to this process. The procedure for public notification is mandated by the *HRM Charter*.

Where a variance approval is refused and appealed, a hearing is held by Community Council to provide the opportunity for the applicant, all assessed property owners within 30 metres of the variance request, and anyone who can demonstrate that they are specially affected by the matter, to speak.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1. Halifax and West Community Council may allow the appeal and overturn the decision of the Development Officer and approve the variance.
- 2. Halifax and West Community Council may deny the appeal and uphold the decision of the Development Officer to refuse the variance.

Map 1 Notification Area

Map 2 Site Plan

Attachment A Original Variance Request Attachment B Variance Refusal Letter

Attachment C Letter of Appeal from the Applicant

Attachment D Permit for Addition
Attachment E Neighbourhood Context
Attachment F Photos of 1548 Henry Street

A copy of this report can be obtained online at http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

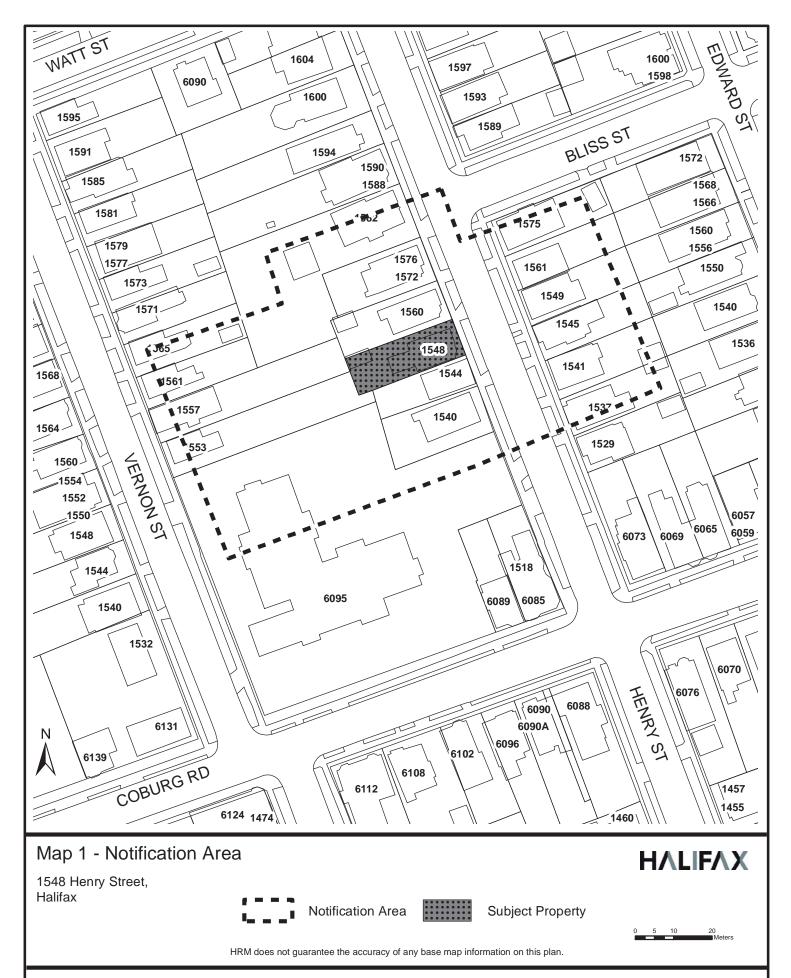
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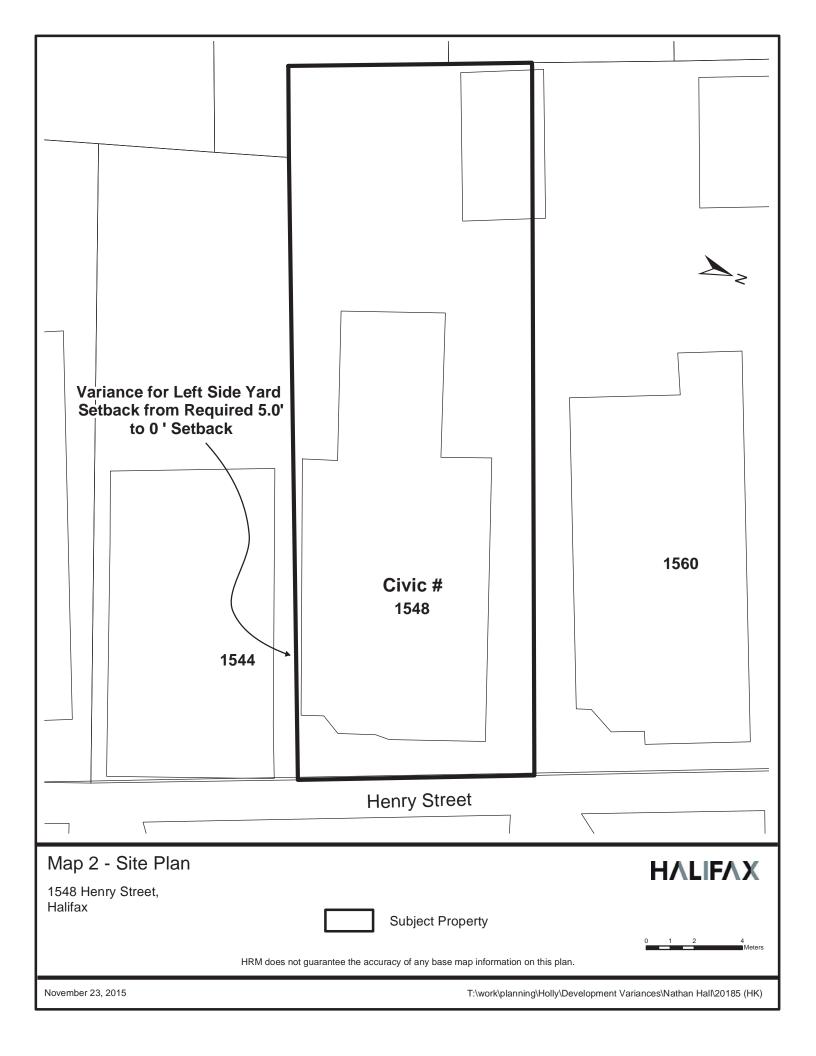
Report Prepared by: Nathan Hall, Development Technician Intern, 902.490.5985

Andrew Faulkner, Development Officer, 902.490.4341

Report Approved by: Original Signed

Kelly Denty, Manager, Development Approvals, 902.490.4800







HRM	file	#

Variance Application

It is advisable to familiarize yourself with the Land Use Bylaw as it applies to your application. All By-Laws are available online at http://www.halifax.ca/planning/map.html

Part I - Please complete the following information.

1548 Henry Street, Halifax, N.S.
The application is to vary what requirement of the Land Use Bylaw? (Please check off all that apply)
a. size of yards (setbacks) d. lot area b. lot coverage e. GFAR (gross floor area)
What is the existing use of the property?
Single family dwelling
Please provide a description of the proposal which requires the variance. We would like to convert the 1989 addition (permit into a legal apartment unit (one bedroom). The unit has access to a parking spot and meets the minimum square factage of 800 sq.ft. Please provide an explanation as to why the variance request cannot be avoided and why other alternatives are not foreible.
The variance relates to the original house not media
the minimum required side yard of 5 feet. It meets the
The variance relates to the original house not media the minimum required side yard of 5 feet. It meets the required side yard on the north side of the house but not
the south side. The addition with the proposed apartment
the south side. The addition with the proposed apartments the required side yard requirements.

Part II - Your completed application form must be accompanied with the following:

1. Application fee of \$500 (includes \$200.00 application fee, \$300.00 variance appeal deposit (may be refunded if no appeals.)

(Cash, Cheque or Debit Card only, no Credit Cards. Cheques made payable to Halifax Regional Municipality)

2. One copy of a plot plan drawn to scale and showing the proposed variance and the following items:

a. the dimension of the subject property;

- b. the location and dimensions of existing and proposed buildings on the property and any proposed additions;
 - c. the distance from property lines to existing or proposed buildings and additions; and,
 - d. distances from property line to buildings on adjacent lots.

<u>Note:</u> A plot prepared by a Nova Scotia land surveyor <u>may be required</u> if the plot plan submitted does not permit the Development Officer to properly evaluate the application.

3. Additional information that may be required, if applicable:

n. a copy of floor plans, existing and proposed, drawn to scale;

- b. a copy of building elevations drawn to scale (building photographs are acceptable); and,
- c. a copy of parking layout drawn to scale.

Note: Plans not drawn on 8 1/2" x 11" paper must be folded separately to 8 1/2" x 11"

Applicant Name: _		
Email Address:		1 . 4
Daytime Phone Number:		Cell Phone:
I declare that all of the cath. If application is must accompany this	s being signed by someon	ne and accurate and has the same force and effect as if made under the other than the property owner, written permission from the owner
Owner Signature		Date:
Applicant Signature		Date:

Halifax Office (Western Region): 7071 Bayers Rd, Suite 2005 Halifax, NS B3L 2C2 Ph: 490-5660 fax: 490-4645

Dartmouth Office (Eastern & Central Regions): 40 Alderney Dr, 2nd fl Dartmouth, NS B2Y 2N5 Ph: 490-4490 fax: 490-4661

Case 20185 – Attachment B: Variance Refusal Letter

October 29, 2015

RE: Application for Variance, File No. 20185 – 1548 Henry Street, Halifax

Dear ,

This will advise that as Development Officer for the Halifax Regional Municipality I have refused your request for a variance from the requirements of the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-Law as follows:

Location: 1548 Henry Street, Halifax

Project Proposal: Convert single unit dwelling to two unit dwelling

Variance Requested: Vary minimum side yard setback requirement from 5 feet

to 0 feet

Section 250(3) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter states that:

A variance may not be granted if:

- (a) the variance violates the intent of the development agreement or land use bylaw:
- (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area; or
- (c) the difficulty experienced results from an intentional disregard for the requirements of the development agreement or land use by-law.

It is my opinion that the proposal (a) violates the intent of the land use by-law and (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area, therefore your request for a variance has been refused.



Pursuant to Section 251(4) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter you have the right to appeal the decision of the Development Officer to the Municipal Council. **Your appeal must be filed on or before November 13, 2015.** The appeal must be in writing, stating the grounds of the appeal, and be directed to:

Andrew Faulkner, Development Officer c/o Municipal Clerk Halifax Regional Municipality Development Services - Eastern Region P.O. Box 1749 Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Nathan Hall at 490-5985.

Respectfully,

Andrew Faulkner, Development Officer Development Services (Eastern Region), Halifax Regional Municipality

Tel 902-490-4341
Fax 902-490-4661
Email faulkna@halifax.ca

CC. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk Waye Mason, Councillor

Case 20185 – Attachment C: Letter of Appeal from the Applicant

Andrew Faulkner, Development Officer

c/o Municipal Clerk

Halifax Regional Municipality

Development Services – Eastern Region

PO Box 1749

Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Re: **Notice to Appeal rejection** of Application for Variance, File No. 20185 – 1548 Henry Street, Halifax, NS –

Andrew:

Thanks for your letter regarding my submission to apply for a variance at 1548 Henry Street, Halifax, NS to convert the use from a single unit dwelling to a two unit dwelling. I appreciate your timely response and willingness to discuss the file with me.

I understand that, in your opinion, the proposal violates the intent of the land use bylaw and the difficulty experienced on my property is general to properties in the area.

I am appealing the rejection of my variance based on my opinion that:

- 1) The variance request does not violate the intent of the bylaw. The by-law specifically makes provisions for properties in my area of Halifax in R-2 zoning to complete two unit conversions (Section 41 of the R-2 zoning). My house has been in existence since approximately 1915 and it is the main portion of the house, not the addition (which was constructed in 1989) which violates the side-yard requirement. This portion of the house has been grand-fathered in as it pre-dates the land use bylaw. My point is that the portion of the house which I would like to convert to the 2nd unit is the addition which complies with the zoning side yard requirements of five feet. The conversion of the addition to an apartment will have no negative effects on my neighbour as the addition does not infringe on the side yard area and the intent would be to have the access/egress points on the side of the main house where the side yard provisions are met. I would contest that although the addition was built post 1985 this request generally complies with the intent of the land use bylaw and should be given consideration for acceptance through the appeal process.
- 2) The difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area. I visually surveyed the property on Henry Street from Coburg Road past Bliss to Binney Street. This is the portion of the street that is most consistent with our home. The later part of the street approaching Jubilee Road presents less single-family units and is often occupied by students presenting a different feel. On my portion of the street there are approximately 25 homes between Coburg/Bliss/Binney. Of those homes I only count 3 properties which present situations where the side-yard is less than the 5 foot requirement of the by-law. In my opinion, this number does not present a significant enough percentage that it could be called **general** to properties in the area. This is a small percentage and my issue is specific to my property.

I trust that you will consider the information provided above and accept the variance request. As
described, the only variance we require is the side-yard provision, and the requirement is not to have C
feet of side-yard as listed in the rejection letter, but the existing 2 feet that is present.

Acceptance of this variance request will permit additional density on the peninsula which I understand is an objective sought for the city.

Respectfully,

CC: Waye Mason

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Case 20185 - Attachment E - Neighbourhood Context

Civic Address	Current Use	Meets 5' side yard setback requirement for two-unit dwelling use*	
1553 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1557 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1561 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1565 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1571 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1573 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1577/1579 Vernon Street	Duplex	No	
1581 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1585 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1591 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1595 Vernon Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1529 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1537 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1540 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1541 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1544 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1545 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1548 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1549 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1560 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	Yes	
1561Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1572/1576 Henry Street	Duplex	Yes	
1575Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1582 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1588/1590 Henry Street	Duplex	No	
1589 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1593 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1594 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1597 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1600 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1601 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1604 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1607 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1608 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1611 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1617 Henry Street	<u> </u>	Yes	
1620 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling Single Unit Dwelling	No No	
		_	
1621/1625 Henry Street	Semi-Detached Dwellings	No/No	
1624/1626 Henry Street	Duplex	No No	
1629 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No No	
1630 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No No	
1633 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No No	
1634/1636 Henry Street	Duplex	No No	
1637 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1638 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No No	
1639 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No No	
1642 Henry Street	Single Unit Dwelling	No	
1646/1648 Henry Street	Duplex	No No	
		Totals – Yes:3 No:46	

^{*}Assessment of setbacks based on current HRM mapping and on staff site visit

Case 20185 - Attachment F - Photos of 1548 Henry Street



