

BARRINGTON E SPACE BUILDING

Remodelling and Additions – 1652, 1656, & 1662 Barrington Street, Halifax

Developer/Owner: Starfish Properties

Architect: David F. Garrett Architects

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DESIGN RATIONALE

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

General:

The project proposes the replacement of the existing storefronts, the restoration of the existing upper facades, additions to the rooftops and the complete interior renovations of the existing buildings at 1652, 1656, and 1662 Barrington Street – the former two Sam the Record Man buildings and the former Granite Brewery building. The structural systems of the existing buildings will remain largely intact.

Retail uses are proposed for the Barrington St. levels of all three buildings and office uses for the upper two floors of the existing buildings and the additions. The three buildings will be interconnected on all levels and a corridor at the second level through 1668 Barrington Street will connect the project to Argyle Street. Light wells will provide natural light to the rear office spaces on each level. Decks on the flat roofs of the existing buildings will be accessible from the additions.

While respecting the individuality of all three existing heritage facades (1652 and 1656 only are municipally-designated heritage buildings), the project combines them into a single grouping through the overall design of the addition, while at the same time echoing the individuality of the three existing buildings through subtle differences between the three facades of the additions. The historic character of Barrington St. is thus conserved and maintained while the two-level additions achieve the qualitative objectives envisioned by HRM by Design as expressions of high-quality, heritage-respectful, contemporary architecture.

Specific:

Storefronts (ground floor):

For 1652 and 1662 Barrington St., the portions of the ground level storefront that are defined as “historic frame” (i.e. beams and piers) are to be cleaned and restored. The portion of the ground level storefront that is within the “historic frame” area is to be fitted with a high-quality, contemporary, minimally-glazed, commercial storefront system on a stone base. Tenant signage occurs at the top of this area as a contemporary, see-thru narrow metal screen in front of the glass. Entrances will be protected with awnings (with the exception of 1656 [middle building] on which awnings would be inappropriate). For 1656 Barrington St. a new, second entrance is proposed on the north side of the building which would be in an existing window opening and identical to the existing entrance on the south side of the building.

Existing Facades (upper floors):

Masonry and wood areas of the existing heritage facades are to be cleaned and restored. Windows will be replaced with heritage-compatible high-quality windows. A clear glass guard rail at the top of at least one façade (1652) will allow a deck behind (note: variance required). Building lighting will be included at the storefront, upper façade and addition levels.

New Addition (fourth floor plus mezzanine):

The addition is two levels high set above the existing three storey buildings, and is set back 10 feet from the street face, making it subordinate to the existing heritage buildings when viewed from the sidewalk across the street. The addition’s material palette includes a combination of clear glass and translucent insulated glass panels in metal frames. The walls between the three sections of the addition will be clad in stone. The symmetries and proportions of the existing facades are echoed in the new addition. Each of the three sections of the addition is a symmetrical 3-part composition incorporating vertical proportions for the window areas and horizontal proportions for the wall areas (as with the existing facades). For the addition, the wall areas are translucent, insulating glass panels. The addition’s three sections are similar to one another, but are distinct and separated by wide stone pillars matching the granite stone of the existing middle (Sam’s) building. The addition is capped with a projecting cornice.

2. HRM REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

General:

All uses and improvements outlined above are consistent with the objectives and requirements of the Downtown Halifax Land-Use Bylaw (DHLUB) (with the two exceptions noted below), the Design Manual (DM), the Barrington Street Heritage District Revitalization Plan (BSHDRP), and HRM By-law H-500 (Barrington Street Heritage District). All existing façade conservation work will be undertaken in a manner consistent with the federal government's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Specific:

DOWNTOWN HALIFAX LAND-USE BYLAW (DHLUB)

All requirements regarding height, setbacks, materials, parking (inc. bicycles), signs, etc. are met in the proposal.

Exception:

The project will seek a variance regarding the requirement in the DHLUB (8.1 Number of Buildings on a Lot) regarding lot lines in order to maintain the historic property lines between the existing three buildings. The buildings will continue to be considered a single building from the point of view of the Nova Scotia Building Code.

DESIGN MANUAL

Downtown Precinct Guidelines:

2.5 Precinct 5: Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District

- d. Conserve the the historic character of Barrington Street and ensure that new development is supportive of, and harmonious with it ...while not necessarily mimicking heritage architecture.

This is achieved in a contemporary manner through massing, line, proportion, and materials as noted in the Project Description above (also see below under 4.1.3).

- g. Allow and encourage contemporary shop front design in the precinct to support and stimulate commercial and retail revitalization.

As described above in the Project Description, the storefront “within the historic frame” (see below under 4.5.3) will be a high quality, contemporary, minimally-framed storefront set on a stone base. The “historic frame” will be maintained and restored. The proposed tall, glass, storefront area is consistent with a heritage photo of the buildings from the early 1900’s. Signage is discussed below under 4.6.4. These elements are consistent with the requirements of this section.

- k. Achieve the objectives of the precinct through accurate architectural reproduction of historic styles or through expressions of contemporary architecture.

As noted above, the facades of the existing buildings will be maintained and restored with a heritage-respectful, subordinate, contemporary addition addition on the roofs.

- m. Recognize the historic role of building cornices....

The addition roof has a strong projecting cornice.

- n. Permit rooftop additions on historic buildings to encourage their economic revitalization while ensuring that such additions are visually inconspicuous and subordinate when viewed from the opposite side of the street....

As noted above, the a two level addition set back 10’ from the front of the existing three storey buildings will be subordinate to the existing buildings.

- o. Attract high-quality retail, cultural, and entertainment uses at street level.

The aim of the project is to attract high-quality retail uses at street level.

Heritage Design Guidelines:

4.1.2 New Buildings in Heritage Contexts

New buildings may be proposed where no previous buildings existed, where original buildings are missing, or where severely deteriorated or non-historic buildings are removed. The intention in designing such new buildings should not be to create a false or ersatz historic building, instead the objective must be to create a sensitive well-designed new structure “of its time” that fits and is compatible with the character of the district or its immediate context....

The design of the addition, while contemporary, was designed to be in harmony with the heritage buildings which support it (see 4.1.3 below). It is also part of the heritage district as a whole. The architectural historian Roy Eugene Graham described Barrington Street as “a catalogue of buildings”, meaning that there are buildings on Barrington Street which are representative of architectural periods and styles going back to the early Nineteenth Century. Each period has built convincingly in its own style.

4.1.3 Contemporary Design

New work in heritage contexts should not be aggressively ideosyncratic but rather it should be neighborly and respectful of its heritage context....

As noted above in describing the relationship of the addition to the existing buildings, it was noted that the addition is related to the existing buildings in massing (maintaining three distinct sections of the upper facades), proportion (vertical window and horizontal wall areas, as well as symmetrical three-part facades), and materials (the use of glass and stone). The design is contemporary and responsive to the existing buildings, but is not “aggressively ideosyncratic”.

4.5 Guidelines for Façade Alteration on Registered Heritage Buildings and Buildings in Heritage Conservation Districts

The intent of these guidelines is to conserve the character of historic character of historic buildings while allowing for reasonable change to improve their functional and economic viability and enable their rehabilitation and revitalization....

The new second entry at 1656 Barrington St. is required in order to attract a high-quality tenant to the ground level retail space in that building.space

4.5.2 Lower Façade (Storefront)

b. Historic photos and drawings should be used to support the restoration or replication of decorative elements of historic significance in the storefront.

The new entry at 1656 will be constructed in the existing window opening on the north side of the building and will be identical to the existing opening on the south side of the building.

4.5.3 Contemporary Expression Within the Historic Shopfront Frame

The objective is to allow and encourage contemporary shopfront design in historic commercial buildings to support and stimulate retail revitalization....

The storefronts for 1652 and 1662, as noted in the Project Description above, will be high-quality, contemporary minimally-glazed glass storefronts. They will replace storefronts in the two buildings built in the mid-1990's and mid-1980's respectfully. Areas of "historic frame" will be maintained and restored.

4.5.5 Windows

Windows are extremely important to the character of historic commercial buildings in the downtown....

The windows of the upper façade of the existing buildings will be replaced with heritage-compatible aluminum clad wood windows with muntin patterns identical to the existing patterns.

4.5.9 Awnings and Canopies

Most historic commercial buildings in downtown Halifax had awnings for sun or rain protection....

Awnings at 1652 and 1662 will conform to the requirements of the Guidelines. Awnings are inappropriate for 1656 Barrington St..

4.6.4 Allowable Sign Types

- .1 Fascia Signs and Flat Wall-Mounted Signs
- .2 Awning Signs
- .3 Projecting Signs
- .4 Window Signs

Signage for 1652 and 1662 will be located on horizontal see-thru metal screens in front of the upper area of storefront glass. For 1656, signage will be located in small letters mounted to the sign fascia of the building above the entry. All buildings may have projecting signs and window signs. 1652 and 1662 may have awning signs. All signs will conform to the requirements of the Guidelines.

Sustainable Design:

5.2 Sustainability Guidelines

The project aims to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification.