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Heritage Advisory Committee
May 22, 2013

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee

SUBMITTED BY: 
Brad Anguish, Director, Community & Recreation Services

DATE: May 1, 2013

SUBJECT: **Case H00373: Substantial Alteration to 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove (Stella Maris Church), a registered municipal heritage property**

ORIGIN

Application by Thomas Foster

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Heritage Property Act

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the proposed substantial alteration to the Stella Maris Church as outlined in Attachments A through E of this report.

BACKGROUND

The property at 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove, is a registered municipal heritage property (Map 1). The subject property is known as the Stella Maris Church. On November 27, 2012, the property owner, Thomas Foster, submitted an application for a substantial alteration to the heritage property (Attachments A through E). The applicant wishes to convert the vacant church building into a single unit residence with a Bed & Breakfast operation. The proposal consists of alterations to all four sides of the building. In accordance with Section 17 of the Nova Scotia *Heritage Property Act*, any substantial alteration to a municipal heritage building requires Regional Council approval.

Heritage Value

The *Heritage Property Act* defines "heritage value" as "*the aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or future generations and embodied in character-defining materials, forms, locations, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings.*" The Stella Maris Church is valued for its association with local history, relationship to surrounding area, and architecture. The church was built circa 1846 as a place of worship for the Catholic population of several local communities, and the Fort York Redoubt military site where a gate was installed in the fort walls to provide church access to worshippers. In 1976, a conservation initiative lead by local community members restored the church to its c. 1900 condition while preserving all original fittings. Perched on a high elevation of land, the Stella Maris Church is a significant community landmark. It contributes to the heritage character of the Fergusons Cove community, York Redoubt National Historic Site and Halifax Harbour.

The Stella Maris Church is an excellent example of an Elizabethan or country Romanesque church with twin protruding towers, rounded apse, and openings with rounded heads. This style of church building is unique in the Halifax Regional Municipality (Attachment F).

Character Defining Elements

Under the *Heritage Property Act*, the "character-defining elements" of a heritage building are defined as "*the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to heritage value and that must be sustained in order to preserve heritage value.*" The following is a list of character-defining elements relating to the architectural significance of the Stella Maris Church:

- Located on a large treed lot in Fergusons Cove, adjacent to York Redoubt National Historic Site and overlooking Halifax Harbour;
- Heavy timber construction;
- Twin protruding towers and rounded apse;
- Gable roof with returned eaves at the rear;
- Wood shingle cladding and heavy timber door with bracket hinges;
- Tall framed openings with rounded heads and wooden keystone-shaped caps;
- Wooden Classic Revival style windows on the front façade and wooden Gothic Revival style windows on both sides; and
- Copper alcove at the front (religious statue has been removed).

Registration

This building was registered on August 31, 1994, by the former Halifax County Municipality.

Heritage Building Conservation Standards

The Heritage Building Conservation Standards are used when evaluating proposed alterations to registered heritage buildings throughout the region. The Conservation Standards ensure that careful consideration is given when alterations are contemplated, and that different strategies may apply in different contexts to better integrate new development with existing heritage buildings.

DISCUSSION

Proposal

The proposed development involves changes to all four sides of the heritage building as shown in Attachments A through E. Two additions will be constructed at the front and harbour-side of the building, both with rooftop patios. A second floor level will be added within the interior of the existing building. A sliding glass door will be installed on the side of the building facing the harbour. Most of the framed openings will be preserved. Many historic windows will be removed or converted from wood to vinyl. A parking area and swimming pool will be installed in the front yard between the church building and Fergusons Cove Road, behind a buffer of trees.

Heritage Building Conservation Standards

The proposal has been evaluated against HRM's Heritage Building Conservation Standards (Attachment G) and staff offers the following comments relative to the applicable standards:

- **Historic Use:** The rehabilitation proposal should consider the historic institutional use and result in minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building, its site and environment. The church building ceased its religious institutional use in 1993 after almost 150 years of service. The proposed new use is substantially different from the historic use but a significant improvement over its current vacant status. The proposed new residence and Bed & Breakfast operation will result in changes to the defining characteristics of the historic church building, as alterations are proposed to each of the four façades of the heritage building. However, the building has been vacant over the past 20 years resulting in structural deterioration. Thus, the new use of the building is an opportunity to restore the structural integrity of the building while maintaining a number of character defining elements.
- **Historic Character:** Many character-defining elements of the property will be retained and preserved in this rehabilitation project. However, the deteriorated condition of the building and the transition of uses involve the removal of numerous historic materials and alteration of characteristic features. Where this is the case, design responses retain key materials and emulate features that characterize the heritage property. The top half of the harbour-side tower was inspected by an HRM Building Official and determined to be in poor structural condition. The property owner will make every effort to preserve the harbour-side tower in its entirety. However, they would like the option of removing the top half of the tower if it is deemed unsafe by a structural engineer and becomes an

insurance liability. To provide this option, this proposal must be understood to include the preservation of one tower in its entirety and only half of the harbour-side tower. On the front façade, all framed openings will be preserved. Three of the Classic Revival style wooden windows will be replaced with vinyl in like appearance. The opening holding the copper alcove will be converted to a patio doorway while the top portion of the copper alcove will be cut and retained in place as a heritage feature. A new second storey will be contained entirely within the existing building envelope by installing an internal platform. As a result, three of the tall window openings along one side will be divided into two separate windows while emulating their original proportions within their original frames.

- **New Additions: Differentiated and Compatible with Massing, Size, and Scale:** This proposal consists of two new additions: a harbour-side sunroom and a front veranda. Both the sunroom and veranda additions are compatible with the heritage building in terms of their massing, size, and scale. They will be clearly distinguished as modern structures clad with a cement board material in a different colour from the heritage building. The harbour-side sunroom addition and the adjacent sliding glass door will replace the historic tall windows on this side of the building.
- **New Additions: Essential Form and Integrity Remains Unimpaired:** The heavy timber construction will be largely preserved within the existing building frame. New openings into the sunroom and veranda additions will be between existing timber posts. The only alteration to the heavy timber construction is on the harbour side where two timber posts will be cut and reframed for the sliding glass door. An HRM Building Official has confirmed that the new second storey platform will provide a structural benefit in stabilizing the timber frame construction. All three additions can be removed in the future and the essential form and integrity of the heritage building and its environment would be unimpaired. Furthermore, all original windows will be salvaged by reincorporating them in the sunroom addition, interior walls, or by storing them within the building.

Conclusion

The proposed residential use and Bed & Breakfast operation would be a significant improvement over the current vacant status of the Stella Maris Church. The building has not found a suitable community facility use in twenty years. Although the proposal will result in changes to some of the defining characteristics of the historic church building, many character-defining elements will be preserved. Where historic materials will be removed, design responses retain key materials and emulate features that characterize the heritage property. The proposed additions will be differentiated from the old and compatible with the massing, size and scale of the heritage building. They will also be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired. Although no longer serving an institutional service, the heritage building will continue to appear as a landmark church building with its integral fittings and several key features preserved.

Therefore, staff recommend that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the substantial alteration to 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove, as outlined in Attachments A through E.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs associated with processing this application can be accommodated within the approved 2013/14 operating budget for C310 Planning & Applications. HRM is not responsible for renovation costs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement process is consistent with the intent of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. The level of community engagement was information sharing achieved through the HRM website and public accessibility to the required Heritage Advisory Committee meeting and Regional Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No concerns identified.

ALTERNATIVES

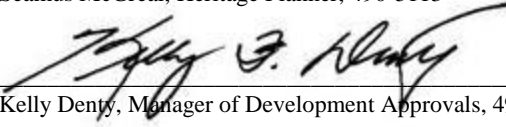
1. The Heritage Advisory Committee may recommend that Council approve the proposed substantial alteration to the Stella Maris Church as outlined in this report. This is staff's recommendation.
2. The Heritage Advisory Committee may recommend that Council approve the proposed substantial alteration to the Stella Maris Church with conditions or modifications and in doing so should provide reasons for the conditions based on applicable conservation standards.
3. The Heritage Advisory Committee may recommend that Council refuse the proposed substantial alteration to the Stella Maris Church as outlined in this report. The *Heritage Property Act* does not include appeal provisions for decisions of Council regarding substantial alterations, however, the owners would be permitted to proceed with their proposal three years from the date of the application. This is not the recommended course of action.

ATTACHMENTS

Map 1:	Location Map – 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove
Attachment A:	Site Plan
Attachment B:	Front Elevation
Attachment C:	Rear Elevation
Attachment D:	York Redoubt Side Elevation
Attachment E:	Harbour Side Elevation
Attachment F:	Photographs of 4 York Redoubt Crescent, Fergusons Cove
Attachment G:	HRM Heritage Building Conservation Standards, By-law H-200

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

Report Prepared by: Seamus McGreal, Heritage Planner, 490-5113

Report Approved by: 
Kelly Denty, Manager of Development Approvals, 490-4800



Attachment A - Site Plan

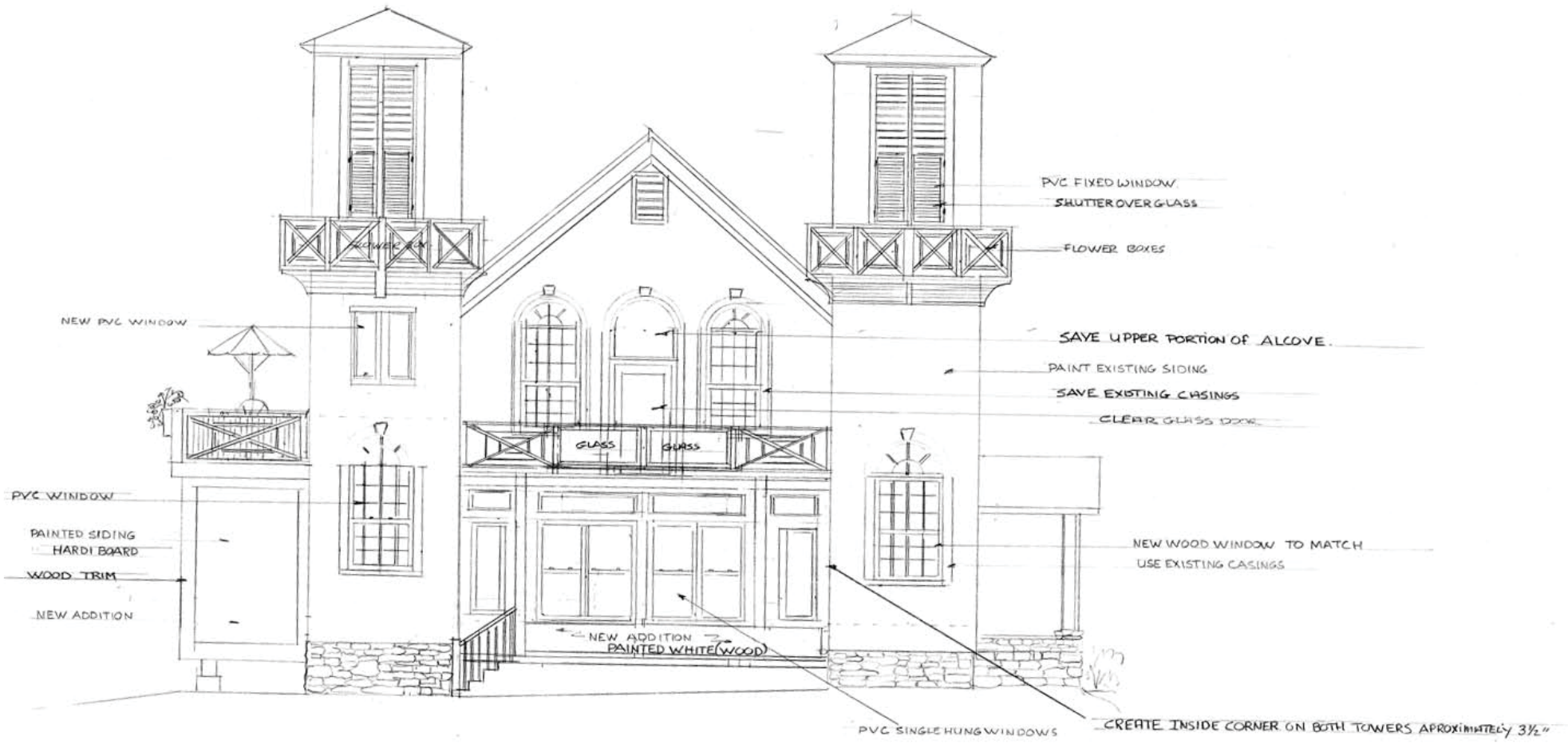
4 York Redoubt Crescent
Fergusons Cove



Planning District 5
(Chebucto Peninsula) Plan Area

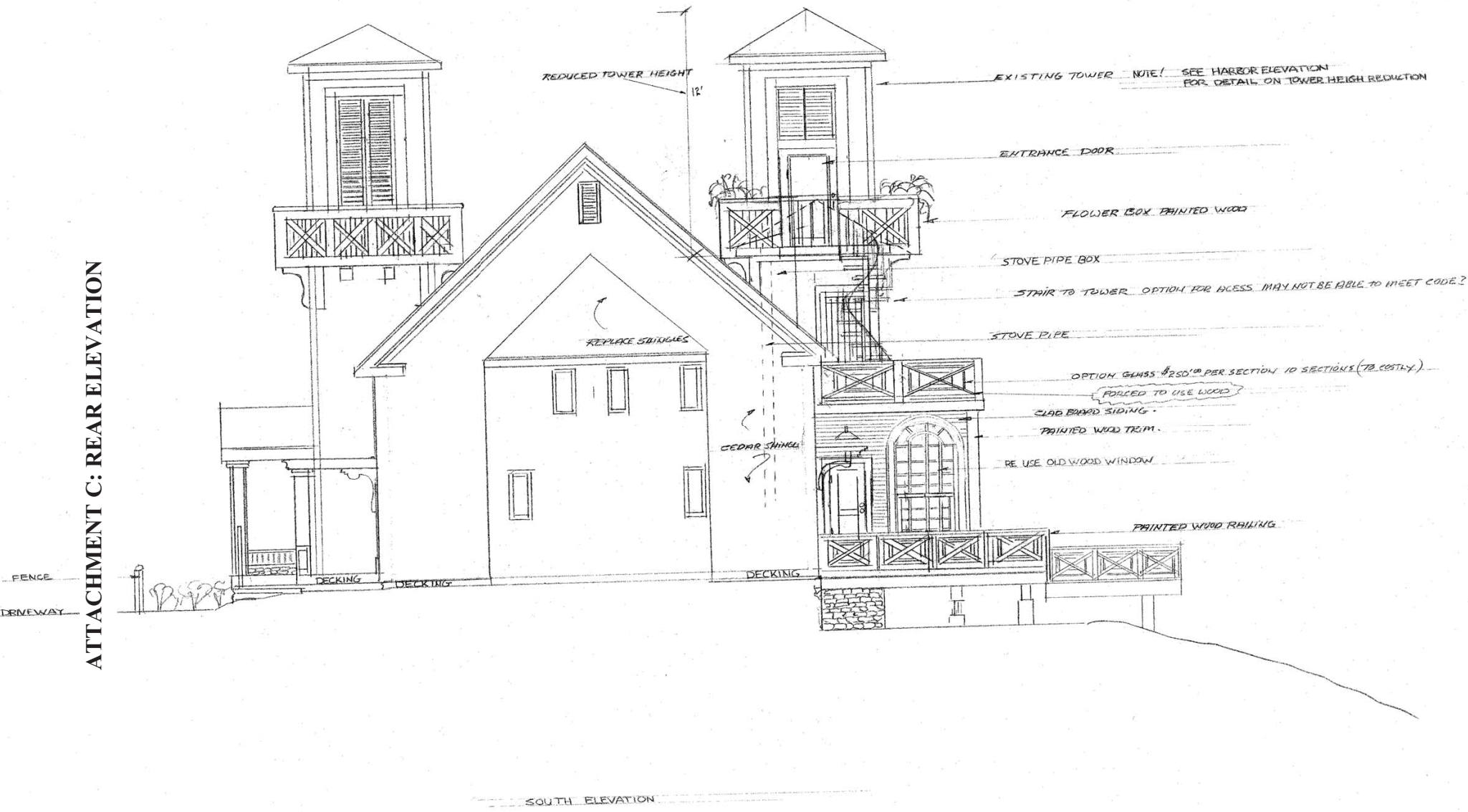
This map is an unofficial reproduction of a portion of the Zoning Map for the plan area indicated.

ATTACHMENT B: FRONT ELEVATION

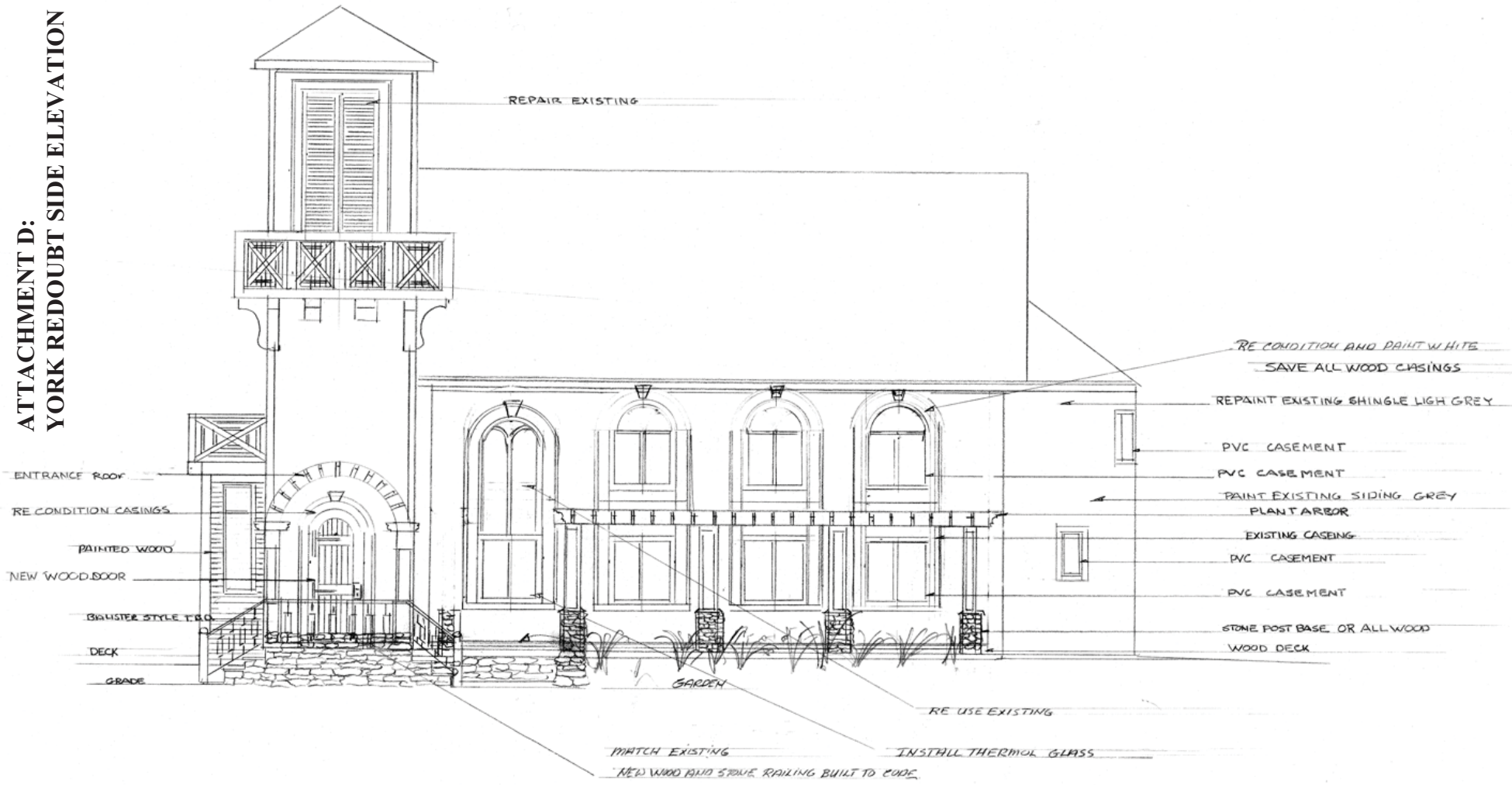


FERGUSON COVERD ELEVATION NW 1/4 1"

ATTACHMENT C: REAR ELEVATION

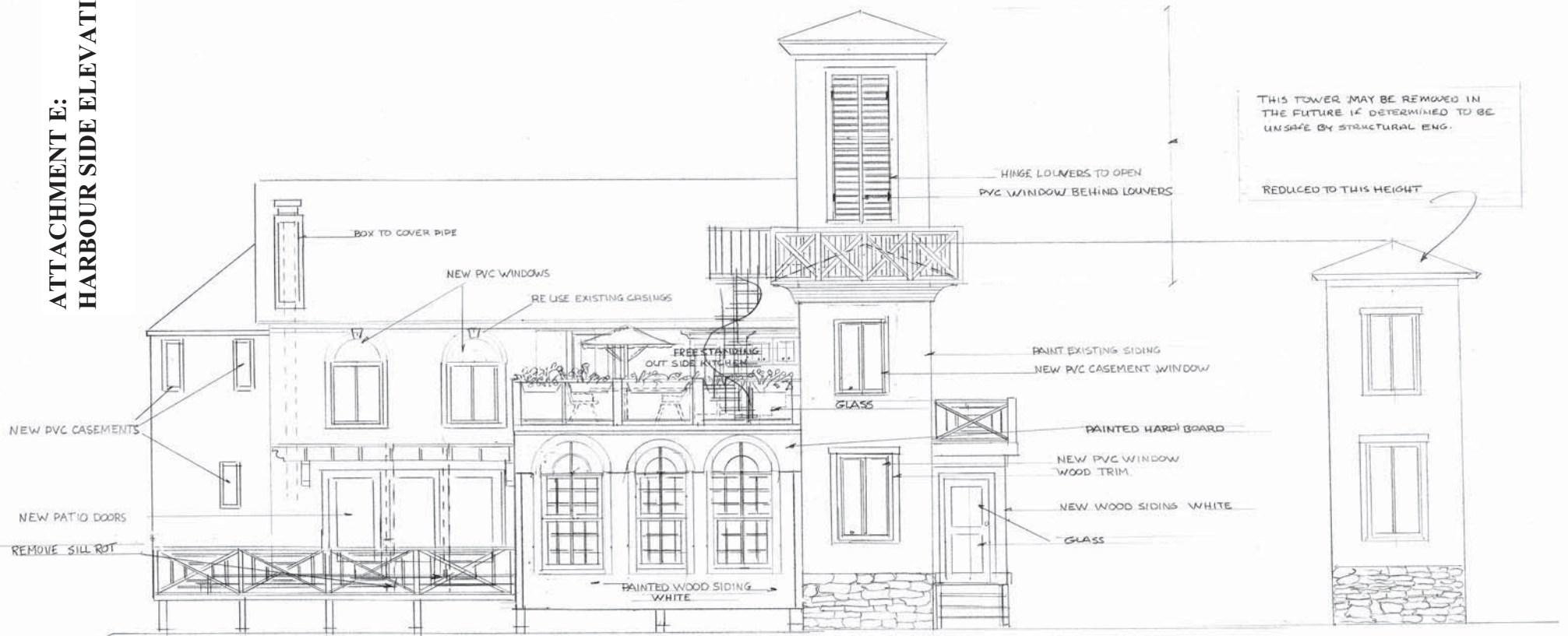


**ATTACHMENT D:
YORK REDOUBT SIDE ELEVATION**



YORK REDOUBT CR. ELEVATION

**ATTACHMENT E:
HARBOUR SIDE ELEVATION**



HALIFAX HARBOUR ELEVATION 14'-1"

ATTACHMENT F

PHOTOGRAPHS OF 4 YORK REDOUBT CRESCENT, FERGUSONS COVE



Figure 1: Stella Maris Church (1846) view from Fergusons Cove Road



Figure 2: Aerial photo (bing.com) showing large treed lot fronting Halifax Harbour and York Redoubt park.



Figure 3: York Redoubt side of the church building showing framed openings and windows.



Figure 4: Rear and harbour side of the church building showing the apse, framed window openings, and the tower.

Attachment G: Building Conservation Standards

These Conservation Standards are based on Conservation Standards used by the United States Secretary of the Interior (36CFR67)(1991) and are in keeping with most conservation principles, including the Venice Charter (1964).

The historic character of a heritage resource is based on the assumptions that (a) the historic materials and features and their unique craftsmanship are of primary importance and that (b) in consequence, they are to be retained, and restored to the greatest extent possible, not removed and replaced with materials and features which appear to be historic, but which are in fact new.

1. The property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building, its site and environment (see Note 1).
2. The historic character of the property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding hypothetical features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old design in colour, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials, shall not be used.
8. Significant archaeological resources affected by the project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment (See Note 2).
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Note 1: This standard is not intended to regulate the use of property. Land use regulation is implemented through the Land Use By-law under authority of the Municipal Government Act.

Note 2: Within the Downtown Halifax Secondary Planning Area and the Barrington Street Historic District, section 4 of the Design Manual of the Downtown Halifax Land Use Bylaw shall be considered in evaluating matters relating to compatibility of massing, size, scale and architectural features.