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**From:** Paul MacKinnon  
**Sent:** January-16-14 1:35 PM  
**To:** Adams, Stephen; Craig, Steve; Dalrymple, Barry; Fisher, Darrell; Hendsbee, David; Johns, Brad; Karsten, Bill; Mason, Wayne; McCluskey, Gloria; Mosher, Linda; Nicoll, Lorelei; Outhit, Tim; Rankin, Reg; Walker, Russell; Watts, Jennifer; Whitman, Matt; Mike Savage; Office, Clerks  
**Cc:** Denty, Kelly; Fraser, Jane; Labrecque, Mike; Butts, Richard; Holm, Maggie; Edmonds, Sheilagh  
**Subject:** Extension of Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Financial Incentives Program

HRM Mayor and Council  
P.O. Box 1749 Argyle Street  
Halifax, NS, B3J 3A5

*Re: Extension of Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Financial Incentives Program*

January 16, 2014

Dear Mayor Savage, HRM Councillors, HRM Planning Staff and Heritage Advisory Committee,

In 2009, as the cornerstone of heritage preservation in HRM by Design, the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District was adopted. This came after several long years of plans, committee meetings, and a delay due to the new downtown plan. A key component of the plan was the financial incentive program, which encouraged façade improvement through matched grants, and structural restoration, through tax forgiveness. The levels of assistance and the model were adopted as the one most appropriate to HRM, following extensive research at other HCD's across Canada and the U.S.

The program is set to expire March 31, 2014. We would strongly encourage you to extend the program, perhaps with some tweaking, for an additional 5 years. A sunset clause was built in for two main reasons: Uncertainty about the success of a new program; an end date would provide incentive for property owners to undertake work as soon as possible.

The program has done what it was intended to do. It got off to a bit of a slow start, as properties began to turn over. This was a positive move, as HRM by Design had solidified the worth of the properties, and several landlords decided to sell. Over the past 5 years, we have seen 16 properties apply for the program. Some great projects have been completed (such as Fireworks, the Cabot Building, the Colwell Building, and the full restoration of the FreeMason's Hall), and others can be seen being worked on now (the former Sam the Record Man and CD Plus buildings). We are hopeful that longstanding eyesores, such as the National Film Board building, and other challenges, such as the Pacific Building (Chives) will soon follow. We have spoken to additional landlords who are interested in doing significant work, but have not yet applied. The work to date has been well done, but the job is not yet finished. We believe an additional 5 years will allow these other projects to proceed.

Programs of this sort typically pay for themselves in increased assessments. More than that however, they ensure an important part of our culture (participants must waive demolition rights for 20 years – moreover the safest heritage

building is always the one that has seen recent investment) and civic pride. Heritage districts, though they contain private property, are a community asset, which is why it is appropriate to spend tax dollars on them. The investment is small, and the returns are great. Ending the program would only achieve very short term savings, and forego very large long term benefits. We feel an additional 5 year period will get us to where we want to be.

In getting feedback from the program participants, there is a strong desire to see it extended. Part of the challenge of the program was a long approvals and administration process, and we would be happy to work with HRM to see this streamlined.

HRM Council has indicated that Downtown/the Urban Core is a priority. Ending the program would send a wrong message at this time, especially when it is delivering what we hoped to see. We would ask that you give it another 5 years.

Sincerely,

Paul MacKinnon  
Executive Director  
Downtown Halifax Business Commission

cc HRM Planning Staff  
HRM Heritage Advisory Committee