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Heritage Advisory Committee
March 27, 2013

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee
Original Signed

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

DATE: March 8, 2013

SUBJECT: **Case H00371: Substantial Alteration 1259 Barrington Street (William Esson House), Halifax**

ORIGIN

Application by Geoff Keddy Architects and Associates Ltd.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Heritage Property Act

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the proposed substantial alteration to the William Esson House as outlined in Attachments A to C of this report.

BACKGROUND

The property at 1259 Barrington Street, Halifax, is a registered municipal heritage property (Map 1). The subject property contains a two-and-a-half storey brick building, known as the William Esson House, which contains four residential units and one commercial unit on the main level. On September 13, 2012, Geoff Keddy Architects and Associates Ltd. submitted an application for a substantial alteration to the heritage property on behalf of the property owner. The applicant wishes to construct an addition in the rear yard consisting of four storeys with seven residential units (Attachments A to C). In accordance with Section 17 of the Nova Scotia *Heritage Property Act*, any substantial alteration to a municipal heritage building requires the approval of Regional Council.

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 William Esson House is valued for its association with its occupant, relationship to its surrounding area, and architecture. William Esson, a successor to the John Esson importing and shipping firm, purchased the property and resided there from 1864-1871.

Built in 1864, the William Esson House is second in a series of five buildings of similar architectural design, all constructed by architect George Blaiklock. These five buildings complement one another and contribute significantly to the character of the neighbourhood. The William Esson House is a good example of the Halifax House style, a term that has been applied to a house style that was common between 1820 and 1900 in Halifax and is a derivative of the Georgian style.

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 William Esson House:

- Symmetrical three bay façade with a side hall plan;
- Steeply pitched, truncated, gable roof with large brackets on overhang;
- Red brick on all four sides of building, chimney on south elevation and heavy quoins at the building corners;
- Vertically proportioned windows on front elevation with moulded sandstone surrounds; and
- Arched doorway with surround including pilasters with decorated capitals, a fascia with relief motifs, and a dentilled cornice.

Heritage Building Conservation Standards & Design Manual

The Heritage Building Conservation Standards have been used by the Municipality on an informal basis since 1996 to evaluate substantial alterations to heritage properties. With the

approval of amendments to By-law H-200 in 2009, the Conservation Standards became duly adopted and are to be used in parallel with the Heritage Design Guidelines of the Design Manual when evaluating proposed alterations to registered heritage buildings within the Downtown Halifax plan area. The Conservation Standards and Design Guidelines ensure that careful consideration is given, and that different strategies may apply in different contexts to better integrate new development with existing heritage buildings.

Approval Process

The Development Officer has reviewed the proposed addition and determined that, as the proposal will not materially change the external appearance of the building facing street lines, it is subject to the non-substantive site plan approval process. This process requires notification to property owners within 30 metres of the subject property, but does not involve a decision by the Design Review Committee nor an appeal mechanism to Regional Council, as is the case with substantial site plan requests. Provided Regional Council approves the substantial alteration to the municipal heritage property, staff is able to issue the permits necessary to authorize construction.

DISCUSSION

Proposal

The proposed development involves changes to the rear of the William Esson House through the construction of a new four-storey addition containing seven units as shown in Attachment A. The proposed addition will connect to the William Esson House by an enclosed stairwell extending from street grade to a landscaped terrace on the roof of the proposed addition. The proposed addition will replace a prior two-storey addition and deck built in 1988 (Attachment D). It will incorporate an historic rear ell made of red brick and parking underneath the structure. For the most part, the addition will not be visible from any street with the exception of a portion of the enclosed stairwell, at the rear of the alleyway between the subject property and the neighbouring property to the north that will be visible from Barrington Street.

Heritage Building Conservation Standards

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

- **Historic Character:** The proposed addition is to the rear of the heritage building. It will result in minimal change to the character defining elements of the heritage building that are predominantly located on the front façade. One window at the rear of the heritage building will be converted into a doorway and enclosed by a stairwell. The dimensions of the opening will be changed to accommodate the doorway. This window is less distinctive than the windows on the front façade with little ornamentation. The enclosed stairwell may also necessitate an alteration to the modest roof overhang, by removing some roof material, at the rear of the building.
- **Integrity of Original Structure:** An original rear ell, constructed of red brick, will be largely preserved and rehabilitated as part of the new addition. A tall, red brick chimney, associated with the ell, will be removed. The red brick material from the chimney will be

reused to rehabilitate the walls of the rear ell.

Design Manual: Heritage Design Guidelines

Section 4.4 of the Heritage Design Guidelines, Guidelines for Integrated Developments & Additions, of the Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law Design Manual applies to this proposal (Attachment F). Staff have evaluated the proposal and advise that it is consistent with the Guidelines. The proposed addition will enable the rehabilitation of the William Esson House while preserving the visual prominence of this heritage asset.

Some of the Guidelines are prescriptive while others call for the exercise of discretion. Those items are outlined in more detail as follows:

Section 4.4.1 – Building Set Back

The proposed addition cannot be setback entirely from the building; it will be connected to the existing building by an enclosed stairwell which will be constructed on top of a rear ell original to the building. An outdoor terrace will replace the existing 1988 addition that is now in disrepair. The addition will also place the bulk of the new addition back from the existing building while providing communal space for the tenants. This terrace will also expose the rehabilitated red brick façade on the south side of the original rear ell while clearly distinguishing the heritage building from the new modern addition.

Section 4.4.3 – Façade Articulation and Materials

The proposed addition will be clearly distinguished as a modern building. The applicant indicates that the materials chosen for the proposed addition are high quality, durable, and require little maintenance. The proposed addition will be clad primarily with a durable aluminium wall panel with concealed fasteners as the primary material. All residential units will include ten-foot wide glass sliding doors to access balcony terraces. The enclosed stairwell connecting the heritage building to the modern addition will be clad in galvanized perforated metal that is partially transparent.

Conclusion

The proposed addition is to the rear of the heritage building and will not be visible from any street. It will result in minimal change to the character defining elements of the heritage building that are predominantly located on the front façade. It will replace an existing 1988 addition that is now in disrepair. A new outdoor terrace will place the bulk of the proposed addition back from the heritage building giving the appearance of two separate structures. An original rear ell will be rehabilitated and integrated into the proposed addition which will be further distinguished as a new building with modern high quality materials. Therefore, staff recommend that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Regional Council approve the substantial alteration to the William Esson House as contained in Attachments A to C.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications. The HRM costs associated with processing this application can be accommodated within the approved 2012/13 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 is information sharing achieved through posting this report on 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 William Esson House 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 William Esson House 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 William Esson House 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

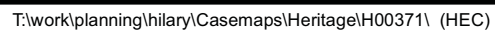
Map 1:	Location Map
Attachment A:	Site Plan
Attachment B:	Proposed Front (West) Elevation and Rear (East) Elevation
Attachment C:	Proposed Side (South) Elevation
Attachment D:	Photographs of 1259 Barrington Street, Halifax
Attachment E:	HRM Heritage Building Conservation Standards
Attachment F:	Heritage Design Guidelines, Section 4.4

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

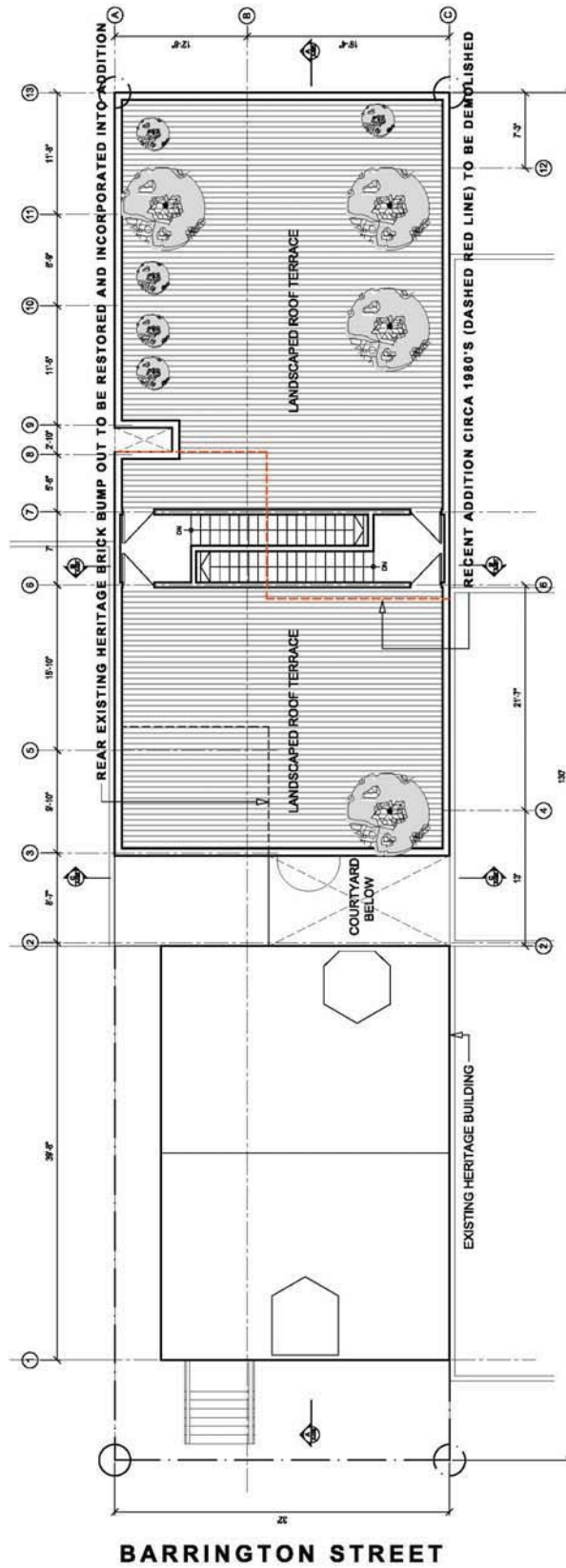
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Report Approved by:  Kelly Denty, Manager of Development Approvals, 490-4800



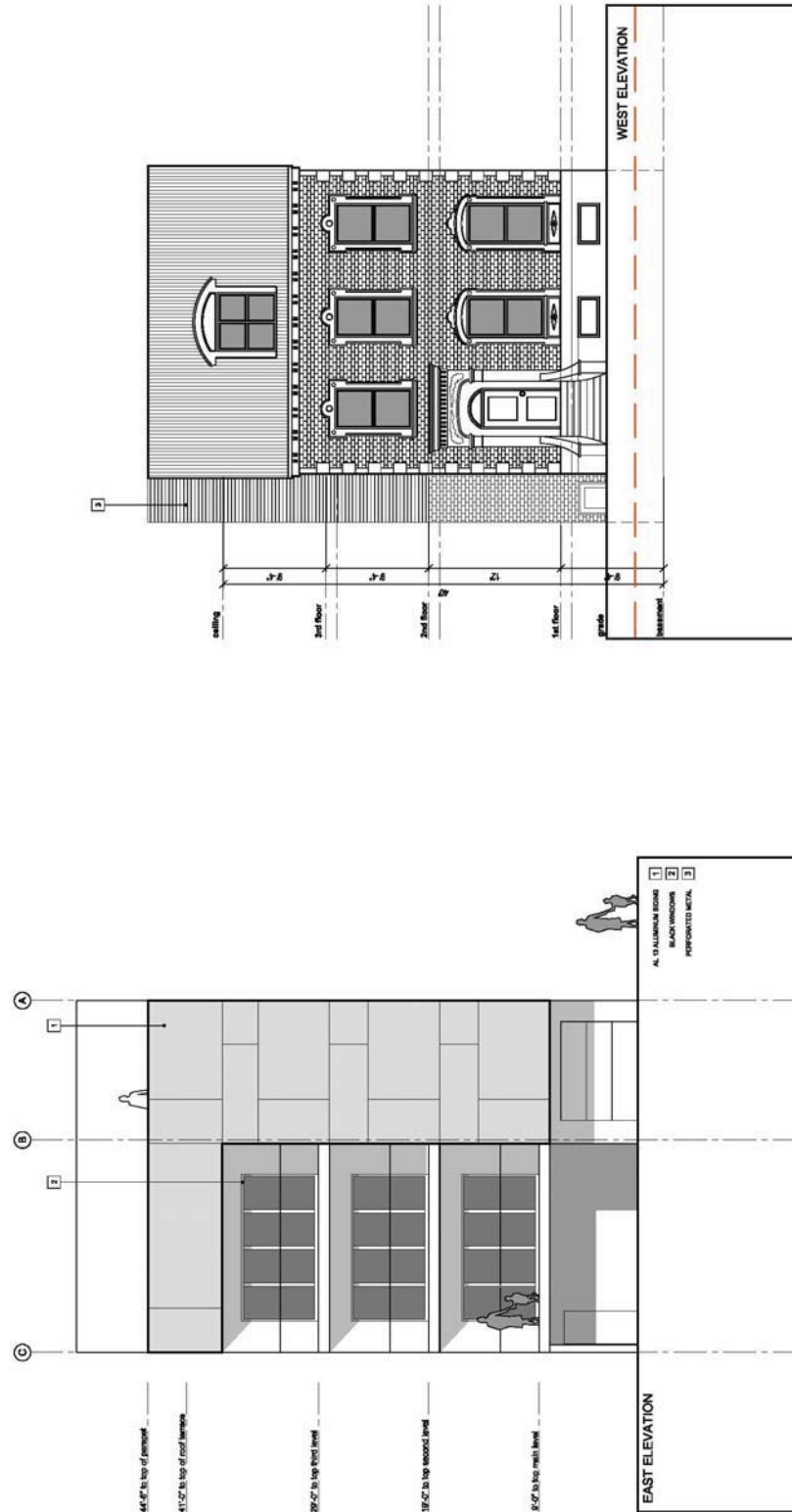
ATTACHMENT A

SITE PLAN

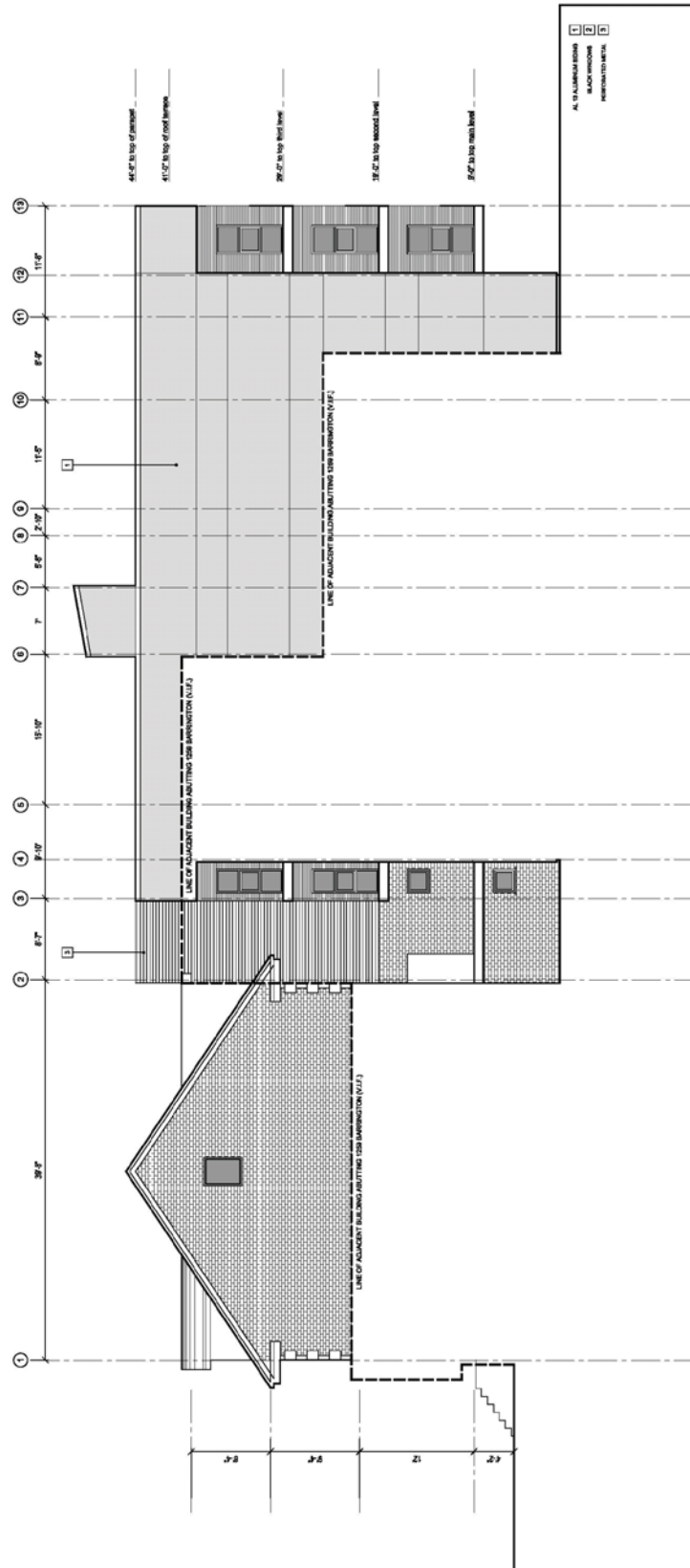


ATTACHMENT B

PROPOSED FRONT (WEST) ELEVATION AND REAR (EAST) ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE (SOUTH) ELEVATION



ATTACHMENT D

PHOTOGRAPHS OF 1259 BARRINGTON STREET, HALIFAX



Figure 1: William Esson House (1864), 1259 Barrington Street



Figure 2: Existing rear addition and deck from 1988 to be removed



Figure 3: Rear window to be altered and red brick chimney to be removed from the original rear ell

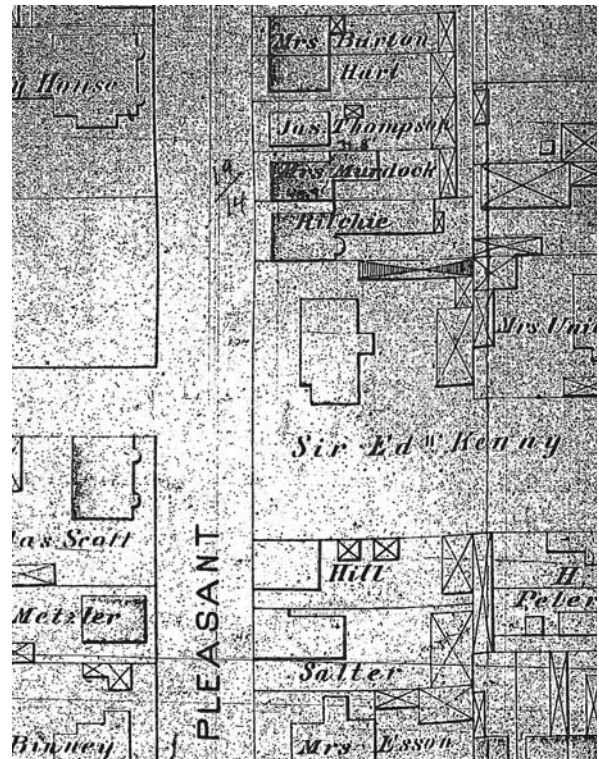


Figure 4: Halifax Fire Insurance Plan (1876), identifying the William Esson House with rear ell as “Mrs. Murdock”.

ATTACHMENT E

HRM HERITAGE BUILDING CONSERVATION STANDARDS

The following standards are used to assess all applications for property alteration and financial assistance. 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.
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.
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.

The above-noted standards are based on the Conservation Standards used by the United States Secretary of the Interior (36 CFR 67) (1991). They are generally in keeping with most Conservation principles, including the Venice Charter (1964).

ATTACHMENT F

HERITAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES, SECTION 4.4

Attachment F – Design Manual Checklist				
Section	Guideline	Complies	Discussion	N/A
4	Heritage Design Guidelines			
4.4	Guidelines for Integrated Developments and Additions			
4.4.1	Building Set Back			
4.4.1a	New buildings proposed to abut heritage buildings on the same site (integrated development) should generally transition to heritage buildings by introducing a building setback from the building line. This setback can be accomplished in several alternate ways, including:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new construction is entirely setback from the heritage building, resulting in a freestanding heritage structure . This is suitable where multiple façades have heritage value (see diagram for Option 1 at left). 			•
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new construction is setback from the street frontage of the heritage building, but only to a depth required to give the heritage structure visual prominence (see diagram for Option 2 at left). 			•
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new construction is setback along its entire façade from the street line established by the heritage structure (see diagram for Option 3 at left) 			•
4.4.1b	Consideration should only be given to the construction of new buildings abutting, or as an addition to, a heritage resource, when the parts of the heritage building that will be enclosed or hidden from view by the new construction do not contain significant heritage attributes.		•	
4.4.2	Cornice Line and Upper Level Setbacks			
4.4.2a	Maintain the same or similar cornice height for the podium building (building base) to create a consistent streetwall height, reinforcing the ‘frame’ for public streets and spaces.			•
4.4.2b	Stepback building elements that are taller than the podium or streetwall height. Stepbacks should generally be a minimum of 3 metres for fl at-roofed streetwall buildings and increase significantly (up to 10 metres) for landmark buildings, and buildings with unique architectural features such as peaked roofs or towers.			•
4.4.2c	Greater flexibility in the contemporary interpretation of			•

Attachment F – Design Manual Checklist				
Section	Guideline	Complies	Discussion	N/A
	historic materials and design elements is permitted.			
4.4.3	Facade Articulation and Materials (There are two alternative approaches to façade articulation: similarity and contrast)			
	<i>Similarity:</i>			
4.4.3a	Maintain the same architectural order and rhythm of both horizontal and vertical divisions in the facade.			•
4.4.3b	Provide similar materials to existing heritage buildings.			•
4.4.3c	Typical materials are masonry, usually brick or stone, in small modular units (bricks, cut stones).			•
4.4.3d	Where materials differ, for example concrete, provide fine scale articulation of the surface through score lines or modular units.			•
4.4.3e	Provide similar colour palettes, typically neutrals and earth tones.			•
	<i>Contrast:</i>			
4.4.3f	Consider existing architectural order and rhythm of both horizontal and vertical divisions in the façade in the articulation of the new building.			•
4.4.3g	Provide contrasting materials and surface treatments that complement the heritage building. Use of glass can be effective both for its transparency and reflectivity.		•	
4.4.3h	Ensure materials and detailing are of the highest quality. In a downtown-wide context, use of contrast should result in the most exemplary buildings in the downtown.		•	