

Schmidville HCD Stakeholder Steering Committee

Report to the Heritage Advisory Committee – March 28, 2018

We are writing to advise you that the Schmidville Heritage Conservation District is now moving to the next phase of the process for designation. We are proud to announce that the Stakeholder Steering Committee has finished meeting and advising HRM staff, who have drafted a plan and bylaw. We have worked very hard to preserve this unique neighbourhood for future generations to enjoy.

Despite our optimism for the future, there are a number of disappointments that we must bring to your attention. These affect the historic and cultural integrity of the Schmidville neighbourhood.

First is the height of existing and planned buildings surrounding Schmidville which offer no substantial transition away from our 35-foot height limit. The Park Victoria is 21 storeys; the Trillium is 19 storeys; the Brenton Place will be 16 storeys; Charter House is 15 storeys; the Margareta will be 9 storeys; the Mary Ann is 9 storeys; and we do not know yet how tall Dalhousie will build on Queen Street. These effectively put Schmidville in a canyon, seriously detracting from the effect of heritage designation.

Second is the actual and impending loss of eight fine historic houses on South Park Street, Brenton Place and Brenton Street, all due to new developments. This is almost 7% of the precious little left of historic Schmidville. There is the possibility of keeping the land in the heritage district while allowing for the new buildings. This would at least give the neighbourhood more inclusion in design and give impetus to maintain the new buildings to the high standards established under the district. As well as the pleasure of having built heritage, it is also an economic boon to cities.

Third is the street wall on the east side of Queen Street. We understand that there is no necessary allowance for the step back and setback rules for the entire former Halifax Infirmary site to be included in the Schmidville plan as it is just outside our boundaries. But if such step back and setback were pursued under the changes to the Centre Plan instead, it would be a positive step for the Schmidville, Central Library, and Spring Garden Rd. area. We remember the concrete wall the old Halifax Infirmary presented to Schmidville. It was not a pleasant site and the wind caused along Queen Street made it uncomfortable to walk. The big impact on Schmidville was the blocking of all morning sunlight between 9A.M. and 12P.M. over the entire neighbourhood. Both areas in present form allow for breaking points in the canyon affect that surrounds Schmidville and so once these two lots become large buildings Schmidville will only further become a valley in the urban jungle.

On a positive note, Schmidville was winner in 2017 and a finalist in 2015 in the neighbourhoods category of the Great Places in Canada Contest by the Canadian Institute of Planners. We will soon be receiving a plaque from that organization, which we will erect in Schmidville.

The establishment of construction guidelines, demolition controls, residential/commercial zones will help to maintain, shape and enhance a healthy district. Thus, for Halifax is it important to keep areas such as Schmidville diverse and unique as they already are, which will be aided in the future by the adoption of the Schmidville Conservation District Plan.

Larry Haiven, Chair

Schmidville HCD Stakeholder Steering Committee