



## 1800 ARGYLE ST. REDEVELOPMENT DESIGN RATIONALE

Submitted by Harvey Architecture  
On behalf of ARMCO Capital



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## PROJECT BRIEF

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Precinct 6:                              | Upper Central Downtown                                   |
| PID:                                     | 00002808   |
| Existing Building:                       | World Trade and Convention Centre Civic #1800            |
| Owner:                                   | ARMCO Capital  |
| Zoning:                                  | Downtown Halifax Zone (DH-1)                             |
| Total Area Foot Print Existing Building: | 3,913 m <sup>2</sup> /42,120 f <sup>2</sup> (Main Floor) |
| Total Addition to Existing Building:     | 260 m <sup>2</sup> /2,800 f <sup>2</sup>                 |
| Maximum Streetwall Height:               | 15.5 m   |
| Actual Height:                           | 8 m / 11.4 m   |
| Minimum Setback:                         | 0 - 1.5m   |
| Actual Setback:                          | 0 m  |

## PROPOSAL

Harvey Architecture on behalf of ARMCO Capital, is submitting a Site-Plan Approval Pre-Application for a building addition to the existing building located at 1800 Argyle St. previously the Halifax World Trade and Convention Centre. The building is situated on a flank lot that encompasses the entire block between Carmichael and Duke St. facing Argyle St. adjacent to parade square. The existing building occupies the entire lot backing on to the Scotiabank Centre with an internal shared property line. The lot does not abut registered heritage properties and is not located in a heritage district. The existing building contains a public easement in the form of a pedestrian link that currently runs along the Argyle St. facade. Separate to this proposal the developer is undertaking the necessary applications and processes for the demolition and relocation of this portion of the public corridor to be reinstated in a more interior location of the existing building.

The proposed development is to reconfigure the Argyle St. facade by extending the second level floor plate to meet the property line at the existing grade level facade. The addition to the second level encompasses 2700 sf. of additional commercial space without increasing the at grade footprint of the existing building. The roof of this new addition will create a new terrace accessed from the third level. New punched openings in the existing brick facade will allow access to the terrace and provide light to newly created commercial space on that level. The redevelopment will provide 6 at grade commercial units along Argyle St. providing a total of 10,320 sf. of commercial space. As part of the redevelopment two levels of internal parking will be incorporated into the existing building with new parking entrances on Carmichael and Duke St. proposed. A new public entrance will be incorporated on the Duke St. side of the site as part of the above mentioned public corridor relocation.



### SITE CONSIDERATION

The site overlooks Parade Square on the Argyle St. side setting up a unique streetscape. The redevelopment of the facade along Argyle St. will play a civic role in framing the extents of parade square while affording the occupants of the building a feeling of open space and prospect looking out over the square. In order to balance the responsibilities of appropriately defining Parade Square while offering the users of the space maximum engagement with the public open area. Careful consideration has been taken in how the building massing and articulation will respond to and enhance the above mentioned spacial relationships.

Although the site does not directly abut any heritage properties it is directly adjacent to Halifax City Hall. Given the proximity to such an important civic site this proposed redevelopment along Argyle St. will be sympathetic in its treatment of the streetwall character in both its material quality and articulation in order not to overwhelm or undermine the presence of such a prominent civic landmark.

The current streetwall presented along Argyle St. offers no engagement with the pedestrian other than to shuttle them from one point to another via the internal public corridor. The existing facade does not present an appropriate streetwall height and lacks any building articulation ultimately amounting to a blank wall presented to the public. This redevelopment seeks to reinstate the fine grained detail of the streetscape articulated by narrow shop-fronts and human scaled spaces. Deviations between commercial spaces are delineated well with vertical brick elements and permeability to the street is encouraged by transparent glazing taking the place of the current heavily tinted curtain wall.



## LAND-USE REQUIREMENTS

Permitted land Uses:

7 (1) Commercial Uses

## BUILT FORM REQUIREMENTS

8(3-5) Heritage:

Compliant;

No registered heritage properties, not abutting registered heritage

Properties, not within a heritage district

8(6) Building Height:

Compliant;

No change proposed to height of existing building.

8(12) Landscaping for Flat Rooftops:

Compliant;

No proposed flat roof in alterations to existing building.

8(13) Land Uses at Grade:

Floor to floor heights are less than 4.5 meters at grade along Argyle St. existing building floor to floor heights 3.2 meters.

8(18) Wind Impact:

Compliant;

None of the alterations to existing buildings will effect the wind patterns of surrounding area.

8(19) Accessory Buildings:

Compliant;

No accessory buildings are foreseen.

8(20) Prohibited External Cladding Materials:

Compliant;

No prohibited cladding is being proposed.



## **STREETWALLS**

9(1) Streetline Setbacks:

Compliant;

Streetwall built at property line, no setback.

9(2) Maximum Streetwall Height:

Compliant:

15.5m (LUB Map 7) streetwall does not exceed 15.5m

9(3) Minimum Streetwall Height:

Refer to Variance Request

9(5) Width:

Compliant;

Streetwall extends the full width of lot abutting the streetline.

9(7) Streetwall Stepbacks:

Compliant;

Streetwall does not exceed maximum streetwall height outlined on (LUB Map 7).

## **BUILDING SET BACKS & STEPBACKS**

10(2) Low Rise Buildings:

Compliant;

No portion of the proposed addition will exceed the maximum streetwall height of 15.5m outlined on (LUB Map 7). the low rise portion will cover 100% of the lot upon which it is situated.

## **PARKING**

14(1) Compliant;

No surface parking proposed.

- No current parking on site

-proposed development adds 2 levels of interior parking total 127 spaces



## S-1 DESIGN MANUAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Downtown Precinct Guidelines

#### (2.6) Precinct 6: Upper Central Downtown

*a. Encourage low to mid-rise mixed use development while respecting the historic block pattern.*

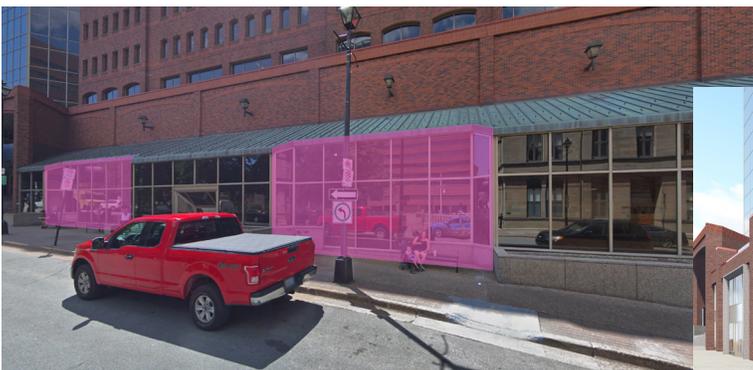
We are proposing a low-rise addition that will cover 100% of the Argyle St. facade north of the existing main building entrance. The proposed facade will respect the historic block pattern reinstating the prevailing character of narrow storefronts contributing to the 'fine grained' character of the streetscape.

*b. Improve the appearance and street-level functionality of larger buildings such as the Metro Centre with street-oriented infill and landscaped roofs.*

The proposed redevelopment of the existing building will vastly improve what is now a facade with no street-level functionality and a uniform blank wall to that of a vibrant pedestrian oriented streetscape. Street level interaction between the public and the newly proposed shop-fronts along Argyle St. will greatly improve the street-level functionality of the existing building.

*l. The Argyle Street and Blower Street area shall be reinforced as a vibrant area of low to mid-rise buildings, small-scale retail uses, restaurants, bars, potential for permanent sidewalk cafes, hotels, cultural uses and residential uses.*

The proposed redevelopment of the Argyle St. Facade will provide small scale retail opportunities that will promote a vibrant animation along the block from Carmichael to Duke St. This proposed redevelopment will promote the expansion of an already popular planning strategy that has re-shaped the streetscape along Argyle St. from Blower St. to Prince St.



**Figure 1.** Existing streetwall conditions along Argyle St.



**Figure 2.** Proposed streetwall conditions offering street-level functionality and public permeability from Argyle St.

## GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 3.1 THE STREETWALL

#### 3.1.1 Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial

The proposed addition is located on Argyle St. which is not identified as a pedestrian-oriented commercial street according to Map 3 of the LUB. It is however the intent of this re-development to create grade level pedestrian-oriented commercial uses along Argyle St. in keeping with the design objectives outlined in this section of the design manual.

*a. The articulation of narrow shop fronts, characterized by close placement to the sidewalk.*

The proposed addition meets the property line with no setback from the sidewalk providing direct access by the passing public. The retail/commercial units have been articulated in a way that sets up a narrow rhythm of shopfronts. This articulation of narrow shop fronts is further emphasized by the stone portals occurring at every second bay providing a second layer of vertical division along the elevation.

*b. High levels of transparency (non-reflective and non-tinted glazing on a minimum of 75% of the first floor elevation).*

All glazing used at the first floor elevation is highly transparent allowing for maximum permeability to the sidewalk. 70% of the Argyle St. elevation will be comprised of non-reflective and non-tinted glazing

*c. Frequent entries*

The permeability from grade level will be greatly increased with 7 new entry points created along Argyle St. where no entries exist presently.

*e. Patios and other spill-out activity is permitted and encouraged where adequate width for pedestrian passages is maintained.*

The width of the sidewalk along Argyle St. could allow for opportunities for spill-out activity. If the paving and curb treatments that have reshaped the blocks between Blowers and Prince St. are continued along Argyle St. this could make such opportunities more viable.



## 3.1.2 Streetwall Setback

*a. Minimal to no Setback (0-1.5m): Corresponds to the traditional retail streets and business core of the downtown. Except at corners or where an entire block length is being redeveloped, new buildings should be consistent with the setback of the adjacent existing buildings.*

The proposed streetwall placement for the re-development along Argyle St. abuts the property line with 0m setback. This will allow for grade level pedestrian-oriented retail uses along nearly the entire block between Carmichael and Duke St. The streetwall placement at the sidewalk is in keeping with the traditional retail streets of the downtown and remedies the existing building condition along Argyle St. that consists of alcoves setback from the sidewalk line. (See Figure 1.)

## 3.1.3 Streetwall Height

*To ensure a comfortable human-scaled street enclosure, streetwall height should generally be no less than 11 meters and generally no greater than a height proportional (1:1) to the width of the street as measure from building face to building face...*

The proposed streetwall height is 8m above which is a stepback of 3.7m that forms a terrace at the existing building third level elevation. The wall continues from this level to meet the minimum 11m streetwall height at the existing building fourth level elevation where it steps back again 2.4m to form another terrace. The existing high-rise portion of the building continues from this stepback to the roof level. (See Variance Request #1).



**Figure 3.** Elevation elements along Argyle St.



## 3.2 PEDESTRIAN STREETSCAPES

### 3.2.1 Design of the Streetwall

*a. The streetwall should contribute to the ‘fine grained’ character of the streetscape by articulating the facade in a vertical rhythm that is consistent with the prevailing character of narrow buildings and storefronts.*

The design of the streetwall makes use of a grid of brick vertical elements that express the structural bay of the existing building as well as divide the 6 retail/commercial units along Argyle St. At every second bay a stone portal element sets up a secondary vertical rhythm to the facade that further helps contribute to the ‘fine grained’ character of the streetscape. Horizontal elements include a strip of spandrel glass that divides the first level from the second level and a brick band that runs along the cornice line of the existing third level of the building. These horizontal elements are broken by the verticals in order to express the prevailing character of narrow buildings and storefronts typical of the downtown blocks.

*b. The streetwall should generally be built to occupy 100% of a property’s frontage along streets.*

The proposed streetwall occupies 100% of the property’s frontage along Argyle St.

*e. Streetwalls should be designed to have the highest possible material quality and detail.*

The materials selected for the proposed addition will match the existing buildings high quality. These include brick, granite, copper, aluminum curtain wall and glass. Clear glazing will be used at street level in place of the existing heavy tinted glass.

*f. Streetwalls should have many windows and doors to provide ‘eyes on the street’ and a sense of animation and engagement.*

All grade level glazing on the streetwall along Argyle St. is clear vision glass allowing for visual connection between interior spaces and the street. See also notes 3.1.1 (b) The visual permeability of the Duke St. elevation has been greatly improved by the introduction of new glazing.

*g. Along pedestrian frontages at grade level, blank walls shall not be permitted, nor shall any mechanical or utility functions (vents, trash vestibules, propane vestibules etc.) be permitted.*

The existing blank wall conditions along the Argyle and Duke St. facades have been eliminated with the interventions of the proposed redevelopment. (See Figures 4 & 5). Mechanical and utility functions will be avoided on the facade on Argyle St. and limited on Carmichael and Duke St. Services will be internalized as much as possible and existing louvers will be utilized where possible.





Figure 4. Existing Duke St. blank wall conditions



Figure 5. Proposed Duke St. facade offering more permeability to the street.



### 3.2.2 Building Orientation and Placement

*a. All buildings should orient to, and be placed at, the street edge with clearly defined primary entry points that directly access the sidewalk.*

The step up in streetwall height at the corner of Duke and Argyle St. clearly defines the relocated entrance to the public corridor. This vertical element added to the corner of Duke and Argyle St. helps to define the building on the site. The addition and added streetwall height along Argyle St. orients the building to the street edge. Building articulation along the Argyle St. facade sets up clearly delineated store fronts that direct sidewalk traffic to entry points.

### 3.2.3 Retail Uses

*d. minimize the transition zone between retail and the public realm. Locate retail immediately adjacent to, and accessible from the sidewalk.*

The proposed retail frontage along Argyle St. is placed at the sidewalk edge with no setback.

*e. Avoid deep columns or large building projections that hide retail display and signage from view.*

Although the facade is designed to be broken by vertical elements to create an appropriate rhythm on the street, these elements are not excessively deep to the point that they will obscure retail display or block signage from view.

*f. Ensure retail entrances are located at or near grade. Avoid split level, raised or sunken retail entrances. Where a changing grade along a building frontage may result in exceedingly raised or sunken entries it may be necessary to step the elevation of the main floor slab to meet the grade changes.*

The changing grade along the existing building frontage on Argyle St. sets up a difficult condition to satisfy the above guideline. Where as this is a proposed addition to an existing building it will not be possible to step the elevation as the existing floor plates are fixed. This creates a challenge for at grade retail entrances along Argyle St. and it is proposed that our strategy of at grade entrances from the sidewalk with an internal transition to the existing building floor level will be an acceptable solution. (See plans and Figure 2. for clarification on this aspect). (See Variance Request #2).

*g. Commercial Signage should be well designed and of high material quality to add diversity and interest to retail streets, while not being overwhelming.*

A horizontal band of spandrel glass will dictate placement of commercial signage and keep the signs within the framework of the architecture.



### 3.2.5 Sloping Conditions

*Many streets in the downtown are steeply sloped, and pose challenges to creating pedestrian-oriented streetwall conditions. Internal floors are by necessity flat, making it difficult to match the external facade for building entrances, and sometimes even to provide windows...*

*c. Provide windows, doors and other design articulation along facades; blank walls are not permitted.*

New glazing has been added to the Duke St. Facade. See notes 3.2.1 (Refer to Figure 5.)

*d. Articulate the facade to express internal floor or ceiling lines; blank walls are not permitted.*

*e. Wrap retail display windows a minimum of 4.5 meters around the corner along sloping streets where retail is present on the sloping street.*

*f. Wherever possible, provide pedestrian entrances on sloping streets...*

*g. Flexibility in streetwall heights is required in order to transition from facades at lower elevations to facades at higher elevations on there intersecting streets....*

Refer to Figure 6 to see how the above guidelines have been implemented on the sloping conditions along the Duke St. facade as it transitions to Argyle St.



**Figure 6.** Sloping conditions along Duke St.

### 3.3 BUILDING DESIGN

#### 3.3.1 Building Articulation

Refer to previous notes regarding building articulation, In addition to what has already been discussed the proposed re-development meets the design objectives of this section by;

The architectural hierarchy of base,middle and top has been well established with the design of the new streetwall along Argyle St. The design of the shopfronts has established a strong base element that emphasizes the existing high-rise portion. (refer to notes 3.2.1 (a) and Figure 3.)

Reinstating the vertical rhythm of narrow buildings and shopfronts along Argyle St. respects the traditional downtown patterns while providing new architectural variety and quality.

While Argyle St. is the predominant facade this proposal addresses, careful consideration and articulation has been exercised to create a consistent design intent along Duke St.

#### 3.3.2 Materials

Refer to previous notes regarding streetwall building materials.

Building materials have been chosen to match the high quality materials on the existing building. heavily tinted glazing will be replaced with clear units at the street level. All facades will have consistent quality of materials. The new entry canopy over public corridor entrance will be copper to match the existing roofing materials that will remain on the Carmichael St. building corner.

#### 3.3.3 Entrances

The entrance to the public corridor on Duke St. is emphasized with a taller building mass on the corner of Duke and Argyle St. and some variation in building material treatment. The new entrance is punctuated by a copper canopy that also provides protection from the weather. (See Figure 5.)

### 3.4 CIVIC CHARACTER

#### 3.4.2 Corner Sites

Refer to previous notes and (see Figure 6.)



### 3.5 PARKING, SERVICES AND UTILITIES

#### 3.5.1 Vehicular Access, Circulation, Loading and Utilities

Parking will be located internally to the building with vehicular access on Carmichael and Duke St. The garage doors will be set back from the sidewalk ensuring proper safety mechanisms are in place to protect pedestrian visibility. Garage doors will be of high quality materials with vision panels. (See figures 7 & 8).



Figure 7. Carmichael St. Parking Entrance



Figure 8. Duke St. Parking Entrance



3.5.4 Lighting

Lighting along Argyle St. will emphasize the vertical elements of the shopfronts and up-lighting on the high-rise portion of the existing building will emphasize the base, middle and top architectural hierarchy at night. Lighting will be provided as necessary at all building entrances and parking entrances. Limited night lighting of shop front displays will also be incorporated along Argyle St.

3.5.5 Signs

Building signs will be of high quality durable materials that fit the material palette of the building. Retail signs will be controlled in a way that fits the architecture (see note 3.2.3 g.)



## VARIANCE REQUEST #1 - STREETWALL HEIGHT VARIANCE

### 3.6.3 Streetwall height Variance

*Streetwall heights may be varied by Site Plan Approval where:*

- a. The streetwall height is consistent with the objectives and guidelines of the Design Manual; and*
- b. The modification is for a corner element that is used to join streetwalls of differing heights; or*
- c. The streetwall height of abutting buildings is such that the streetwall height could be inconsistent with the character of the street or*
- d. where a landmark building element is called for pursuant to the Design Manual.*

A variance in streetwall height from the minimum 11 meters to 8 meters is being requested for the proposed streetwall along Argyle St. We believe the variance is in accordance with the following clause of section 3.6.3.

- b. The modification is for a corner element that is used to join streetwalls of heights.*

The proposed corner element at Duke and Argyle St. emphasizes the corner site with a vertical element that breaks the lower volume of shopfronts along Argyle St. and wraps around to meet the cornice line of the streetwall along Duke St. The existing cornice line of the Duke St. streetwall matches the datum of the cornice line of roof of Halifax City Hall across the St. (See Figure 9.).

In order to maintain this datum and still create a vertical element emphasizing the corner condition we propose dropping the height of streetwall along Argyle St. to 8 meters.(See Figure 6.)



## VARIANCE REQUEST #2 - MINIMUM FLOOR TO FLOOR HEIGHT

### 3.6.15 Land Uses at Grade Variance

*The minimum floor-to-floor height for the ground floor of a building having access at the streetline or Transportation Reserve may be varied by Site Plan Approval where:*

- a. The proposed floor-to-floor height of the ground floor is consistent with the objectives and guidelines of the Design Manual; and,*
- b. The proposed floor-to-floor height of the ground floor does not result in a sunken ground floor condition;*

*And at least one of the following:*

- e. In the case of a new building or an addition to an existing building being proposed along a sloping street, the site for the proposed new building or the proposed addition to an existing building is constrained by sloping conditions to such a degree that it becomes unfeasible to properly step up or step down the floor plate of the building to meet the slope and would thus result in a ground floor floor-to-floor height at its highest point that would be practical.*

We believe that the sloping conditions along Argyle St. as well as the floor plates of the existing building to which we are proposing to add meet the variance outlined in part 3.6.15 (e).



## CONCLUSION

This design rationale expresses the architects and developers intent to improve the existing building at 1800 Argyle St. It is our opinion that the development proposal will vastly improve the streetscapes of Argyle and Duke St. while taking careful consideration of the intent outlined in both the Land Use Bylaw and Design Manual. The variance requests are a result if careful consideration of the guidelines as interpreted by the structural and siting constraints of the existing building. These requests represent a sincere effort to respect the fabric and character of the urban core and thus garner Design Manual support.

Harvey architecture on behalf of ARMCO Capital thanks you for you consideration.



# 1800 Argyle St. Redevelopment: Design Rationale



Image A. Duke & Argyle St. Corner



Image B. Duke St. Facade & public corridor entrance



Image C. Argyle St. Storefronts



Image D. Duke St. Parking Entrance





Image E. Carmichael St. Parking Entrance