

Heritage Advisory Committee
April 23, 2025

Item 9.1.1
HALIFAX

Downtown Dartmouth Heritage Conservation District

Background Study

What is a Heritage Conservation District?



A Heritage Conservation District (HCD) is a defined area of historic or architectural value, in accordance with the *Heritage Property Act*

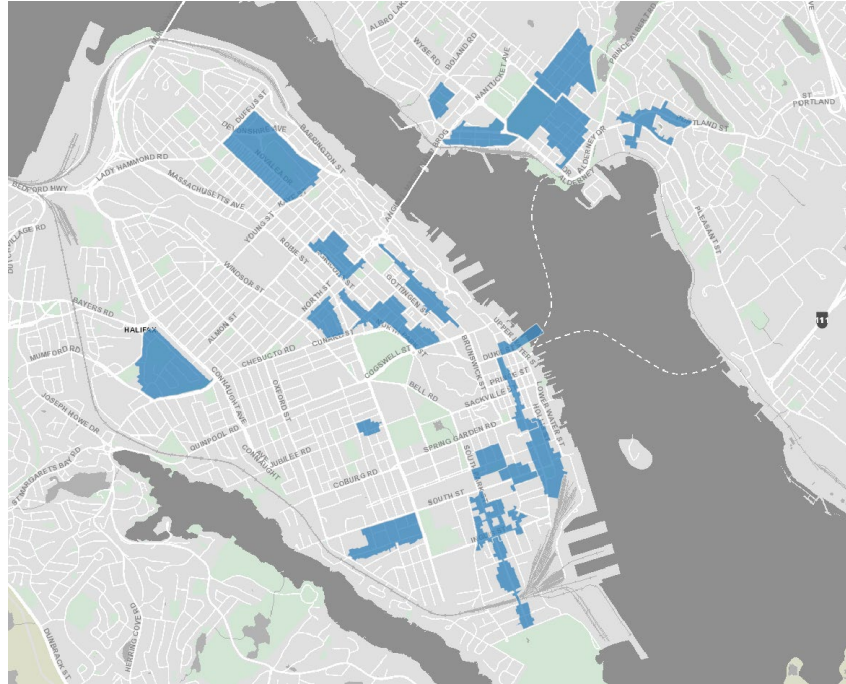
HALIFAX

Project Origin

- Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy
- Policy CHR-10: consider initiating and adopting proposed HCDs identified in Table 4
- Lists 17 proposed HCD's for further study
- Regional Council identified Downtown Dartmouth as a proposed HCD

“The sections of Downtown Dartmouth to the southeast of the Dartmouth Common contain a mix of 18th and 19th century residential and commercial buildings where the architecture of the buildings narrates a story of the community’s evolution”

Active and Proposed HCDs



Report Origin

In 2020, following a motion by Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, prioritized HCD's based on areas with:

- High concentration of registered heritage properties;
- Rare examples of historic architecture;
- High rate of change based on development permit activity over the past five years; and,
- Potential for large-scale redevelopment due to land use designation

Report Origin

November 17, 2020, Halifax Regional Council motion (Item No. 11.2.1):

“THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prioritize the adoption of new Heritage Conservation Districts in the following order: 1) Downtown Dartmouth; 2) Old North Suburb; and 3) Creighton’s Field;”

HALIFAX

Creating a Heritage Conservation District

The *Heritage Act* defines the procedure for establishing a Heritage Conservation District is carried out in three separate phases:

1. Initiation and Adoption of a Background Study;
2. Community Engagement and Heritage Conservation District Plan & By-law Preparation; and
3. Adoption and Implementation of the Heritage Conservation District Plan & By-law



Creating a Heritage Conservation District

The role of HAC with respect to heritage conservation districts is to advise the municipality respecting:

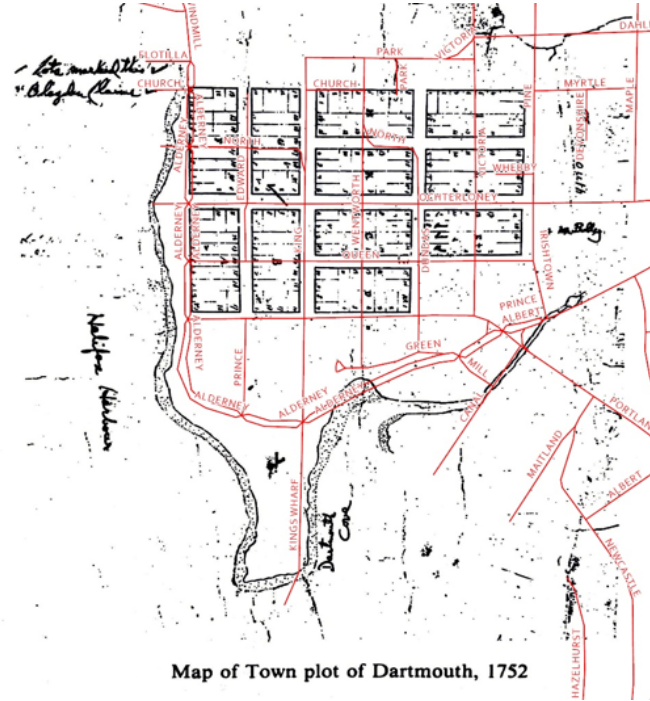
1. Preparation, amendment, revision or repeal of a conservation plan and conservation bylaw;
2. The administration of heritage conservation districts; and,
3. An application for a certificate that is required by the Act or the conservation plan and bylaw to go to a public hearing

Heritage Conservation Districts Regulations

Seeks to address the following *Heritage Conservation Districts Regulations* requirements in the preparation of a conservation plan and by-law:

- a) the rationale or justification for heritage conservation measures in the district;
- b) the rationale for the boundaries of the district;
- c) the relationship of a conservation plan and conservation by-law with any municipal planning strategy, land-use by-law or provincial land-use policy or regulation in effect for the district; and
- d) an analysis of the social and economic implications of the establishment of the district, as these relate to clause a)

Historical Context: *Early Settlement*



- Mi'kmaq used the area for summer encampments
- First Town Plot of colonial Town of Dartmouth, established in 1750
- Provided agricultural produce to the Town of Halifax
- First colonial families arrived from Gravesend, England on the ship *Alderney*
- Ferry service began operating in 1752

Historical Context: *Loyalists & Maroons*

- By 1754, population dwindled due to tensions with the Mi'kmaw, whose traditional and ancestral lands were being adversely impacted by European settlement
- After the War of Independence (1775-83), many Loyalists arrived in Dartmouth and established businesses
- In 1786, Town Plot was resurveyed to add more streets and building lots
- In 1796, British government relocated 500 Maroons from Jamacia to Nova Scotia. Severe mistreatment led to relocation to Sierra Leone



Historical Context: *Early Industry*



- Shubenacadie Canal operated from 1861 to 1871
- Industrial town by mid-19th century with new suburbs developed
- Starr Manufacturing Company designed and manufactured ice skates
- Stone crushing, ice harvesting, shipyards, dry goods, and smaller businesses such as blacksmiths, carriage factories, grocery and hardware stores
- Dartmouth incorporated into a town in 1873

11

Historical Context: *Modern Downtown Dartmouth*

- Opening of MacDonald Bridge in 1954 led to rapid suburban and commercial development
- Dartmouth amalgamated with suburban area in 1961
- Various large construction projects including Dartmouth City Hall, Queen Square, and new ferry terminal
- In 1990s, Commercial Street converted to four-lane boulevard and renamed Alderney Drive



Rationale for Conservation Measures:

Heritage Value



- **Rich architecture:** Rare examples of historic architecture from early colonial development;
- **Cultural and community value:** Diverse history from Mi'kmaq to Loyalist, Quaker and Maroon settlements that played a role in the social, economic and spiritual life of the area; and,
- **Industrial development and urban growth:** Developed around key industries such as Shubenacadie Canal, evolving through industrialization and post-war recovery

13

Rationale for Conservation Measures:

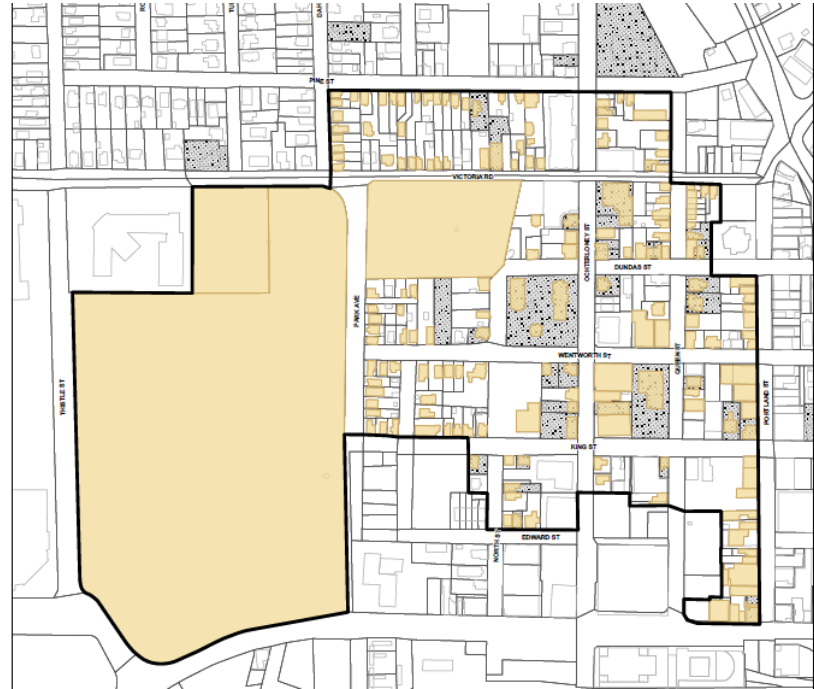
Development Pressure



- Between 2015 and 2023, 109 permits issued for mostly mixed-use development
- Downtown Dartmouth (DD) zone allows for Floor Area Ratios between 1.75 and 8.5 and heights up to 90 metres
- Development will be encouraged through heritage sensitive development regulations in the HCD Plan

Rationale for HCD Boundary

- Amended study area identified through the Housing Accelerator Fund initiative
- Proposed boundaries encompass original colonial Town Plot laid out in 1750 and again in 1786
- Contributing resources (identified in yellow) are buildings, structures, or landscapes that contribute to HCD heritage value



15

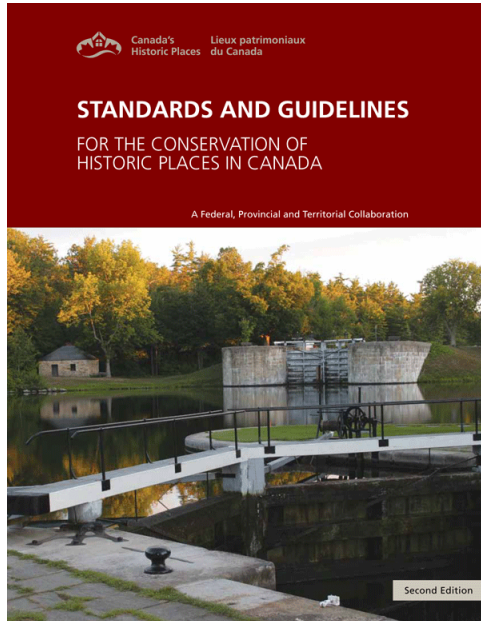
Rationale for HCD Boundary:

Character-Defining Elements

- Original Dartmouth Town Plot (1750) bound by Church St, Alderney Dr, Portland St & Pine St/Irishtown Rd;
- Harbour views from major streets: Church, North, Ochterloney, Queen, Portland, King & Prince;
- Large square blocks from 1786 replacing original rectangular layout;
- Victorian-era suburbs west of North St & north of Victoria Rd, within/near original Town Plot;
- Historic church properties within original town; and,
- Cemeteries at Park Ave & Victoria Rd



Heritage Conservation Approach



- Plan will establish policies tailored to the character of Downtown Dartmouth
- A Heritage Officer will be designated to administer the Plan and issue certificates
- *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, 2nd Edition* will be used to evaluate any alterations to a property within the HCD

Social and Economic Implications



- ✓ Strengthen community identity
- ✓ Encourage the development of a complete community within a walkable, urban setting
- ✓ Provide financial incentives to help maintenance and rehabilitation efforts
- ✓ Tangible link to history with educational opportunities
- ✓ Growth potential through the revitalization of vacant lands and underused properties

Next Steps

- **Background Study** must be considered by HAC and Regional Council, and the Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH)
- **1st Public Meeting** held for Background Study
- **2nd Public Meeting** held for draft HCD Plan and By-law
- HCD Plan and By-law considered by HAC and Regional Council, including a **Public Hearing**
- **Minister approval required** (no timeframe)



Recommendations

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Accept the background study contained in Attachment A to initiate the process to establish a Heritage Conservation District in Downtown Dartmouth; and,
2. Follow the Public Participation Program for HCDs, adopted by Regional Council on November 17, 2020, as contained in Attachment B, to obtain public input on the proposed Downtown Dartmouth Heritage Conservation District (HCD) plan and bylaw in accordance with Section 6 of the Heritage Conservation Districts Regulations.

HALIFAX

Thank you