

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH
1102-1110 PURCELLS COVE ROAD

Heritage Development Agreement Application
Design Rationale

June 25, 2025



DESIGN RATIONALE

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- Neighbourhood and Landscape
- Building Height Context
- Heritage Registration
- Previous Massing Study

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- Heritage Building Materials
- Investment in the Community

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- C: Heritage Impact Statement
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PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Site Description

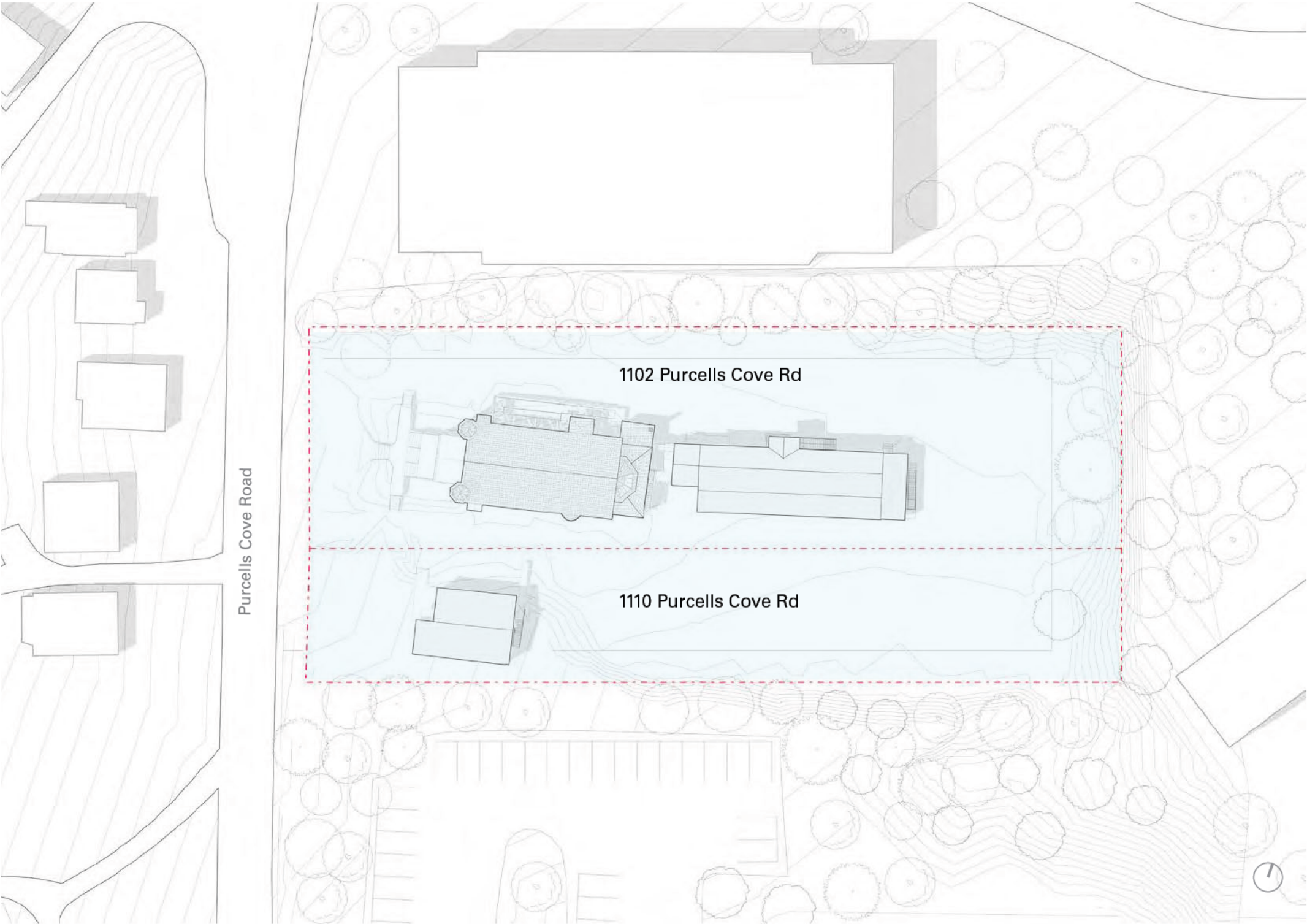
Site Description

1102 and 1110 Purcell’s Cove Road are located on adjacent lots in Halifax, NS, near the Armdale Yacht Club and the Armdale Rotary, in a quiet residential area bordered by wooded land and close to the Purcell’s Cove Backlands and Long Lake hiking trails.

1102 Purcell’s Cove Road is the former site of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, a community landmark opened in 1929. Prior to its construction, the site was used as a powder magazine during World War I. The church served the Armdale community for nearly a century before closing in September 2021.

1110 Purcell’s Cove Road contains a three-storey wood-frame rectory house. Both lots slope gradually toward the rear, backing onto forested land that provides a natural buffer and a connection to the surrounding landscape.

ADDRESS	1102 Purcells Cove Rd	1110 Purcells Cove Rd
USE	St. John the Baptist Church	Rectory and parking
PID	00251835	00251843
AREA	~36,716 sf	~22,264 sf
ZONING	R-2 Two-family Dwelling	R-2 Two-family Dwelling



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Neighbourhood and Landscape

Neighbourhood Character

The site is located along Purcell’s Cove Road, within a predominantly residential area that blends mid-rise apartment buildings with low-rise single-family homes. Surrounded by a natural landscape of mature trees and native vegetation, the area maintains a harmonious balance between development and nature.

Varied Setbacks: Homes and buildings along Purcells Cove Road are set at varying distances from the street, ranging from modest front yards to deeper setbacks that preserve mature tree cover and winding driveways.

Diverse Heights: The area features a mix of one- and two-storey homes, multi-unit residential buildings of 6-9 storers, and a few larger estate-like properties perched on the granite slopes.





Varied Uses: While the area is primarily residential, including single family and multi-unit residential buildings, the community also includes commercial buildings, churches, marinas, boatyards, and former quarry sites, reflecting the area’s deep connection to the land and water.

Natural Landscape Characteristics

Purcells Cove Road features rugged topography with granite outcrops, forests, and coastline. Properties vary in elevation, offering views of the Northwest Arm. As the road winds south, larger lots and spaced-out homes blend with the natural landscape.

The area also features various community amenities and a green pathway along the Northwest Arm. Introducing new housing and transforming the Heritage building into a community asset will further support the area’s growth and development.



-  Community Amenity/Recreation
-  Walking Trails
-  Church
-  Site

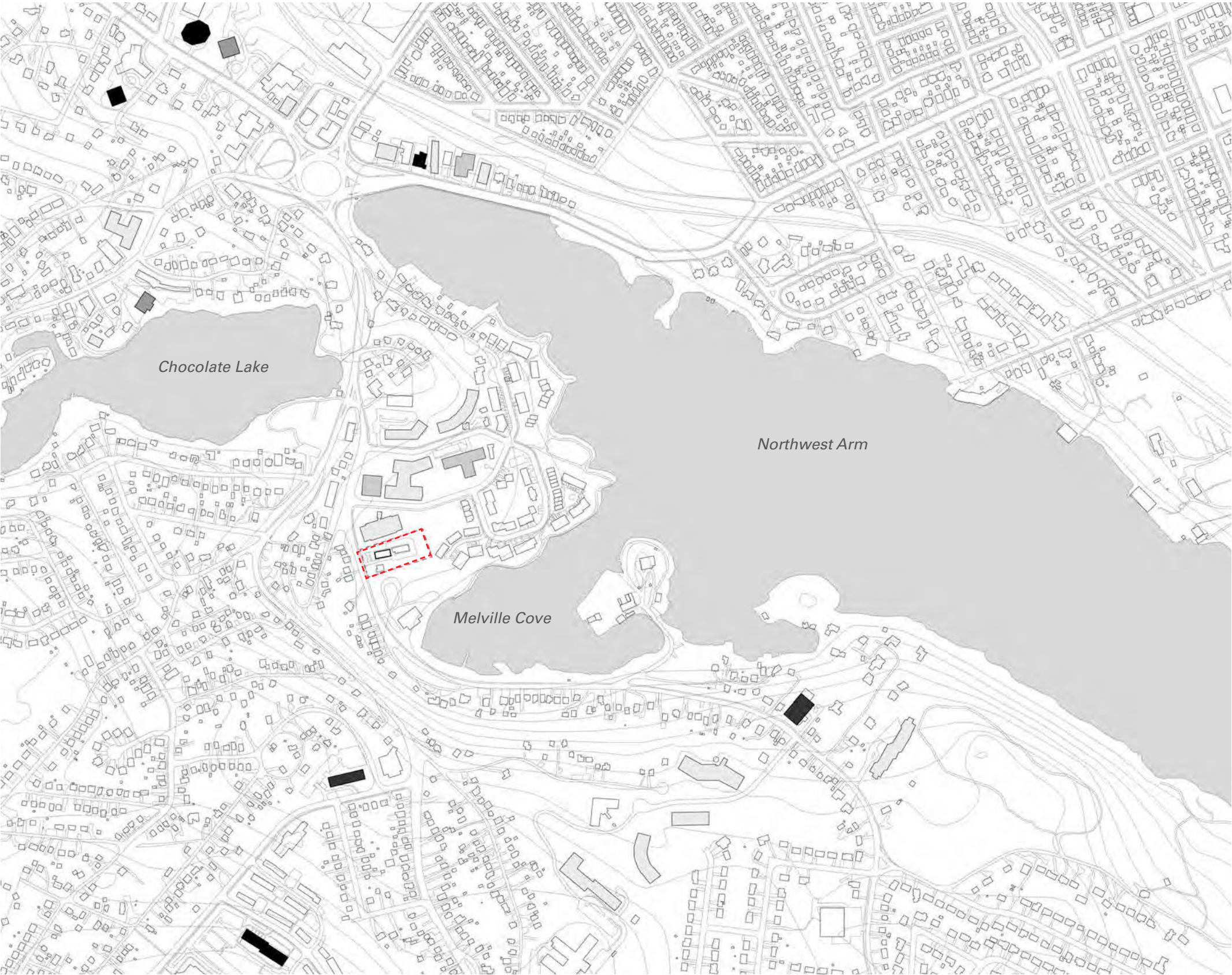
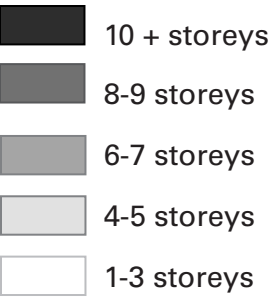
- 1 - Chocolate Lake Recreation Centre
- 2 - Chocolate Lake Park & Beach
- 3 - Halifax Yoga
- 4 - Regatta Point Walkway
- 5 - St. George’s Greek Orthodox Church and Community Centre
- 6 - Melville Island Viewpoint
- 7 - Boat Yard
- 8 - Armdale Yacht Club



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Building Height Context

Building Height Context

The built form along Purcells Cove Road is predominantly low-rise and mid-rise residential. This is comprised of one- to two-storey single-family homes and mid-rise residential buildings with 4-7 storeys. There are occasional institutional and commercial buildings such as churches, community halls and restaurants. At the perimeter, several 10+ storey residential buildings exist, typically with generous setbacks. While the immediate context is modest in scale, introducing a taller, small-footprint building on a larger site would be consistent with the broader development pattern and contribute to housing needs.



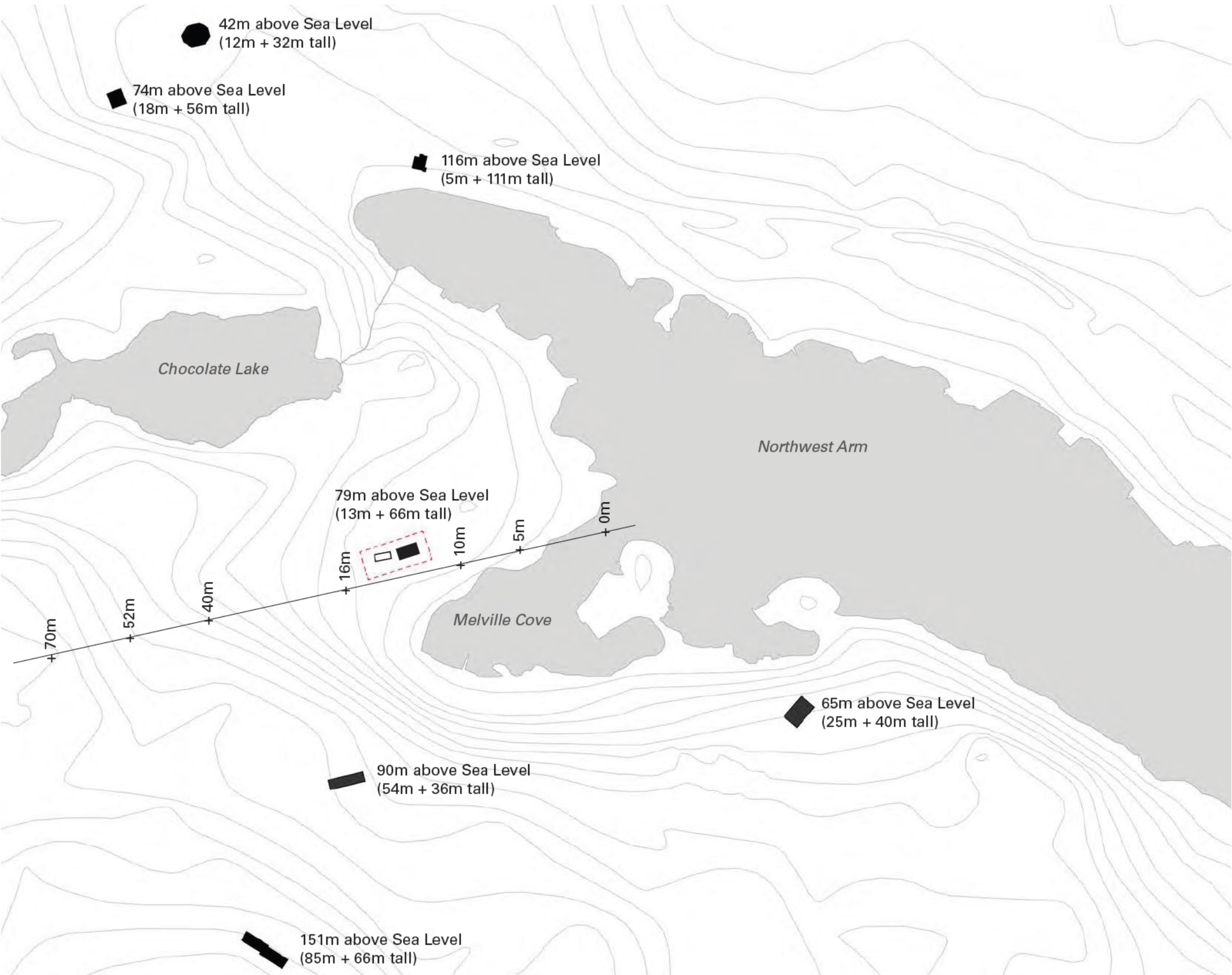
PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Building Height Context

Building Height Context

The concept of relative building height is particularly relevant at 1102 and 1110 Purcells Cove Road, where topography plays a significant role in shaping visual impact. These properties are situated on gently sloping terrain near the base of a larger ridge line, with surrounding elevations rising to the east and south. As a result, even a modestly taller building on these sites would appear less prominent when viewed against the higher backdrop. This natural elevation change helps integrate increased height into the landscape more seamlessly, reducing the perceived scale of new development and supporting thoughtful intensification within the existing visual context.

Relative Building Height

= Ground Elevation + Actual Building Height





PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Heritage Registration


Heritage Registration

1102 Purcells Cove Road is a municipally designated heritage property in Halifax, recognized for its architectural and historical significance. The site includes the former St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church, built in 1929, and a rear extension added in 1948 to accommodate educational functions. Unlike the church, the extension is a modest, utilitarian structure and does not share its ornate architectural character, and it is not registered. In 2022, Halifax Regional Council granted the Church heritage status under the Heritage Property Act. Together, the buildings reflect the cultural and spiritual history of the Purcells Cove area and contribute to the community’s diverse religious heritage.

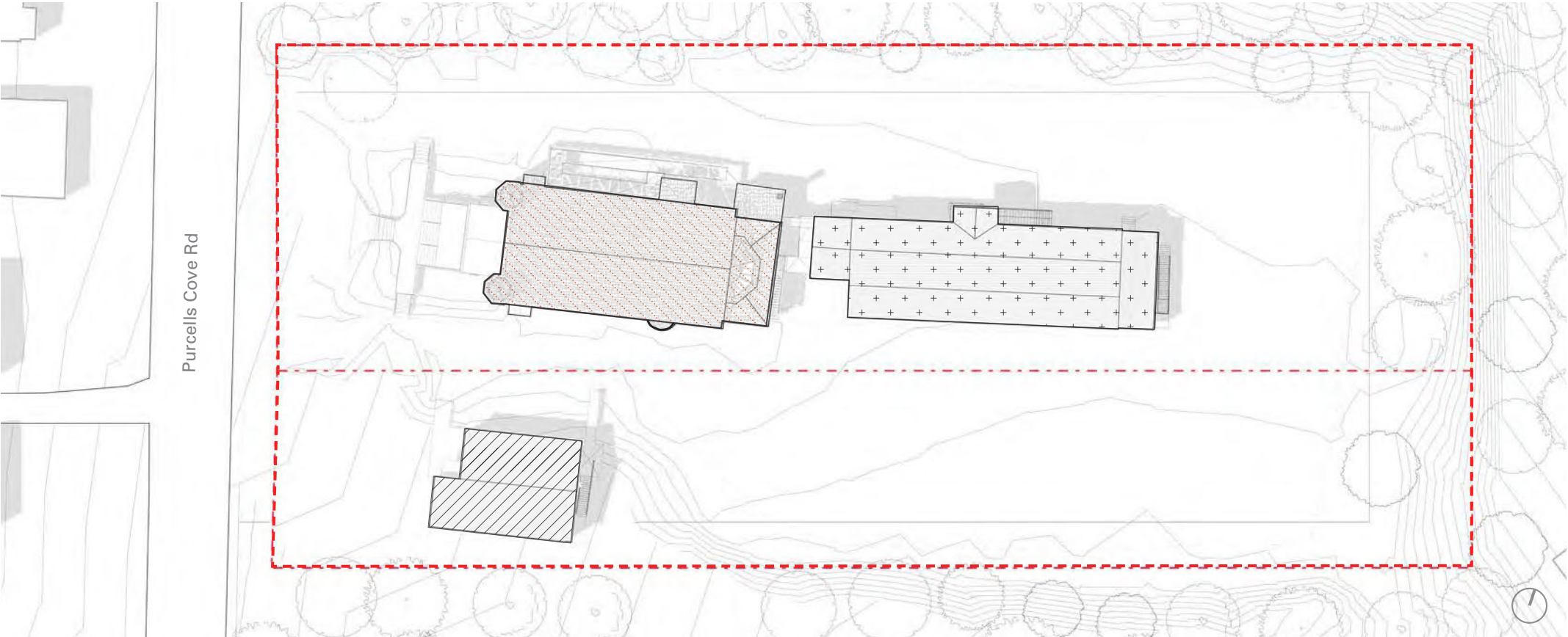
1110 Purcells Cove Road, known as the Rectory, is a two-storey wood-frame dwelling located to the south of the church, on a separate parcel directly adjacent to 1102 Purcells Cove Road. While the church is listed as a Registered Heritage Property by Halifax Regional Municipality, the Rectory like the Church extension does not hold heritage status and has been assessed as having no heritage value. It is currently proposed for demolition.

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Footprint of First St. John the Baptist Church constructed in 1929
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Rear extension constructed in 1948; not subject to heritage registration
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Rectory constructed in 1969; not subject to heritage registration



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Previous Massing Study

This previous massing study for the redevelopment of the heritage property highlights several important lessons learned during the design process. The primary takeaway was the importance of maintaining the visual and architectural prominence of the heritage building.

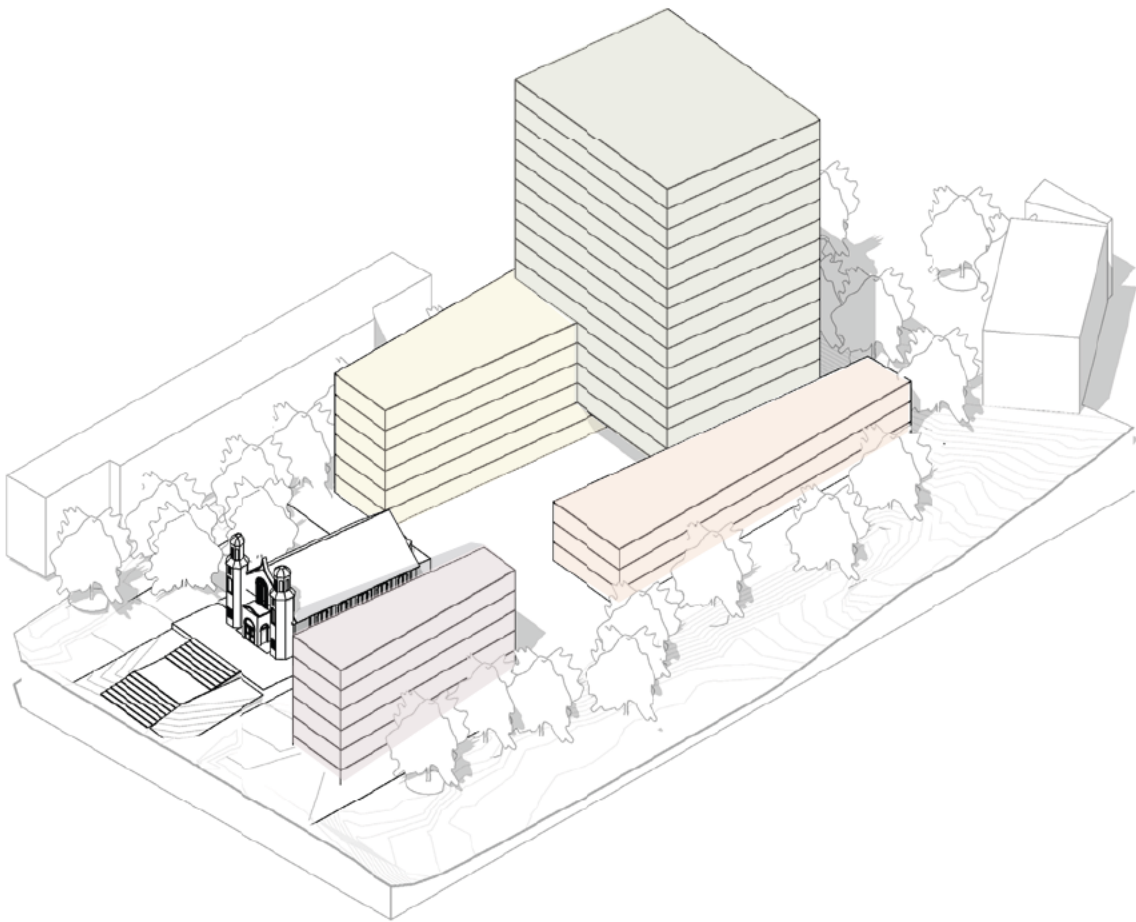
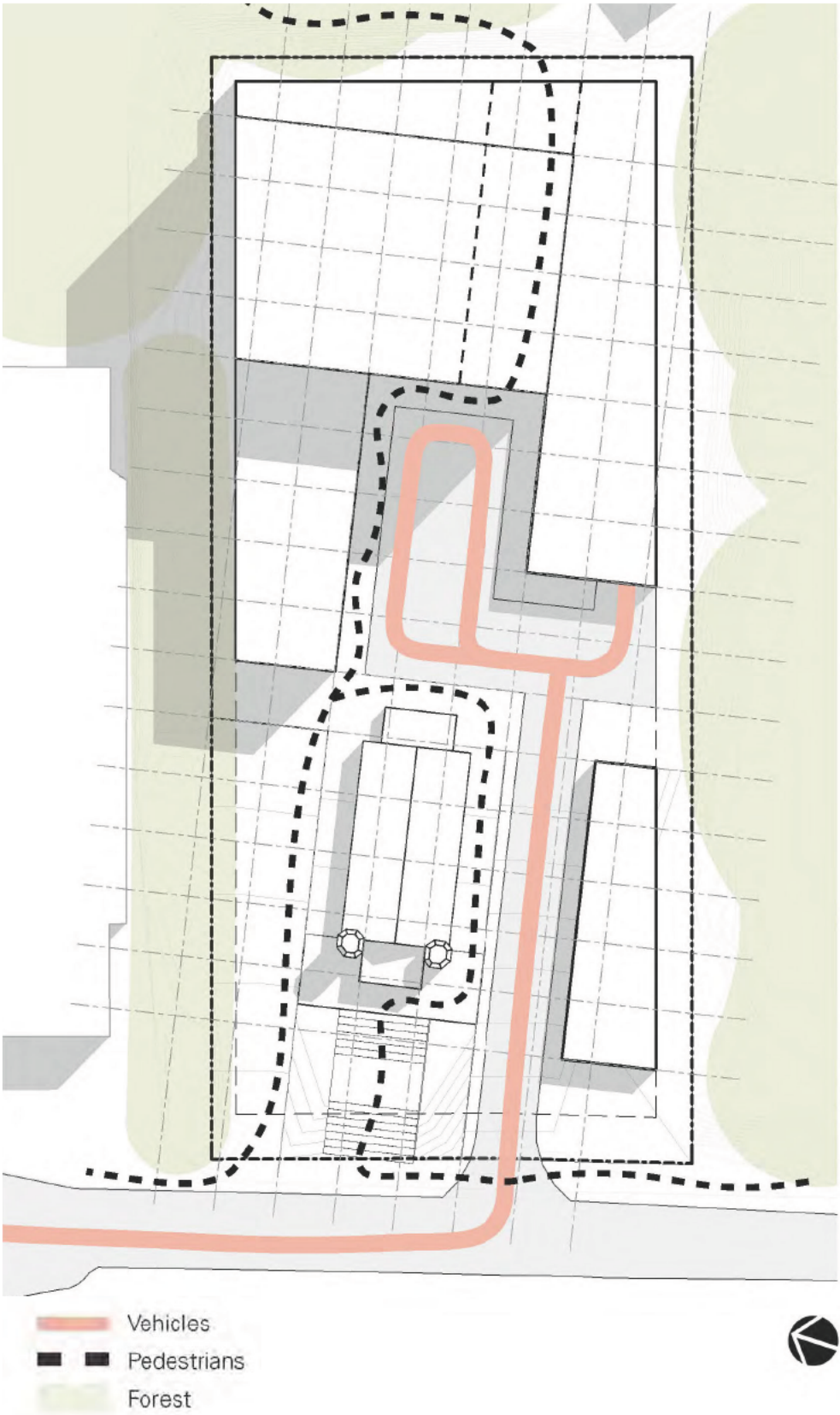
Site strategies that failed to minimize the footprint of the new construction resulted in massing that competed with and crowded the Church. One critical realization was the need to avoid placing new buildings near or adjacent to the Church, as this proximity reduced its prominence on the site while increasing the visual impact of the proposed new building on the street.

The preferred design strategy, shown on the following pages, involves relocating the Church closer to the front of the site, which allows for a new residential building to be positioned toward the rear of the property. To preserve the visual hierarchy of the Church and ensure that it remains the focal point of the site, the design of the residential building should arrange it's massing it such a way that prevents it from visually overpowering the heritage building. Further, it should be confined to the back half of the site to reduce the perceived scale of the building, while prioritizing the view of sky above the Church.

This design strategy produces a tall, slender building at the rear of the site which orients its narrowest face toward the heritage building without detracting from its prominence on the site.

PRELIMINARY DATA

SCHEME	FOOTPRINT	FLOORS	GROSS
01 Courtyard	8000	14	112000
	8640	6	51840
	2600	5	13000
	5670	3	17010
Total New	24910		193850
Church	2600		2600
TOTAL	27510		196450



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Site Strategy

This design proposal re-imagines the heritage building as a shared community amenity, complemented by a new multi-unit residential development that ensures the project’s economic viability.

At the heart of the proposal is a carefully considered relocation of the church: reoriented to squarely face Purcells Cove Road and shifted forward on the site to enhance its visibility and prominence within the community. Recognizing that churches are traditionally designed to command a strong presence within their context, the design team has developed a series of strategies to uphold this architectural intent.

1. Site Hierarchy

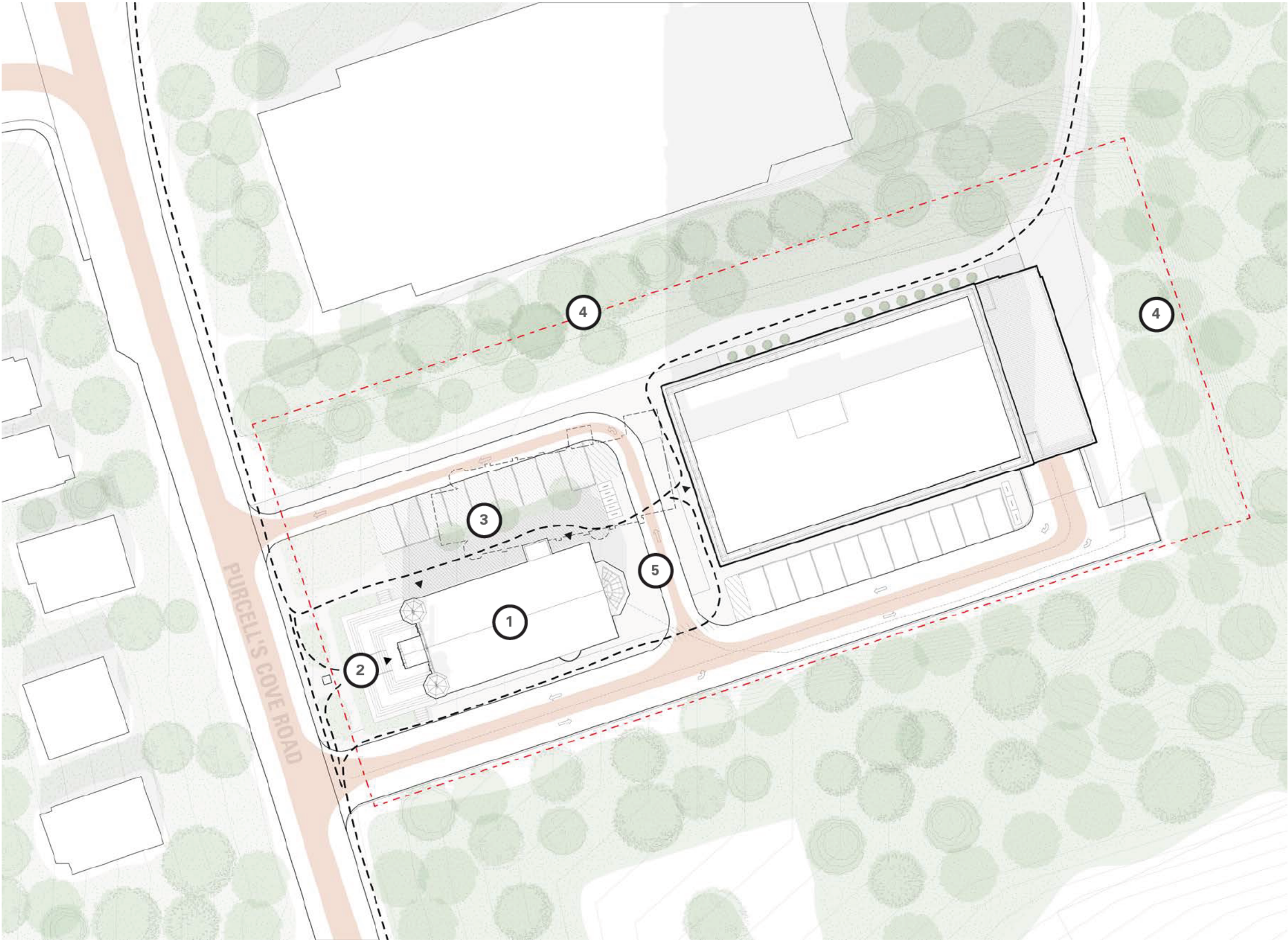
Positioning the heritage building prominently at the front of the site, aligned with Purcells Cove Road, preserves its status as the dominant visual element for both pedestrians and motorists. This clear hierarchy establishes the heritage building as the foreground focus, while the new residential development is respectfully sited at the rear.

2. Heritage Building Front Yard

To honor the church’s historical relationship with the community, the front yard and approach will be carefully restored and enhanced. The original stair geometry and the building’s connection to the ground plane will be reinstated. These steps and front yards have long served as informal community gathering spaces, and their preservation supports continued public engagement with the site.

3. Heritage Building Side Yard

Shifting the heritage building slightly south allows for a generous side yard, which opens new visual perspectives, enhances accessibility, and creates a flexible space for community and cultural events. This open space prevents the heritage structure from feeling “boxed in,” while the mature trees flanking either side reinforce its prominence in the landscape.



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Site Strategy

4. Enhanced Side and Rear Property Green Space

By minimizing the residential building’s footprint and centering it on the rear of the site, a significant greenbelt is preserved and widened along the north and west property lines. This landscape buffer provides separation from neighboring residences and strengthens the urban forest and trail system—both cherished community assets. New trees and pedestrian pathways will extend connections to nearby trails and local streets.

5. Separation Between Buildings

A generous buffer is maintained between the heritage and residential buildings, with no physical connection between the two. This allows movement around the entire perimeter of the heritage structure to be preserved, as it was historically. This spatial separation, along with the expansive side yards, reinforces the perception of the church as a distinct and significant object in the landscape, consistent with its original design intent.

6. Maintaining Open Sky Above the Heritage Building

The architectural features of the church—particularly its Spanish Mission style parapet and octagonal turreted spires—were designed to be read against the open sky. These elements are rare in this region and form a key part of the building’s heritage value. The forward siting of the heritage building, combined with the slender, rear-positioned residential massing, preserves key view corridors, ensuring that the church continues to be perceived as a standalone form silhouetted against the sky.



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Investment in the Heritage Building

As part the Heritage DA, the following investments and improvements are proposed, focused on restoring key architectural elements to their original design intent. The development will yield significant economic and cultural benefits to the community.

1. Restoration of the Entry Vestibule

The entry vestibule will be restored to its original configuration and proportions. The current vestibule visually competes with the front façade’s key architectural elements. The restoration will return the vestibule to its original dimensions and reinstatethe historical door configuration, a main double entry door at the front and a single entry door on each side. This will reestablish architectural harmony in the building’s front elevation.

2. Restoration of the Front Entry Stair

The front entry stairs leading will also be restored to their original configuration with it’s architecturally significant geometry. These stairs have historically served as a gathering place and will be further enhanced through integration with improved outdoor community spaces.

3. Restoration of the Apse

A rear addition will be removed to reveal the original apse, a key architectural feature of the building. This removal will allow the heritage structure to be returned to its original form and appearance.

4. Improved and Integrated Accessible Entry

Currently, the accessible entry on the north side of the building consists of a substantial wood ramp that detracts from the carefully designed elevation. The new entry will replace the ramp wiht a lift, improving accessibility while minimizing visual impact. The lift enclosure will be designed to complement the architectural style of the heritage building, while remaining clearly distinguishable.

5. Reconstruction of Board-Form Concrete Foundation

A new board-form concrete foundation will be constructed to support the heritage building. This foundation will improve the building’s structural stability, match the existing foundation and significantly enhance its longevity, ensuring the preservation of the heritage resource for generations to come.

6. Insertion of Curtain Wall Glazing on Ground Level

Glazing units inserted between the six existing buttresses will allow for a more accessible entrance to the ground floor level program, and initiating a connection between the interior program and exterior landscaped plaza.



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Heritage Building Materials

1. Standing Seam Metal Roof

2. Board Formed Concrete

3. White Cladding with Black Accents

4. Curtain Wall Glazing

5. Concrete Front Entry Steps

6. Glazed Accessible Entry Doors

7. Existing Stain Glass Windows



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Investment In the Community

For over nine decades, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and its surrounding grounds have stood as a prominent landmark and gathering place for the Armdale community. With its striking architectural presence, visible both to passersby and visitors, the church has played a significant role in the everyday lives of many local residents.

Our approach to preserving this heritage building goes beyond protecting its physical structure and historical features. Equally important in our design strategy is maintaining its prominence as a community landmark and enhancing its role as a welcoming space for connection and community building.

From preserving the iconic statue that stands proudly in front of the church, to restoring the original configuration of the entry stairs, which once again encourage impromptu conversations and friendly encounters among family, friends, neighbors, and visitors, every detail is being thoughtfully considered. The heritage building will continue to serve as a beloved and recognizable gathering point within the community.

The future use of the church is being carefully envisioned to support community engagement. Upgrades will significantly enhance accessibility, while improvements to the relationship between interior and exterior spaces will encourage greater interaction with the site. The lower level of the church will now open directly onto the adjacent side yard, imagined as a flexible gathering space, welcoming everything from local markets and performances to summer picnics and quiet rest under the shade of newly planted trees.

New life will be breathed into both the interior of the heritage building and its surrounding outdoor spaces, reaffirming its role as a center of gathering, connection, and community spirit. Through thoughtful preservation, restoration, and renewed purpose, the heritage building will remain a valued community asset for generations to come.



POLICY RESPONSE: Policy CH-7A

Policy CH-7A of the Halifax Regional Municipal Planing Strategy provides the criteria by which Council may consider the adoption of a heritage development agreement. The remainder of this document addresses each of the criteria set out in this policy.

Policy CH-7A

On any registered heritage property, or on a lot containing a registered heritage building located outside of the Regional Centre Secondary Plan Area, Downtown Halifax Secondary Plan Area or any establish Heritage Conservation District, Council may consider a development agreement for any development or change in use not otherwise permitted by the Land Use By-law. The purpose of this policy is to support the conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage properties and buildings. In considering such development agreement proposals, Council shall consider that:

a) the development proposal maintains the heritage value of any registered heritage property of which it is part, including a registered heritage streetscape, heritage conservation district, or Cultural Landscape, and does not propose to demolish any registered heritage buildings that exist on the property;

The project will maintain the heritage value of the former St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church. The physical changes to the First Baptist Church heritage building will be heritage supportive investments that ensure the heritage buildings financial sustainability and enhancement of it’s heritage character. The proposal does not propose to demolish any registered heritage buildings that exist on the property.

b) the impact on adjacent uses, particularly residential uses, is minimized in terms of intensity of use, scale, height, traffic generation, noise, hours of operation, and such other land use impacts as may be required as part of the development;

The proposed building has been thoughtfully designed to minimize its impact on adjacent properties, providing significant relief through an expanded greenbelt buffer. It will be a multi-unit residential development, consistent with the surrounding building typologies and their intensity of use.

The heritage building on-site is intended for commercial use, serving as an amenity and providing benefits to both the community and neighbouring properties. While the hours of operation have not yet been finalized, they will be carefully determined to align with the character of the neighbourhood, with measures in place to ensure minimal noise and disruption.

The Traffic Impact Statement (Appendix B) outlines the proposed 18-storey apartment building, which will include 163 units with a mix of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom layouts. The development features two levels of underground parking with 122 vehicle spaces and 76 Class A bicycle spaces on Level P1, along with surface parking for 20 vehicles and 16 Class B bicycle spaces. The study estimates 44 new vehicle trips during the AM peak hour and 52 during the PM peak hour, concluding that the impact on the surrounding transportation network will be minimal.

Stopping Sight Distance at the proposed driveway on Purcells Cove Road meets required standards. The site is well served by Halifax Transit via Route 25 (Governors Brook), offering regular service seven days a week and convenient connections across HRM. It is also within a 300 metres walk of Chocolate Lake, a stop location along the future Bus Rapid Transit Yellow Line. Additionally, the area is pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, supporting active transportation options for future residents.

c) the level of proposed investment in conservation measures on the property is generally proportional with the additional development rights provided through the agreement, especially in cases of new construction;

The level of proposed investment in conservation measures is proportional to the additional development rights provided through the agreement. The project includes a comprehensive series of interventions that go beyond basic preservation, aiming to restore key architectural feature, such as the entry vestibule, front stair, and original apse, to their historic configurations. These efforts are key to not only for retaining the building’s heritage value but also for enhancing its role as a functional community asset.

The proposal reflects a thoughtful balance between heritage conservation and new development. For example, significant resources will be directed toward correcting past alterations that detract from the building’s character, such as the removal of a non-original addition and the replacement of an oversized vestibule. Additionally, accessibility upgrades are being implemented in a way that respects the architectural integrity of the building. These investments represent a meaningful and measurable commitment to conservation in exchange for the development rights granted.

Finally, the construction of a new board-form concrete foundation at the building’s relocated site further demonstrates a long-term investment in the structure’s stability and preservation. Overall, the proposed conservation measures are well-aligned with the scope of the new development entitlements and reflect a responsible and proportional heritage response.

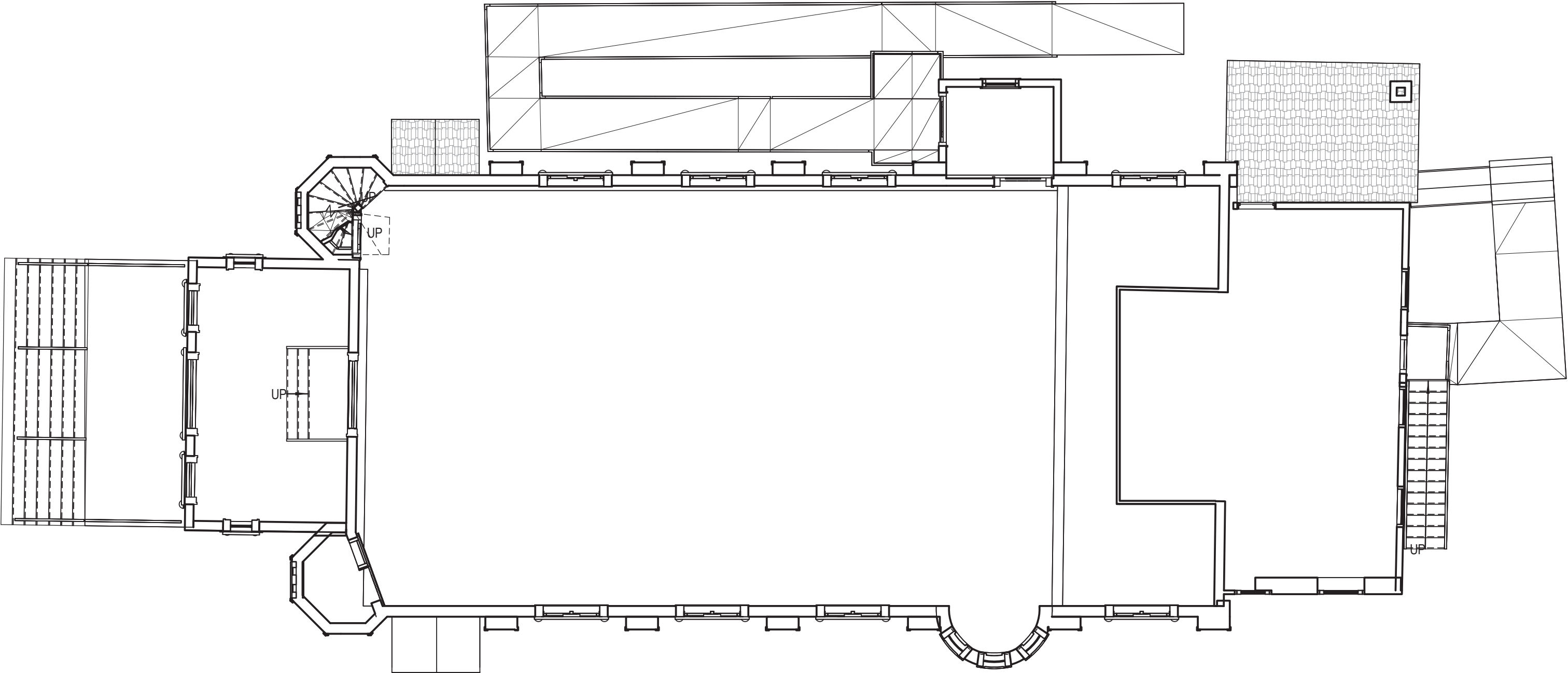
d) the proposal is generally consistent with the other policies of the secondary plan area of which it is part, especially heritage policies.

This proposal is consistent with the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy’s policies on heritage resources which have the objective of “the preservation and enhancement of areas, sites, structures, streetscapes and conditions in Halifax which reflect the City’s past historically and/or architecturally.”

Specifically, policy 6.4.1 speaks to maintaining the heritage integrity of registered heritage buildings through “encouraging sensitive and complementary architecture,” which is a driving design consideration of this proposal. Policy 6.8 helps to achieve this by enabling an owner of a heritage designated property to apply for a development agreement for any development not permitted by the land use by-law in accordance with Policy CH-7A of the Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy.

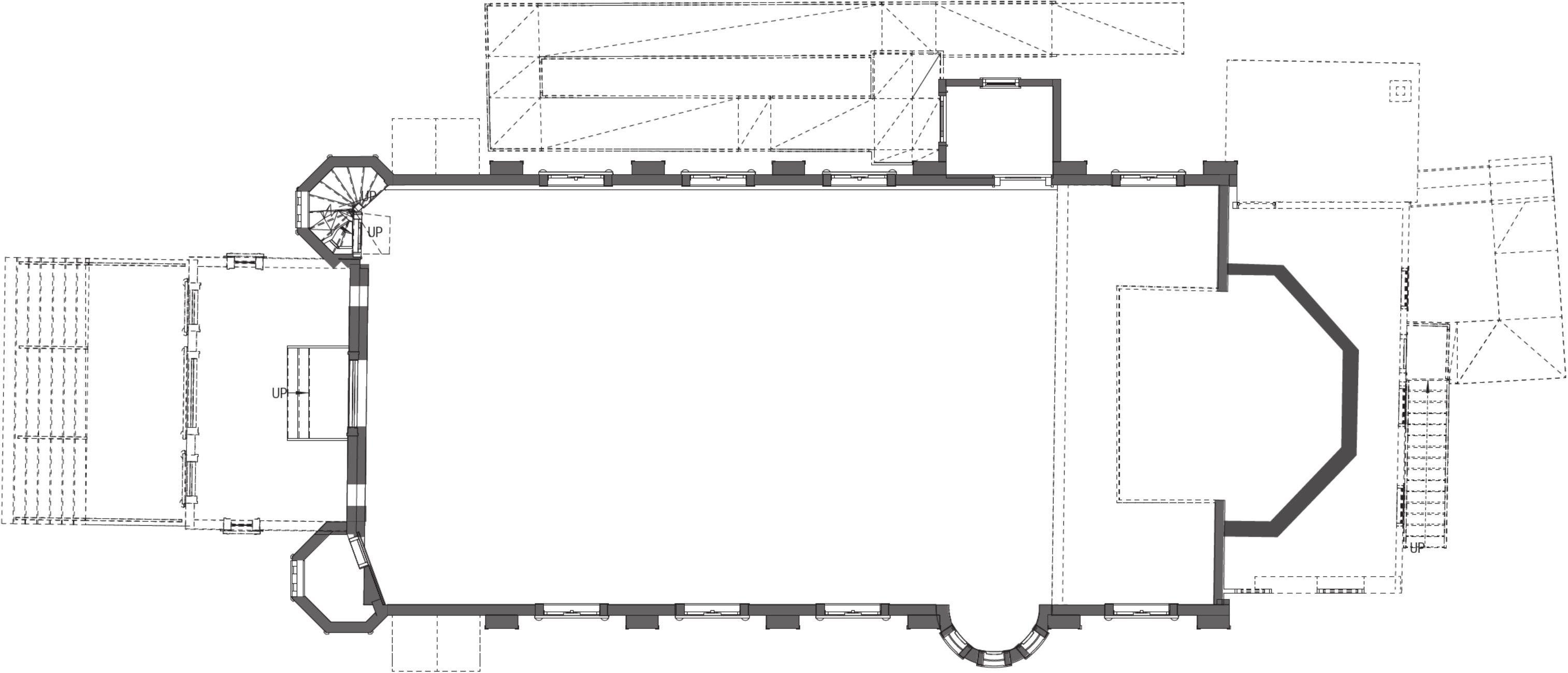
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Existing Level 1 Plan



Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

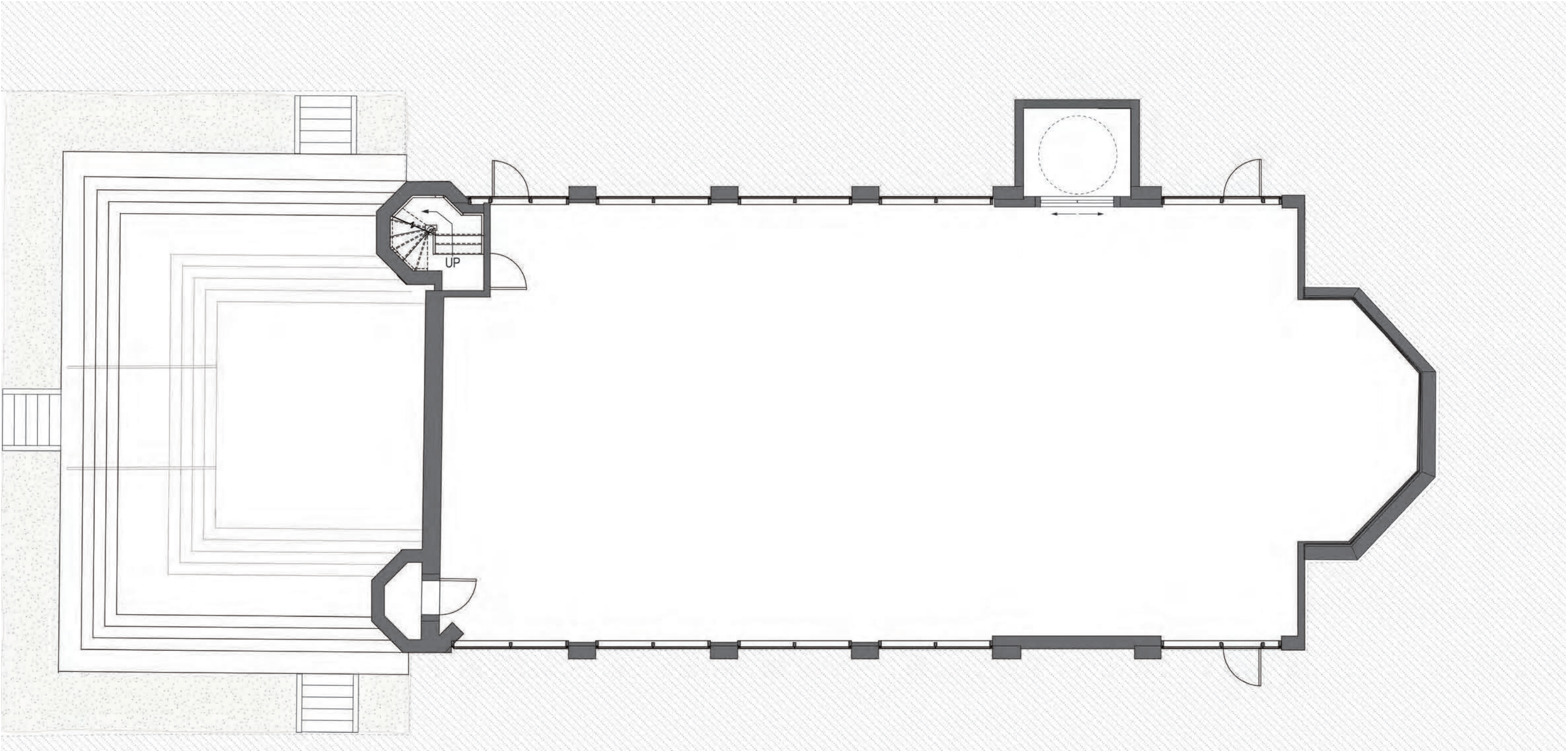
Existing Level 1 Plan - Showing Non-Heritage Elements to be Removed Dashed



- To be removed
- Existing to remain

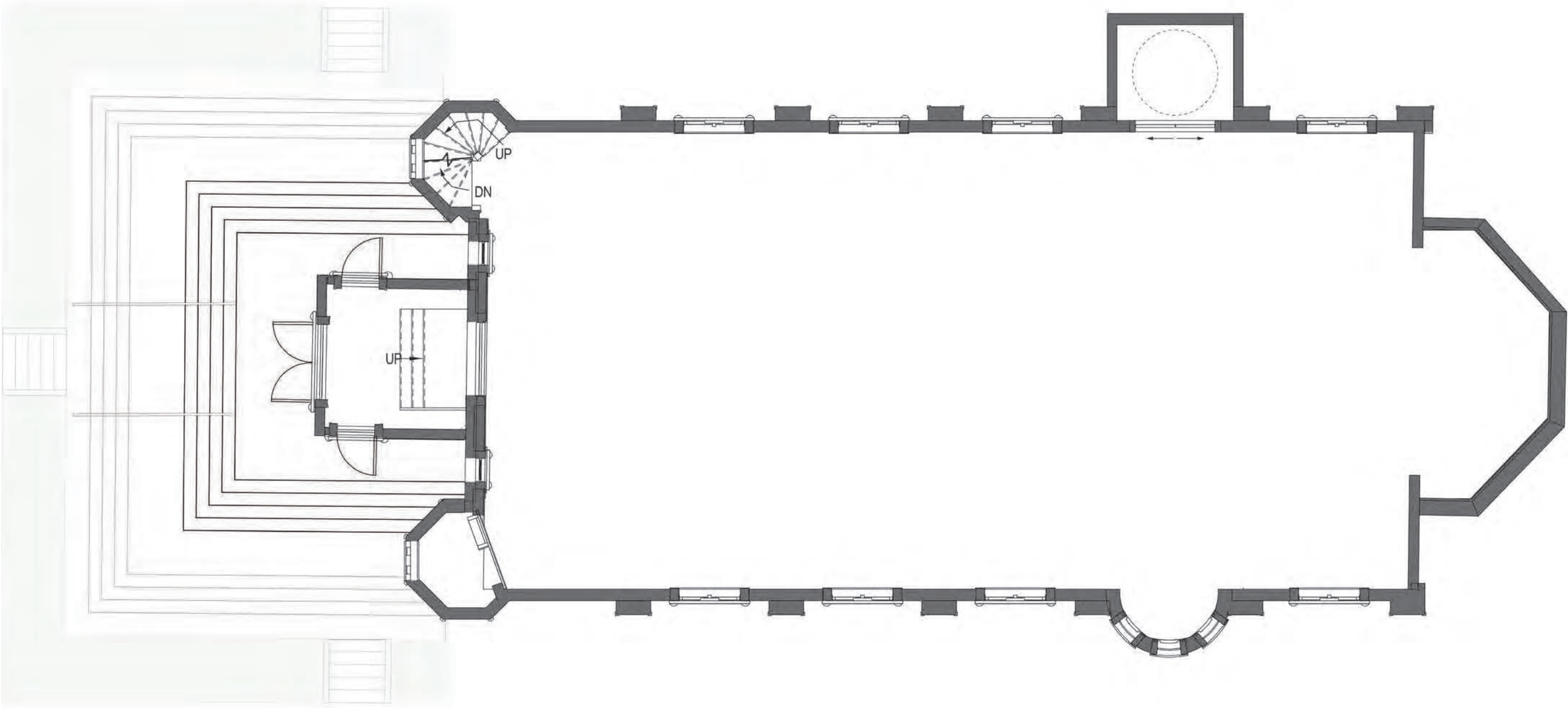
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Proposed Ground Level Plan



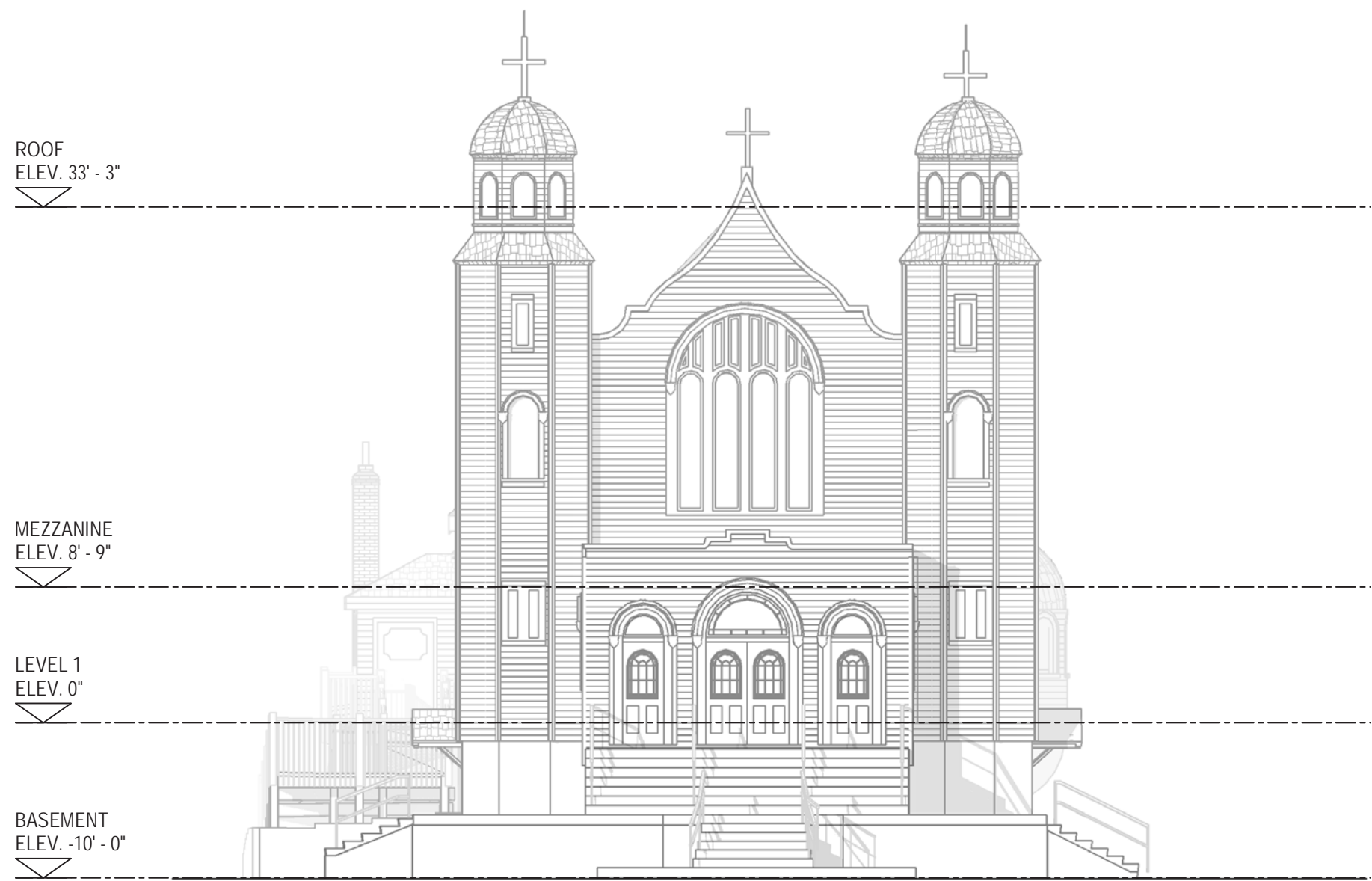
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Proposed Level 1 Plan



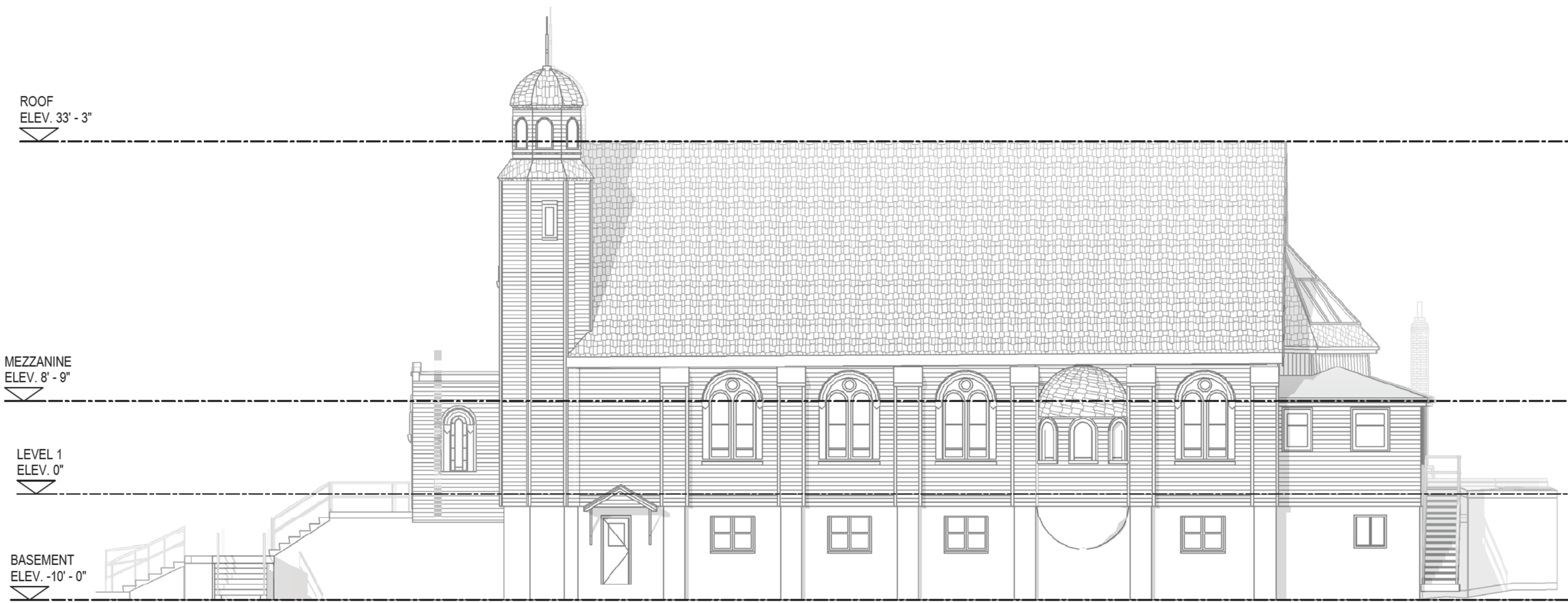
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Existing West Elevation



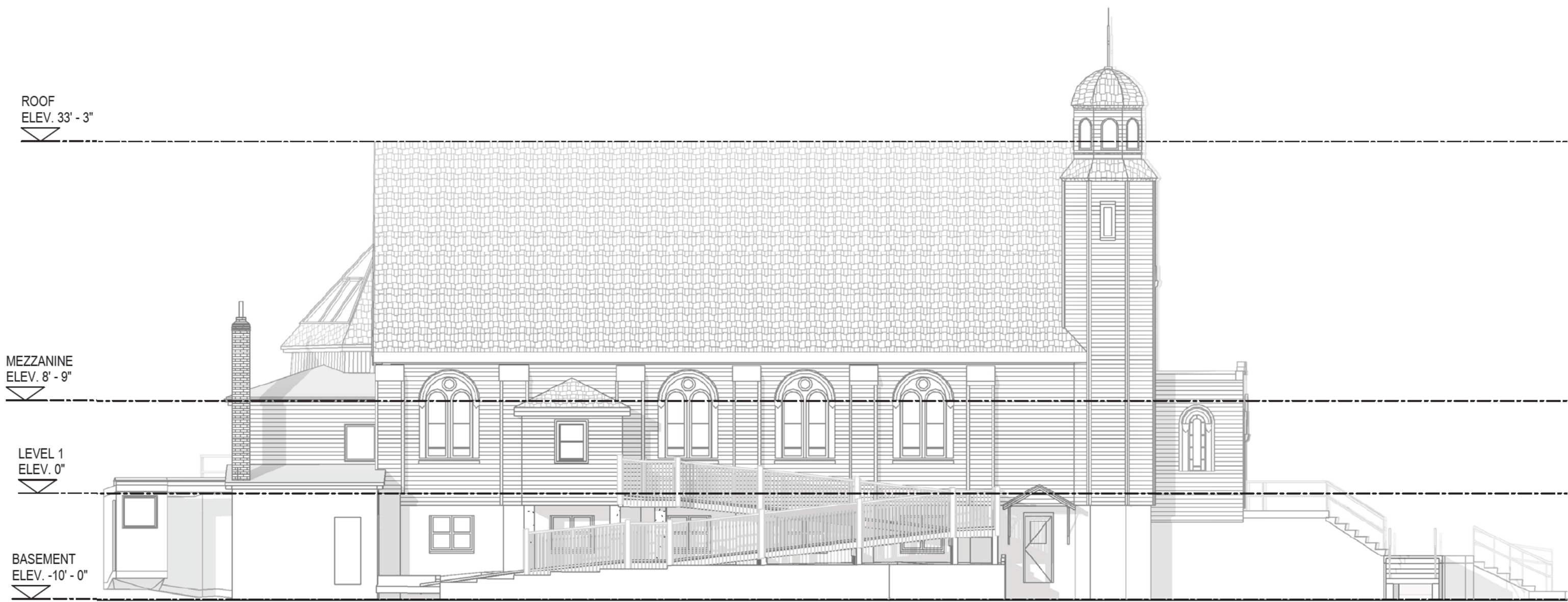
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Existing South Elevation



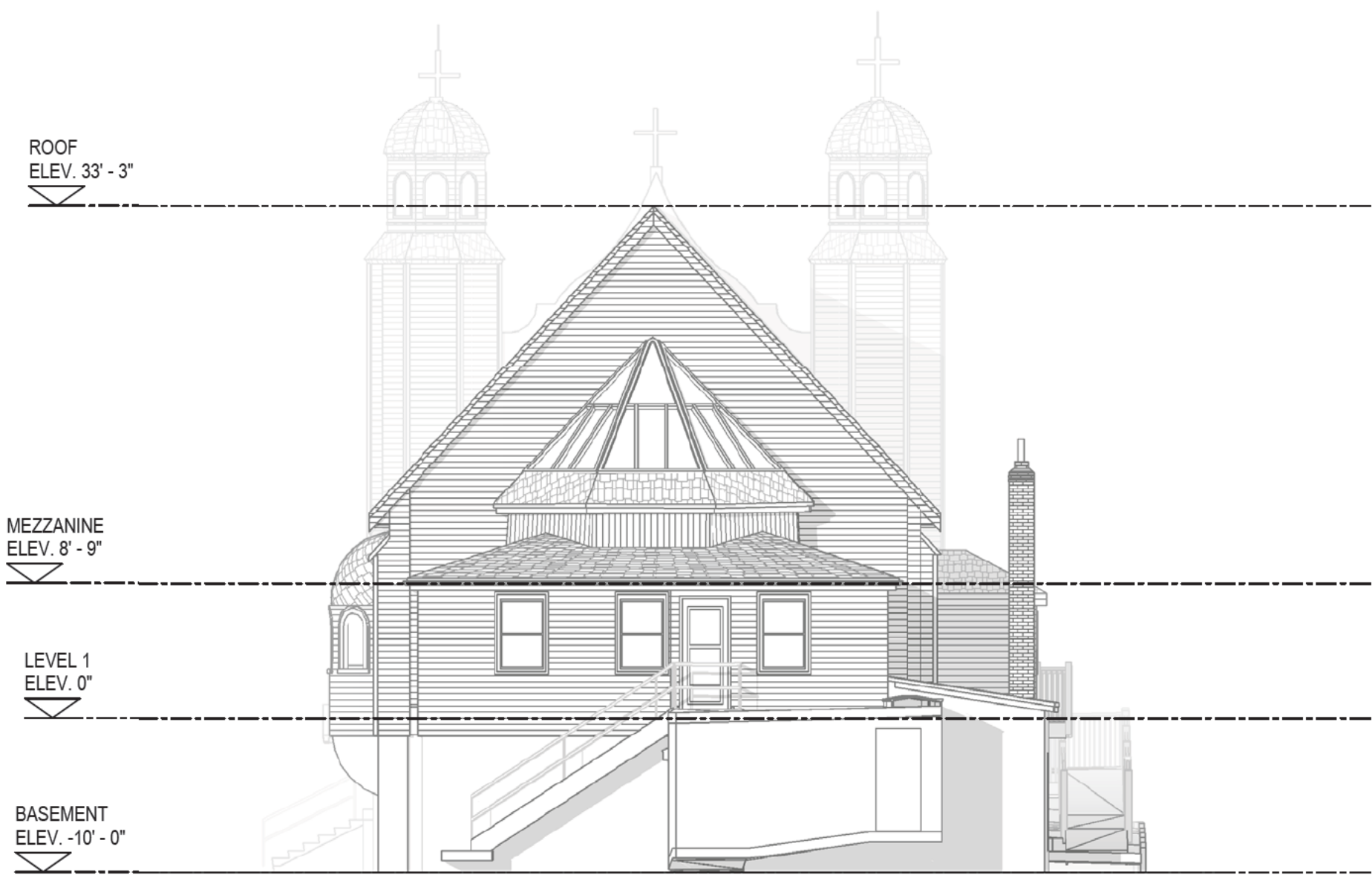
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Existing North Elevation



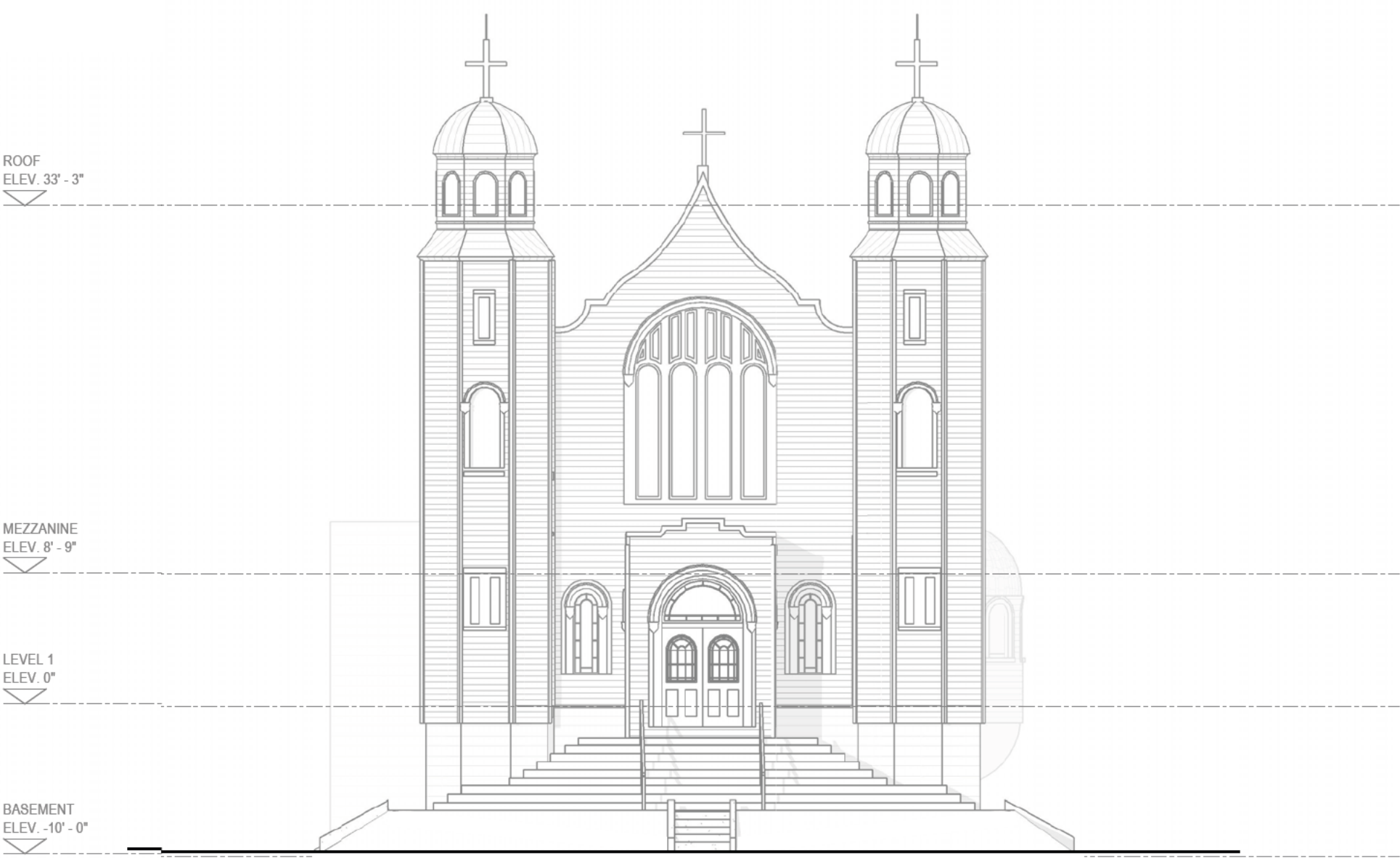
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Existing East Elevation



Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Proposed West Elevation



Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Proposed South Elevation



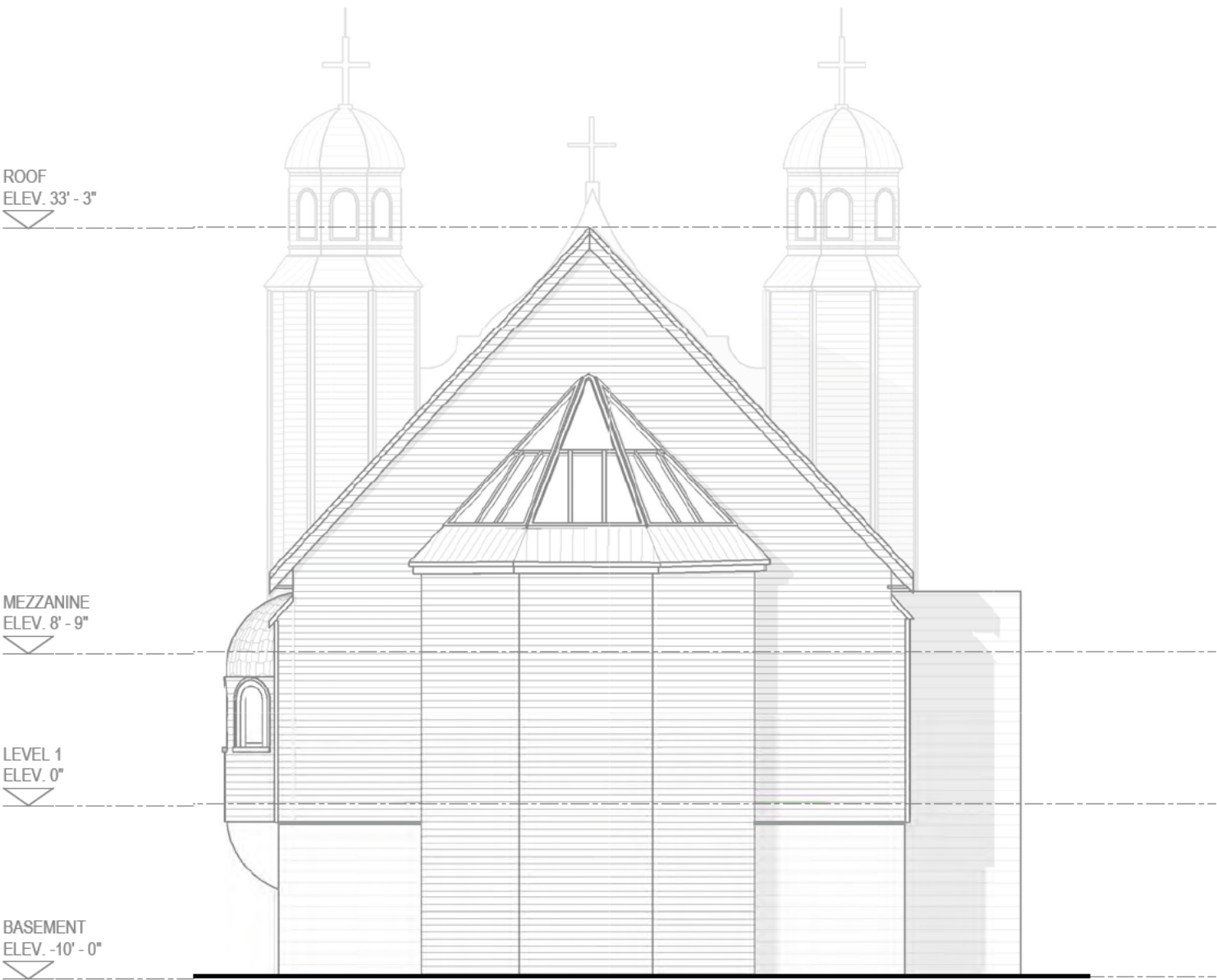
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Proposed North Elevation



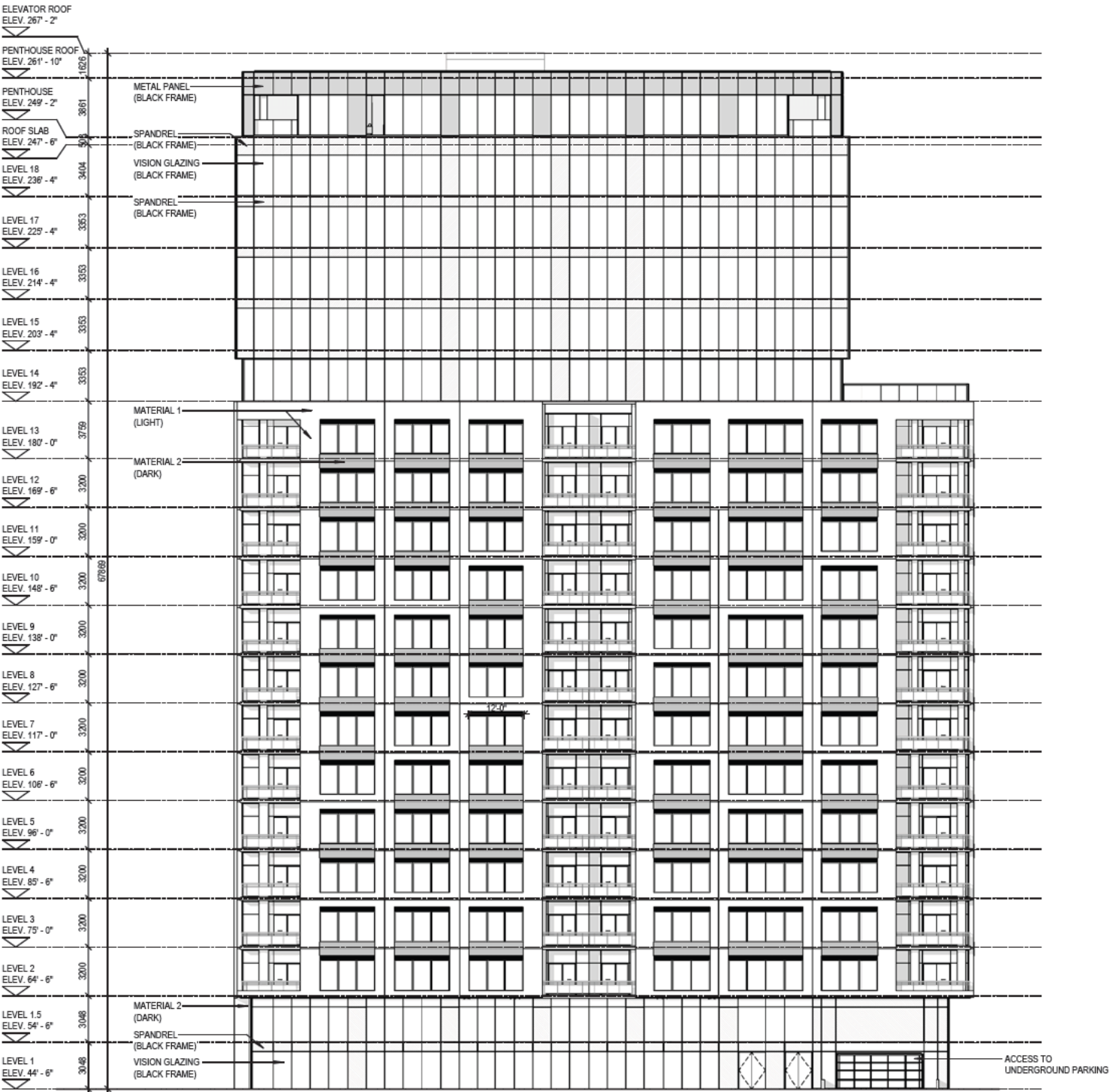
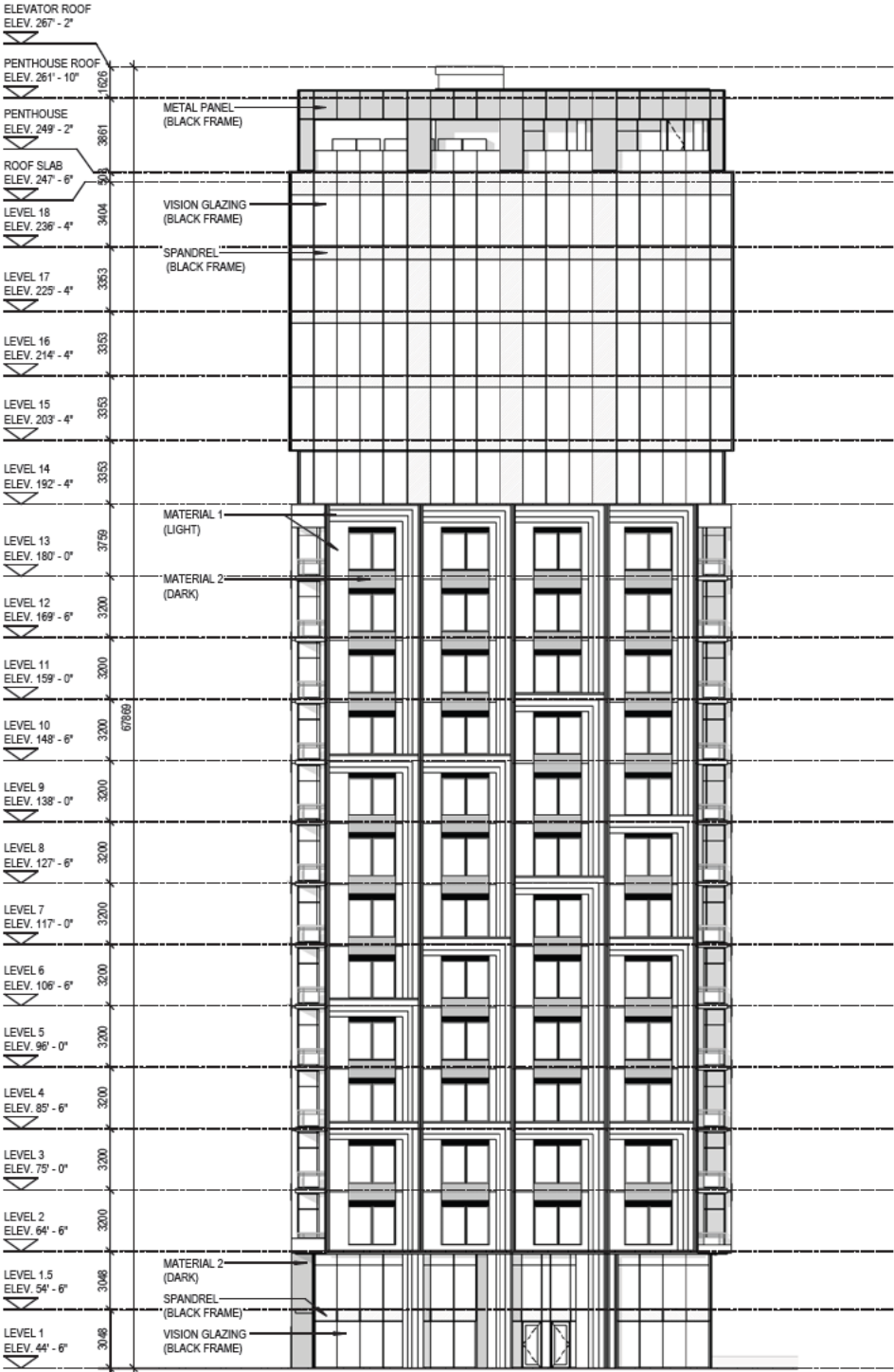
Appendix A. Heritage Building Drawings

Proposed East Elevation



Appendix B. Residential Building Elevations

East and South Elevations



Appendix B. Residential Building Elevations

West and North Elevations

