

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
1290 & 1300 OXFORD STREET
Heritage Development Agreement Application
Design Rationale

July 10, 2025

FBM



DESIGN RATIONALE

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

- Site
- Heritage
- Centre Plan

DESIGN PROPOSAL

- Strategy
- Impact Assessment
- Materials and Articulation
- First Baptist Church

POLICY RESPONSE

- Policy CHR-7
- Policy IM-7

APPENDICES

- A: Drawings
- B: Solar Study
- C: Traffic Impact Statement
- D: Heritage Impact Statement

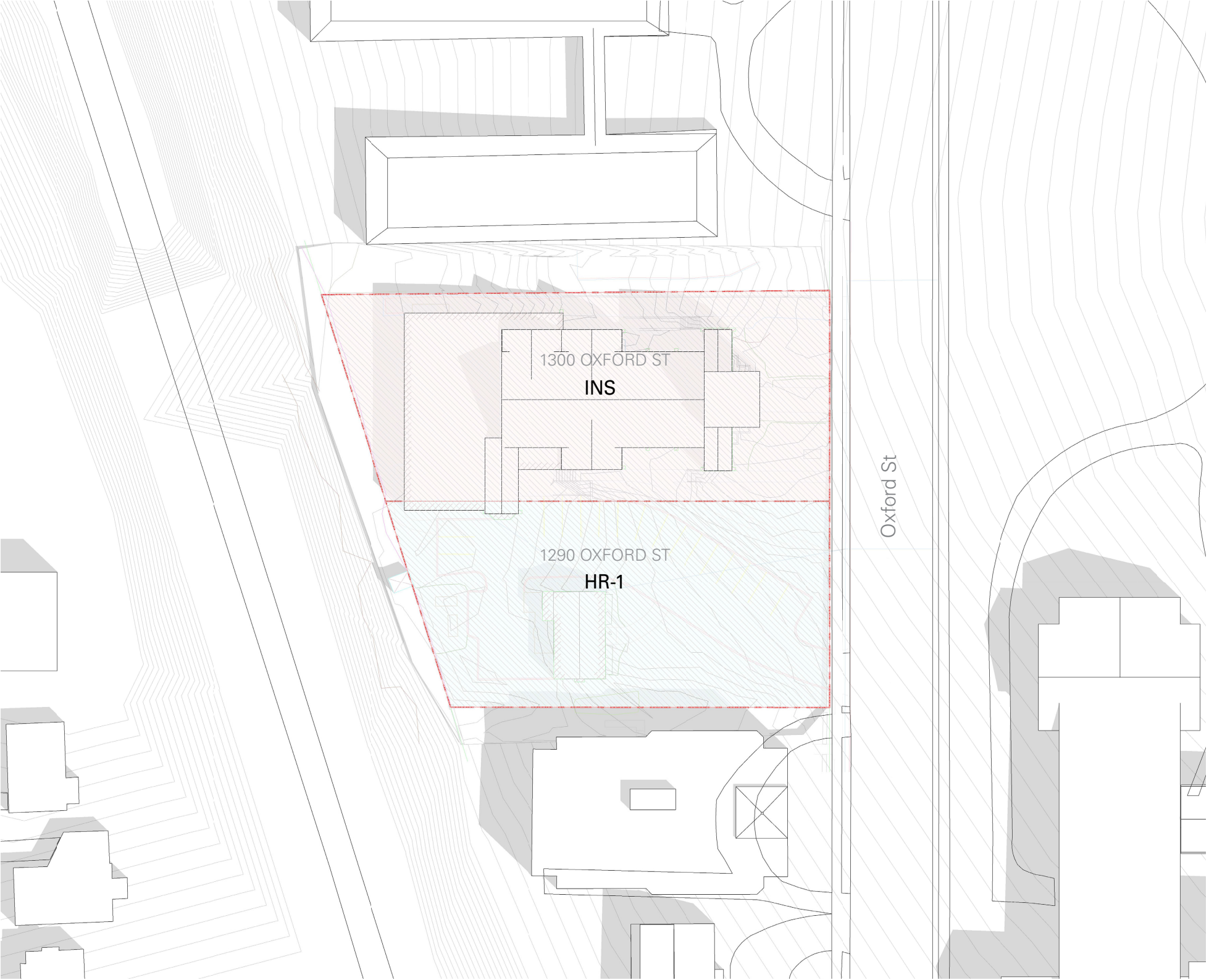


PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Site

Site Description

The subject site comprises of two adjacent lots, 1300 Oxford Street and 1290 Oxford Street, located on the west side of Oxford Street between Cobourg and South Streets and directly across from the Dalhousie Campus. The First Baptist Church, which was constructed in 1948-1949, dedicated in 1950 and continues to host an active congregation, is located on the 1300 Oxford St lot. This property is zoned INS (institutional) and is a recently Registered Heritage Property. A parsonage house and parking lot are set on the separate and smaller parcel to the south, 1290 Oxford. This lot is zoned HR-1 (Higher Order Residential) and is the site of the proposed residential development. Both lots slope down to the rear yard where they abut the rail cut.

ADDRESS	1300 OXFORD	1290 OXFORD
USE	Church	Parking & Parsonage
PID	00078170	00078162
AREA	~23,250 sf	~19,900 sf
ZONING	INS Institutional	HR-1 Higher Order Residential



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Site

Neighbourhood Character

The neighbourhood of Oxford Street around Coburg and South hosts an eclectic mix of buildings. They vary significantly in a number of ways.

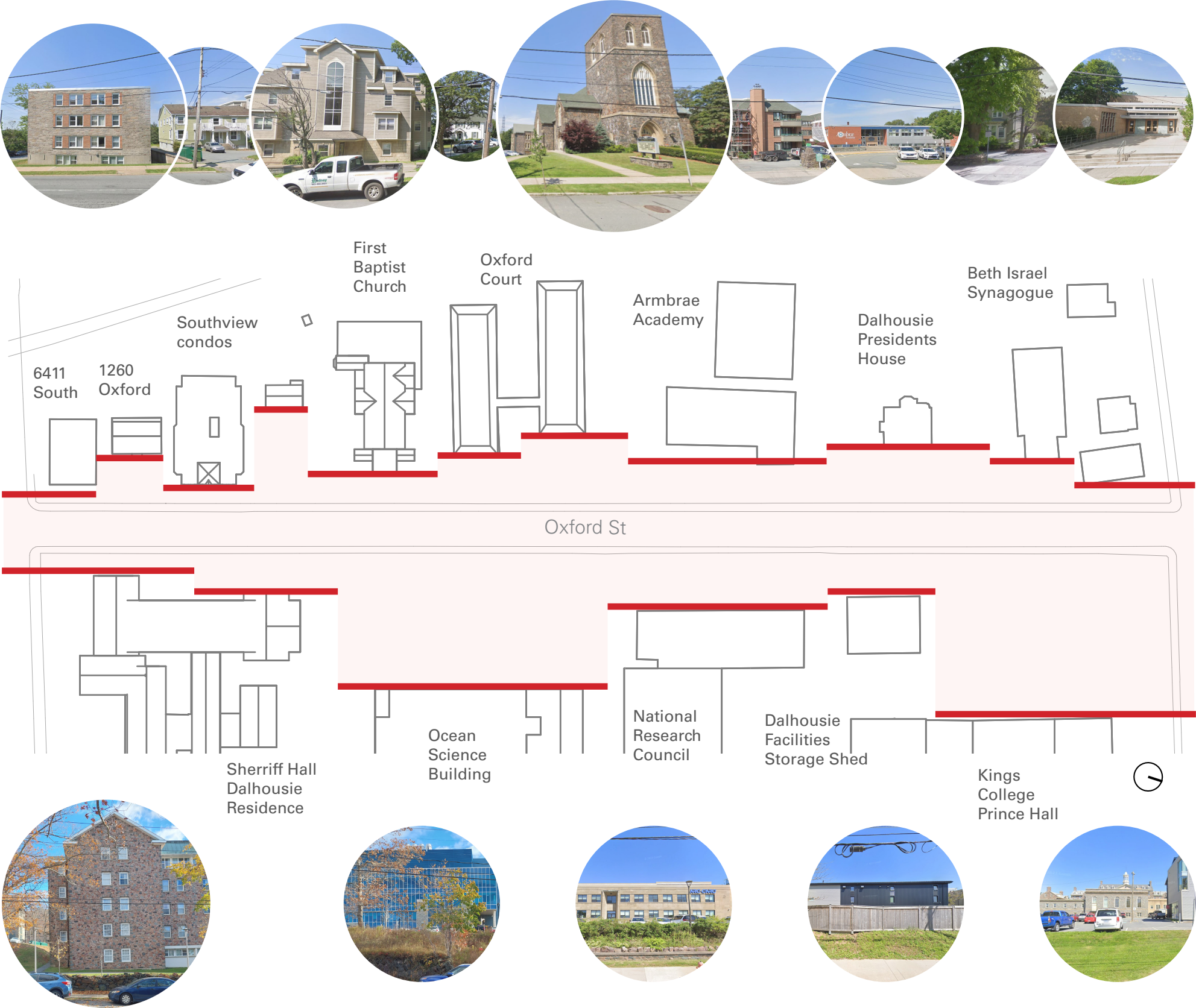
Different Setbacks: There is no consistent street wall on either side of Oxford Street. Setbacks range from 5 m to 20 m or more with no two neighbours sharing the same distance.

Different Heights: Low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise building typologies can all be found within the neighbourhood.

Different Uses: Multi-unit residences, single family homes, religious, educational, institutional, parking, storage, and office uses all coexist together.

Different Ages: Building ages span over 150 years with nearly every building along this stretch of Oxford originating in a different decade from the 1860s to the 2010's.

Parts of the street are fairly heavily treed while others are wide open. There is a significant grade change along much of the East side that separates the buildings from the street. A subtle trend in building width is noticeable toward the south end of Oxford on the west side of the street where lots have the same or similar frontage. These properties also back onto the rail cut, a 47.5-metre wide transportation corridor that separates this area from the low-rise residential neighbourhood on the other side.



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Site

Building Height Context

This area of Oxford Street connects low rise residential neighbourhoods to the North and South with the specific development patterns of Dalhousie University. The large institutional buildings of the campus are mixed in with residential buildings of all types. On the campus itself, mid-rise housing is prevalent. The perimeter of the campus has several 10+ storey residential buildings mixed into blocks of established low-rise housing, often with generous set backs from the street. Introducing a 10+ storey building on the West perimeter of campus would be consistent with this development pattern, especially if a generous set back was also provided.



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Site

Building Height Context

The concept of relative building height takes into account the land elevation of the location of a given building. This helps us understand how prominent a development might be depending on how it is observed. The location of 1300 and 1290 Oxford sits at 35 m above sea level. The land to the north east rises by an additional 15 m fairly quickly with buildings of up to 24 m sitting on top. This means that a relatively tall building at 1290 Oxford would blend in with its north eastern context by virtue of sitting lower on the horizon.

Relative Building Height

- = Actual Building Height
- + Ground Elevation



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Heritage

Heritage Registration

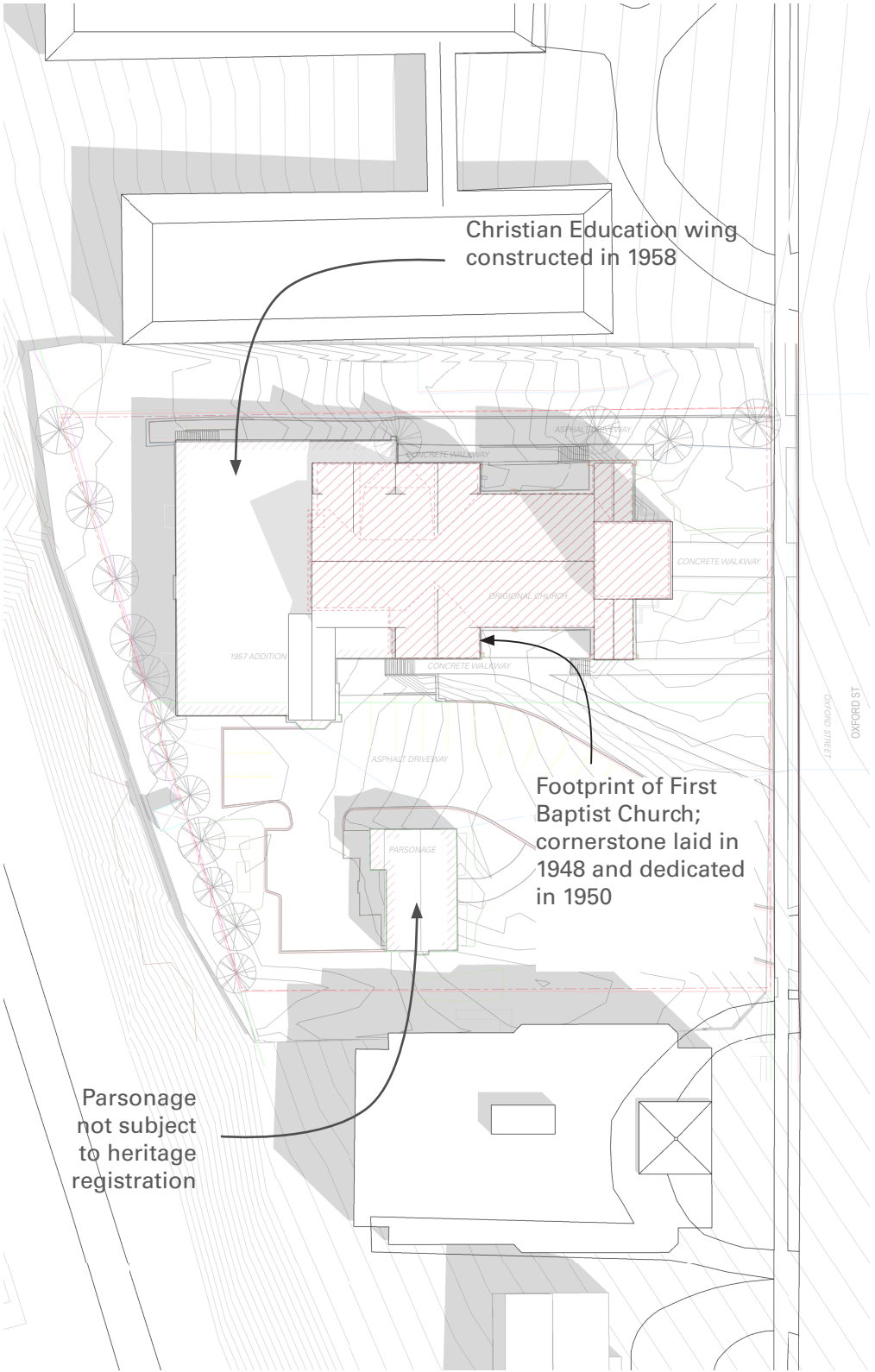
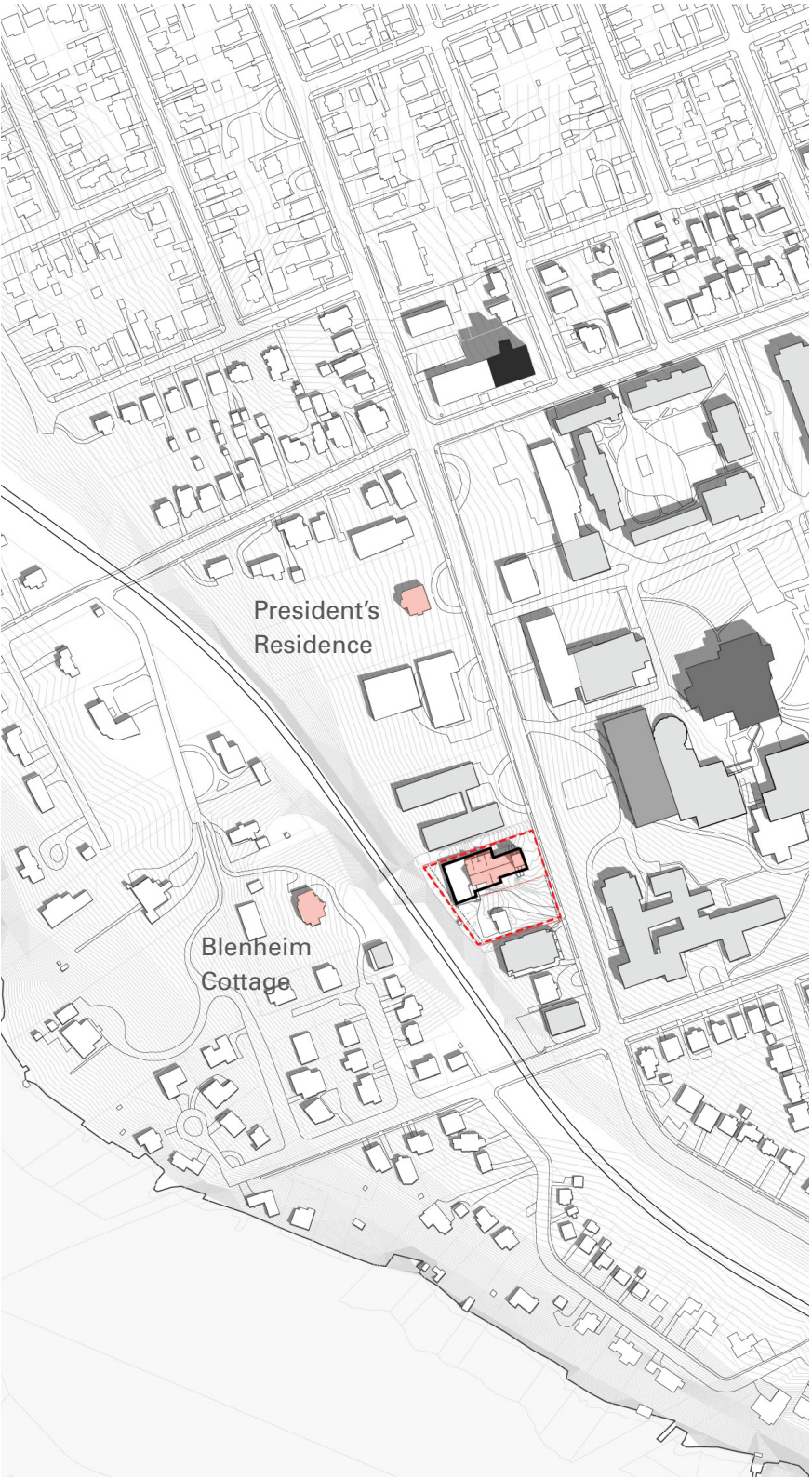
First Baptist Church on 1300 Oxford Street was approved by Halifax Regional Municipality and formally recognized as a Registered Heritage Property in early 2025. The development proposed under this application will see the First Baptist Church building retained and preserved in its entirety.

The parsonage house, the existing single-family dwelling on the south property, has no formal heritage status and is proposed to be replaced with a multi-unit residential development.

The siting, massing and materiality of the proposed development was carefully selected to ensure a sympathetic relationship with the heritage resource. The impact of the development on the overall heritage value and character-defining elements of the subject site was comprehensively assessed by McLean Heritage Planning and Consulting and documented in a Heritage Impact Statement (refer to Appendix D).

Two other heritage properties, both residential, are located nearby. To the North is the Dalhousie President’s house and on the other side of the rail cut is Blenheim Cottage. Various Dalhousie and King’s buildings are identified as potential heritage,including Sherriff Hall (Case H00501, Aug 2022) located South East of First Baptist. No significant impact on any of these sites is anticipated from the proposed development.

Registered Heritage Property



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Centre Plan

The following is an outline of the by-laws that would apply to the massing of an as-of-right development at 1290 Oxford Street assuming the development would aim to maximize the gross floor area.

- Zoning:

HR-1
- Use:

Multi-unit Residential, Limited Commercial
- Lot Area:

~19,900 SF
- FAR:

N/A
- Max. GFA:

N/A
- Setbacks:

Front yard:

Min. 1.5m

Rear yard:

Min. 3.0m

Side yard:

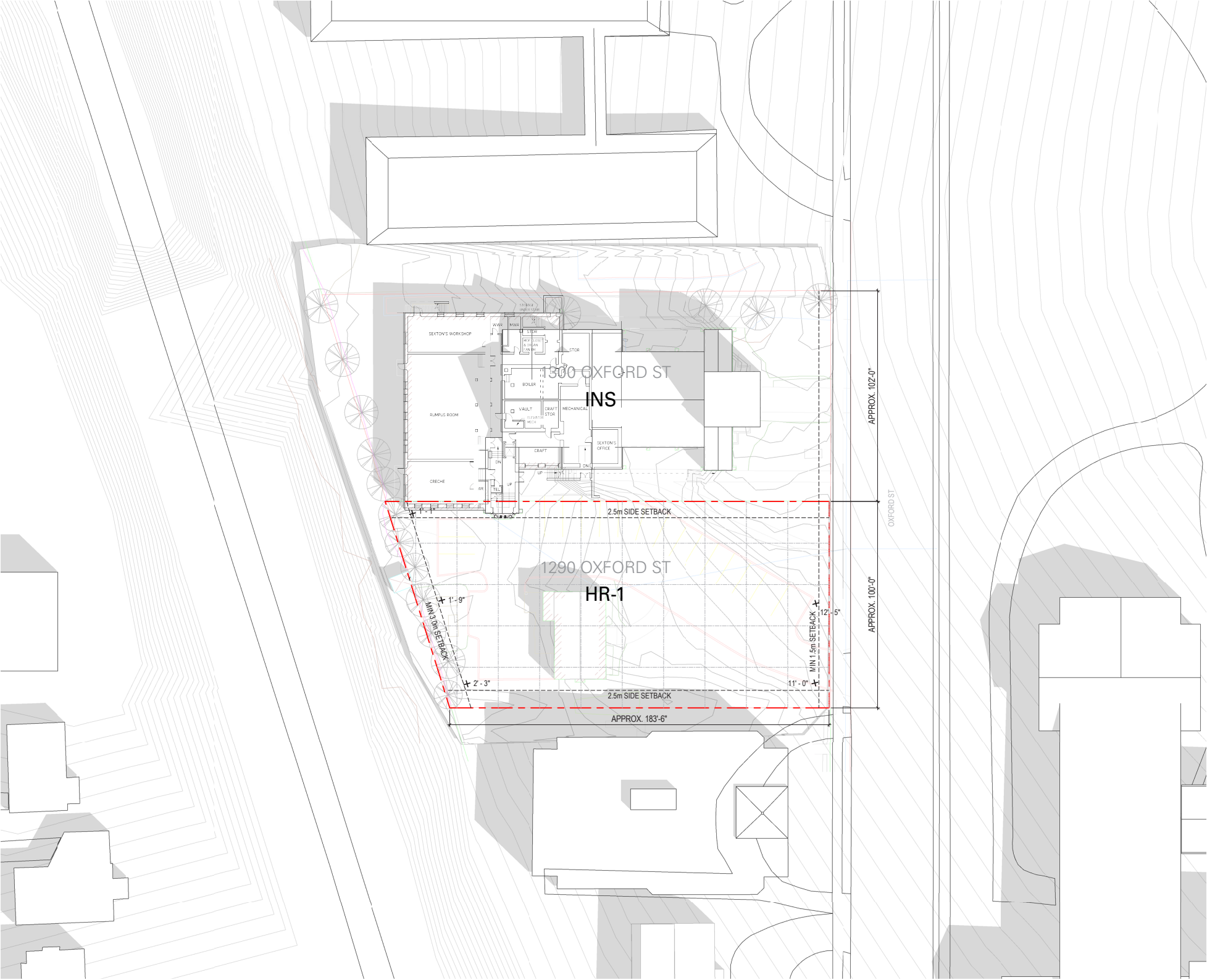
Min. 2.5m
- Height:

7 storeys + Penthouse
- Streetwall Height:

6 storeys*
- Streetwall Stepback:

2m

*Maximum Streetwall height on properties abutting a heritage property is 2m above the height of the cornice line on the heritage building.



PROJECT INTRODUCTION: Centre Plan

The resulting building would be a 7 storey-tall mid-rise residential building with a penthouse. Set-backs would be minimized and the parkade entrance would be on the front elevation. The street wall at the front of the building would be 6 storeys in height. After subtracting for exterior walls (assumed 12 inches thick), stair cores, and elevators, the GFA would be 93,003 square feet.

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HR-1
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- Lot Area:

~19,900 SF
- FAR:

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- Max. GFA:

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- Setbacks:

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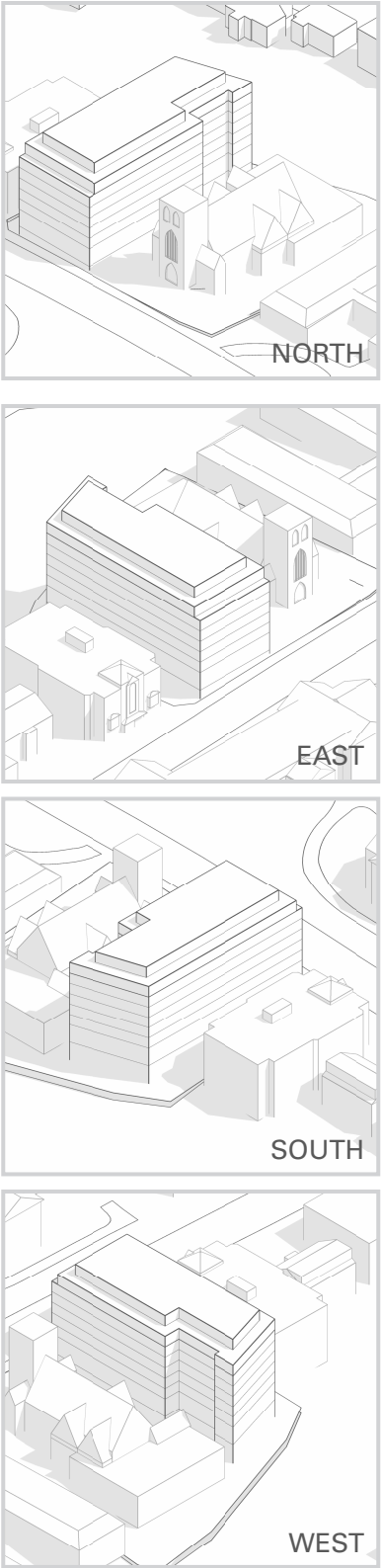
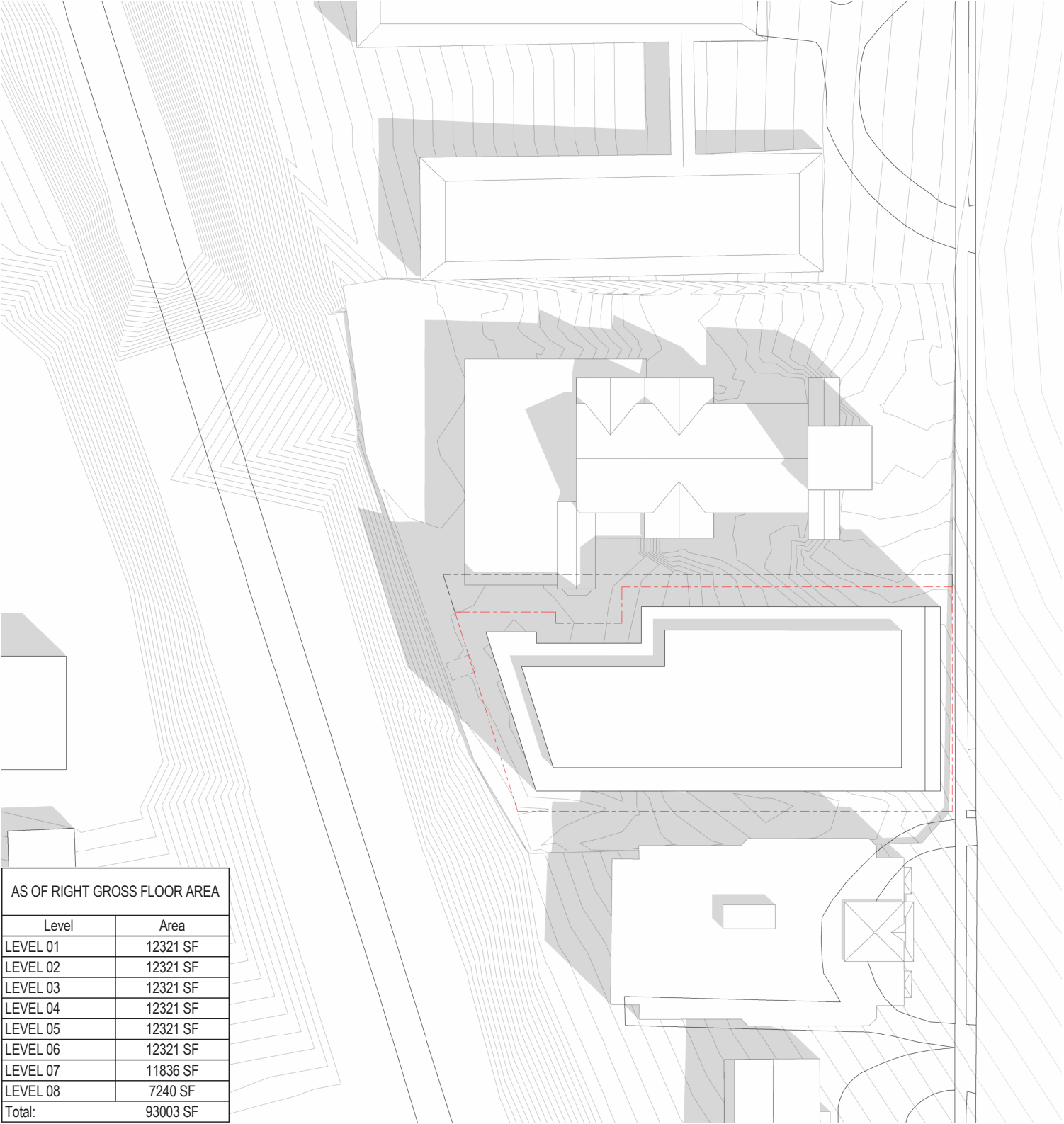
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DESIGN PROPOSAL: Strategy

With the registration of First Baptist Church as a heritage building, the site can be developed with the use of a heritage development agreement. This allows a development not otherwise permitted by the Land Use By-law to support the integrity and conservation of First Baptist Church. To this end, the parsonage house next door would be demolished and a multi-unit residential building constructed in it's place. The new building would provide financial stability and offer shared amenities for the church congregation with out physically impacting the heritage building. The DA process allows for a design proposal that is more economically viable but remains sensitive to the project's unique context to be considered.

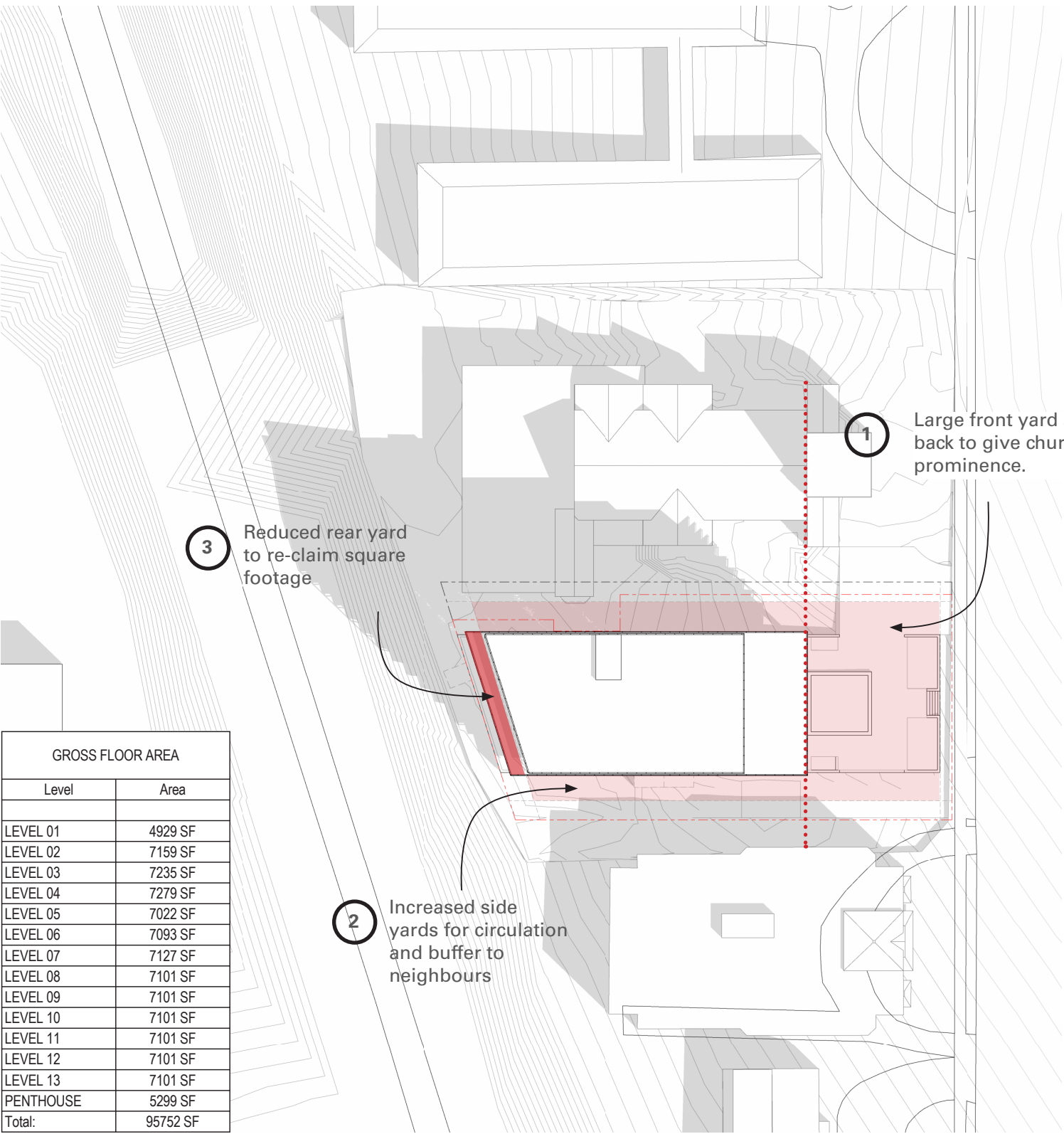
Building adjacent to a church, especially one with heritage registration, requires careful consideration. Aligning old with new, and respecting established historical heights and rhythms is not enough. Churches are typically built in a way that establish prominence within their context through the use of generous lots and large front yards. There is no historical “street wall” but rather a spatial hierarchy that should be maintained. With this in mind, the design team has proposed a series of design strategies.

1. Front Yard

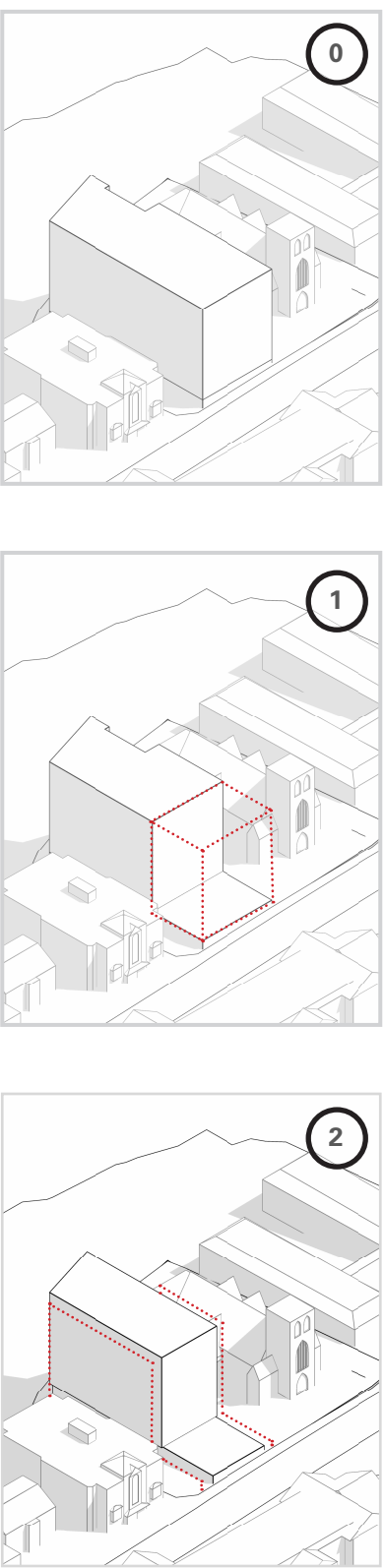
The building design is placed significantly back from the street such that the building face sits beyond the church's steeple and main entrance. This creates a generous front plaza that is continuous with the church's front yard and establishes a clear spatial hierarchy with the church as dominant. The visibility of the church from both direction on Oxford Street is maintained.

2. Side Yard

Set-backs beyond the minimum required by the Centre Plan are also used to establish discrete vehicle circulation, pedestrian access, and sense of separation from neighbouring uses. The increased buffers benefit the development, the church and the neighbouring condominium to the south.



GROSS FLOOR AREA	
Level	Area
LEVEL 01	4929 SF
LEVEL 02	7159 SF
LEVEL 03	7235 SF
LEVEL 04	7279 SF
LEVEL 05	7022 SF
LEVEL 06	7093 SF
LEVEL 07	7127 SF
LEVEL 08	7101 SF
LEVEL 09	7101 SF
LEVEL 10	7101 SF
LEVEL 11	7101 SF
LEVEL 12	7101 SF
LEVEL 13	7101 SF
PENTHOUSE	5299 SF
Total:	95752 SF



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Strategy

3. Rear Yard

The lot at 1290 Oxford backs on to a the rail cut, a 47.5 m wide transportation reserve that is extremely unlikely to ever be developed. The building design proposes expanding into the minimum rear yard setback to offset some of the floor area lost to the front and side yards.

4. Add Height:

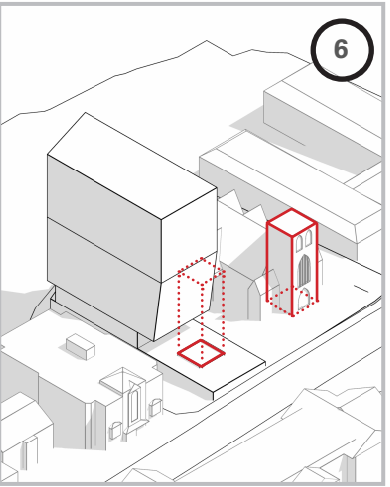
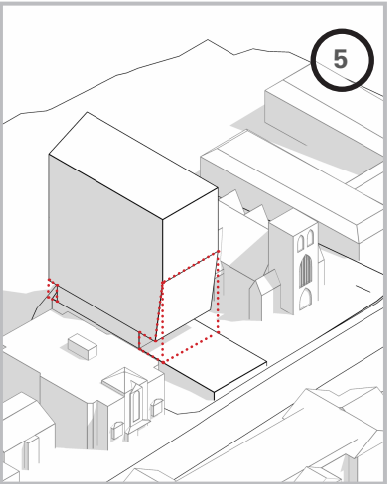
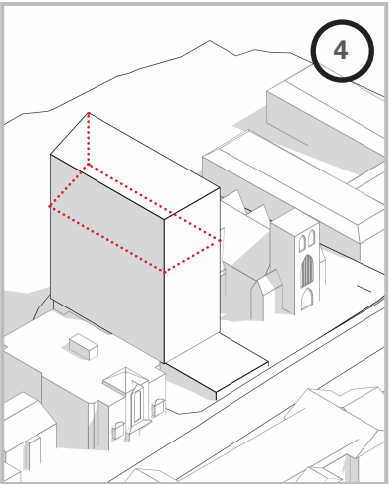
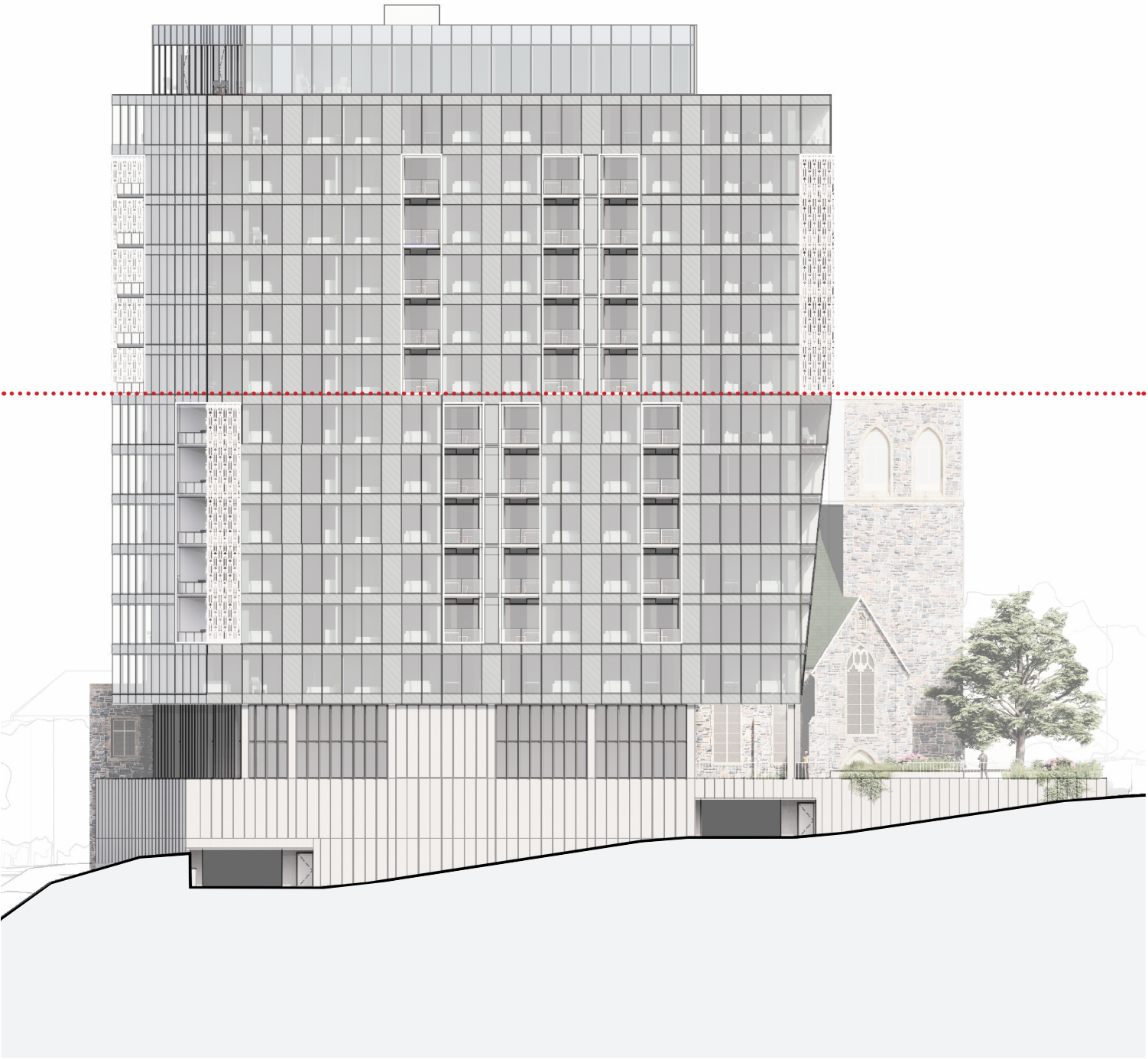
To further compensate for the loss in building area at the front and sides of the lot, additional storeys have been added. Upward expansion was capped at twice the hieght of the church tower to instill a proportional relationship between the two buildings. The penthouse level is set back to reduce the visual impact of increased height.

5. Align + Tilt:

The front face of the proposed building slopes away from the street below the height of the Church’s steeple. This canted face effectively “pulls back the curtain” to enhance the street-level visibility of the church, shared plazas and lower church entrances from the south approach. The canted face simultaneously emphasizes the generous front plaza, scribes the church tower datum onto the development, and strengthens the new building’s subservient role.

6. Celebrate

The prominent steeple of the First Baptist Church is celebrated in the landscape design for the new building. A landscape feature located on the main plaza will echo the church steeple’s footprint and position to symbolically link the development and the heritage resource.



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Impact

To better understand the impact the proposed design has on the neighbouring properties and community, we have compared it to what might be expected from an as-of-right development with a similar gross floor area.

1. Site Hierarchy

Without the increased front yard, the as-of-right massing ignores the site hierarchy established by the church. It's relative proximity to the street makes it more prominent than the proposed design. The remaining open space is limited and the church starts to feel "boxed in."

2. Shading

A shadow study compares the impact of the as-of-right design with the DA proposal. It is attached as Appendix B. The proposed design increases the reach of shading but reduces shading duration. Most impacted is the church to the North with the residence to the South hardly impacted at all.

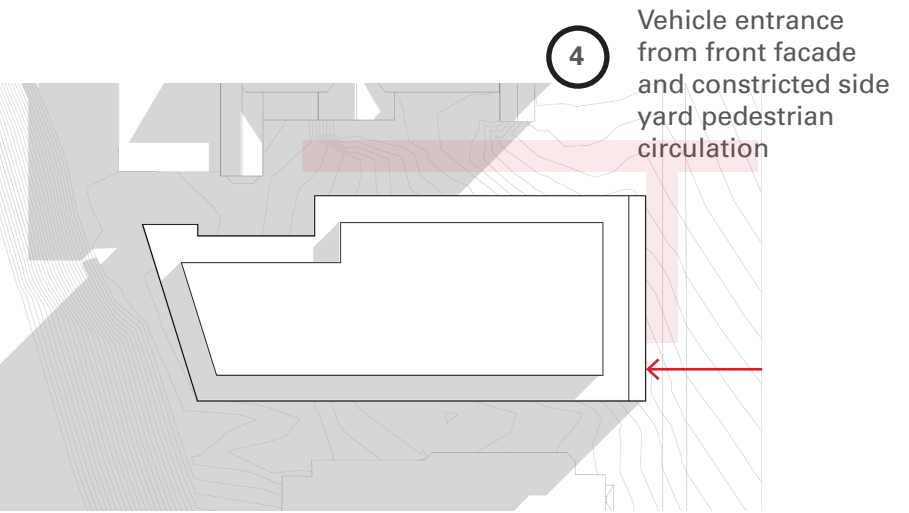
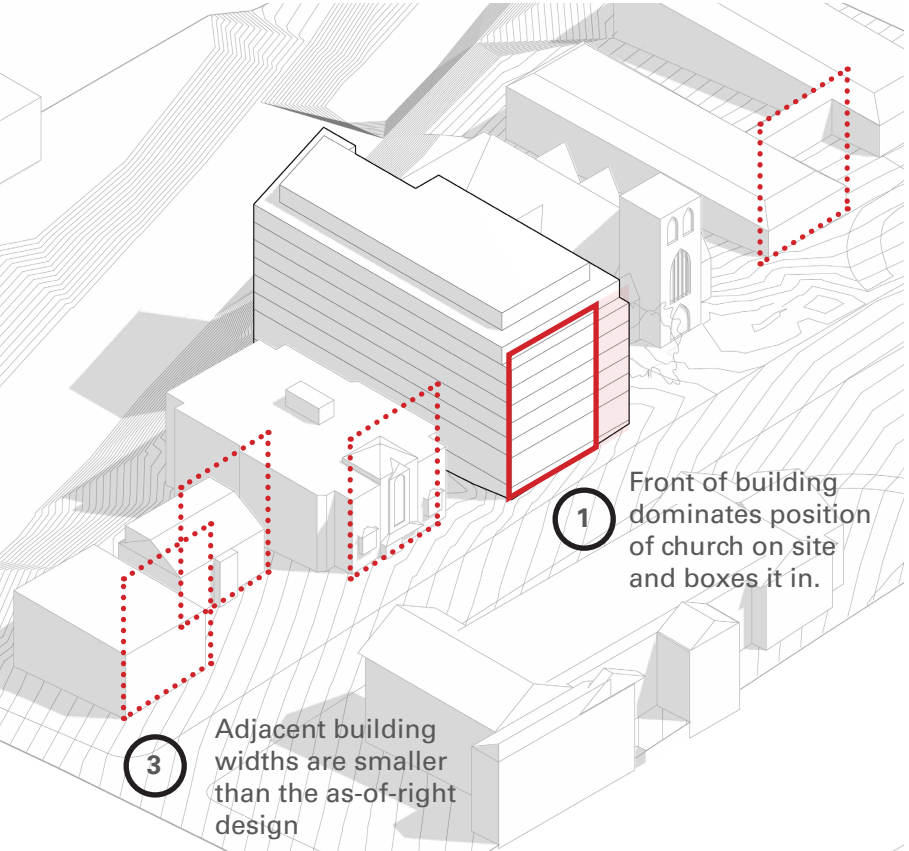
3. Street Rhythm

In the proposed design, the reduced building width aligns with adjacent structures contributing to consistent street rhythm whereas the as-of-right option is noticeably wider.

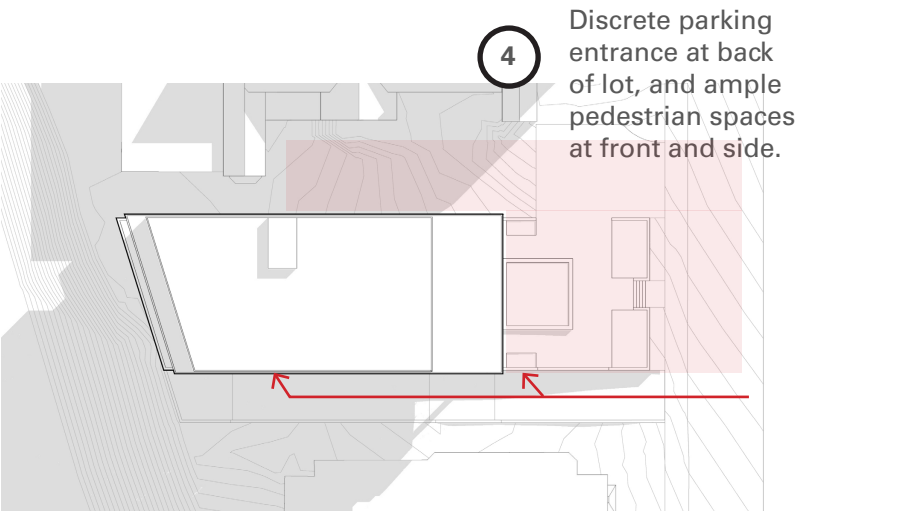
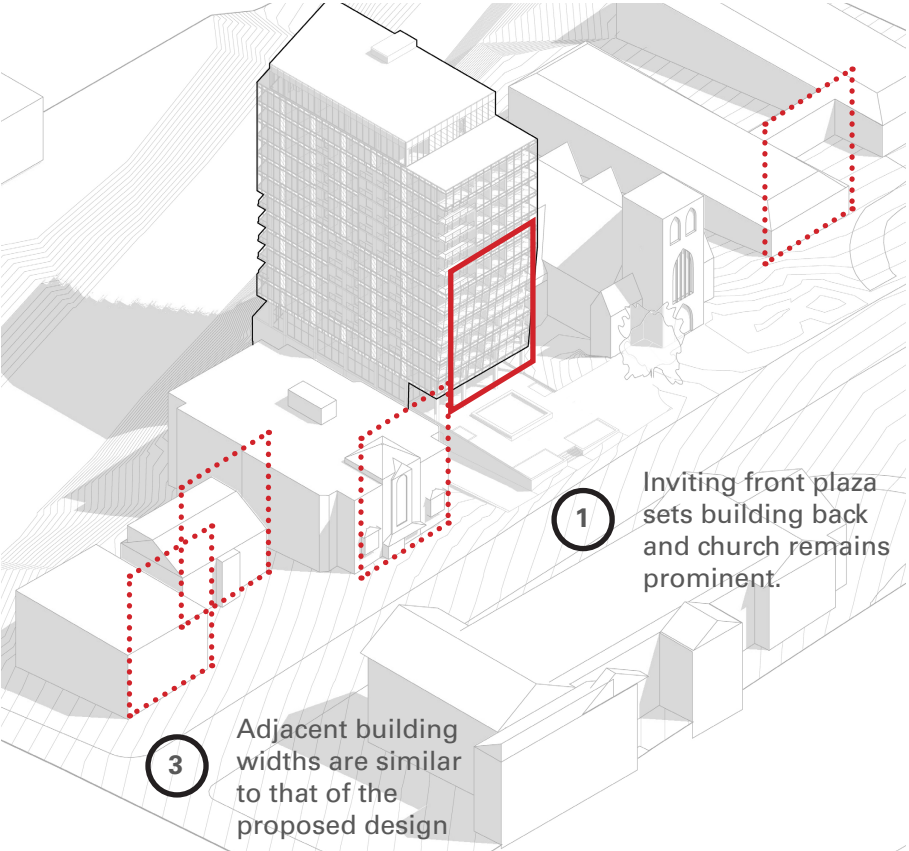
4. Site Circulation

In the as-of-right version, site circulation is very constrained. Vehicles would enter and exit the parkade from the front facade. Pedestrian circulation around the church is also constrained. The proposed DA design has a discrete parkade entrance and ample pedestrian oriented space both for the building itself and the church next door.

1. As-of-Right: 7-Storey + Penthouse / Mid-Rise - 93,003 GFA



2. Proposed DA: 13-Storey + Penthouse / High-Rise - 95,750 GFA



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Impact

5. Building Height

The as-of-right proposal tops out at 8 storeys while the DA design proposes 14 storeys. While the mid-rise massing is less intense vertically, it crowds the site in other directions. The inverse is true for the DA proposal: It is much taller but offers relief at the street and side yards that is preferable.

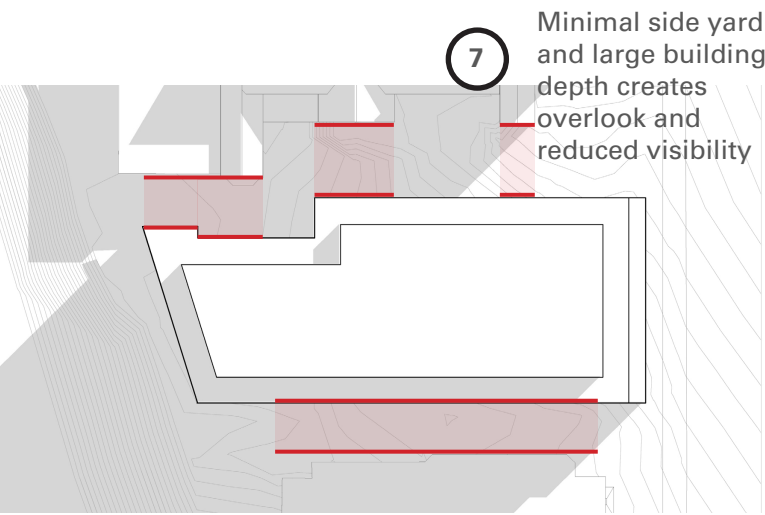
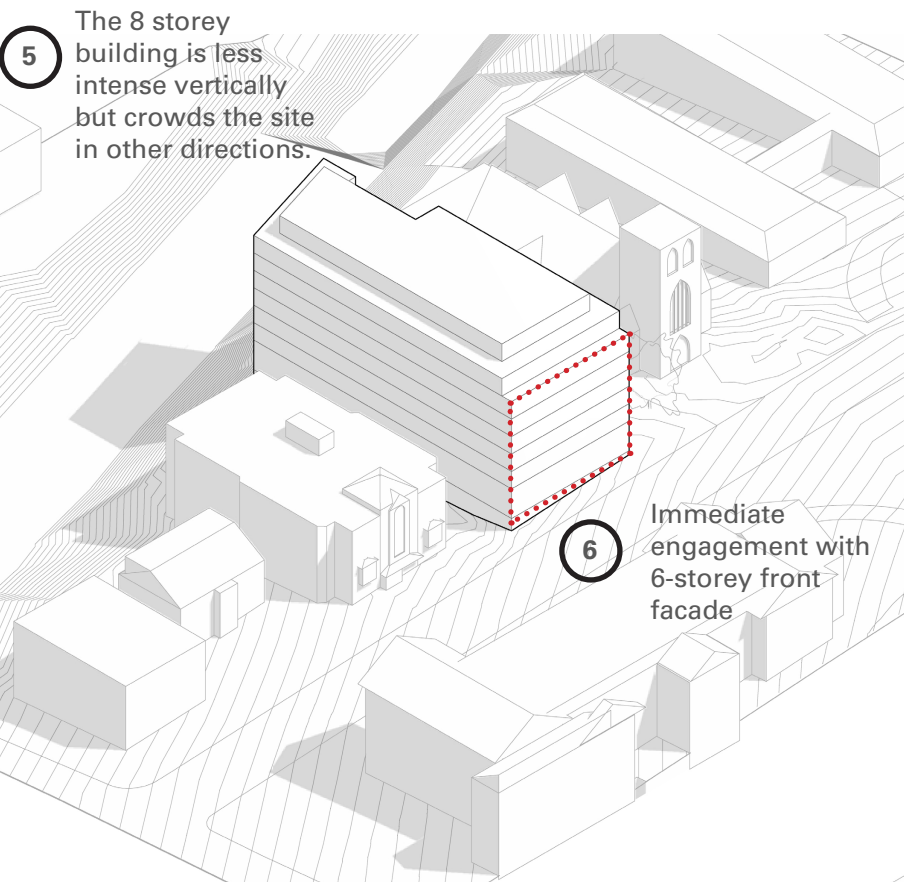
6. Human Scale

When considering how people engage with the site, especially at the sidewalk threshold, the as-of-right option presents an immediate encounter with it's 6 storey front facade. The proposed DA design, by contrast, provides a landscaped open space with a sense of procession that eases pedestrians into either the residential building or the church. Large planters, benches, an open plaza, steps and ramps are among the human scaled features integrated into the design.

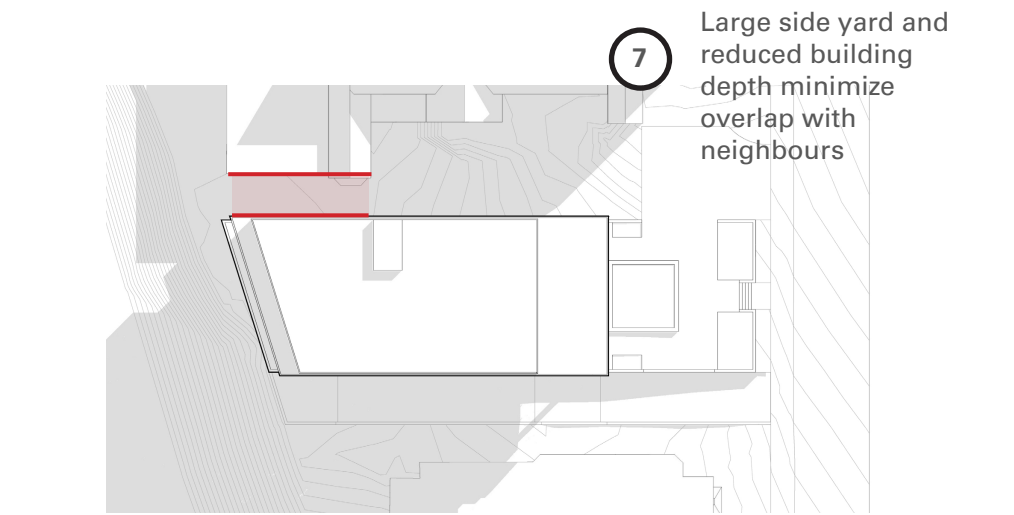
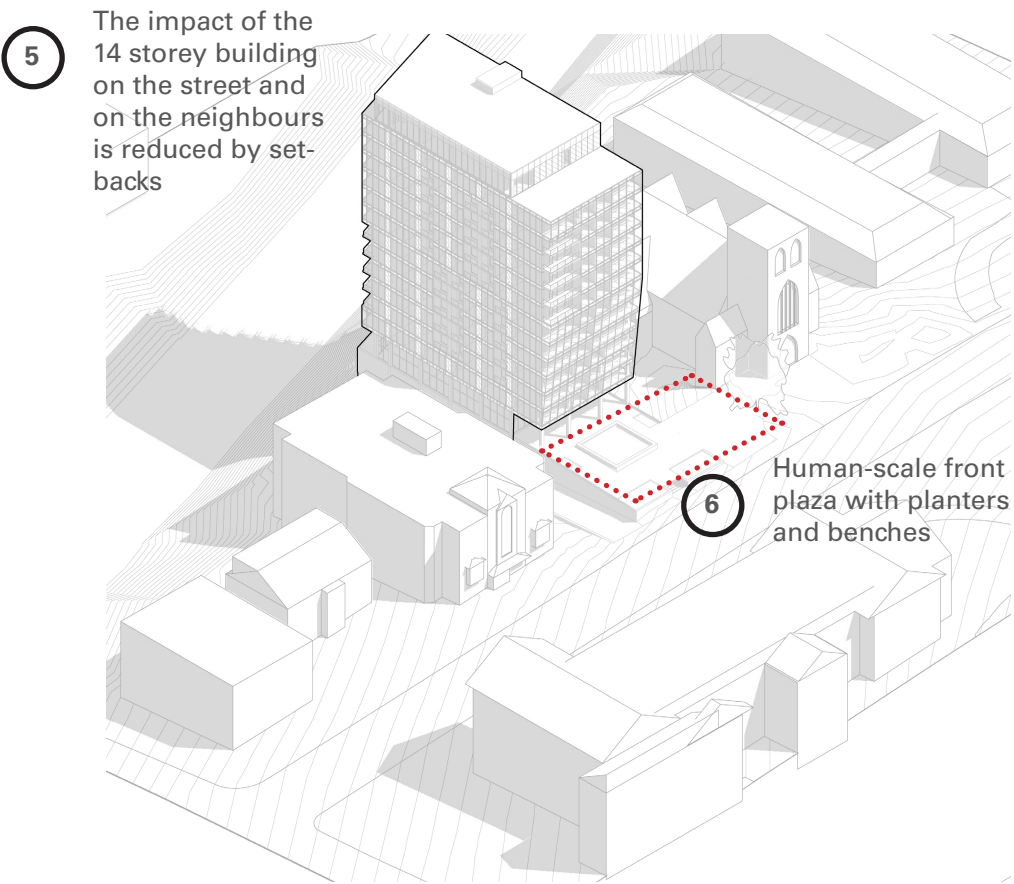
7. Sightlines and Overlook

For the neighbouring residence to the south, the as-of-right design limits people's views and produces "overlook" where units look directly into each other across the side yard. When the massing is shifted back in the proposed DA design, a significant portion of the units will look out on a landscaped plaza instead. The larger side yard in the DA proposal also helps by increasing the distance between the buildings where units might face each other. Additionally, the north side yard, adjacent to the church, buffers the new building from the most active areas associated with the congregation and other church uses.

1. As-of-Right: 7-Storey + Penthouse / Mid-Rise - 93,003 GFA



2. Proposed DA: 13-Storey + Penthouse / High-Rise - 95,750 GFA



DESIGN PROPOSAL: Materials and Articulation

Creating a design that is sympathetic to the church is not only about finding the right massing strategy. Careful consideration of materials and facade articulation can also play a part. The First Baptist Church has informed the following elements of the design.

1. Cladding

A large portion of the building facade is composed of glass and metal panels to create a light and airy impression. These materials compliment the church’s rough cut stone walls by way of contrast, more or less inverting the material strategy of the church from one that is predominantly masonry with some glass to one that is predominantly glass.

2. Openings

The elegant proportions of the tall, narrow church windows are re-imagined in the elevations of the proposed design. Slender openings for stacked terraces punctuate the facade. A change in material helps articulate the openings recalling the church’s sandstone jambs.

3. Rhythm

One of the notable features of the church’s steeple is the huge window above the main entrance. The glass is divided using a series of strong vertical muntins, creating a rhythm of narrow vertical stripes that is repeated in various other places. This rhythm has been translated into a series of slender fins that encapsulate the podium and entry level of the proposed design.

4. Ornamentation

Many of the church’s character defining elements use the Gothic arch, often paired with finely crafted tracery at windows and doors. The proposed design borrows from these geometries to create a lattice-like screen at the corner balconies.

1



2



3



4



DESIGN PROPOSAL: First Baptist Church

The following investments in / improvements to the Church property are proposed as part of a tentative Heritage Development Agreement:

Site Improvements

- New outdoor amenity spaces (a shared community plaza and two gathering spaces / courtyards designated for the church,
- Improved accessibility, notably new stairs and barrier-free path to new church vestibule,
- Refreshed landscaping.

Additional On-site Parking

- New accessible surface parking,
- Indoor parking spaces within new development designated for FBC

Long-term Financial Stability

Funds will be set aside for the FBC to ensure continued use and care of the proposed heritage building by the congregation.

Addition of Mixed Housing Stock

Adding housing to the site supports the FBC’s mission to encourage community connections and support newcomer and refugee settlement.



POLICY RESPONSE: Policy CHR-7

Policy CHR-7 of the Regional Centre Municipal Planning 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, as well as those set out in IM-7 to guide the consideration of rezonings and development agreements more generally.

Policy CHR-7

On any lot containing a registered heritage building located outside of any approved 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 to support the integrity, conservation and adaptive re-use of registered heritage buildings. This includes development proposals that exceed the maximum floor area ratios or the maximum building heights on Map 3 and Map 4 of this Plan. 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, and does not propose to demolish any registered heritage buildings that exist on the lot;*
- 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 a development;*

The proposed building has been designed to minimize its impact on adjacent properties, providing significantly more relief than what would be provided under current zoning requirements for the same amount floor area.

To the rear, the site is buffered by the rail cut, creating a 47.5-metre separation from established residential properties - far exceeding the 6-metre rear yard setback required for properties abutting an ER zone. The site is flanked by an existing multi-unit residential building on one side and the First Baptist Church on the other. The building design has been carefully considered to go beyond the minimum setbacks in order to respond to both.

A traffic study conducted as part of this application has determined that traffic generation will be minimal. Additionally, given the site’s highly walkable location on the Halifax Peninsula, a low rate of car ownership is anticipated, with parking provided at a ratio of 0.5 spaces per unit.

- c) any new construction, additions, or renovations facing a street substantially maintain the predominant streetwall height, setbacks, scale, and the rhythm of the surrounding properties, especially of registered heritage properties;*

The portion of Oxford Street within proximity of First Baptist Church does not have a predominant streetwall with which the development could align with. To meet the intent of this policy, the development has been intentionally designed to respond to the massing of the First Baptist Church, aligning a prominent angular feature of the front facade with the height of the church’s iconic tower. When accounting for the change in grade elevation, the building’s overall height remains consistent with other Dalhousie buildings, including the Life Sciences Centre, contributing to a cohesive skyline across this area of the Peninsula.

Entirely contained within the existing property lines, the development’s width is similar to that of other buildings along Oxford Street, maintaining the rhythm of the surrounding streetscape. Additionally,

a generous front yard setback and the inclusion of an at-grade public open space help to ensure that the building does not visually dominate the street but is instead well integrated into the existing community fabric.

- d) the development complies with Pedestrian Wind Impact and Shadow Impact Assessment Protocol and Performance Standards of the Land Use By-law;*

While a shadow impact study is not required for this site, as it is not near any specified sites on Schedule 51 of the Land Use By-law, a shadow study has been included in Appendix B. It compares the shading of the proposed development with an as-of-right development with a similar GFA. While the shadow is longer, it lingers on any given area for less time than would be achieved through an as-of-right development due to the narrow dimensions of the built form. Of most concern are adjacent residences, the closest of which is to the south. However, by virtue of their southern positioning, they are not impacted by shadow.

A pedestrian wind impact study per Appendix 1 of the Regional Centre land use by-law will be completed and if mitigative measures are recommended, they will be incorporated into the building design.

- e) the level of proposed investment in conservation measures on the property and through the required incentive or bonus zoning requirements is generally proportional with the additional development rights provided through the agreement, especially in cases of new construction;*

While the proposed building will be taller than the current zoning requirements allow for, it will not have a greater floor area than what could be achieved under the existing as-of-right zoning requirements. Despite this, the proposed development will result in significant investment into the First Baptist Church that will restore heritage features, and ensure that it can continue it’s historic use as a religious and community institution indefinitely.

The purpose of the heritage development agreement process is to enable a building design that supports the character of the adjacent heritage building, provides investment to preserve and enhance the heritage building, and responds to the surrounding context better than can be achieved under the as-of-right development requirements. Each of these intents is being achieved with the proposed development.

- f) any un-registered, historic buildings on the lot that contribute to neighbourhood character are preserved to retain the visual integrity of the lot;*

A non-registered dwelling “parsonage house” is proposed to be demolished to allow for the proposed development. The Heritage Impact statement determined that this building does not have heritage value and that its removal is considered to be appropriate. Due to the location of the house, it cannot be retained and would be required to be demolished for a new development, whether by as-of-right or by development agreement.

See the heritage impact statement for more information.

- g) the development complies with policies relating to the Citadel View Planes and Ramparts Sight Lines, protected public views and view terminus sites;*

This site is not subject to Citadel View Planes, Rampart Sight Lines, protected public views, or view terminus sites.

- h) incentive or bonus zoning is provided consistent with the requirements of the Land Use Bylaw;*

The proposed development will meet or exceed the applicable bonus zoning requirements of the land use by-law.

- i) the development agreement requires a waiver under Section 18 of the Heritage Property Act to be registered on the property before*

a development permit is issued for any portion of the development; and

A waiver under section 18 will be obtained prior to issuance of a development permit.

j) the general development agreement criteria set out in Policy IM-7 in Part 9 of this Plan.

Policy IM-7

a) the proposal is consistent with the Vision, Core Concepts, Urban Design Goals, and all applicable objectives and policies set out in the Regional Plan and this Plan;

The proposed development aligns with the vision, core concepts, and urban design goals of the Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy as well as the objectives and policies of the Regional Plan. Alignment with the core concepts of the Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy is discussed below.

Complete Communities:

The proposed development supports the development of complete communities by locating growth in an area with strong access to transit routes, parks, commercial, and institutional services in the immediate neighbourhood. In this type of neighbourhood, residents are more likely to walk, bike, or take transit to reach their daily goods and services.

Human-Scale Design:

While the proposed development does not have a typical podium and tower form, this has been intentionally designed in order to provide relief for the adjacent heritage building. Human scale design is instead provided by the provision of an at-grade plaza between the building and Oxford Street. This open space helps to keep with the neighbourhood context of Oxford Street by providing generous setbacks and quality open spaces. We believe this

is an improvement of the alternative as-of-right design which would result in an up to 6-storey Streetwall on Oxford.

Pedestrians First:

The building design is thoroughly pedestrian focused with the at grade open space leading to a welcoming ground floor lobby area. High quality landscaping design will help to create a sense of place in the plaza, helping to knit together both the First Baptist Church and the proposed development in a harmonious relationship. Site planning has also specifically considered the walkability of the site to ensure that the inclusion of an accessible entrance to the First Baptist Church at the side of the building.

Strategic Growth:

This site is suitably located in the higher-order residential zone and directly across from one of the region's largest employers, Dalhousie University. Growth in this location will help to achieve the goal of accommodating at least 40% of the Municipalities' Growth within the Regional Centre.

- b) the proposal is appropriate and not premature by reason of:***
- i. the financial capacity of the Municipality to absorb any costs relating to the development,***
 - ii. the adequacy of municipal wastewater facilities, stormwater systems or water distribution systems,***
 - iii. the proximity of the proposed development to schools, parks, and community facilities, and the capability of these services to absorb any additional demands,***
 - iv. the adequacy of transportation infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, public transit and vehicles for travel to and within the development, and***

v. the impact on registered heritage buildings, heritage streetscapes, and heritage conservation districts;

The proposal is appropriate based on the criteria of this policy.

- c) the subject lands are suitable for development in terms of the steepness of grades, soil and geological conditions, locations of watercourses, wetlands, and susceptibility to flooding;***
- d) The subject site is suitable for development and does not include any sensitive environmental features.***
- e) that development regulations in the proposed rezoning or development agreement will adequately mitigate potential conflict between the proposed development and nearby land uses, by reason of:***
 - i. type of use(s),***
 - ii. built form of the proposed building(s),***
 - iii. impacts on adjacent uses, including compatibility with adjacent residential neighbourhoods, parks, community facilities, and railway operations,***
 - iv. traffic generation, safe access to and egress from the site, and parking,***
 - v. open storage and signage, and***
 - vi. impacts of lighting, noise, fumes and other emissions.***

The building has been designed intentionally to mitigate conflict between land uses by:

- 1. being entirely residential in nature
- 2. setting back the building further from the front and rear property lines than required under the as-of-right requirements

- 3. providing at-grade open spaces to be compatible with the adjacent neighbourhood
- 4. Having a limited number of parking spaces, reducing potential issues of traffic generation along Oxford.
- 5. Locating any waste management and storage within the building, and designing any external lighting as to not impact adjacent uses or public right-of-ways.