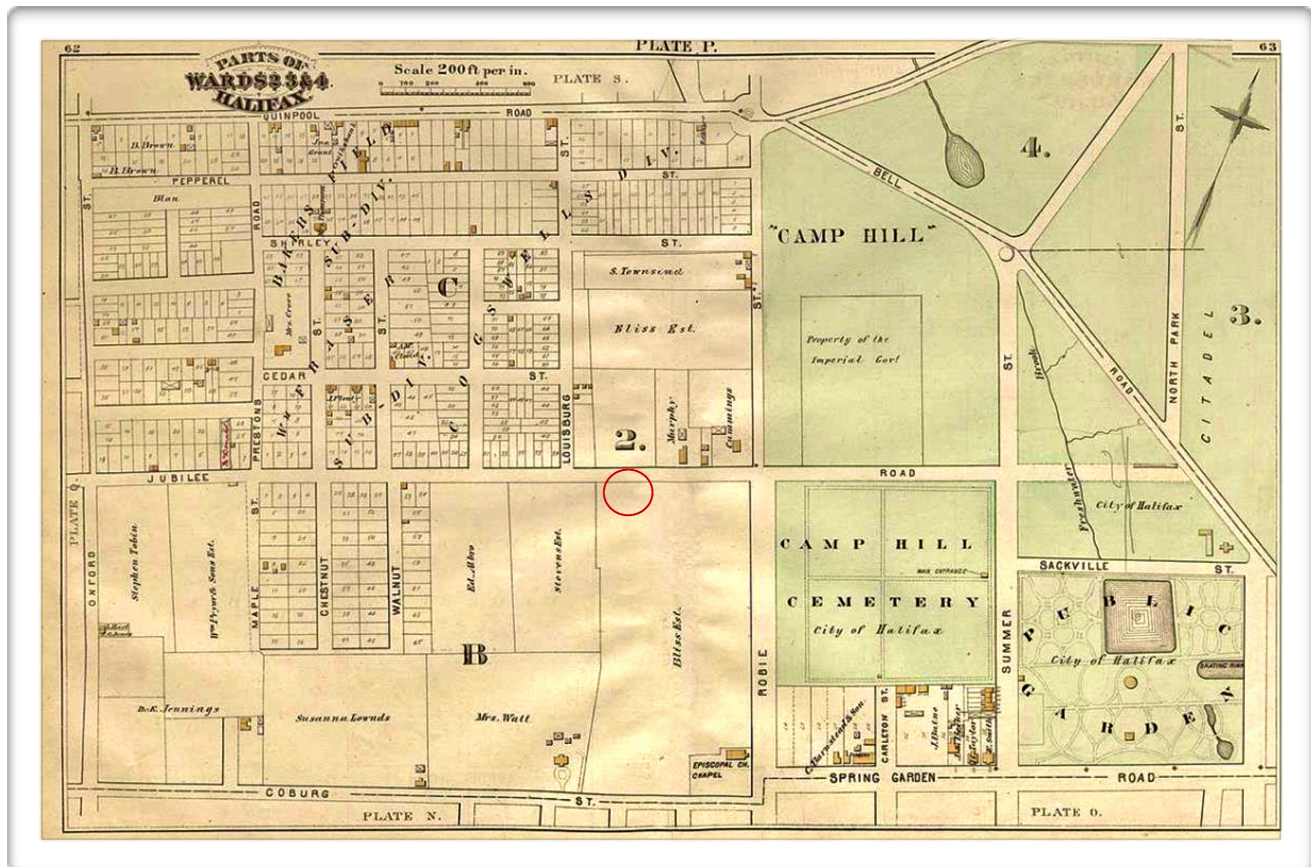


Toward Creating a Heritage Conservation District:

Old West End Halifax: Ethical, Ecological, Heritage and Community Considerations

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Submitted on Behalf of
MIRCS (Maritime Institute for
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Contents:

I Introduction - 3

II Case for Old West End Halifax as a Heritage Conservation District - 6

III Heritage, Ecology and Democracy - 12

Appendix A: Architectural Texts listed for Halifax Library and other sources - 13

Appendix B: Sample Advertisements for Old West End Building Lots and Houses - 17

Appendix C: Select Bibliography - 18

Appendix D: Maps, Images, Photographs

I Introduction

Current progression of Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) Centre Plan includes clarification of zoning for mid-rise and high-rise developments (“densification”), districts to be maintained as residential low-rise areas, and specified Heritage Conservation Districts.¹ On the face of this reading one is to view the Centre Plan as a mixed use, balanced implementation for future urban development. Alternatively one may interpret the goals as determining districts to be removed from the urban landscape (older buildings, small business locations, residential locations, places of worship) in favour of dramatic streetscape and precinct developments. Zones designated as residential and for heritage conservation, while presumably maintaining the status quo, are liable to be ringed about on their perimeters by radical urban densification and erosion of boundaries; in effect the former become “islands” subject to loss of integrity. MIRCS (Maritime Institute for Civil Society) has taken into consideration one such zone of housing and low-rise development which may be recognized for its residential structures and heritage architecture. The Old West End (here described as bounded by Robie Street, Quinpool Road, Oxford Street and Coburg Road) is already subject to mid-rise and high-rise construction along its edges and intrusion within the said boundaries.

MIRCS is committed to civil discourse, community-oriented engagement and active democratic initiatives for the Common Good. Its range of interest include historical reconnaissance, internal provincial community development and public policy issues. The implications for urban shifts and demographic accommodation under the Centre Plan can be brought forward with the Old West End as a case study and the positive aspects of status quo recognition and heritage district potential, all of which find resonance with the Institute’s core focus. It is proposed, therefore, as active participation in urban transformation, that MIRCS hereby submits a historical overview of the Old West End and current composition. It is hoped thereby that response from municipal authorities will indicate priorities and the place of community obligations within an on-going process of demolition,

¹ HRM: Centre Plan: “A Heritage Conservation District is a defined area of historical architectural value that is protected by regulations governing such things as demolition, exterior alteration and new development and where incentives may apply to encourage private architectural conservation and programs that enhance public amenities.” Cf. Cork City, Republic of Ireland: “The built heritage of Cork city is finite. The building forms, the shapes of the street and quays and the historic spaces of the City combine to give it its celebrated unique expression of Cork through the centuries.” “We have a duty to protect, conserve, and sensitively use our historic building to ensure they are passed onto our successors with their value intact.”

displacement, development and filtering of population replacement attached to income and social restructuring.²

A community consists of its resident population and the built environment. Social relations are affected by availability of interaction (business, medical, recreation, familial) in relationship to residential placement and construction which either enhance or inhibit community life. Densification limits the scope for interpersonal communications by demographic change, isolation within high-rise 'pods' and limited residential walking routes (eg. wandering alternate floor levels or hallways is not akin to variations of street walkabouts in low-rise neighbourhoods; the former raises suspicions while the latter invites conversation). Green spaces (parks, gardens, trails) are alternate means of ameliorating separation in dense high-rise tenancies or condominium towers; low-rise streets more readily accommodate a mix of public and private green space. Additionally the latter are shared by persons of all economic and social classes either by open entrance or viewing from neighbourhood sidewalks; admittance into "densified" architectural structures is filtered by security and other forms of control. Encroachment on low-density urban micro-communities (blocks or streetscapes) disrupt the complex web of established norms. Changes dictated by any outside agents distract from engaged, vital population dynamics. Public hearings which result in the nullification of local citizens input in favour of over-arching urban design planning and developer lobbying alienates citizens from positive appreciation of civic government. Halifax peninsula has seen repeated examples of the latter.³

Where the Centre Plan lays out zones of development whether low-rise, mid-rise or high-rise, the plan positions itself to give effect to streetscape and community zone eradication. Developers may acquire properties in blocks with the understanding that as owners they may proceed with razing functional structures, displace established businesses, and directly interfere with places of worship. The Old West End has been subject to territorial erosion along Quinpool road and

² The MIRCS Institute had submitted an earlier commentary report in December 2016 for the Draft Centre Plan. At that time one of the emphatic observations was citizenry: "Surely, in part, it must be how much change should be imposed on those who already live there. How radically should existing forms of life and interaction be disrupted within the Centre-district before the whole proposal must be regarded as something no longer done for the benefit of the people, but is something imposed by the municipal apparatus for corporate objectives that no longer serve the common good."

³ MIRCS has engaged in a study of Halifax's Old North End utilizing mapping, census returns, directories, etc. as noted on its current website: "This was late Victorian Halifax - a city of tradition and innovation, a hub of international communication and trade, all organized in a complex web of family, mobility, social gradations and intersecting networks... A reconstruction of these detailed records of neighbourhood life can provide lessons for the present about the changes which have occurred since then. In this case, the moral sciences can help with an assessment of our self-understanding, of how we conduct our responsibilities to the disadvantaged, sustain the environment, improve economic conditions for all, and retain that which upholds the good."

Robie Street. The former was designated as a corridor for mid-rise development (while “exceptions” for high-rise towers have occurred either side of the Quinpool Road-Robie Street nexus). The “Keep” has been built along Quinpool and Pepperell and bounded on one side by Vernon Street. Two similar mid-rise projects are to be created between Preston and Oxford streets (excepting the West End Baptist Church at Preston and Quinpool, and the buildings up from the Oxford-Quinpool intersection). Both the Church and Shaar Shalom Synagogue will be inordinately diminished in the streetscape along with other implied derogation of the significance of sacred worship sites. A former industrial property (Ben’s Bakery which straddled either side of Pepperell Street) has had a mid-rise building go up between Pepperell and Shirley, while the in-fill for Pepperell-Quinpool has yet to be commenced. The demarcation of Robie Street from the Willow Tree intersection to the Robie and Coburg intersection for high and mid rise development (a change from the first draft of the Centre Plan) will further distort the reality of the Old West End’s low-rise composition.⁴

The progression of development which will be either three times the height of current residential homes in the Old West End (most of which are three stories and under), or high-rise towers (such as the nearly completed “The George” between Pepperell and Shirley along Robie Street) which have opened the low-rise area to further intrusion despite the Centre Plan’s regulations which state interest in low-rise residential neighbourhoods. Robie Street demolition and construction will directly impact the Old West End by displacement of community residents and some businesses, alter shadow effects, wind events and disrupt private citizens lives during the course of demolition and construction. Though private land owners may choose to sell to a developer’s agents it does not confine the transition’s subsequent activities to the specific building/house lot. Owners who choose not to sell out will have their lives greatly disrupted as alluded to in the foregoing - excavation and blasting, and building-site noise for upwards of two to three years. All adversely affects the quality of life without compensation either by the developer or the civic government; puts properties at risk of damage by blasting; and interferes with free access to streets and sidewalks during construction as well as heavy vehicle movement. The citizens adjacent to such development are

⁴ Cf Witold Rybczynski, *Looking Around: A Journey Through Architecture* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992): pg. 264: “One of the greatest architectural shortcomings of most of our modern cities is the apparent inability of builders to produce large numbers of unassuming but satisfying buildings that can form the backdrop for the occasional important landmark. Instead, what we have are cities composed increasingly of aspiring landmarks, which is to say cities without any landmarks at all.”

sacrificed to urban planning permissions and political agendas, and capitalist ventures.⁵

II Case for Old West End Halifax as a Heritage Conservation District

The Old West End is a potential heritage conservation district in its representation of last quarter nineteenth-century and first quarter twentieth-century suburban growth (although it now comprises an inner city zone as Halifax grew out and beyond it). Large estates were sectioned off for residential lots when heirs released property to the open market. Development had actually begun at Robie Street and Quinpool Road as early as 1860 with the sale of lots “measuring 50 feet by 100” at St. Andrew’s Cross [now generally known as the Willow Tree intersection.]⁶ Several of the present-day streets had been surveyed prior to the 1880s. Documentation survives in contemporary newspapers, real estate registers, maps, and professional journals. Growth is attested to as well in the city directories. The construction was influenced by print media which spread the appeal of Neo-Gothic design, later Beaux Arts expressions (including the growth of Arts and Crafts writings by British advocate William Morris), and the so-called Craftsman style. Evidence of access to these publications in Halifax exist in newspaper book sales, city libraries and other sources. Both American and British publications inspired replication here in the city among its residents. Titles that occurred and were available in the book trade, for example, included A. J. Bicknell’s *Bicknell’s Village Builder. Elevations and Plans* (New York 1872); *Specimen Book of One Hundred Architectural Designs ... Suburban Houses, Villas, Sea-Side and Camp-Ground Cottages, Homesteads, Churches and Public Buildings* (New York 1879); T. F. Hunt, *Half a Dozen Hints of Picturesque Domestic Architecture* (London 1841) - dated but available in local libraries of the time; John Bullock, *The American Cottage Builder* (Philadelphia 1871); Raymond Unwin and M. H. Baillie Scott et al, *Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909); Henry H. Saylor, *Bungalows* (Toronto 1913); *Woodward’s Country Homes* (New York 1868); *Woodward’s Cottages and Farm Houses* (New York 1867); John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London 1849) - his work and related writings on labour remained popular throughout the nineteenth century; Andrew Jackson Downing,

⁵ Cf. Allen B. Robertson, “Urban Development/ Urban Displacement: Theological Insight on Human Ecology” (Unpub. paper Halifax NS 2017: posted to [academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu)); Robertson, “Navigating the Common Good in 21st Century Halifax, Nova Scotia: Enterprise, Civil Society, Heritage and Theological Vision” : Paper presented to symposium on the Common Good and Social Enterprise, Atlantic School of Theology, October 2017 (posted to [academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu))

⁶ *British Colonist* (Halifax, NS): 1860 April 14 pg. 3

The Architecture of Country Houses (New York 1850) - a landmark publication; Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages* (1857); William T. Comstock, *Detail, Cottage and Constructive Architecture* (New York 1886); John H. Parker, *ABC of Gothic Architecture* (1881).

These publications by no means exhausted the literature available during the late 1800s to early 1900s. Periodicals and newspapers carried articles on new construction, historical studies of past styles, and announced local Halifax lectures on the topic. The Gothic Revival had its prominence boosted with the new Parliament buildings in London, and Canada's own first Parliament building in Ottawa (of which the Library is the sole survivor of an early Twentieth Century fire). Local churches had already been gothicized in design as when the Irish-born, New York based architect Patrick Charles Keely was brought to Halifax to view and design the extension of St. Mary's Cathedral and create a granite facade with towers (ultimately reduced to the present one tower and spire due to costs) during the 1860s.⁷ The later Customs House and Post Office Building along Dresden Row, George and Hollis streets with its heavily ornamented exterior was another highly visible representation of later Victorian architectural achievements. Though these belong to the category of religious and public buildings they nonetheless influenced home construction as would be evident in the old West End as the then suburb lots were sold and houses were contracted for new householders.⁸

One needs as well to note the profusion of a later architectural phenomena which greatly affected the design of many West End houses. That was the rise of the pre-cut and packaged house (shipped by rail-car) sold through catalogues - Sears-Roebuck, T. Eaton, Aladdin, and others based in the United States and Canada. The designs for each style carried a name for easy identification. One found in the T. Eaton catalogues, such as (1917) *Plan Book of Ideal Homes*, "Eatoncourt," "Earlswood," and "Earnscliffe" which are readily recognizable in extant West End houses and elsewhere on the peninsula. These ran the gamut of

⁷ J. Philip McAleer, *A Pictorial History of the Basilica of St. Mary, Halifax Nova Scotia* (Halifax, NS: Tech-Press, 1884); Allen B. Robertson, "Patrick Charles Keely: The Nova Scotia Neo-Gothic Connection" *Celtic Life International* Spring 2012: 33-35; Allen B. Robertson, "Liturgy & Sanctuary: Radical Faith in a Neo-Gothic Space: Commentary on Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica, Halifax, Nova Scotia" *Fidelitas* [Journal of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars (Canada)]: Summer-Fall 2016: pp. 83-114

⁸ On St. Matthew's United Church [formerly Presbyterian] see: Glen McArthur and Annie Szamosi, *William Thomas Architect 1799-1860* (Archives of Canadian Art an imprint of Carleton University Press, 1996); David Stirling (1822-1887) was the architect for the highly decorated Post Office and Custom Building (1863-67) in Bedford Row: see Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950 (online), and the *Canadian Illustrated News* 30 October 1869 pp. 12-13 and illustration.

vestigial Gothic (in trim), Arts and Crafts forms, and Craftsman or “Stick” style (the latter inspired by Gustav Stickley (*Craftsman Houses The 1913 Catalog*).)⁹

Finally, one has to be aware of the architects active in Halifax during this period who designed and oversaw construction of houses within the Old West End and adjacent housing expansion. The Craftsman style (arising in part from the Beaux Art studies he had been immersed in) would be found in William Critchlow Harris’s work (public and private) including his time in partnership at Halifax under the firm “Harris & Horton.” Other notable names included Andrew R. Cobb, the Dumaresq architectural dynasty, William Thomas & Sons (responsible for the Court House in Spring Garden Road and St. Matthew’s Church), George Lang (died 1881), and H. B. Sellon. (Others may be found in Maud Rosinski’s *Architects of Nova Scotia: A Biographical Dictionary 1605-1950* (1994).) Each one brought elements of the Gothic Revival, Empire Style, Arts and Crafts with its lineal developments and European Art Nouveau expressions.¹⁰

The foregoing is a necessary exposition of architectural influences all of which will be found to have left tangible expressions in the houses of the Old West End. When subdivision of older estates was taken up by Halifax developers for new streets and building lots there were already well formed tastes in building aesthetics, serviceability, and family considerations. These included the forerunner ideas of the British-inspired Garden City concept where separated buildings, tree-lined streets and room for home gardening were promoted to foster social harmony, a healthy environment and a certain idealized vision of homeownership.¹¹ Such sentiments were held by the American landscape architect Frederick L. Olmsted

⁹ Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books and Catalogues in American Architecture, 1788-1950: A History and Guide* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); John Lorinc, “By the (pattern) book: How the humble mid-century bungalow shaped Canadian neighbourhoods” *Toronto Special The Globe and Mail* 2009 May 15; James L. Garvin, “Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America 1800-1860” *Winterthur Portfolio* Vol. 19 No. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1984)) pp. 107-50

¹⁰ Robert Tuck, *Gothic Dreams: The Life and Career of a Canadian Architect: William Critchlow Harris 1859-1913* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1978); Jean B. Weir, *Rich in Interest and Charm: The Architecture of Andrew Randall Cobb 1876-1943* (Halifax, NS: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1990); Janet Kitz, *Andrew Cobb: Architect and Artist* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 2014); “Horatio [or Horace] Broke Sellon 1838-1913” *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada*

¹¹ Raymond Unwin and M. H. Baillie Scott, *Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909); cf. Barry Cahill, “Reconstruction Reconsidered: Thomas Adam’s Role in Rebuilding the “Devastated Area” after the 1917 Halifax Disaster” *Urban History Review* Vol. 46, no. 2 (April 2012): pp. 57-69: re: involvement in the Hydrostone district, and the earlier provincial Town Planning Act of 1915: “He was already an accomplished planner when the government hired him, internationally recognized for his work with the English Garden City movement.” (pg. 57). Cf. Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working Class Suburb in the 1920s* (University of Toronto Press, 1995) which examines the Hydrostone district of the North End and comments on architect Adams.

and promoted in the writings of John Ruskin. (One of Olmsted's sons would be consulted for the design of Truro's Victoria Park.)¹² Indeed, the forerunner of the Halifax Public Gardens which ran along Spring Garden Road, and the establishment of Camp Hill Cemetery between Summer and Robie streets as part of the park-style approach ("rural cemetery movement") with walks and leafy avenues were to be to the Old West End what the more highly dense New York would be around Central Park. This thematic link meant a separation from industrial sites and mercantile concentration in older downtown Halifax, and the shift to low-rise residential neighbourhoods.

Currently all three areas are undergoing encroachment which places them in an "at risk" category. High-rise and medium-rise buildings along three edges of the Public Gardens has already created adverse shadow effects for botanical plantings. Camp Hill Cemetery was nearly sliced into (or at least graves were near to exposure) during excavation along its parallel border to Spring Garden Road. The possibility of projected mid-rise and high-rise developments along Robie Street from the Willow Tree to the intersection of Robie Street and Coburg further compromises the integrity of the former unity of the Gardens, Cemetery and Old West End. Significant buildings along the western side of Robie Street representative of the above building styles would be threatened with demolition. Among those important structures is the Classical colonnaded cottage at Jubilee and Robie which was once the home of Halifax's first mayor, William Caldwell.¹³

The phases of improvement and expansion during the later Victorian period in the Old West End can be traced, as noted, in real estate catalogues and newspaper real estate advertisements. One of the earliest public announcements appeared in the Halifax paper, *British Colonist*, for April 1860 when W. M. Allan advertised "Several valuable Building Lots measuring 50 feet by 100" at St.

¹² Lee Hall, *Olmsted's America: An "Unpractical" Man and His Vision of Civilization* (Boston, MA: Little Brown and Co., 1995): pg. 163: "His attitude was unequivocally Ruskinian: the human being could be changed by surroundings; a spiritually elevating habitat could be expected to improve the morals, politics, and aesthetics of those who dwelled in it.", pg. 190: "Driven also by passion for social reform and for shaping American civilization in accordance with his values, Olmsted spoke out on issues and took an active role in effecting change. He had criticized the rigid grid pattern of New York as conducive to tenements and had advocated intelligent urban design as a method of improving society...". Deborah Trask, *Life How Short Eternity How Long: Gravestone Carving and Carvers in Nova Scotia* (Halifax NS: The Nova Scotia Museum, 1978): pg. 36: "The Rural Cemetery Movement". See also: Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkmar, *Landscape in History: Design and Planning in the Eastern and Western Traditions* 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1999): pg. 486: "The public gardens of Boston and Halifax, Nova Scotia, are both excellent, extant examples of the type of mid-nineteenth century open space."

¹³ Francesco Bandaris and Ron Van Oers, *The Historic Urban Landscape: Managing Heritage in an Urban Century* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012): pg. "Conservation of the built environment has therefore a plurality of meanings: the preservation of memory, the conservation of artistic and architectural achievements, the valuing of places of significance and collective meaning."

Andrew's Cross (now known as the Willow Tree intersection). Over the next fourteen years land sales began to rapidly increase in part due to the activities of John D. Nash and Col. Hornsby, two estate agents and land speculators, along with building societies set up to manage mortgage purchasing.¹⁴ In 1874 Nash acted for the estate in disposal of Cogswell's Fields between Jubilee Road and Quinpool Road: "About 40 Building Lots, situate in Cogswell's Fields, on Jubilee Road, each measuring about 34 x 100 feet. These Lots are among the finest that have been offered in the fields, many of them fronting on the Jubilee Road, and are really very superior in respect to position and the nature of the ground for building purposes." [*British Colonist* 1874 Sept. 2 pg. 3 col. 7]. The previous year Nash oversaw the sale of other Jubilee lots and others facing Quinpool Road: "... 6 lots fronting on Quinpool road in Cogswell's fields, nearly opposite Mr. Humphrey's, each measuring 33 feet front by 100" [*British Colonist* May 1873]. Again, in 1871, Nash was busy advertising 95 "Choice Lots as Building Sites" between Jubilee and Quinpool roads. [*British Colonist* 1871 Sept. 2 pg. 3 col. 7] The other half of the district was undergoing development and subdivision into building lots at the same time. In 1870 several lots and houses were offered on the market along Seymour and Lemarchant streets. One building on Lemarchant, a double house, was of considerable size: "Each House has about 10 Rooms, besides Kitchen to each..." [*Morning Chronicle* 1870 April 19 pg. 3 col. 7] The property called Bank Head Farm straddled what is today Oxford Street. Over the years several sections were sold off for suburban development. [*Sun & Advertiser* 1867 Nov. 20 pg. 1 col. 1]¹⁵

Real estate booklets published in the 1870s in Halifax listed properties for rent and for sale. These offer city wide context for development and the in-filling of building lots of the Old West End with new construction. John Naylor's *Halifax and Dominion Real Estate Register* for February 1878 noted building lots on Cedar Street, Pepperell, Quinpool Road, Shirley, and Jubilee. One house already in place on Cedar Street was described as follows: "New double house ... Each half contains parlour, dining room, pantries, and L(arge) kitchen on the ground floor. On next floor 4 bedrooms and closet. Frost-proof cellar under the whole of the

¹⁴ Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan T. J. Artibise, ed., *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979; 1st pub. 1966): Susan Buggy, "An Entrepreneur in the Halifax Building World: The Role of John D. Nash" pp. 173-86

¹⁵ Cf. HRM Case H00139: 6234 York Street, Halifax NS: application for heritage designation - the research report describes Bank Head Farm properties and streets within the Old West End. See also: *British Colonist* 1861 May 2 pg. 4 col. 5: "For Sale. A Field, containing 8 Acres situate on the road leading to the North West Arm, opposite Bank Head, bounded on three sides by Public Roads...Apply to S. & W. M. Gray, House and Estate Agents..." See also Seyitan Moritiwon, "Two HRM properties get heritage status" *The Coast* (Halifax) 2020 August 19: 6074 Jubilee Road - wooden building between brick portions of terrace housing.

house. Cistern of rain water in the cellar. Well of good water in the vicinity.”¹⁶ See as well listings in Frederick Wakefield’s real estate register for 1876: “36 Building Lots on Jubilee Road, Cambridge and Ferdinand Street with Coburg Street; plans at office of Lovely & Stimpson.”¹⁷ Local developers and building speculators figured in commentaries of the era, as in Duncan Campbell’s *Nova Scotia, in its historical, Mercantile and Industrial Relations* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1873): “The high price which building lots have attained in Halifax, within the last few years, and which is certain evidence either of present prosperity and faith in the future of the city, has been mainly owing to the remarkable energy and enterprise of Colonel B. H. Hornsby, a gentleman belonging to the Southern States, who arrived in Halifax seven years ago with little money in his pocket, but endowed by nature with considerable brains. In Dartmouth and the neighbourhood of Halifax, he has left his mark, and gentlemen who have long sneered at his profitable speculation have been constrained to imitate his example - hence the value of real estate at this date as compared with what it was seven years ago.”¹⁸ A variety of causes for Halifax’s expansion out over the rural parts of the peninsula led to the subdividing of estates into convenient building lots which attracted the middle class as well as promotions for working class families to consider acquiring their own home, rather than live as lifelong tenants. The extension of the city’s public transportation lines (horse-drawn rail-cars in its early stages) encouraged the purchase of lots in the Old West End for one was not solely dependent on possessing horse and carriage for travel. Planned grid-layouts avoided irregular property patterns which ensured in the early decades the maintaining of privacy buffer zones in contrast to crowded tenement conditions in the older parts of Halifax. The Old West End therefore reflects the vision of Victorian “green space” housing which is largely in-tact in 2021. Advocates for more sustainable cities are looking back at these concepts and incorporating aspects into their own re-visioning of urban landscapes. Densification represents a relapse into crowded tenements whether these today are called apartments or condominiums.

¹⁶ *Halifax and Dominion Real Estate Register February 1878*

¹⁷ *Subscribers Real Estate Directory*. Office No. 138 Hollis Street

¹⁸ Cf. Stelter, *Power and Place: Canadian Urban Development in the North American Context* 1982: pg. 176: “Amidst a fin-de-siecle building boom, the Halifax *Evening Mail* glancing back a quarter century to a previous peak in the building cycle and found that citizens primarily responsible for the extensive development then current in the Nova Scotia capital: one was Colonel Bennett H. Hornsby; the other was John D. Nash. The *Mail*’s choice was a curious one, for Hornsby had died in 1889, Nash in 1875...”

III Heritage, Ecology, Democracy

The Old West End maintains, as noted, an integrity as a low-rise district which may be preserved if high-rise and mid-rise densification projections are removed as a zoning threat. Decisions by urban planners and the municipality's elected officials will reveal whether the Center Plan B agenda is pro-citizen and for the betterment of urban development, or if the former are willing to abandon citizens's interests to the erosion and disintegration of low-rise residential districts and oversee the destruction of potential heritage conservation districts.¹⁹

On the ecological front relevant studies within Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, in addition to UNESCO research reports and declarations, all supply relevant assessments of the carbon footprint aspects of urban change, ecological benefits in re-purposing and re-cycling heritage buildings together with extant buildings at large.²⁰ Demolition and new extensive construction, even when advertised as being outfitted with energy efficient apparatus, fall short where existing, viable low-rise, mid-rise and heritage structures are removed and populations displaced. The Centre Plan B's sections which promote community space (parks, trails, sports fields) are contradicted by the built-in promotion of removal of extant structures. Space in-filling (respectful of surrounding buildings and land use) and utilization of underused properties (eg.

¹⁹ Cf. Robert A. Young, *Stewardship of the Built Environment: Sustainability, Preservation, and Reuse* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009); Guido Licciardi and Rana Amirtahmasebi, ed., *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2012): "In fact, it should be noted that correcting market failures that lead to the undersupply of conserved space for multiple uses in historic city cores and preservation of the public good supplied by urban heritage areas are becoming central concerns of local governments." Cf. Farook Lazrak, Peter Nijkamp, Piet Rietveld and Jan Rouwendal, "The Market Value of Cultural Heritage in Urban Areas: An Application of Spatial Hedonic Pricing" *Journal of Geographical Studies* vol. 16, no. 1 (July 2014): pp. 89-114: Abstract: "In this paper, the effect of cultural heritage is analyzed in three complementary ways. First, we measure the effect of a listed building on its market price in the relevant area concerned. Secondly, we investigate the value that listed heritage has on nearby property. And finally, we estimate the effect of historic-cultural sites on real estate prices. We find that, to purchase a listed building, buyers are willing to pay an additional 26.9%, while surrounding houses are worth an extra 0.28% for each additional listed building within a 50-m radius. Houses sold within a conservation area appear to gain a premium of 26.4% which confirms the existence of a 'historic ensemble' effect." [Case area was Zaanstad, The Netherlands]

²⁰ Stephanie Meeks and Kevin C. Murphy, *The Past and Future City: How Historic Preservation is Reviving America's Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2016 for National Trust for Historic Preservation: pg. 21: "Preservation is about ensuring that our urban landscape reflects more than just profit margins or the whim of developers and real estate speculators - that they address the real needs and concerns of communities." Cf. Roger W. Caves and Anita Shokonhi, ed. *Encyclopedia of the City* (London: Routledge, 2005): pg. 6: "However, the greatest value of the adaptive reuse movement is represented by the hundreds of abandoned schools, factories, warehouses, military posts and hotels of local historical value that have been creatively adapted for use as affordable housing, office buildings, commercial complexes, as well as civic, educational, cultural and recreational centres."

former industrial yards, unoccupied waste land, etc.) offer alternates to citizen ejection from established neighbourhoods. Equality of opportunity in terms of affordable housing so as to ensure that zones are not economic exclusion residential “bubbles”, and safe neighbourhoods, relative access to places of employment, health-care, recreation and social activities, and space for small businesses to fill needed niche markets - these are overturned by mid-rise and high-rise projects which, through rental rates or purchasing prices, automatically exclude segments of Halifax’s citizenry.²¹ Glen Miller, writing for Policy Options (Canada), endorsed one option for the post-COVID-19 urban municipalities which was to lease rather than sell surplus property thereby gaining greater control over the scale of construction projects by developers while enhancing revenue and approaching regeneration of areas in a way consistent with citizenry input.²² In a related field, the World Bank produced an article discussing the issues of gentrification with its advantages and disadvantages which had implications for democratic society and urban growth: “Managing the Potential Undesirable Impacts of Urban Regeneration: Gentrification and Loss of Social Capital” (n.d.) It addresses the issue of forced migration of poorer residents who cannot afford either the higher rents which result from gentrification or increased property taxes. Lost with the change of population are the existing social connections relevant to the local economy, small scale entrepreneurs, and social-cultural assets. Even the Old West End of Halifax with its mid-range income levels (particularly among the tenant population) will be affected by any relational rental increases with the proximity of high-rise tenement or condominium construction, as well as the loss of existing buildings which would be purchased by developers and demolished for new buildings. Revenue stream and rapid development have their human ecology impact which is too often relegated to the periphery of urban planning or missing from strategic reports. Nor should a new, wealthier population influx occur at the expense of established residents.

It has been a feature of the Centre Plan process over the past few years for there to be community hearings, open forum discussions and submissions for

²¹ Cf. Saral De Naidi, Hilary Craig, Steven High and Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place* (2020): Introduction: “Some of the contributors to this collection base their chapters upon the revolutionary ideas of maps as markers of time, identity and experience as much as of place... Maps, as with any other visualization, can become conduits of social justice and catharsis if built around inclusion, openness and experience. This conjunction is the stuff of memory itself, an assemblage of which maps and stories are but a part.” Rybczynski, *Looking Around*: pg. 65: “Instead of pioneering innovations in construction, design, and planning that would reduce selling prices and enlarge the size of the first-time buyers’ market, most builders prefer to cater to the prosperous second- and third-time buyer. The button that is labelled “Small and Cheap” remains largely unpushed.”

²² Glen Miller, “Density can work post-COVID-19, with good urban planning” Policy Options 8 June 2020 (policyoptions.irpp.org)

commentaries on the Plan. These features were ostensibly in place to enhance the democratic participation of the citizens in shaping Halifax, and to serve as additional sources for planners and municipal politicians to take into consideration for urban renewal. Where majority opinions on issues are overruled or ignored the democratic aspect is diminished and reduced to mere “window dressing.” Certain tactical pronouncements have occurred, preserved in the media reports, which downplay public in-put: accusations of “elites” [that is, educated opinions submitted to hearings], insufficiently knowledgeable with the issue(s) [ie. ignorant], and “fear of high buildings” [phobia which can be dismissed] which is akin to the phrase “cult of neighbourhood” [religious fanatic implication which again can be dismissed]. Without validation of citizens’ opinions, research and reports, an imbalance occurs which tilts urban planning changes in favour of vested interests which are focussed on demolition, large construction projects and disregard of urban displacement and social ramifications. These observations are placed adjacent to the phrase, “I’m all for heritage but...” which actually reveals an animus toward heritage and its advocates. The meaningful absence of places of worship from Centre Plan B is another case in point. People, low-rise neighbourhoods and heritage architecture as assets rather than liabilities would add a revolutionary new vision to Halifax’s evolutionary landscape and social-cultural changes to come.

The Regional Centre Plan itself suggests another route to the future. Section 5.0 (Introduction) lays out that plan: “Culture and heritage policies balance the need to accommodate growth with the preservation of significant cultural and heritage assets. These include heritage buildings, properties and cultural landscapes that reflect the community character and cultural diversity. Cultural policies must also promote living heritage which includes the traditions, memories, experiences, objects and places recognized for creating a sense of community and belonging. This is essential to the Regional Centre’s sense of place, identity and future development.” People and balance are the key phrases with heritage and culture.

There is the risk of raising up literal and symbolic walls across the peninsula - walls of high-rises, barriers to affordable accommodations, and diminishment of green space. Buffer zones for heritage buildings, heritage conservation districts and residential low-rise neighbourhoods would mitigate densification projects and inspire alternate urban planning creativity. The Old West End in the scheme of Center Plan B may prove to be the litmus test for pursuit of the Common Good, or abandonment to elitist modernization. All cities change over time. How that change is monitored and regulated together with the long-term vision of civil society will

be the basis for judgment on those who had or have the ability and courage to embrace the Common Good.²³

²³ Julio Bermudez, ed., *Transcending Architecture: Contemporary Views on Sacred Space* (2015): Based on symposium “Transcending Architecture” sponsored by School of Architecture and Planning at Catholic University of America: pg. 17: “I cannot help concluding this introduction by pointing to the urgent need for the pursuit of a “transcending architecture.” We only have to look at our world obsessed with speed, consumerism, technology, entertainment and economic growth along with its mounting pile of overwhelming negative effects to realize the value and timing of an architecture that “transcends.” These views are in contrast to the negative commentary on neighbourhoods as found in the opinion article by Matthew Halliday, “Liberating the missing middle of Halifax’s development” *The Coast* 2019 January 10 re: “The cult of neighbourhood character is closing off HRM to new residents and strangling housing supply. Time to open things up.” Halliday specifically attacks in one example the area bounded by Jubilee, Connaught, Quinpool and Robie as gentrification halting construction without addressing the great increase in rent in new buildings which effectively drives people out creating a hyper-gentrification.

Appendix A: Architectural Texts listed for Halifax Library and other sources

Catalogue of the Citizens' Free Library Halifax Nova Scotia. Prepared by Harry Piers (Halifax NS: Wm. McNab, 1894)

- Builder: Illustrated weekly magazine for architects, engineers 1859, 1860
- Civil Engineer and Architects Journal 1864
- Loudon, (J.C.), ed. Architectural Magazine 5 vol.
- Brunner (A.W.) Cottages, or hints on economical building NY 1890
- Bulloch (J.) American Cottage Builder: designs, plans and specifications from \$200 to \$20,000, for homes for people 1883
- Busbridge (W.) Portfolio of 30 Working Drawings of the most important details of Building Construction
- Evelyn (J.) Architects and Architecture. With Leon Baptist Alberti ... (London) 1723
- Hallatt (G. W. T.) Hints on Architectural Draughtsmanship London, 1892
- Hunt (T. F.) Half a dozen hints in Picturesque Domestic Architecture in a series of designs for Rural Residences London, 1826
- Hurst (J. T.) Hand-book of Formulae, Tables and Memoranda for Architectural Surveyors London 1892
- Lefevre (A.) Marvels of Architecture, trans. London, n.d.
- Loudon (J.C.) Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture, and Furniture London, 1833
- Pocock, (W.F.) Architectural Design for Rustic Cottages, Picturesque Dwellings, Villas, &c. London, 1823
- Ruskin, (J.) Seven Lamps of Architecture London, 1891
- Sharpe (E) The Seven Periods of English (Church) Architecture London 1888
- Sloan (S) Constructive Architecture Philadelphia, 1859
- Tuthill (L. C.) History of Architecture Philadelphia, 1848
- Wightwick (G) Palace of Architecture London, 1840
- Young (W) Town and Country Manners and Suburban Houses 1879

British Colonist: 1853 November 19: pg. 3: Useful Works Recently Published For Sale at the London Book Store

- The Artist & Tradesman's Companion, embracing the manufacture and application of Varnishes to Painting and other branches of the arts - House Painting, Carriage Painting, &c.
- History and Rudiments of Architecture
- The Rudiments of the Art of Building
- Practical Draughtsman

British Colonist: 1869 April 1: pg. 2: “Scientific Books, Just Received At William Gossip’s No. 87 Granville Street:

- Saxton’s Price Book for 1869- for Architects, Builders, Engineers and Contractors
- Rudimentary Treatises on the Erection of Dwelling Houses
- A Technical Dictionary of Terms Used in Architecture, Building and Engineering, Mining, Surveying, and Construction: Early and Ecclesiastical Art, The Fine Arts, &c
- Cottage Building; and hints for improved dwellings for the labouring classes
- The Architecture of Marcus Vitnevius (sic: Vitruvius) Pollo - translated from the Latin
- A Grammar of Colouring, applicable to House Painting, Decorative Architecture and the Arts

British Colonist: 1874 November 3: pg. 3: “Valuable Works on Architecture” M. A. Buckley, 101 Granville Street:

- Architectural Sketches, Views and Details from France, Italy and German ... by Richard Norman Shaw, Esq., Architect
- Specimens of Mediaeval Architecture, from examples of the 12th and 13th centuries in France and Italy by William Eden Nestfield, Architect
- Hurst’s Architectural Surveyor’s Hand Book, 8th ed.
- London’s Encyclopaedia of Cottage and Farm, and Villa Architecture
- Woodward’s Country Homes
- Woodward’s Cottages and Farm Houses
- Woodward’s Rival Art

Appendix B: Sample Advertisements for Old West End Building Lots and Houses

Morning Chronicle: 1870 April 19: pg. 3:

“Seymour & LeMarchant Streets” by John D. Nash; Seymour Street - “One Double House on a lot 5_ ft from and 130 ft deep. Suitable for small families. Each house has about 6 rooms, beside Kitchen, and and snug and comfortable. One large house with 8 rooms and kitchen a small Barn and other Out Houses, on a lot 45 ft 4 inches by 130 ft deep”; LeMarchant Street - 5 Lots: 32 ft 4 inches x 130 ft deep, 2

Lots “each 32 ft 6 inches in front by 130 ft deep, and a large double House on a lot 100 ft front by 130 ft deep. Each House has about 10 Rooms, besides Kitchen to each, a good Barn & Stable with other Houses.”

British Colonist: 1871 September 2: pg. 3:

“Halifax Common-West. Building Sites. By John D. Nash. On the premises ..95 Choice Lots as Building sites between Jubilee and Quinpool roads, on the ground surveyed for the Railway Terminus last spring. These Lots command extensive views over the Peninsula and Bay, with good drainage, and are laid off fronting on the street of full width, according to plans to be seen at the Auctioneers, Good title, possession immediate, and terms liberal. Gas and water close by. This is a rare chance for investment. “

British Colonist: 1872 August 27: pg. 3”

“Jubilee and Quinpool Roads. John D. Nash Will Sell ... 10 lots fronting on Jubilee Road and new road laid out running from Jubilee to Quinpool Road, a plan of which may be seen at the Reading Room or at the office of the Auctioneer.”

British Colonist: 1873 May: “Saturday, May 3, Lots on Jubilee and Quinpool Road”: John D. Nash: “6 Lots of Land on Quinpool road, part of McCulloch’s Fields, 34 and 35 x 100 feet. Also, 2 lots 50 x 103 feet. These are in a first rate state of cultivation... 6 lots fronting on Quinpool Road in Cogswell’s fields, nearly opposite Mr. Humphrey’s, each measuring 33 feet front by 100”

British Colonist: 1874 September 2: pg. 3:

“This Day September 10. Cogswell’s Fields, Jubilee road. John D. Nash Has Been instructed to sell at auction ... About 40 Building Lots, situated in Cogswell’s Fields, on the Jubilee Road, each measuring about 34 x 100 feet. These Lots are among the finest that have been offered in the fields, many of them fronting the Jubilee Road and are really very superior in respect to position and the nature of the ground for building purposes.”

Appendix C: Select Bibliography:

Aladdin “Built In A Day” House Catalog 1917

Aladdin Homes. Complete Cities or Single Homes. Quick Shipment. Quick Results. Quick Results. Service Plus. Manufactured by The Canadian Aladdin Co. Limited Toronto Canada Catalogue No. 14

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Armstrong, Karen Elisabeth, “The Late Nineteenth-century Stone Farmhouses of John Thompson Crellin” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* Vol. 43, No. 2 (2018): pp. 27-41

Arnot, D. H. *Gothic Architecture Applied to Modern Residences* New York: D. Appleton, 1851

Ballard, Joseph M. A. *Fairy Dells and Rustic Bowers: The Creation of Victoria Park, Truro, N.S.* Halifax, NS: SSPublications , 2018

Bicknell, A. J. *Specimen Book of One Hundred Architectural Designs ... Suburban Houses, Villas, Sea-Side and Camp-Ground Cottages, Homesteads, Churches and Public Buildings* New York: A. J. Bicknell & Co., 1879

Brousseau, Mathilde *Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture* Parks Canada, 1980

Brooks, S. H. *Rudimentary Treatise on the Erection of Dwelling Houses* London: John Weale, 1860

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Bullock, John *The American Cottage Builder* Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1871

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City Council Minutes 17 April 1916 Halifax, NS

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