



NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR
HISTORIC TRUST
— est 1966 —

9 March 2020

Mayor Danny Breen
Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary
Councillors Burton, Collins, Froude, Hanlon, Hickman, Jamieson, Korab, Lane, and Stapleton
City of St. John's
P.O. Box 908
St. John's, NL A1C 5M2

Re: 1 Clift's Baird's Cove / A. P. Parking Garage

Dear Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, and Councillors Burton, Collins, Froude, Hanlon, Hickman, Jamieson, Korab, Lane, and Stapleton:

We are writing in opposition to the proposed text amendments to the St. John's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations for 1 Clift's Baird's Cove as they relate to the development of the A.P. Parking Garage. We would also like to address several misconceptions and deficiencies in process and fact on the part of councillors voting in favour of these amendments. Please consider the following:

- The decision before Council is a change to zoning, not the approval of a design. Nevertheless, approving members of Council have repeatedly cited the design as an improvement over current conditions. It is imperative that Council understand the difference. Elements of the design considered "improvements" (i.e. renovations to the existing garage) may never be implemented and the final design may become as bulky and bland as Atlantic Place with no further input from Council.
- The *Envision St. John's Draft Municipal Plan* includes several provisions which suggest the proposal is inappropriate or premature:
 - Section 6.1.6 reads: "ensure that tall buildings are designed and sited to: contribute positively to the skyline of the city; [...] be integrated with adjacent areas by stepping down to lower-scale buildings and neighbourhoods." In terms of skyline the proposal represents a flattening along Harbour Drive, blocking views of the distinctive terraced layout of downtown without contributing positively. The proposal in no way "steps down" to the buildings on Water Street and instead exacerbates the height difference.
 - Section 6.3.2 reads: "Develop detailed urban design guidelines for the downtown that address built form, the height and bulk of buildings and their relationship to the street and to each other." Approving the proposed zoning changes at this time, before the area has been properly analysed by experts and appropriate recommendations made,

The Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust is dedicated to the preservation of the province's buildings and landscapes and their importance to communities.

PO Box 2403, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, A1C 6E7
coordinator@historictrust.ca
www.historictrust.ca

would be premature. The development of such guidelines may very well preclude a development of this scale in this location.

- At the February 17th meeting of council both Councilor Hickman and Mayor Breen expressed confusion over Councilor Lane's comments regarding "public space." Councilor Lane was likely referring not to the subject property but Clift's Baird's Cove itself – a historically open right-of-way with incredible potential to become a vibrant public square. The proposal inexplicably ignores its own property line and extends over this public space. This is not a case of a property-owner doing what they like with their own property or using views to which they are entitled. They instead propose appropriating public views to which they have no claim.
- Council has thus far neglected to consider impacts on neighbouring historic resources and, in particular, the St. John's Court House National Historic Site. The Statement of Significance for the St. John's Court House lists "views to and from the building and St. John's Harbour" among its Character-Defining Elements - the tangible and cultural features that contribute to the heritage value of a historic place and which must be retained to preserve its heritage value. Allowing this development to extend beyond its site, into the historically open cove, will absolutely impact views to and from the Court House and diminish its heritage integrity.



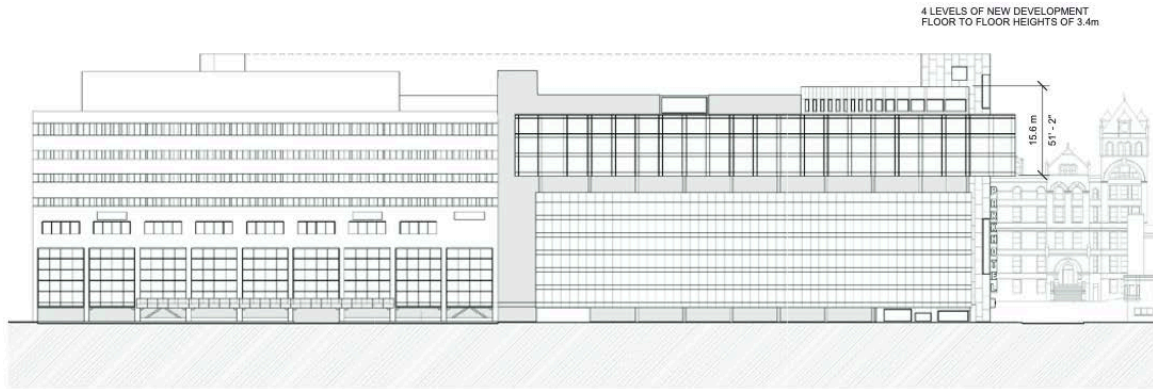
The St. John's Court House has enjoyed unobstructed views to and from the harbour for more than 100 years.

The City of St. John's recently hosted a workshop with Parks Canada architect David Scarlett on the "Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada." Councilor Hickman attended part of the day and Councilor Burton the whole day. Guideline 4.1.5, Visual Relationships, states that "the visual relationships between elements of [...] heritage districts, can influence the user experience." It goes on to discourage "introducing a new feature that alters or obscures the visual relationships in the cultural landscape, such as constructing a new building as a focal point, when a character-defining vista was traditionally terminated by the sky." This is precisely what is proposed. It should be noted that St. John's is lagging most other Canadian cities in adopting the Standards and Guidelines.

- Also at the February 17th meeting Mayor Breen asserted that "[the proposal is] not as high as the current Atlantic Place." This is false. According to the publicly available LUAR the proposal is precisely the same height as Atlantic Place.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust is dedicated to the preservation of the province's buildings and landscapes and their importance to communities.

PO Box 2403, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, A1C 6E7
coordinator@historictrust.ca
www.historictrust.ca



Proposed 4-storey hotel addition

Image from the 1 Clift's Baird's Cove LUAR indicating identical height.

The proposed amendments (and particularly the bump in FAR) would additionally allow floor space at these upper stories beyond what has been illustrated.

- It should be noted that this proposal paradoxically grew out of a plan in 2011 to limit the height of the AP Parking Garage to its current 8 stories. While Council is in no way bound to the unrealized desires of past Councils, such intentions should be considered. At what point did massing akin to Atlantic Place change from unacceptable to desirable?

The Trust is opposed to the proposed text amendments and urges Council to vote against them. Should they be approved we further ask that air rights over public rights-of-way not be sold or leased to the proponent. Public air rights should never be transferred without a compelling case and demonstrable public benefit, and the proponent has not articulated a single reason for the request.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Newfoundland & Labrador Historic Trust

The Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust is dedicated to the preservation of the province's buildings and landscapes and their importance to communities.

PO Box 2403, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, A1C 6E7
 coordinator@historictrust.ca
 www.historictrust.ca