

TOWN OF LUNENBURG

# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

BLOCKHOUSE  
HILL  
DESIGN PROJECT

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# 2024

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May 6, 2024



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Dear Ms. Charrois,

Firstly, I would like to extend my gratitude for the continued collaboration we have had with your office. Our partnership is essential to navigating the complexities of heritage conservation and sustainable development in Lunenburg.

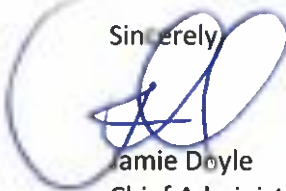
The concerns raised by the Friends of Blockhouse Hill revolve around the Blockhouse Hill Design Project and Land Use By-law and Heritage Conservation District Plan and By Law revisions. We take these concerns seriously and are committed to addressing them in a manner that aligns with our overarching goal of responsibly managing Old Town Lunenburg.

It is imperative to emphasize that our commitment to conserving Lunenburg's heritage does not exist in isolation. We recognize the need for economic sustainability and understand that finding solutions to achieve both conservation and economic stability is paramount. However, we face significant challenges, including deferred maintenance and a lack of financial resources to invest in heritage conservation. We appreciate your patience in needing extra time to complete this work as it placed a significant strain on our human resources.

While the proposed development has garnered considerable public attention, the absence of adequate funding and support from federal sources poses a substantial threat to our long-term conservation efforts. We are proud of Lunenburgers' contributions to Canada's heritage movement, but we believe that fostering a closer partnership with Parks Canada is essential to our mutual success. We aspire to strengthen our partnership and work together to find solutions that benefit both parties. We believe that by working together as better administrative and financial partners, we can safeguard Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site more effectively for future generations.

I am pleased to share the attached site manager assessment of the Blockhouse Hill Design Project. I respectfully request your comment on the proposed design and impact assessment and related materials. If you have any concerns about the project, our process or site management, we will do our best to address them. Your insight and support are invaluable as we strive to balance heritage conservation with economic sustainability in Lunenburg.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely  
  
Jamie Doyle  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Town of Lunenburg

## INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Town of Lunenburg's staff, focuses on the Blockhouse Hill Design Project. Its purpose is to assess the potential impact of Design Option 2: Out of Sight on the Outstanding Universal Value of Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site. It is also intended to serve as a crucial document guiding Parks Canada's response to the World Heritage Centre's request for information following the Friends of Blockhouse Hill's submission of their *Report on a Threatened UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Site 'What We Learned' Old Town Lunenburg and its Buffer Zone* (henceforth Friends of Blockhouse Hill Report) to the World Heritage Centre.

At the heart of this assessment lies continuity and change management to ensure sustainability and safeguard Lunenburg's heritage. Engaging diverse viewpoints, including those of the Friends of Blockhouse Hill, whose report opposes any development on the site, aligns with the Town's commitment to community-engaged design. The Friends emphasize preserving the open space character and view planes of Old Town Lunenburg's World Heritage Site Buffer Zone and stress any development on Blockhouse Hill or other World Heritage Site Buffer Zone lands threatens Old Town Lunenburg's World Heritage listing. The Blockhouse Hill Design Project explores whether sensitive design can mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance potential positive effects on Old Town Lunenburg's Outstanding Universal Value.

Blockhouse Hill is within the World Heritage Site Buffer Zone of Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site. Buffer zones safeguard World Heritage Sites from detrimental development. Yet development is allowed in World Heritage Buffer Zones, and the lower slopes of Blockhouse Hill were zoned for residential development when the World Heritage Committee listed Old Town Lunenburg in 1995 and when the World Heritage Committee voted on Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site's Buffer Zone in 2017. Through careful design, review, public engagement, and regulation, Staff are optimistic that residential development on the back slopes of Blockhouse Hill will meet the community's housing needs and conserve Lunenburg's heritage value.

The ongoing and iterative heritage review process adheres to international conventions, guidelines, and principles outlined by UNESCO, ICOMOS, and other relevant bodies. These include the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* and the ICOMOS *Charter on the Built Vernacular Environment*. Additionally, Staff prepared this report using the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* and the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context*. Parks Canada

was notified of this project well before any irreversible decisions and has been updated as it unfolded. Staff will continue to update Parks Canada on the project as it continues.

Many steps remain in the Blockhouse Hill Design Project. On April 9, 2024, Council directed Staff to work with MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects on design rules for Option 2: Out of Site, on Staff's recommendation that it was a compromise between those in the community who want high-density development and those who want no development. This process will see Staff continue to explore possible mitigation measures and develop legally binding development rules for any potential Blockhouse Hill development, fulfilling the Town's obligation to protect Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site legally.

Before Council could sell the lands or enact development rules, two public hearings would need to be held, ensuring additional public engagement. Again, heritage review is ongoing, and this assessment is subject to change pending further research, design refinement, and reflection.

Provided to ensure transparency and continued collaboration between the Town of Lunenburg and Parks Canada, this report emphasizes the importance of conserving Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site while addressing the community's evolving needs.

# PROJECT SCOPE AND RATIONALE

## CONTEXT: FINANCIAL AND HOUSING NEEDS

The decision to undertake the Blockhouse Hill Design Project stems from two primary motivations: utilizing town-owned land to address pressing housing needs and financial challenges.

Conserving Lunenburg and what makes it unique comes at a cost – to the Town, businesses, and homeowners. The Town has an impressive land and building portfolio that urgently needs substantial investment. This work is vital to Lunenburg maintaining its World Heritage Status, as was detailed in the Town’s 2023 State of Conservation Report. With an operating budget of approximately \$9.9 million and a capital budget of approximately \$4 million, the Town relies on borrowing, grants, and other revenue-generating methods to offset increasing capital costs. The Town’s building portfolio will need approximately \$46 million over the next decade, while infrastructure costs are estimated to range from \$60 to \$75 million over 10-12 years. The Town's limited options to cover these anticipated costs include raising taxes, cutting services, applying for grants, or divesting lands and buildings. The Town pursues grants and strives to be efficient with budgets, but the financial burden remains overwhelming.

Lunenburg also faces a housing crisis, evidenced by statistics revealing a significant gap between housing demand and supply. According to the Government of Nova Scotia's Housing Needs Assessment for Lunenburg, the Town's population has been steadily increasing, outpacing the provincial growth rate. Projections indicate a need for 120 new units by 2027 and 170 by 2032 to accommodate population growth adequately. Furthermore, affordability is a significant concern. Median Lunenburg home prices increased 105% from 2019 to 2022, compared to 22% between 2016 and 2019. At least 85% of all couples, 93% of all lone-parent households and 99% of all single-person households earned below the estimated incomes required to afford the 2022 median sale price of a local dwelling. For rentals, at least 9% of renting couples, 40% of renting single parents, and 73% of renting single persons earned below the estimated income required to afford the 2021 average local rent. The Community Social Planning Council and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation argue in *Local Government Levers for Housing Affordability* that strategically using municipally owned land as a platform for affordable housing is particularly important in areas with high land and housing prices.

The Town's efforts to incentivize private development have not fully addressed the pressing need for housing. For example, the Town clarified development expectations under a new Land Use By-law, which includes removing minimal parking requirements and as-of-right

provisions. The Town is actively pursuing new incentives for private property owners to develop housing, including grants, tax forgiveness, and agreements for affordable housing. Recently, the Town was awarded \$1,158,943 under the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund for six housing initiatives.

On April 9, 2024, Council requested that Staff prepare a Short-Term Housing Report outlining the Town's responsibilities and options concerning short-term housing. This report should address potential taxing and zoning options and evaluate both positive and negative impacts of short-term housing within the Town of Lunenburg. The Town is also undertaking a Cultural Tourism Economic Impact Study and Sustainability Plan to inform decision-making and ensure that our tourism sector benefits the community while contributing to effective, responsible heritage management and housing provision.

With these pressures and activities in mind, Council directed Staff to explore using some Town-owned land for housing, including Upper King Street and Blockhouse Hill. Exploring design options for Blockhouse Hill gives Council tools to consider the advantages and drawbacks of using Blockhouse Hill for housing and the option to control what is eventually constructed on site if Council chooses to sell. However, the decision to develop Blockhouse Hill is not without its critics. The Friends of Blockhouse Hill argue they are not anti-development but are anti-development on Blockhouse Hill.

The Town has evaluated other town-owned lands for housing and determined that Blockhouse Hill offers one of the best opportunities to meet housing needs without compromising heritage conservation efforts. For example, the Upper King Street design project was awarded to zzap consulting on September 15, 2022, and concluded on November 28, 2023. Like Blockhouse Hill, Upper King Street is within Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site's Buffer Zone. Staff determined the proposed design option for Upper King Street could diminish Old Town Lunenburg's heritage value. First, Staff felt the proposed plan for Upper King Street did not adequately maintain the separation between urban and non-urban areas. It included constructing a multi-storey easily visible from within Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site. Second, the height and location of the proposed buildings, right behind historic craftsman homes on the north side of Creighton Street, were deemed to dominate these historic buildings, detracting from Lunenburg's evolving vernacular architecture tradition. Most of the north side of Creighton Street is outside Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site and the Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site Buffer Zone.

While new housing on this site could have contributed to Old Town's vibrancy as a thriving Town, which is also a crucial aspect of Old Town's World Heritage designation, Staff felt this potential benefit did not outweigh the possible negative impact on Old Town



Lunenburg's heritage and outstanding universal value. The proposed design was judged incompatible with the Old Town Lunenburg's heritage value, and Council chose not to sell the Upper King Street lands for residential development. Staff is still exploring creating two residential building lots on Creighton Street for small-scale residential development.

Blockhouse Hill is one of the Town's most extensive tracts of undeveloped land. The largest, the Academy Lands, are not ideal for residential development due to the graveyard on site and the threat development may pose to Lunenburg Academy National Historic Site – the Academy's designation lists its prominent hilltop location at the edge of Old Town Lunenburg and its setting in a green space with playgrounds amongst its character-defining elements. The Town has not yet explored selling its recreation complex for residential development.

Council has explored using smaller town-owned land parcels for housing. The New Old Town School Municipal Heritage Property and Angus Walters House Municipal Heritage Property, located outside Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site on Tannery Road, have either been adaptively reused as residential properties or are undergoing revitalization. In 2021, Council considered private redevelopment options for the Old Fire Hall. ICOMOS Canada's Committee on World Heritage expressed concern that since Old Town Lunenburg's authenticity is partly dependent on public spaces remaining true to the Town's colonial plan, any development of this site should prioritize public use. Parks Canada suggested that the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS International may need to evaluate the potential sale's impact on Old Town Lunenburg's Outstanding Universal Value. In response, Council decided not to proceed with selling the property.

Despite the site's slope challenges, Blockhouse Hill has emerged as a prime candidate for residential development due to its size and strategic location. While its placement within the World Heritage Buffer Zone necessitates careful handling and risk mitigation, residential development on the back slopes of Blockhouse Hill would also mean an increased residential population within walking distance of Old Town Lunenburg. This proximity fosters engagement with the site and promotes its continued adherence to its original functions, a vital aspect of Old Town's authenticity.

In conclusion, the Blockhouse Hill Design Project represents a strategic and necessary response to Lunenburg's housing crisis. By exploring leveraging town-owned land for housing and implementing targeted policies and initiatives to guide development, Lunenburg aims to address housing affordability while maintaining Old Town's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site through legal protection. The Blockhouse Hill Design Project seeks to create a sustainable future for Lunenburg through careful planning and community engagement.

## **THE BLOCKHOUSE HILL DESIGN PROJECT TO DATE**

The Blockhouse Hill Design Project embodies a deliberate and essential reaction to Lunenburg's housing challenges while foregrounding heritage concerns. Through utilizing town-owned land for housing, Lunenburg endeavours to tackle housing affordability without compromising Old Town Lunenburg's World Heritage Site listing. With meticulous planning and active involvement from the community, the Blockhouse Hill Design Project endeavours to forge a sustainable future for Lunenburg's inhabitants today and tomorrow.

The Town of Lunenburg is dedicated to fulfilling its obligations to conserve Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site within the scope of this project through the following actions:

1. Consultation: Facilitating community-involved design and upholding the democratic process.
2. Analysis: Conducting thorough heritage review.
3. Management: Ensuring that development adheres to municipal by-laws and exploring additional regulations to ensure compliance with approved designs should Council decide to proceed with a sale.
4. Reporting: Providing regular updates to Parks Canada and the public to foster transparency and collaboration.

## **Request for Proposals**

The Town of Lunenburg issued a Request for Proposals for the Blockhouse Hill Design Project on February 8, 2023, with a submission deadline of March 31, 2023. The request sought:

- An Archaeological Reconnaissance Study (Category C) for the entire site, as defined by the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage, to ascertain exemptions or requisite archaeological mitigation measures.
- Facilitation of a public engagement process, including at least three public engagements, a visioning report, and a 'What We Heard Report.'
- Formulation of four design options for residences on Blockhouse Hill.
- Financial cost analyses for the four designs, encompassing any required on-site and off-site infrastructure upgrades.
- Drafting of restrictive covenants or agreements, one for each development scheme, to ensure compliance by prospective purchasers.
- Presentation of the final design recommendation to Town Council, including the rationale.

Staff diligently embarked on a comprehensive and systematic review of the project proposals received, encompassing evaluation of submissions for completeness, formulation of a grading rubric, scoring of applications, and conducting interviews with top candidates, culminating in issuing a recommendation based on the findings. On June 13, 2023, Council awarded the Blockhouse Hill Design Project contract to MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects. Recognizing the paramount significance of the project, Council opted to engage the services of one of Canada's foremost architects and a leading heritage expert, eschewing the lowest bid.

### **The Consultant Team**

Throughout the review process, MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects distinguished themselves by exhibiting the highest levels of knowledge and experience within their team. Notably, the MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple team boasts two internationally renowned Members of the Order of Canada: Brian MacKay-Lyons and Julian Smith. Brian MacKay-Lyons is esteemed for his innovative and sustainable designs deeply rooted in the maritime vernacular tradition. He views vernacular design as a rich source of inspiration, providing a framework for creating buildings that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also deeply rooted in their cultural and environmental contexts. MacKay-Lyons believes that vernacular architecture embodies a "wisdom of the past," reflecting centuries of adaptation and innovation in response to local conditions.

Julian Smith, a highly accomplished heritage planner and Director of Willowbank School of Restoration Arts, is recognized for his expertise in heritage policy development and impact assessments. He has been pivotal in preserving and revitalizing historic sites and districts globally, including drafting the 2011 UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*. He is a founding member of ICOMOS Canada.

MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects demonstrated a superior understanding of this project, its opportunities, and its challenges throughout the review process. Of Acadian and Mi'kmaq ancestry, Brian MacKay-Lyons was born in nearby Arcadia and raised on Nova Scotia's South Shore. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects' field office at 160 Montague Street in Old Town Lunenburg evidences the firm's commitment to the region's culture and history and intimate, lived understanding of Lunenburg. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects are also passionate proponents of participatory design. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects' proposal included nine examples of their participatory design approach, emphasizing the importance of community collaboration in shaping project programs and determining design directions.

## Public Consultation

The McKay-Lyons Sweetapple Team led three public workshops.

- Workshop 1 Visioning – September 14, 2023, from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Lunenburg Fire Hall
- Workshop 2 Urban Design – October 19, 2023, from 6:00-9:00 pm at the Lunenburg Fire Hall
- Workshop 3 Options – November 16, 2023, from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Lunenburg Fire Hall

These workshops touched on heritage, housing density, affordability, and open public space. Each workshop opened with a brief staff presentation outlining the project process and introducing attendees to their consultants. Workshop 1, *Visioning*, included group discussion and a visioning exercise around Lunenburg and Blockhouse Hill's meaning to the community. Workshop 2, *Urban Design*, explored possible futures for Blockhouse Hill, including what residential development may look like through two participatory design exercises. Preliminary results of the archaeological reconnaissance study were also shared at this meeting. At Workshop 3, *Options*, MackKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects brought forward seven possible design options for Blockhouse Hill for public input. Online surveys complemented each workshop.

In addition to these workshops, Council has received written correspondence and heard many public presentations regarding this project, most notably at its meetings on May 9 and July 11, 2023 and February 27 and March 26, 2024. Town of Lunenburg Council meetings are open to the public; anyone can present before Council on any issue on the Council agenda. While it is sometimes difficult to tell whether correspondence is sent on behalf of the Friends of Blockhouse Hill or people are contacting the Town as individuals, many emails have been exchanged between Town Staff and the Friends of Blockhouse Hill, who have also exchanged correspondence and had meetings with Councillors. Staff are fulfilling three Freedom of Information requests for the Friends of Blockhouse Hill.

The Archaeological Research Division at Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office was contacted in September 2023 to inquire whether traditional Mi'kmaw land use is known of in or near Blockhouse Hill. Archaeologists Davis MacIntyre & Associates received a response on October 5, 2023. While the traditional use information provided is confidential, it was considered under the Archaeological Resource Impact Assessment. KMKNO-ARD also provided historical references, which were incorporated into the site's historical background and summarized later in this report. Wasoqopa'q First Nation was also contacted in September 2023. No mitigation measures relating to L'nuk, Mi'kmaw or First Nations heritage have been recommended.

Initial archaeological findings were shared with the public at Workshop 2 on October 19, 2023. The Government of Nova Scotia approved the Archaeological Resource Impact

Assessment on March 27, 2024. Davis MacIntyre & Associates granted staff permission to publicly share that their work included Mi'kmaq and First Nations engagement. This disclosure took place before Council on April 9, 2024. Nova Scotia's Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage provided the Town of Lunenburg with a redacted report on May 10, 2024.

The What We Heard Report, submitted by the MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Team on December 4, 2023, and accepted by Council on December 12, 2023, outlines the outcomes of the three public workshops and corresponding online surveys. Approximately 150, 120 and 120 people attended workshops 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The What We Heard Report includes both qualitative and quantitative analysis of community responses. For example, responses from workshop 1, which was designed better to understand the community's vision for the site, are coded into thematic categories and presented in tables. The results of the cognitive mapping exercise are presented in the report as a narrative.

The results of the ranking survey in workshop three were analyzed quantitatively, with the MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Team analyzing the results in multiple ways, including, and excluding incomplete answer sheets. Point systems and bar graphs are used to make this complex dataset as easy to understand as possible. To summarize the results of this exercise quickly, the report confirms that Workshop 3 in-person attendees and those who filled out the online survey were polarized, with the least and highest density design options ranking highest and lowest as either people's top or bottom choices. Medium-density options garnered lukewarm results – few enormously liked or disliked these options. 28.5% of participants in the ranking survey exercise preferred no development. 71.5% of participants in this exercise preferred development on Blockhouse Hill.

The report's extensive appendices include all the responses submitted by participants. Nothing was discarded. This report and the recordings of each workshop available online form a comprehensive record of the public's opinions and involvement in the project, ensuring transparency and the possibility of additional data analysis in the future. All other correspondence and public presentations before Council are captured in the public record.

Following the public workshops, MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects revised possible designs based on community feedback into four design options. For example, the MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects team committed to featuring Option 4: Park in the Visioning Report during Workshop 1, September 14, 2023. This decision was influenced by community feedback, as workshop attendees indicated that some residents strongly preferred not having any development on the site among the four options presented to

Council. This approach reflects community-led design, where participants' preferences play a significant role in guiding design decisions. It also aligns with UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN's recommendation in the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* recommendation to consider whether no action is better or worse for a World Heritage Site. The four design options were brought before Council in the form of a Visioning Report on January 23, 2024.

### **New Management Tools**

Blockhouse Hill's development is governed under the Town's *Land Use By-law*. Part of the site is also within the municipal Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District. Governance is discussed further in the Management History section of this report.

Drafting additional development rules for Blockhouse Hill is part of MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple's contract. These rules could form a development agreement or restrictive covenant matching Council's chosen design option. Both development agreements and restrictive covenants can be attached to land titles, meaning they are binding on subsequent property owners.

Development rules ensure that development restrictions apply even if the property changes hands. Both can be enforced through legal action. Working with MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple on the best approach to managing Blockhouse Hill's potential development is the next step of the Blockhouse Hill Design Project. Staff will also be seeking a legal opinion.

# **BLOCKHOUSE HILL SITE INFORMATION**

## **SITE HISTORY**

Blockhouse Hill spans approximately 22.53 acres northeast of Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site, with a sloping terrain descending towards Lunenburg's Back Harbour.

The Mi'kmaq have inhabited the Lunenburg area for millennia. Direct archaeological evidence dating back at least 4000 years has been found in Lunenburg's neighbouring communities. It highlights a rich land use tradition, including reliance on nearby waterways for transportation and sustenance. While the likelihood of L'nuk archaeology on the site is low, hunting or gathering activity may have occurred on Blockhouse Hill.

Euro-Canadian settlement began in the 17th century with the arrival of French and Acadians, followed by the British founding of the Town of Lunenburg in 1753. During this period, the eastern blockhouse was constructed along the south end of Blockhouse Hill. Despite refurbishments, the blockhouse eventually fell into disrepair, and its exact demolition date is unclear. A portion of Blockhouse Hill has been flagged as having a high potential for archaeological resources related to these military activities.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the area largely served as public common lands for pasturing animals while providing unobstructed military views of the Front and Back Harbours. Leases were permitted beginning in the 1820s. Limited documentation about agricultural use could be located. Apart from some apple trees, no archaeological evidence of agricultural use exists. However, oral histories suggest Blockhouse Hill was known as Apple Tree Hill. While agricultural uses declined, recreational and public uses increased in the 19th century. The short-lived Lunenburg County Jail was constructed on Blockhouse Hill, evidenced by a concrete and stone foundation dating from 1893 to sometime after 1931.

Today, the back slopes of Blockhouse Hill feature sloped, rough, and wet terrain, with evidence of past disturbance along various trails and properties. Sylvia Park, a public park situated at the summit of Blockhouse Hill and housing remnants of Lunenburg's colonial blockhouse and military grounds, remains exempt from development consideration.

The site's steep gradient poses distinctive challenges for placing buildings and roads, with an approximate three-story grade variation tracing the hill's contours. Nevertheless, this topographical feature offers advantages, including enhanced vistas and minimized visual impact of new construction if harmoniously integrated within the natural contours of the hill.

## **MANAGEMENT HISTORY**

### **World Heritage Listing**

Information on Old Town Lunenburg's buffer and authenticity of setting have been disjointed such that it is unsurprising that the Friends of Blockhouse Hill have concluded any development on Blockhouse Hill would threaten Old Town Lunenburg's Outstanding Universal Value. The Friends of Blockhouse Hill argue that Blockhouse Hill needs to be conserved as a public open space in perpetuity as an attribute of Old Town Lunenburg's recognition as the best-preserved colonial settlement in North America. Staff feel the Town must follow World Heritage Committee decisions, such as the 2015 Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and the 2017 Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Buffer Zone.

The 1994 World Heritage nomination dossier argues that Lunenburg's authenticity as a British model town lies in its adherence to four principles: geometrically regular streets and blocks, the allocation of public spaces, an allowance for defensive fortifications, and a distinction between urban and non-urban areas. The nomination also said Old Town Lunenburg was protected by a natural buffer and restrictive zoning, including the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, and that New Town took development pressure from the Old Town plat.

Residential development was allowed on Blockhouse Hill under the Town's Land Use By-law when Old Town Lunenburg was listed. Map 6, appended to the nomination dossier, shows Blockhouse Hill zoned for residential development. Hence, nominators and reviewers knew these areas were not protected as undeveloped green space and might be built upon. The residential zoning was further explained in 1994 correspondence. No lands currently in the Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site Buffer Zone were included in the 1994 map of inscribed property. While technological advancement and Lunenburg's housing crisis have made development on the back slopes of Blockhouse Hill more practical, the area is still regulated under the Town's Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, discussed further below under Municipal Management.

The 2009 Periodic Report to UNESCO did not mention setting or boundaries. The 2013 Periodic Report to UNESCO provides mixed information on the buffer zone. It alternately indicates no Buffer Zone (Section 1.3) and a Buffer Zone (Section 4.1.1). In Section 4.1.6, the municipal Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District is called the buffer zone. The 2000 Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plan and By-law does include areas outside Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site, including some Academy Lands and the crest of Blockhouse Hill, but not all of the lands in Old Town Lunenburg's World Heritage Buffer Zone. Section 4.3.1 of the 2013 periodic report to UNESCO on Old



Town Lunenburg reiterated that “The property of the Old Town is surrounded by a natural buffer zone in the form of water to the north and south and very steep slopes on the other sides, upon which development is impractical.”

In 2017 (41 COM 8D), the boundaries of Old Town Lunenburg were updated as part of the Retrospective Inventory, which, starting in 2004, sought to clarify unclear boundaries for sites inscribed on the World Heritage List between 1978 and 1998. This exercise would have been unnecessary if a buffer zone had been clearly established for Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site. The boundaries of Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site remained the same as the 1994 map of inscribed property. The current 32.44 ha buffer zone was added and included all town-owned lands surrounding Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site.

The 2017 revisions included more town-owned lands than in earlier maps, some already developed. For example, 19 Pelham Street, referred to in the Friends of Blockhouse Hill Report, was a purpose-built liquor store designed by Nova Scotian architect Charles Donald Davison, likely in the late 1950s to early 1960s. The building was then converted into a library. The new residential building referenced in the Friends of Blockhouse Hill Report incorporated elements of the original liquor store to conserve the palimpsest nature of the site. 19 Pelham Street was not part of an alternative communal land management system, nor was it open space when Old Town Lunenburg received World Heritage listing. Buffer Zone lands were referred to and mapped as town-owned in Old Town’s nomination dossier, and leasing lands on Blockhouse Hill dates to the 1820s.

In 2015, the World Heritage Committee adopted a new Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for Old Town Lunenburg. This Statement does not mention the commons or open areas surrounding Old Town Lunenburg. The Statement of Outstanding Universal outlines, “The original British colonial town plan remains evident, including the regular layout of property parcels in a grid pattern with geometrically regular streets, central public spaces, and key community structures, with a functioning waterfront as its focus.” It further states, “Within the boundaries of the 33.85 ha property are located all the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of Old Town Lunenburg. The property encompasses the intact original town plan in its entirety, missing only the fortifications that surrounded the Town in its early years.” This indicates that everything that needs to be conserved is located within the World Heritage Site. The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value even clarifies that the site encompasses the original town plan in its entirety, specifying that the archaeological remains of the fortifications are outside the site. Where previous World Heritage Committee rulings did not mention authenticity of setting, the current 2015 statement does.

Staff first requested additional information on the World Heritage Buffer Zone from Parks Canada on June 26, 2023, to better understand the World Heritage Buffer Zone in relation to possible development. On February 20, 2024, Parks Canada clarified that “buffer zones in the World Heritage context are intended to provide additional protection to property through complementary legal mechanisms and/or customary restrictions placed on their development and use...there are no specific restrictions related to new development described in the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines, and it is the responsibility of the appropriate managing authority to determine, using mechanisms like heritage impact assessment, whether development or changes in use in the buffer zone would protect or threaten the OUV of the associated World Heritage property.” The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value emphasizes the importance of maintaining Lunenburg's original model town plan intact. It warns against overwhelming the site with excessive growth or obscuring it through neglect. This does not prohibit growth but stresses the need to evaluate any future development carefully.

On April 5, 2024, the Executive Director of Cultural Heritage confirmed that, in the World Heritage context, buffer zones are intended to provide additional protection to property through complementary legal mechanisms placed on their development and use and that it is the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value that encapsulates the World Heritage Committee's decision and approval of what elements of the property are of Outstanding Universal Value and must be protected. The Executive Director of Cultural Heritage highlighted that Old Town Lunenburg's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value says Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site's boundaries represent entirely the features and processes that convey the property's significance. Therefore, according to the World Heritage Committee's decisions, nothing in the buffer zone contributes to the site's global significance. The role of the buffer zone in the case of Old Town Lunenburg is to allow the site manager to influence what occurs within this zone to mitigate potential impacts.

In 2010, Herb Stovel and Francois Lablanc argued for expanding heritage protection to encompass a wider area, including Gallows Hill, Blockhouse Hill, and the views across the harbour. “Given the prominent place of this open space in the description of the inscribed world heritage district's attributes,” Stovel and Leblanc argue that “should it be reduced or marred - even tastefully – this will open the Town and Parks Canada up to legitimately founded concerns that OUV [Outstanding University Value] is at risk.” However, Herb Stovel wrote this before the World Heritage Committee's confirmation of what constitutes Old Town Lunenburg's Outstanding Universal Value in 2015.

In contrast, Julian Smith feels none of the design options currently under consideration for Blockhouse Hill threaten Old Town's World Heritage Status. Julian Smith's analysis focuses on possible World Heritage Committee concerns, primarily possible visual and

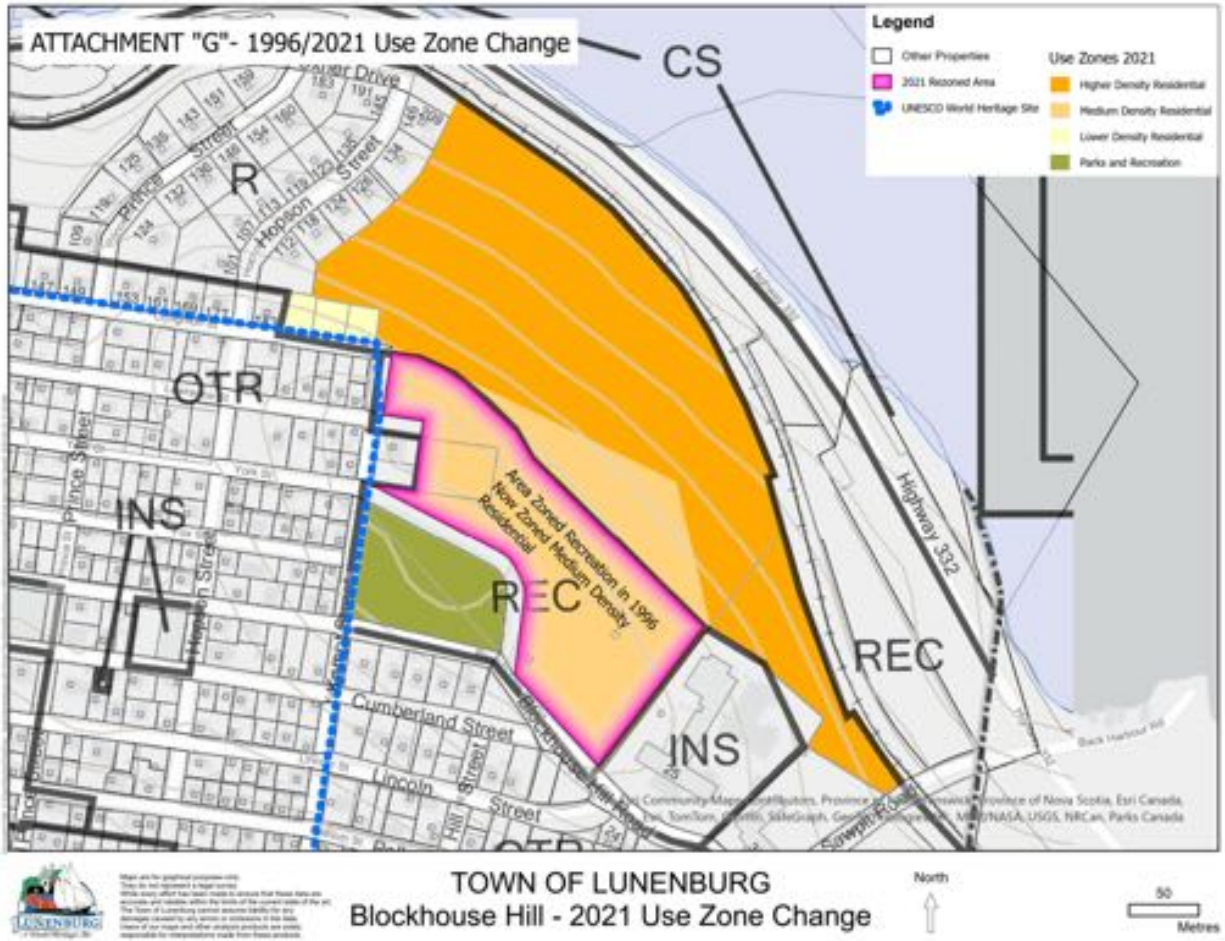
functional impacts. To mitigate visual impact, Julian Smith argues new developments must not obstruct views within Old Town Lunenburg or to and from the Front Harbour. Julian Smith recommends avoiding construction that rises above Sylvia Park when viewed from the harbour or Old Town's primary street corridors. Regarding functional impact, Julian Smith argues that new developments should contribute to maintaining a healthy community by addressing the effects of tourism on affordable housing and community services. This advice has been incorporated into Staff's analysis presented in this report.

## **Municipal Management**

Old Town Lunenburg is a National Historic Site of Canada and a World Heritage Site. Legal protection of Old Town Lunenburg is a requirement of its World Heritage Listing. The Town of Lunenburg updated its Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law in 2021. It passed a new Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plan and By-law on February 27, 2024. The Friends of Blockhouse Hill have argued that recent By-law changes affecting Blockhouse Hill have weakened the site's protection.

The Municipal Planning Strategy emphasizes maintaining a working waterfront and protecting Lunenburg's heritage. The Municipal Planning Strategy includes Policy 6-19, which states, "Council shall not amend the Land Use By-law or enter into a development agreement unless Council is satisfied the proposal...is not premature or inappropriate due to...impacts on UNESCO World Heritage Site statements of outstanding value."

The Friends of Blockhouse Hill allege that the Town of Lunenburg rezoned 37% of the Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Buffer Zone in 2021. However, an estimate comparing the 1994 and 2021 Land Use By-law using GIS data revealed the only rezoned land in Old Town Lunenburg's World Heritage Buffer Zone is approximately 26,000 square meters on Blockhouse Hill rezoned from recreational to medium-density residential. The 26,000 square meters equates to roughly 23% of Blockhouse Hill and only 8% of Old Town Lunenburg's World Heritage Buffer Zone. These are rough calculations only.



Map showing lands on Blockhouse Hill rezoned in 2021.

Apart from the change to these 26,000 square meters on Blockhouse Hill, regulatory changes affecting Blockhouse Hill were minimal between 1994 and 2021. For example, the maximum allowable building height remains 10.5 metres. Smaller lot sizes are now possible, but the 2021 Land Use By-law defines lot coverage at 40%, where it previously was unspecified. A comparison chart of changes to provisions affecting Blockhouse Hill is below. The four design options have been analyzed against the 1994 and 2021 Land Use By-laws. Apart from a few homes on the south side of the Creighton Street connection, Option 2 sees no homes built on rezoned land.

**Comparison between Land Use Zoning on Blockhouse Hill Today and in 1996**

	1996	2021	
	Residential 1	High Density Use Zone, Old Town/New Town 1 Form Zone	Medium Density Use Zone, Old Town/New Town 1 Form Zone
Front Yard Main Building Setback	6 metres or greater	0-6 metres	0-6 metres
Rear Yard Main Building Setback	6 metres or greater	6 metres or greater	6 metres or greater
Side Yard Setback	2.4 metres or greater	2.4 metres or greater	2.4 metres or greater
Common Wall allowed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flankage Yard Setback	6 metres or greater	0-6 metres	0-6 metres
Maximum Building Height	10.5 metres	10.5 metres	10.5 metres

*NOTE: The approach to zoning used by the 2021 Land Use By-law (LUB) differs from that used in 1996 in that building setbacks and height are set under the Form Zone for the area and are unrelated to the Use Zone. Under the 2021 LUB, there are three zone types, each with its own map: Use Zones, Form Zones, and Lot Zones. In the 1996 LUB, there are only Use Zones, where the single zone contains all the rules to be followed in each zone. Under the 2021 LUB, the Form Zone specifies these rules, and one must refer to the rules for all three zone types to determine the full zoning rules that apply to a given property.*

The Friends of Blockhouse Hill are mistaken in their belief that conservation controls over Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site have been reversed. Bill Plaskett’s 1994 report ‘Towards the Establishment of a Heritage Conservation District in the Town of Lunenburg,’ which led to the drafting and adoption of the 2000 Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plan and By-law, argued that protective measures should apply not only to the area of Old Town’s grid plan but the surrounding area. Yet, the 2000 Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plan included the following policy statements:

**5.1.1 Conservation of open space on Blockhouse Hill & Gallows Hill.**

It shall be the intention of Council to conserve the open character of Town-owned lands on Blockhouse Hill and Gallows Hill in order to maintain the clear physical definition of the edges of the historic Old Town plan and protect the historic setting of the Town's early fortifications (on Blockhouse Hill) and the Lunenburg Academy (on Gallows Hill). Council shall also consider amending the zoning designations of these sites under the Municipal Planning

Strategy and Land Use By-law to ensure that permitted future development will be compatible with their historic open space character and their significance as defining elements in the landscape setting of the Old Town.”

### **7.1.1 Conservation of views from Gallows Hill and Blockhouse Hill.**

It shall be the intention of Council to conserve public views from Gallows Hill and Blockhouse Hill by retaining these areas as open space and to implement this policy through appropriate land use and zoning designations in the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law. In addition, any proposed residential development in the residential zone on the lower slopes of Blockhouse Hill, towards the Back Harbour, will be reviewed for its impact on the view of from Blockhouse Hill.

These policies protect the open space character of and views from Blockhouse Hill. However, they also address possible residential development on the site. These policies do not protect the entirety of Blockhouse Hill as undeveloped green space in perpetuity. Using a Heritage Conservation District Plan and By-law to prohibit development outright is made legally impossible under Section 19D of the Nova Scotia *Heritage Property Act*. Section 19D of the Nova Scotia *Heritage Property Act* states, "restriction in a conservation By-law that does not permit a building of any kind on a lot is ultra vires."

Friends of Blockhouse Hill feel these policies have been removed from the new Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plan, weakening Blockhouse Hill’s heritage protection. However, the 2024 Plan offers comparable protection to the distinction between urban and non-urban areas and unobstructed views from the Town's four original blockhouses over the district towards Lunenburg Harbour as the 2000 Plan. The change is that views and the distinction between urban and non-urban lands are captured in a new Statement of Significance for Old Town Lunenburg, excerpted below, instead of under a standalone policy statement.

**Policy 3:** It is Council’s policy to adopt the following Statement of Significance to guide decision-making surrounding Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District.

#### **Heritage Value:**

Old Town Lunenburg is recognized as a Municipal Heritage Conservation District because it is:

- The best-preserved example of a planned colonial settlement in North America;

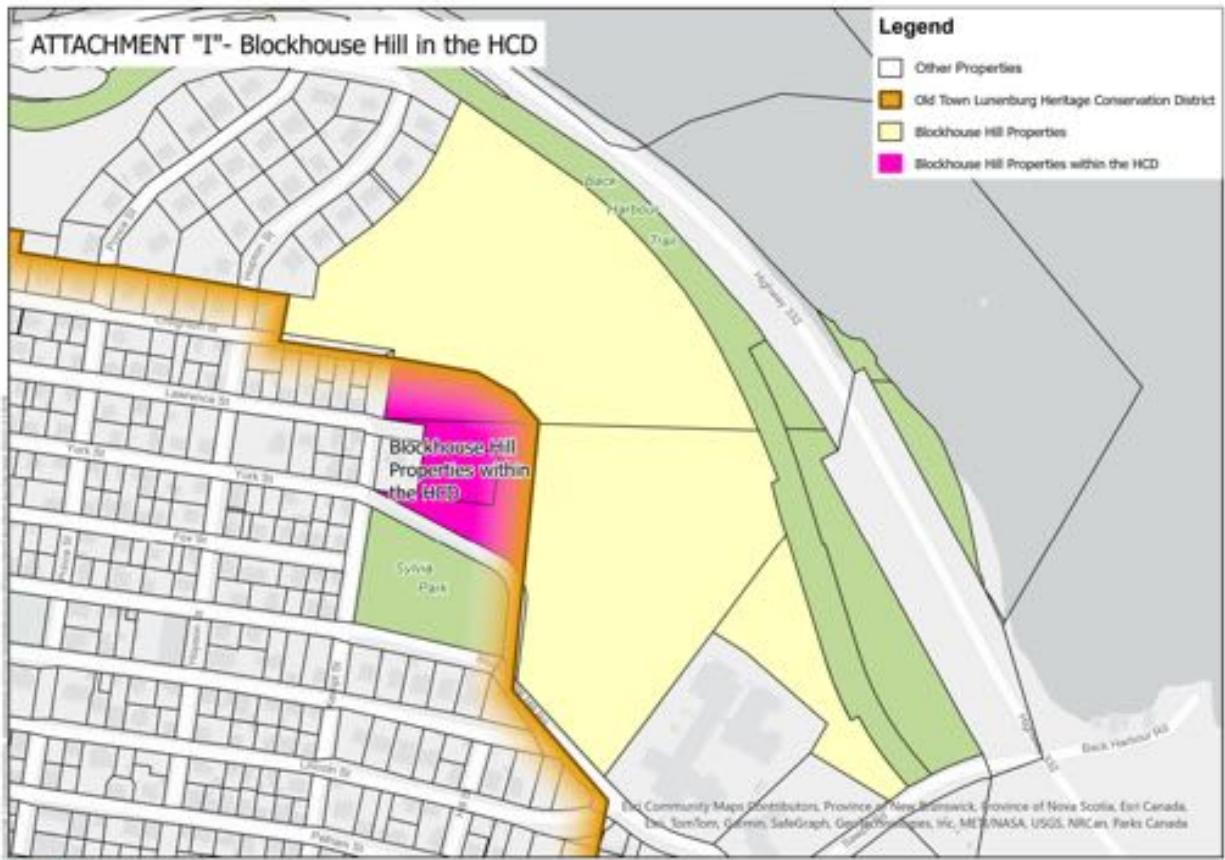
- Home to a well-preserved continuing vernacular architectural tradition; and
- An exceptional example of a culture based on, and an urban community designed for, marine activities.

**Character-Defining Elements:**

Elements that evidence British colonial planning, in particular surveyor General Charles Morris's design, include:

- The geometrically regular gridiron plan comprising seven north-south streets, 48 feet wide (except for King Street, which is 80 feet wide), intersected at right angles by nine east-west streets, each 40 feet wide;
- The lack of encroachment into the streets mentioned above, providing unobstructed north-south and east-west sightlines;
- The minimal setbacks of structures from the street visually reinforcing the street plan's regularity and rectilinearity;
- Old Town's topography, especially its steep streets that evidence a Morris's commitment to using a rectilinear grid plan regardless of the Town's sloping site;
- The distinction between urban and non-urban areas;
- The grandeur of King Street, including its width relative to other North-South streets (50% increase in width) and its location relative to public space, marking the middle of the four public lots set aside for public functions in Morris' original plan;
- Archaeological remains of Old Town Lunenburg's original fortifications;
- Unobstructed views over Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District and out towards Lunenburg Harbour from the location of the Town's four original blockhouses;

Section 1.6 'Transition Area' in the new Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District's By-law's Conservation and Design Guidelines includes the distinction between urban and non-urban areas and unobstructed views over Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site out towards Lunenburg Harbour from the location of the Town's four original blockhouses as elements that must be conserved. The Guidelines grant the Town's Heritage Officer increased authority to ensure any development on Blockhouse Hill captured under the Heritage Conservation District By-law respects these character-defining elements. The same area of Blockhouse Hill is protected under the 2024 Heritage Conservation District Plan and By-law as the 2000 version.



Map data for geographical coordinates, place names, road networks, and other information is provided by third parties and is not guaranteed to be accurate. The Town of Lunenburg cannot accept liability for any damage or loss arising from the use of this data. Users of this map and other services provided by third parties are responsible for their own actions.

**TOWN OF LUNENBURG**  
**Blockhouse Hill - Overlap with HCD**





# BLOCKHOUSE HILL DESIGN PROJECT ASSESSMENT

## VALUES AND ATTRIBUTES

Using the tools provided in the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, Staff have analyzed Old Town Lunenburg's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value relative to Blockhouse Hill, extracting and organizing values and attributes. *Values* are indicated in red italics, attributes are underlined, and **locating information** is shown in bolded blue font.

### Outstanding Universal Value

#### Brief synthesis

Old Town Lunenburg is *the best surviving example of a planned British colonial settlement* in North America. Established in 1753, it has retained its original layout and overall appearance, based on a rectangular grid pattern drawn up in the home country. The inhabitants have safeguarded the town's identity throughout the centuries by preserving the wooden architecture of the houses and public buildings, some of which date from the 18th century and constitute an excellent example of a sustained vernacular architectural tradition. Its economic basis has traditionally been *the offshore Atlantic fishery*, the future of which is highly questionable at the present time.

Criterion (iv): Old Town Lunenburg is a well-preserved example of *18th century British colonial urban planning*, which has undergone no significant changes since its foundation, and which largely continues to fulfil the economic and social purposes for which it was designed. Of special importance is its diversified and well-preserved vernacular architectural tradition, which spans over 250 years.

Criterion (v): Old Town Lunenburg is an excellent example of an urban *community and culture designed for and based on the offshore Atlantic fishery* which is undergoing irreversible change and is evolving in a form that cannot yet be fully defined.

#### Integrity

**Within the boundaries of the 33.85 ha property are located all the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of Old Town Lunenburg. The property encompasses the intact original town plan in its entirety, missing only the fortifications that surrounded the town in its early years, but of which there are no surviving above-ground remains. Its boundaries adequately ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that convey the property's significance, and there is a 32.44 ha **buffer zone**. The property does not suffer unduly from adverse effects of development and/or neglect.**

## **Authenticity**

Old Town Lunenburg is authentic in location and setting, forms and designs, materials and substances, and uses and functions. The original British colonial town plan remains evident, including the regular layout of property parcels in a grid pattern with geometrically regular streets, central public spaces, and key community structures, with a functioning waterfront as its focus. In terms of forms and materials, there is a harmony of scale, siting and materials (predominantly wood) throughout the property, and a regional architectural vocabulary that includes the ‘Lunenburg bump’, an indigenous five-sided dormer. While a continuing vernacular architectural tradition is integral to the property’s Outstanding Universal Value, there has been very limited infill in the modern era. Many of the property’s historic uses and functions survive.

Most of the recent changes to the property are renovations to specific buildings, some of which have better conveyed the heritage value of Old Town Lunenburg than others. Due to long-term economic circumstances, there are also ongoing pressures on property owners in terms of rising property values, maintenance costs, and the challenges of retaining historical accuracy in restoration planning.

## **Protection and management requirements**

Old Town Lunenburg, which is almost entirely in private ownership, is commemorated by the Government of Canada as a National Historic Site (1991) and protected under two key pieces of provincial legislation, the Municipal Government Act (1998) and the Heritage Property Act (1989), which enable the municipality to create, respectively, land-use and heritage By-laws. In this context, the municipality adopted the Heritage Conservation District Plan, By-law and Guidelines in 2000 (consolidated in 2001). In order to better manage the community as a World Heritage property and ensure the continuing protection of the town’s heritage resources, the Town of Lunenburg Heritage Sustainability Strategy (2010) has been developed to guide its development, including the identification of heritage, culture and tourism prospects that may produce economic opportunities for the community.

Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property over time will require managing, to the degree possible, ongoing pressures on property owners related to rising property values, maintenance costs, and the challenges of retaining historical accuracy in restoration planning. It will also require developing and implementing mechanisms to encourage building renovations that fully respect the heritage value of Old Town Lunenburg. Special attention will be given over the long term to monitoring and taking appropriate actions related to a number of factors **in and near the property**. Specifically, these include the potential impacts of climate change, and the impacts of tourism and visitation.

Staff undertook a similar exercise using the 2000 and 2024 versions of the municipal Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plan and By-law. The results of this analysis have been summarized below. All the attributes except the division between

urban and non-urban areas and views of and from Blockhouse Hill are from the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value. The division between urban and non-urban areas and views of and from Blockhouse Hill are from the 2000 and 2024 Old Town Lunenburg Heritage Conservation District Plans and By-laws.

Value	Attributes
<b>Best surviving example of planned colonial settlement in North America</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intact original town plan = Grid pattern with regular streets</li> <li>• Central public spaces</li> <li>• Key community structures</li> <li>• Historic economic and social functions</li> <li>• Missing fortifications</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The division between urban and non-urban areas</i></li> <li>• <i>Views of and from Blockhouse Hill</i></li> </ul>
<b>Continuing vernacular architecture tradition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wooden architecture of the houses</li> <li>• Well-preserved vernacular architecture</li> <li>• Harmony of scale and siting</li> </ul>
<b>Marine tradition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Waterfront</li> </ul>

## POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Staff have used Tool 3, ‘Evaluating Potential Impacts’ from *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, to evaluate the potential impact of housing on Blockhouse Hill on Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site. As in *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*, the goal is to avoid or reduce to an acceptable level any potential negative impacts on Outstanding Universal Value and highlight or reinforce any potential positive impacts.

Element of Proposed Action	Attribute	Description of Potential Impact
<b>Construction New Buildings (form)</b>	<b>Archaeological evidence of fortifications</b>	New construction could disturb archaeological remains.
	<b>The division between urban and non-urban space</b>	New construction could obscure the division between urban and non-urban areas.

	<b>Views</b>	New construction could obscure views from the district and Blockhouse Hill towards the Back Harbour.
	<b>Evolving vernacular building tradition</b>	New construction could be an opportunity for neo-vernacular expression in a new area of Lunenburg.
<b>Construction of new buildings (use)</b>	<b>Historic economic and social functions</b>	New uses on Blockhouse Hill could impact Old Town Lunenburg's use as the social and economic hub of the community.
	<b>The division between urban and non-urban space</b>	New homes could obscure the division between urban and non-urban areas.
	<b>Historic Vernacular architecture</b>	New homes outside Old Town Lunenburg might lessen development pressures within Old Town Lunenburg.
	<b>Working Waterfront</b>	New homes could support the Working Waterfront.
<b>Construction of New Access Routes and Roads</b>	<b>Grid pattern with regular streets</b>	New roads connecting into Old Town Lunenburg's street grid could obscure the grid's boundaries.
	<b>Archaeological evidence of fortifications</b>	New construction could disturb archaeological remains.
	<b>The division between urban and non-urban areas</b>	New construction could obscure the division between urban and non-urban areas.
	<b>Views</b>	New construction could obscure views from the district and Blockhouse Hill towards the Back Harbour.
<b>Increased Traffic</b>	<b>Grid pattern with regular streets</b>	New access routes through Old Town Lunenburg would increase traffic and roadway wear and tear.

	<b>Historic economic and social functions</b>	Congestion may impede Old Town Lunenburg's economic and social functioning. However, bypassing Old Town may isolate it from community life and negatively decrease its use and continued functioning.
<b>Increased Population</b>	<b>Historic Vernacular Architecture</b>	Increased population could increase the wear and tear on Lunenburg's historic building stock, especially those housing businesses and public uses.

From this evaluation of potential impacts, Staff created the following list of potential adverse impacts to be eliminated or mitigated and potential positive impacts that could be reinforced through the design process.

Potential Negative Impacts to Avoid or Mitigate

- Disturbing archaeological remains
- Obscuring the distinction between urban and non-urban areas (form)
- Obscuring views from Blockhouse Hill towards the Back Harbour
- Obscuring views from the district towards the Back Harbour
- Obscuring the boundaries of Old Town Lunenburg's grid
- Competing with Old Town Lunenburg's historic social and economic functions
- Increased wear and tear and congestion through increased use and traffic

Potential Positive Impacts to Allow or Reinforce

- Promote neo-vernacular design
- Local vibrancy, continued historic functions and working waterfront through housing provision
- Fiscal sustainability
- Relieve development pressures from Old Town Lunenburg
- Support Working Waterfront

Staff is working on eliminating or mitigating negative impacts, first focusing on potential direct, irreversible, permanent impacts. These findings should be considered in the context of the Town of Lunenburg's financial sustainability and housing crisis, as discussed in the introduction to this report.

**IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION**

MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple prepared four Blockhouse Hill design options for Council’s consideration. Each option, illustrated as a complete build, can be phased over several years to align with the Town’s growth demand. Preliminary design options were presented at Workshop Three on November 16, with subsequent refinements based on public feedback.

On April 9, 2024, Council directed Staff to work with MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple on Option 2: Out of Sight development rules. Staff recommended Option 2 because it balances green space, heritage concerns, and housing and fiscal sustainability.

The rest of this report considers Option 2 against the Town’s management tools and the above lists of potential negative and positive impacts.



*Option 2: Out of Sight*



*Aerial View Option 2: Out of Sight*



*View from Bay to Bay Trail looking up to Sylvia Park Option 2: Out of Sight*

<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
Disturbing archaeological remains	Eliminated
Obscuring urban and non-urban areas use	Mitigated & In Process
Obscuring urban and non-urban areas form	Mitigated & In Process
Obscuring views from Blockhouse Hill to the back harbour	Eliminated
Obscuring views from the district to the back harbour	Mitigated & In Process
Obscuring boundaries of Old Town Lunenburg's street grid	Mitigated & In Process
Competing with Old Town Lunenburg's historic social and economic functions	Eliminated
Promote neo-vernacular design	In Process
Increased wear and tear and congestion through increased use and traffic	Under Study
Local vibrancy, continued historic functions and working waterfront through housing provision	Assured
Relieve development pressures from Old Town Lunenburg	Assured
Working Waterfront	In Progress
Fiscal sustainability	Assured

### **Land Use Planning and Heritage Management**

Housing on Blockhouse Hill does not require any policy or By-law changes. Option 2: Out of Sight complies with the Town's use, lot, and form zone requirements. Single-detached homes with optional accessory dwelling units are located in the Residential Low-Density Zone closest to Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site. Townhouses, allowing for the highest density, are incorporated into the Residential High-Density Zone towards the bottom of the hill. Lot coverage does not exceed 40%. Lot sizes will vary between 513 m<sup>2</sup> and 2060 m<sup>2</sup>, and frontages vary between 23.5m and 111.5 m. These sizes are all permitted. A comprehensive site plan with individual lot dimensions will be finalized as part of the development rules.

Staff have also analyzed each design relative to the Town of Lunenburg's 1996 Land Use By-law, with zones identical to those shown on a map included in the Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Nomination dossier. Sylvia Park was zoned Recreation in 1996 and is now zoned Parks and Recreation. The lower slopes of Blockhouse Hill were zoned Residential 1 and are now zoned a combination of High- and Medium-Density Residential. The 2021 Land Use By-law zoned the band of land to the North of Sylvia Park from Recreation to Medium-Density Residential. However, apart from perhaps a few homes on the south of the proposed Creighton Street extension, Option 2 would have been allowed as of right under the 1996 Land Use By-law. These few homes would also be within Old Town Lunenburg



Heritage Conservation District and thus must adhere to heritage design guidelines. This finding should allay the Friends of Blockhouse Hill's concerns relative to the Land Use By-law changes between 1996 and today. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects and Staff are also exploring removing homes from the Creighton Street extension to create a green buffer.

### **Archeological Remains**

According to the Archaeological Resource Impact Assessment approved by the Government of Nova Scotia, Option 2 does not require any archaeological mitigation. Option 2 sees no construction over the former Lunenburg County Jail or disturbance of the Hill's military history. Davis MacIntyre & Associates, archaeological consultants, confirmed the likelihood of L'nuk artefacts on the site is low and consulted with Mi'kmaw and First Nations. No mitigation measures relating to L'nuk, Mi'kmaw or First Nations heritage have been recommended.

### **Views and Division between Urban and Non-Urban Areas**

The back of Blockhouse Hill is currently unmanicured green space. Option 2 sees 53% of the site remain public green space. Staff recommend that Council retain ownership of any lands outside the proposed Option 2 development area. Sylvia Park at the top of Blockhouse Hill was always outside the study area and never under consideration for development. Council has declared the eight acres that would be developed under Option 2 surplus such that green space would remain Town-owned should Council choose to sell land on the lower slopes of Blockhouse Hill for development.

No design options would be visible from Old Town Lunenburg or the front harbour, except from the proposed Creighton Street road connection. Furthermore, should trees be retained between housing and Sylvia Park, Option 2 would be invisible from Sylvia Park, significantly mitigating the potential development's visual impact. Option 2 includes significant green space between Kempt Street, the easternmost edge of Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site, and development. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects and Staff are exploring removing homes from the Creighton Street extension to create a green buffer, further mitigating visual impacts from Creighton Street.



*Option 2 View from Sylvia Park*



*Option 2 view from below Sylvia Park on Kempt Street. The buildings visible in this rendering are all existing buildings.*



*Option 2 view from Lawrence Street. The buildings visible in this rendering are all existing buildings.*



*Option 2 view from Creighton Street looking down the proposed Creighton Street extension. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects and Town Staff are exploring removing the first few homes on either side of the street from the design and creating a green buffer to mitigate visual impacts on the northeasternmost corner of Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site.*

## **Legibility of Town Grid**

Overall, the plan proposed in Option 2 is compatible yet distinguishable from the Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site grid plan. Option 2 approximates Old Town's original block and lot sizes. Green buffers and distinct curving roads and pathways pay homage to Old Town's grid while remaining distinguishable from it.

Roads perpendicular to the hill would be too steep for vehicular traffic, necessitating the primary network of streets to align with the land's contours, running streets horizontally across the hill. Option 2 features road connections from Creighton Street and the Hopson Street Loop to Sawpit Road. It also includes green corridors running down the Hill from Sylvia Park to the Back Harbour Trail perpendicular to the proposed streets. These green streets offer several advantages. Firstly, they introduce a rhythm to the block pattern, breaking up the long stretch of road, akin to how a vehicular intersection would mark the end of a block. Secondly, the green corridors serve a practical purpose for site drainage, incorporating natural greenery and soft landscaping to assist with site runoff. Lastly, they establish a network of connecting pathways for walking trails throughout the proposed development. Making these pathways universally accessible would be difficult, given the grade and topography of the site.

Option 2 also takes a light touch relative to the Old Town Lunenburg street grid, proposing only one road connection to Creighton Street. Again, MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects and Town Staff are exploring removing the first few homes on either side of the street from the design and creating a green buffer. This change would also enhance the distinguishability between the new roadways and Old Town's historic street grid.

## **Neo-Vernacular Design**

The MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects Team is preparing design guidelines for the potential development. These guidelines could promote neo-vernacular design but may also make housing less affordable, lessening some of the project's potential social and economic benefits. With his extensive expertise in neo-vernacular architecture, Brian MacKay-Lyons is an excellent choice for developing such guidelines. His approach prioritizes a deep understanding of local context and cultural heritage while pushing design and affordability boundaries. By engaging Brian MacKay-Lyons, the Town can benefit from design guidelines that foster a sense of place and community identity by creating a regulatory framework to promote the continuation of its vernacular architecture tradition.

## **Traffic Impacts**

On March 1, 2024, the Town of Lunenburg issued an RFP for a new Town of Lunenburg Parking and Traffic Plan. This plan will consider the proposed Blockhouse Hill design and potential traffic and parking impacts. Option 2 includes both on-site and on-street parking. The MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects Team intends to include parking provisions in the project's development rules. Furthermore, the Town recently invested in a full-time by-law enforcement officer to enforce parking and traffic infractions among the town's other by-laws.

## **Relieving development pressures and ensuring continued historic functions**

Having only homes instead of a potential mixed-use development on Blockhouse Hill ensures Old Town Lunenburg remains the local commercial and social hub. Keeping development within walking distance of Old Town ensures its continued use and vibrancy as a living community. Currently, many who work in Lunenburg cannot afford to live in Lunenburg. Affordable housing helps our economy and keeps workers, including maritime workers and bearers of Lunenburg's marine culture, in Lunenburg and using Old Town Lunenburg. Staff are working from the assumption that increasing housing stock would relieve development pressures from Old Town Lunenburg, regardless of the design plan.

## **Housing and Fiscal Considerations**

Option 2 includes housing but also 53% public green space and more green space between new homes and Old Town Lunenburg versus other options explored through the design process. Option 2 would not require any archaeological mitigation and includes greater connectivity than Option 3— more roads and pathways connecting areas of Town and Sylvia Park to the Back Harbour Trail. Option 2 includes all these advantages and the second-highest unit count, making the most of the site for housing while mitigating other concerns. While Option 2 was not the public's preferred design option according to the results of the ranking survey in workshop three, it is a compromise between polarized public opinion, with some wanting no development and some wanting higher density development.

The Community Social Planning Council and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporations argue that strategically using municipally owned land as a platform for affordable housing is particularly important in areas with high land and housing prices in Local Government Levers for Housing Affordability (2023). The distribution of studio and 1-bedroom, 2-

bedroom, and 3+ bedroom units in each design option match the projected needs identified in the Town of Lunenburg Municipal Housing Needs Report. The Housing Needs Report found Lunenburg needs 35 studio or 1-bedroom units, 50 2-bedroom units, and 35 3+-bedroom units by 2027. More of each will be required by 2032. Option 2 sees 256 dwelling units, including 26 studio units, 66 1-bedroom units, 98 two-bedroom units and 66 three-bedroom units.

Hanscomb Quantity Surveyors has prepared costing estimates for each design option, apart from Option 4, which sees no development on the site. The estimates include a profit for the developer. Union contractors are assumed to be responsible for the work, with a 20% allowance covering design and pricing uncertainties and an additional 10% contingency. The Blockhouse Hill Design Project RFP said 10% of the design will contain affordable housing – defined as 30% (or less) of the median household income. According to Statistics Canada, the median total household income in the Town of Lunenburg is \$65,000 (pre-tax). 30% of that is \$19,650, which translates roughly to \$1,637/month. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects has created designs where studio units could be built and rented below that threshold. Miranda Bailey shared on January 23 that the construction cost of the buildings only (services, roads, and contingencies excluded) for a studio or accessory dwelling unit would be approximately \$125,000, a 1-bedroom unit approximately \$200,000, a 2-bedroom unit approximately \$250,000 to \$275,000, a 3-bedroom unit between approximately \$275,000 and \$325,000 and a single-family home approximately \$400,000. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects and Staff are exploring ways development rules could assure affordability and secure housing, such as outlawing short-term rentals on Blockhouse Hill.

The Town of Lunenburg establishes municipal tax rates, but it does not handle the calculation of property assessments, which serve as the basis for tax calculations. This responsibility lies with the Property Valuation Services Corporation of Nova Scotia. Property valuations are beyond the expertise of Staff. To provide an estimate of potential municipal tax revenue for each design option, Staff worked from an assumption that the units' assessment value in year one would be equivalent to construction costs. Potential tax revenue was computed using the Town's current residential rate of \$1.376 per \$100 of assessment. On this basis, Staff have estimated that Option 2 would result in \$ 1,766 389.09 in tax revenue. Option 4 has no development costs and does not necessitate an immediate investment from the Town. However, the Town would not realize the short- and long-term financial gains of selling the land and increasing its tax base. A landscaped park is cost-prohibitive. It would mean a multi-million-dollar investment with no cash return.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff is working with MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects to mitigate the impact on the division between urban and non-urban areas and the distinguishability of Old Town Lunenburg's Street grid by refining the Creighton Street connection in design Option 2: Out of Sight. MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects and Town Staff are also working on development rules, including design guidelines to promote neo-vernacular architecture in the area and secure affordability and parking. The Town has hired WSP to develop a parking and traffic plan for Lunenburg, including Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site and its World Heritage Buffer Zone. Heritage impact assessment is iterative and ongoing.

A Public Information Meeting, an advertised meeting where members of the public can come and present before Council, is a requirement of selling the lower slopes of Blockhouse Hill for housing. If Council would like to adopt development rules, a public information meeting before the Town's Planning Advisory Committee and a public hearing before Council are required. The public can come and speak at both events. The two public hearings before Council could occur at the same Council meeting.

Town Staff will continue to update Parks Canada as the process unfolds.