

Development + Heritage in St. John's

Getting the Right Balance

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Water Street National Historic Site



331 Water Street (adjacent to Water St. National Historic District)



331 Water Street – Powers Brown Architecture



U of Maryland Research Centre – Powers Brown Architecture



The Green Case for Recycling Buildings



Grace Hospital Demolition



Former Grace Hospital Nursing Residence

Recycling Buildings = Environmental Sustainability



“We never see the existing as a problem. We look with positive eyes because there is an opportunity of doing more with what we already have” - Lacaton/Vassal
(2021 Pritzker Architecture Prize winners)

New Design/Development in Heritage Context Finding the Balance



Finding the Balance: I) Understanding Context (and Responding to it)

Document:

- Historical development of site
- Existing building/streetscape patterns
- Views to and from site
- Environmental conditions
- Human/Social Values

Finding the Balance:

I) Understanding Context (Historical Fabric)



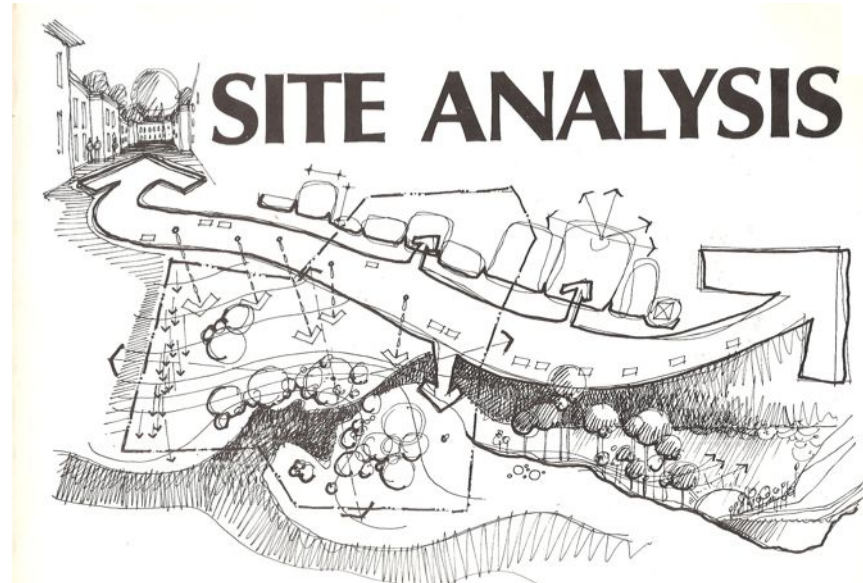
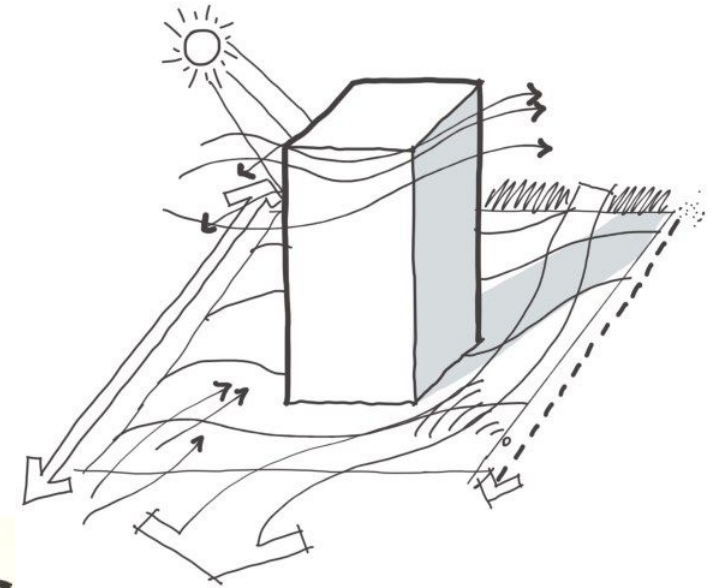
- Historical building/street/open space patterns
- Evolution/change over time (physical/uses)
- Massing (size/height)
- Building materials



Finding the Balance: I) Understanding Context (Environmental)

Document:

- sun exposures
- wind
- precipitation/drainage
- vegetation
- green spaces
- topography



Finding the Balance: I) Understanding Context (Social)

How do Residents & Visitors:

- Use a site/location?
- Or not use it?
- Feel it meets their needs?
- Value it?
- Hold memories of it?



Niagara on the Lake



Using heritage to create “place.”

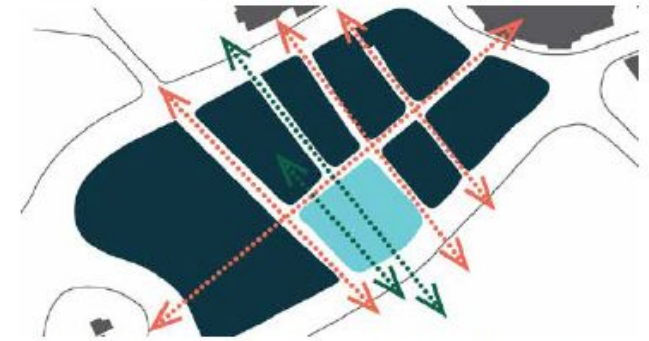
Preserving 426 Water Street would add architectural interest to a new development and help to establish it a destination within downtown St. John's. The stone walls of the building could add atmosphere to a modern interior and the historic façade — if restored — could provide an iconic public face or entrance for the new complex.

Historic maps (above) show the George Street West area comprised a number of short blocks separated by narrow lanes connecting Water Street through to New Gower Street. Paying homage to these laneways could be done in a creative way that adds interest to the Water Street façade. Rooting a development to a tangible history such as this can increase the public's attachment to the project and lend it a certain timelessness. Research shows shorter urban blocks support more interesting and healthy streets.

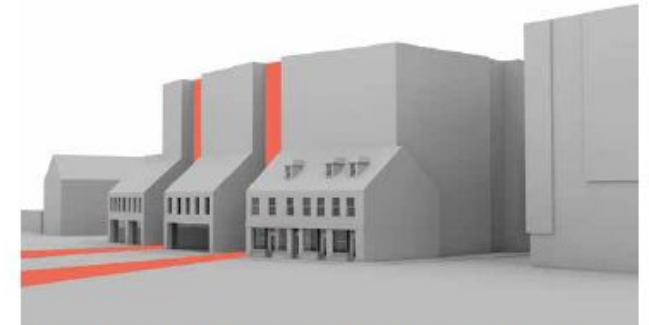
Incorporating these former lanes can be accomplished in a number of ways including: indenting the façade at former pass-through locations, locating entrances to the building at these laneway intersections, or providing views into or out of the structure, connecting it to the larger neighbourhood. Branding opportunities exist using the historic names of these lanes.



Old brick and stone are timeless materials that have recently seen a resurgence in popularity as part of modern designs due to their authenticity. (Source: Historic Timber & Plank)



This area once comprised many small blocks. Most of these routes still exist as roads or walkways. One through the subject block has been closed but could be incorporated symbolically.



Historic lanes could be marked by entrances/exits, indents, and/or material choices.

Finding the Balance: II) Meaningful (Early) Public Engagement

Why its Important:

- Protect public interest (we all own the street)
- To generate a variety of fresh perspectives/ ideas on a proposed development
- To get more public buy-in and less conflict



Finding the Balance: II) Meaningful (Early) Public Engagement

Tools for Public Engagement:

- Community Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Design Charettes
- Open Houses/Storefront displays
- Oral Histories

Design Ideas from Parish Lane Public Engagement



Parish Lane Focus Group Feedback

Strengthen Address on Public Streets/ Treatment of Parish Hall Building Elements:

- Enhance visual appeal/street address on public streets (Queens Rd & Harvey Rd)
- Develop interpretive panels on history of site
- Maintain architectural vocabulary of existing buildings along Queen's Rd (e.g., Glebe House)
- Move building line right up to edge of sidewalk
- Integrate existing Anglican Church Hall building elements more meaningfully into the building design
- Move parking garage further back into the site

Parish Lane Design Charette

ERA Design Charette Report

Figure 1: Conservation Strategy Opportunities



This figure conceptually represents one potential way the Conservation Strategy described in the following section could be implemented on the site. This concept plan, which serves as an urban design strategy, is informed by feedback obtained during the February 20, 2020 Charrette. Letters correspond with the 'Objectives' of the Conservation Strategy, as outlined in the attached memo and listed above for reference. Note: 'Objectives' I and J are not included on this diagram.

APPENDIX

Conservation Strategy Objectives

- A** Recognize the site as a Cultural Heritage Landscape
- B** Provide landscaped spaces that reinforce the campus quality of the former institutional properties
- C** Ensure vehicular access and accommodation on the site enhances the public realm and campus feel of the site
- D** Respect the historic and adjacent relationship between the institutional character of the block and residential edge along Garrison Hill
- E** Ensure public views to, from and around the site are respected
- F** Have regard for views to, from and around other civic cultural institutions (the Rooms, Basilica, Gower Street United Church, the Kirk)
- G** Recognize and respect the historic institutional built form character along Harvey Road
- H** Recognize and respect the historic residential built form character along Garrison, and as it turns into Queen's Road
- I** Ensure high quality architectural design and materials
- J** Be authentic to building types
- K** Consider opportunities to share, support and collaborate with the various institutions on the block



Parish Lane Queen Street Address (Original)



Parish Lane Queen Street Address Revised

Parish Lane Area Historical Context



Examples of Contemporary Design in Historic Contexts

