

Decision Note

Title:	59 Duckworth Street – St. John's Heritage By-Law – Amendment Requests
Date Prepared:	March 25, 2026
Report To:	Committee of the Whole
Councillor and Role:	Councillor Tom Davis, Heritage
Ward:	Ward 2

Decision/Direction Required:

To consider a request to amend the St. John's Heritage By-Law, Schedule D – Heritage Design Standards, to allow a proposed exterior alteration to 59 Duckworth Street.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

59 Duckworth Street (Devon House) is in Heritage Area 3 and is designated by the City as a Heritage Building. The building is also a Registered Heritage Structure by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (Heritage NL). A location map and the heritage statement of significance are attached.

Exterior alterations to all four sides of Devon House were approved by Council at its July 15, 2025 regular meeting. The Council-approved elevations are attached. The applicant has received development and building approvals and is now renovating the building.

On January 30, 2026, the applicant submitted a request to amend the Heritage By-Law to enable further exterior changes at 59 Duckworth Street (proposal attached). At that time there were two requests: changes to the dormer section of the Heritage Design Standards, and changes to the cladding section. The applicant is now asking only to amend the dormer section of the Standards to allow a vertical extension of the bay window on the rear wall. Extending the bay window up another storey would require the removal of an original hooded dormer window (a small window with a rounded top). For a designated Heritage Building like this, the Heritage Design Standards require the original dormer shape, size and proportion to be maintained, even on a rear wall that does not face a street, and there is no discretion for Council or staff.

The Built Heritage Experts Panel met on March 9, 2026 to discuss the amendment request. The applicant attended as a delegation and presented the requested alterations. The Panel

recommend Council maintain the Heritage Design Standards as is and reject the amendment request. Staff agree with this recommendation for three reasons:

1. There are only 158 designated Heritage Buildings in the city and this requirement applies only to designated buildings with dormer windows.
2. The dormer windows are character-defining features of Devon House as outlined in the heritage statement of significance.
3. According to the new St. John's Heritage Strategic Plan (Goal 1.1.a), the City will adopt the federal Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and will apply them to designated Heritage Buildings. The City's Heritage Design Standards are in line with the federal Standards and Guidelines already, so changing our standards would go against the federal standards.

Since Devon House is also designated by Heritage NL, that group was consulted on the request to remove the dormer window. A letter is attached from their Executive Director, stating that Heritage NL holds an easement covenant agreement on the property, which restricts the removal of features without their written approval. It states that the "restoration of the dormer windows at the rear, and ensuring retention/repair of their original trims and detailing, are conditions of the property's revitalization grant as approved by [the Heritage NL] Board, June 2025, and referenced in the active grant contract signed by the current property owner." Heritage NL has stated that the dormer windows on the rear of the building are important to its architectural character and are to remain. This means that if Council wishes to amend the Heritage By-Law, then the requested change to 59 Duckworth Street will not be supported by Heritage NL.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Not applicable.
2. Partners or Interested Parties: Property owner, heritage advocates, Heritage NL.
3. Is this a New Plan, Master Plan, Strategy, Report, or Framework: No
4. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

A Sustainable City: Plan for land use and preserve and enhance the natural and built environment where we live.

An Effective City: Ensure accountability and good governance through transparent and open decision making.

5. Alignment with Adopted Plans: St. John's Heritage Strategic Plan 2026-2036, St. John's Heritage By-Law.
6. Accessibility and Inclusion: Not applicable.

7. Legal or Policy Implications: An amendment to the St. John's Heritage By-Law, Schedule D – Heritage Design Standards is required if Council wishes to enable the proposed exterior alterations. The change would be counter to the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, a federal document which Council has agreed to adopt as per our new Heritage Strategic Plan.
8. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.
9. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Not applicable.
10. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.
11. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.
12. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.
13. Information Management Implications: Not applicable.
14. Other Implications: Not applicable.

Recommendation:

That Council reject the request to amend the St. John's Heritage By-Law, Schedule D – Heritage Design Standards to allow the removal of an original dormer window at 59 Duckworth Street.

Prepared by: Lindsay Church, MCIP, Planner III – Urban Design and Heritage
Approved by: Ken O'Brien, MCIP, Chief Municipal Planner

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	59 Duckworth Street - St. John's Heritage By-Law, Schedule D Amendment Request.docx
Attachments:	- 59 Duckworth Street - Location Map.pdf - 59 Duckworth Street - Statement of Significance.pdf - ELEVATIONS JULY 8_25_COUNCIL_APPROVED.pdf - Devon House Ltr Council 2026-03-24.pdf - Devon House Heritage Submission 2026-03-24.pdf - 2026-03-25 - Letter from Heritage NL.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Mar 26, 2026

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Ken O'Brien - Mar 26, 2026 - 10:20 AM

Jason Sinyard - Mar 26, 2026 - 10:49 AM