

## Some Remarks to HRM Council re Schmidville Heritage Conservation District Designation, 17 July, 2018

By Larry Haiven

- Friends of Schmidville is a community association formed in 2008 and registered as a nonprofit society to promote the development of our neighbourhood, the preservation of its unique historic character and the replication of the Schmidville model in the rest of the city.
- An active, committed group of neighbours has been a key element of the success of Schmidville and is essential in other projects across the City as well.
- That wasn't always the case here. Friends of Schmidville came together more than a decade ago because of a development application that promised to and eventually did demolish a block of the finest houses in our neighbourhood and replace them with a 19-story tower. We realized that if we didn't organize, this would be repeated throughout Schmidville. We're even more certain of that now as even more (7%) of what was left of Schmidville has fallen to the wrecking ball, even as the Heritage designation process was ongoing!
- I want to remind you that Schmidville recently won the great neighbourhood award for 2018 from the Cdn Institute of Planners. The jury said:
  - "We were won over by the multiple strengths of the neighbourhood – its walkability, unique reflection of local history, cohesive mix of residential and commercial uses, and the significant role it already plays as a Great Place in Halifax,"
- Why Schmidville matters.
- This is not only about preserving and enhancing a bunch of older buildings. It's really more about building and strengthening a neighbourhood, a community of people; a cohesive group of neighbours. I literally can't walk outside my door without stopping and being stopped for chats with residents and business owners. Halifax needs more Schmidville.
- Schmidville is distinctive not only because it is the oldest and largest contiguous historic neighbourhood in Halifax
- Looking only at the 5.76 hectares within our boundaries, it is also one of the densest neighbourhoods in Halifax. Chock-a-block with houses, Schmidville is in the same population density league as Paris and Barcelona AND YET THE SCHMIDTVILLE HEIGHT LIMIT IS ONLY 35 FEET AT ITS HIGHEST; showing that we can achieve much of the density we want simply by protecting our older neighbourhoods.
- We also have a great mix of incomes. 75% of our residents are renters. The 2016 census shows the median individual income of Schmidville *residents* as \$25, 439. Ladies and gentlemen, that is what affordable housing looks like. And yet with 30% of us making above \$50,000 and a few above \$100,000, that is what housing diversity looks like.
- Yes, as everywhere on the peninsula, there is gentrification going on, but ours seems slow and sustainable, not what happens when you demolish houses and replace them with a bunch of pricey condos; it's what I call "gentlefication,"
- As far as the goals of Halifax, Schmidville is the almost nearly perfect neighbourhood. And I say that without a hint of exaggeration. If we don't know what we've got 'til it's gone, let's protect what's left and let's celebrate.
- My greatest fear is that once designated, Schmidville will be a mere ghetto, a fig-leaf for unbridled development in the rest of the City and even just outside our neighbourhood.
- If I had my way, designation as a distinct neighbourhood would be available not only for heritage preservation but also for distinctiveness and cohesion; and we still have lots of that in Halifax, if we only appreciate it