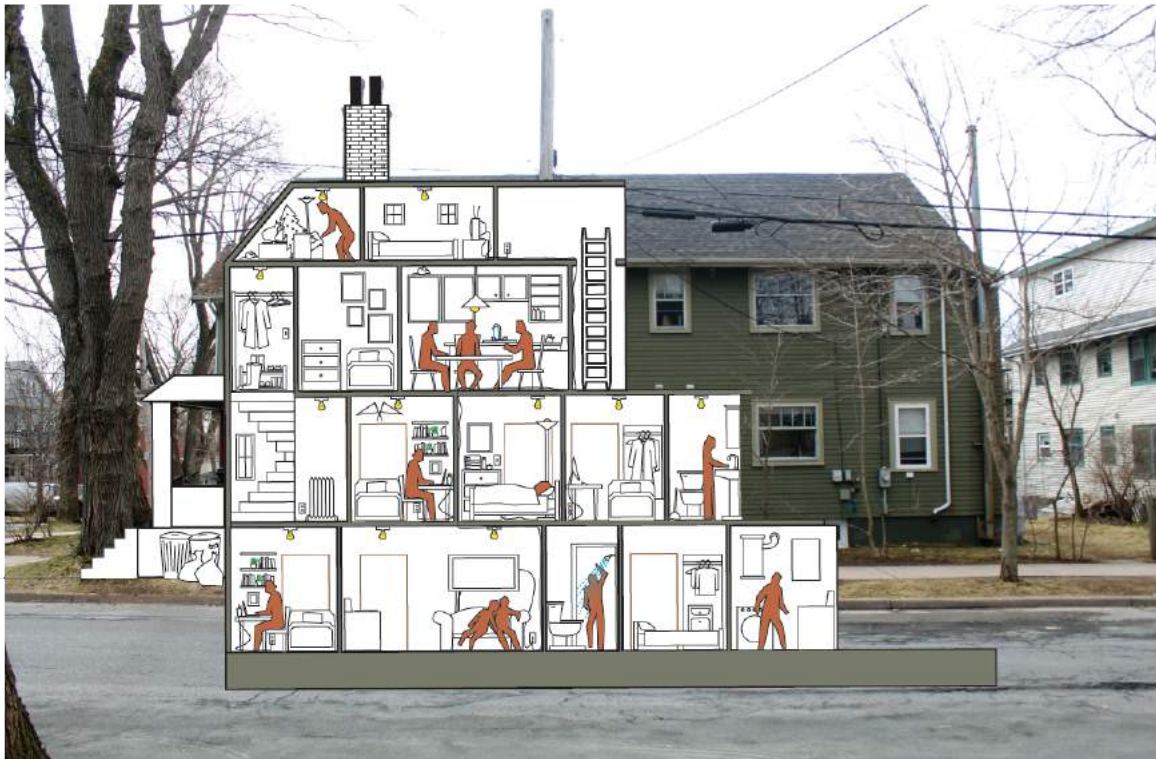


ARE ROOMING HOUSES DISAPPEARING IN HALIFAX?



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Executive Summary

Rooming houses or Single Room Occupancies (SROs), a form of affordable housing in which people rent single rooms in a house, are disappearing across North America. In the midst of this change, many cities also report the arrival of “quasi rooming houses”, rental units that operate similarly to a rooming house but targeted at university students. The purpose of this project was to create a better understanding of SRO change in the context of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) where the decline of rooming houses and prevalence of quasi rooming houses are widely reported but poorly documented. We adopted a data triangulation method to create a database of rooming houses and quasi rooming house addresses that existed between 1995 - 2016. We collected addresses from various of sources that included former city directories, newspaper archives, fire and police reports, municipal records, and online listings sites to create a clearer idea of rooming house and quasi rooming house distributions across HRM. We further analyzed their current status, zoning, media coverage, and property assessments.

Our research identified 151 rooming house addresses that existed between 1995 – present, with high concentrations in Halifax’s north end, south end and downtown Dartmouth. Most of these rooming houses have indeed been lost from the affordable housing market; many have been converted to more profitable forms of housing. We identified 57 currently operating quasi rooming houses concentrated in communities adjacent to university campuses, particularly in areas just north of Dalhousie’s Studley campus.

Our findings, combined with further analyses of media coverage, zoning, and property assessment change seem to create two distinct narratives for rooming houses and quasi rooming houses in HRM. Rooming houses here may face an uphill battle to remain as affordable housing due to social stigma, unpermitted zoning, and economic pressures for conversion. Quasi rooming houses may be a more stable form in HRM with less public attention, grandfathered zoning policies that allow them to operate in areas of high housing demand without competition, and higher property assessment growths that make them appreciating investments for landlords.

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1. Introduction

Housing is a basic need for people. It is in a city's best interests to have an adequate supply of housing within the means of its most vulnerable citizens. However, changes to markets, regulations, and society pose risks to the availability of affordable housing. In the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), rooming houses, traditionally a form of affordable housing, seem to be declining in number - a trend that is observable in many other cities in North America. Amidst the loss of rooming houses, there are many reports of "quasi rooming houses" that operate similarly to rooming houses without licensing or labelling themselves as such. This project attempts to document and map the loss of rooming houses as well as the prevalence of quasi rooming houses in the HRM. It analyzes the zoning, property assessments and media coverage of rooming houses and quasi rooming houses to compare the two forms of housing. By doing this, the research hopes to improve our general understanding of SROs in the HRM in a way that can ultimately guide policy to keep healthy and affordable housing available in this city.

2. Literature Review



Demolition remains from former rooming house in Dartmouth, NS (Photograph taken by Uytæ Lee, 2016)

are broadly defined as a form of shared accommodation where residents rent individual bedrooms and share common areas (CMHC 2000) such as kitchens and bathrooms.

A Brief History of Rooming Houses

Rooming houses have a history of providing affordable accommodations in Canada and the United States. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they were generally regarded as a respectable form of housing for working class and middle-income tenants wishing to live in the city (Campsie, 1994, p2). In 1906, sociologist Albert Wolfe characterized rooming house tenants in Boston as a “great army of clerks, salesmen, bookkeepers, shop girls, stenographers, dressmakers, milliners, barbers, restaurant-keepers, black railroad porters and stewards, policemen, nurses,... journeymen carpenters, painters, machinists, [and] electricians” (p. 6). Indeed, a boom in new industrial and commercial jobs in the city in the early 19th century had encouraged many people to move into cities and rooming houses became a somewhat emblematic of independent city living for those hoping to escape rural life (Groth, 1994).

In the 1950s, the rapid growth of the suburbs made private home ownership affordable for the middle class and, in turn, changed the demographic profile of rooming houses (Campsie, 1994). With more people choosing to live away from the city in suburban homes, rooming houses soon became a form of housing for those who had few other options - students, the working poor, and the unemployed (Campsie, 1994). The following decades saw a gradual deterioration of rooming houses that damaged both their structure and reputation. Many landlords stopped maintaining their buildings, often choosing to operate them from a distance (Lottis & McCracken, 2014). The poor conditions in rooming houses came to the point that many cities began to impose tighter regulations on them throughout the twentieth century. These regulations, while well-meaning, often made rooming houses more expensive to operate and resulted in the closure of many rooming houses. In Seattle, the introduction of expensive fire safety requirements for rooming houses in the 1970s saw an estimated 5000 SRO units close in a matter of months (Durning, 2012). Rooming houses further became associated with urban decay (Slater, 2004) and were targeted by grand urban renewal projects in North American cities such Los Angeles, Boston and Seattle in the 1960s (Arrighi, 1997).

Importance as Private Sector Affordable Housing

Rooming houses and other SROs are an important form of affordable housing. Rooming houses cater to a niche market of tenants who seek independent housing while living below the poverty line (CMHC 2006). Some rooming house residents are unable to work because of their physical or

mental health, while others may be recovering from life disrupting circumstances such as substance addictions or injuries (CMHC 2006). For such people, rooming houses offer a lifeline from what is often homelessness (Campsie, 1994).

Rooming houses fit under a larger discussion of private sector affordable housing. The traditional theory behind private sector affordable housing is that the elimination of service, repairs, and amenities lowers the operating costs of a rental unit and, thus, lowers rents for tenants (Groth, 1994). This can be quite valuable for governments as private sector affordable housing can theoretically offer housing for the poor without government subsidies.

However, a combination of typically older buildings, troublesome tenants and limited revenue make it difficult for rooming houses to adhere to existing standards (Lottis & McCracken, 2014). Inattentive landlords can further exacerbate these issues to create living conditions in rooming houses that compromise the health and safety of tenants (MNHA, 1996). Drawing from experiences from rooming-house tenants in Hamilton, Ontario, Mifflin & Wilton (2003) find that there are “serious shortcomings exhibited by many rooming houses... as ‘home’ environments, with implications for the health and well-being of the tenant” (p.417). The authors argue that shelters offer a greater sense of control, comfort, and community than rooming houses (Mifflin & Wilton, 2003). A medical study on rooming house tenants in Canada further finds that mortality rates among rooming house residents are much higher than the mortality rate that would be expected on the basis of low income alone (Hwang et al., 2009). Rooming houses thus play a complicated role as providers of risky, yet vital forms of affordable housing.

Vulnerability and Disappearance

SRO units seem to be declining across Canada with the municipalities of Winnipeg (Kaufman & Distasio, 2014), Montreal (Alfaro, 2010), Toronto (Slater, 2004), and Vancouver (Paulsen, 2007) all reporting significant losses. While it is difficult to pinpoint any single reason for the recent decline of SROs, this change seems to be occurring against the backdrop of increased numbers of people moving into urban centres (Westcott, 2014), which is linked to the general loss of affordable housing (Newman & Wyly, 2006). For direct causes to rooming house decline, the literature points towards a mixture of complex and interacting forces between market pressures, gentrification, and regulations.

Changes in the Housing Market

Rooming houses are vulnerable to changes in the local real estate market. In Vancouver, an increasingly expensive housing market has made rooming house operations less profitable (City of Vancouver, 2010). Redevelopment is cited as the leading cause for decreases in rooming house stock (Paulsen, 2007). Across Canada, property owners have similarly found it profitable to convert rooming houses into single family homes or other uses such as condominiums that cater to the higher end of market housing (CMHC, 2000). Rooming houses are further threatened by damages caused by fires and other incidents that landlords deem too costly to fix, resulting in closure (Kaufman & Distasio, 2014).

Gentrification and Displacement Pressures

In addition to unfavourable market forces, rooming houses may find themselves socially condemned and displaced from the community around them. Media depictions of poor conditions in some rooming houses have given them a negative perception by the public (Campsie, 1996). A study of gentrifying neighbourhoods in Toronto found that rooming house tenants often felt scrutiny and shame as more affluent residents and elitist businesses settled into the community (Mazer & Rankin, 2010). Rooming house landlords are frequently targets for criticism by tenant advocates and community members who view them as entirely responsible for poor conditions (Campsie, 2014). In many cases, rooming houses have been targeted for closure by residents' associations that pressure local governments to revoke their operating licenses (McGillicuddy, 2007).

Changes in Regulations

Rooming houses are often regulated and licensed with the purpose of maintaining a basic level of safety and health for tenants (CMHC, 2006). Despite good intentions, these regulations can drive both good and bad rooming house landlords out of business as a result of the increasing cost of meeting city requirements (CMHC 2000). The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation points to the example of San Francisco where the introduction of rooming house requirements resulted in a significant loss in SRO units as well as a sharp increase in rents (CMHC, 2000). In Toronto, the Toronto Star (a news publication) reported that almost half of the rooming houses in the city had been lost in the three years following the licensing by-law in 1974 (Campsie, 1994). In light of these precedents, recent efforts to regulate rooming houses in Regina saw much resistance from landlords who feared licensing could force many rooming houses out of business (Stuckel, 2013); the municipality subsequently chose to remove the "rooming house" land classification altogether

(Vigliotti, 2013). The complex nature of regulating rooming houses have led many to make conclusions similar to the following statement by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation;

"Municipalities must find a balance between ensuring safety standards are met and providing affordable housing options." (CMHC, 2000, pg. 4)

2.2 The Context of HRM

The project studies rooming houses in the context of the Halifax Regional Municipality in Nova Scotia. Here, rooming houses share the narrative common to other rooming houses across North America. At the turn of the 20th century in Halifax, rooming houses were popular among single and young skilled workers (Stickings, 2012). However, by the 1990s, rooming houses in Halifax were in a dismal state; a study by Metro Non-Profit Housing described them to be “very substandard housing” (Metro Non-Profit Housing Association, 1996, pg. 4). Reports of rooming house fires and crime were common in the media and contributed to a NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) attitude amongst residents towards rooming houses (CMHC, 2000). Licensing and inspection requirements for rooming houses were introduced to Halifax much later compared to other major Canadian cities. Licensing requirements for rooming houses came in 2001 with the passing of by-law M-100 (McGillicuddy, 2007) which continues to regulate rooming houses today. Similar to other cities in North America, the number of rooming houses is widely reported to be declining in Halifax (Bousquet, 2013, Lowe, 2014, AHANS, 2014,, & HRM, 2015a). The decline comes amidst recent reports of low housing affordability in the municipality. Currently a quarter of residents in HRM spend more than 30 percent of their household income on housing (Bundale, 2015).

HRM's Policy on Affordable Housing

The Halifax Regional Municipality acknowledges the need for affordable housing in its policies without mentioning SRO units by name. In its 2014 regional plan policy (HRMa, 2014), policy S-30 discusses strategies for increasing affordability, including “ (h) identifying existing affordable housing and development of measures to protect it” (HRM, 2014a, p. 58). Policy S-34 states, “HRM shall investigate other means of supporting affordable housing including reducing or waiving of fees” (HRM, 2014a, p. 58).

However, unlike many other urban centres in Canada, HRM has no direct authority over the management or provision of affordable housing within the municipality (Berman, 2015). The provincial government maintains responsibility for affordable housing through Housing Nova Scotia which encourages rooming houses and other forms of affordable housing through the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). Rooming house landlords can apply through this program for a fully forgivable loan of up to \$16,000 per unit for repairs, upgrades, and

maintenance on the condition that rents are capped at or below market rates (Housing Nova Scotia, 2015).

Rooming Houses are Disappearing in Halifax

Like many municipalities across North America, HRM seems to have lost a significant number of rooming houses, as many sources confirm (**Table 2.2.1**). While estimates for the extent of the loss vary, they all point towards a similar narrative of an alarming decline of SROs in the HRM. Hypotheses for how rooming houses are lost in Halifax vary between renovations that convert them to more upscale forms of housing such as apartments or closures due to deteriorating conditions (HRM, 2015a).

Table 2.2.1: Estimates for number of rooming houses in Halifax and their decline in Halifax

Description of estimate from source	Source
<i>"We found 146 to be rooming houses"</i>	(MNHA, 1996, p. 19)
<i>Metro Non-Profit Housing Association - "the more than 140 rooming houses in north and south-end Halifax"</i>	(Flinn, 1996, p. 4)
<i>"The municipality estimates there are at least 140 rooming houses on the peninsula"</i>	(Jeffrey, 2000)
<i>"The municipality has records for 77 rooming houses"</i>	(Gulamhusein, 2005, p. B7)
<i>"In 2007, there were 153 rooming houses in HRM; last year there were just 25, and five of those are for sale"</i>	(Bousquet, 2013)
<i>"In 2007, there were 136 rooming houses in HRM. Today there are 23, five of which are for sale"</i>	(Lowe, 2013, p. A4)
<i>"The number of rooming houses has declined by over 90% in the last decade"</i>	(AHANS, 2014, p. 19)
<i>"According to municipal Planning staff, the number of legal rooming houses has decreased from over a hundred to just 18 although they suspect that there are still about a hundred illegal rooming houses in the Municipality."</i>	(HRM, 2015a, p54)

Where are Rooming Houses in Halifax?

An aggravating challenge to understanding the decline of rooming houses in Halifax is the lack of records on this form of housing. The Metro Non-Profit Housing Association created an inventory of rooming houses conditions in 1995 where they identified 146 addresses in Halifax (MNHA, 1996). However, the report was limited to surveying the conditions of a smaller sample of rooming houses and did not publish findings that analyzed this data spatially or broadly. The municipality itself did not collect records on rooming houses until 2001 after the passing of By-Law M-100 brought licensing requirements and minimum building standards for rooming houses in HRM (Gulamhusein, 2005). The licensing program for rooming houses seems to have come several years later. The Chronicle Herald reports the lack of a licensing program to complement rooming house inspections four years after the passing of M-100 (Gulamhusein, 2005) and a job posting from the city as recent as 2007 describes the need for an inspector to issue rooming house licenses (HRM 2007). During the years between, inspections were carried out by various groups, which included building inspectors, developments services, public health, by-law enforcement, and fire services (McGillicuddy, 2007). Even then, a lack of resources and a complaint-driven approach to inspections resulted in many rooming houses being overlooked and undocumented (Gulamhusein, 2005). In 2005 the municipality claimed to have 77 rooming houses on record with as many as 50 more undocumented. (Gulamhusein, 2005). Since the adoption of the licensing program, the information collected by these groups has not been transferred over to the registry of rooming houses (McGillicuddy, 2007) which currently lists 36 addresses (19 of which remain active). The loss of rooming houses in HRM amidst the sluggish pace to license them is reminiscent of Philippa Campsie's description of rooming house decline in Toronto;

"Rooming houses... emerged from obscurity, just in time to become an endangered species"
(Campsie, 1994, p. 4).

Quasi Rooming Houses and the University Effect

Amidst declining rooming house availability, parts of Halifax are seeing cases where property owners operate rental units as rooming houses without being permitted or licensed as such. This is especially prevalent in communities adjacent to universities. Nearby residents may complain of homes subdivided into multiple units and rented singly to students (Dunphy, 2005). Investigations by the CBC found several homes that fire and police staff described as rooming house but which were not licensed (Murphy, 2015).

HRM's municipal staff have referred to this phenomenon as "quasi rooming houses" (Dunphy, 2005). As early as the 1980s, concerns about unregulated house conversions to denser forms of housing resulted in the proposal for a "family-only" by-law that the province deemed discriminatory (Maley, 1986). Residents felt that the conversion of houses into student apartments "threaten[ed] to ruin some of Halifax's toniest neighbourhoods" (Bornias, 2005). In 2005, by-law amendments were made to limit the number of bedrooms within dwellings in certain neighbourhoods in response to this issue, but existing multi-unit structures were allowed to remain (Dunphy, 2005). There is also evidence that quasi-rooming house conversions are occurring illegally. In 2016, the CBC published a story of an "overcrowded" international student apartment under investigation by city planners for renting out 8 bedrooms despite submitting plans that claimed only three bedrooms existed in the building (Luck, 2016).

The existence of unlicensed and illegal rooming houses near university areas has been observed in other cities as well. In Toronto's Scarborough district where the zoning does not permit rooming houses, city inspectors have similarly found multiple cases of unlicensed rooming house operations near the University of Toronto (Freeman, 2014). Many cite a lack of student accommodations at the university residences as a primary reason for the illegal conversions (Vincent, 2013). A lack of student housing within universities can have damaging effects on the surrounding community as observed in Ithaca, New York where demand for housing around universities gradually displaced single family communities with student occupied houses (Gumprecht, 2006). The university neighbourhood, known as "the Great Rooming-House Belt", saw many issues with out-of-control parties, drug-related violence, and decrepit housing conditions (Gumprecht, 2006).

HRM's Unclear Definitions

In Halifax, the issue of quasi-rooming houses is, in part, due to an uncoordinated and unclear definition of rooming houses in Halifax's policies (Wheeler, 2015) that allow landlords to unknowingly or deliberately run an unlicensed rooming house (Murphy, 2015). By-laws introduced at different periods of HRM's history as well as separate zoning by-laws that came together with HRM's amalgamation in 1996 give rooming houses several different definitions within parts of the municipality.

By-law M-100, which regulates the standards for residential occupancies in Halifax, defines rooming houses as any dwelling with three or more bedrooms rented out as separate units (HRM, 2012) while the Dartmouth Land Use By-Law sets this minimum at six or more bedrooms (HRM, 2014b). The Halifax Peninsula LUB definition uses a range of bedroom minimums corresponding with the number of dwellings in a rental building (for example, a minimum of nine bedrooms for a rental building with three dwellings and a minimum of six bedrooms for a rental with one dwelling) (HRM, 2014c).

How Do Quasi Rooming Houses Avoid Licensing?

There are various housing types in Halifax that could be considered Single Resident Occupancies but avoid licensing under current definitions, they are listed below.

6 or More Bedroom Shared Apartment Rented as a Single Unit

A landlord rents out a 6+ bedroom apartment (which would be considered a rooming house under current HRM definitions) to a single group (most often students) at a 1-year lease. The tenants pool their money at the end of each month to pay the rent.

Watt St 6 Bedroom flat close to Dal available Sept 1st



Date Listed	09-May-16
Price	\$3,300.00
Address	██████ Watt St, Halifax, NS B3H, Canada View map
Bathrooms (#)	2 bathrooms
For Rent By	Owner
Furnished	No
Pet Friendly	No

Available September 1st. One block from Kings and Dal Dunn Building. 6 bedrooms, 2 full bathrooms. Includes front load washer and dryer, dishwasher and two fridges. Small deck overlooking large backyard. Heat, hot water, electricity and internet included. This is a quiet building. Call ██████ no email inquiries.

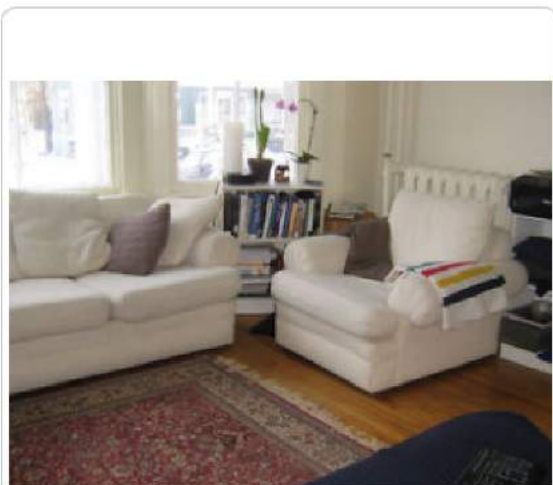
Visits: 26

Figure 2.2.2: Shared Apartment Rented as a Single Unit example from Kijiji.ca (Retrieved on May, 14, 2016).

Shared Apartment with Rooms Rented Individually

A landlord advertises and rents out each room in an apartment individually (typically on a 8 -12 month lease). A separate cheque is collected from each tenant in the apartment.

ROOMS IN 4 BEDROOM FLAT - NOW TO AUG. 31 - SOUTHBEND HALIFAX



Date Listed 09-May-16
Price **\$475.00**
Address [redacted] Edward St, Halifax, NS B3H, Canada
[View map](#)
Furnished Yes
Pet Friendly No

This is a perfect location on the corner of Edward and Bliss Streets. It is very near Dal., hospitals, shopping, downtown, and bus stops. The flat is very spacious, bright, and well maintained.

There are 2 rooms available in this 4 bedroom flat. The house has 2 flats and this one is on the main floor. It has hardwood floors, huge windows, a large eat in kitchen with lots of storage, a very big living room, a washer and dryer. All the bedrooms are large and can accommodate double beds and there is lots of storage.

The lease runs from now to August 31.

The rent of \$475 per person per month includes heat, light, water, and internet.

Please phone or email for more information or to make an appointment to view. My cell is [redacted] and my home phone is [redacted].

Ethelda Burnell

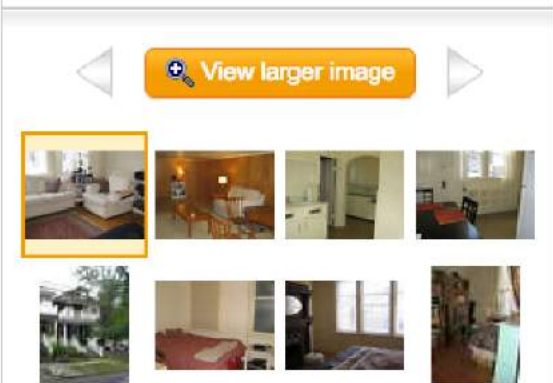
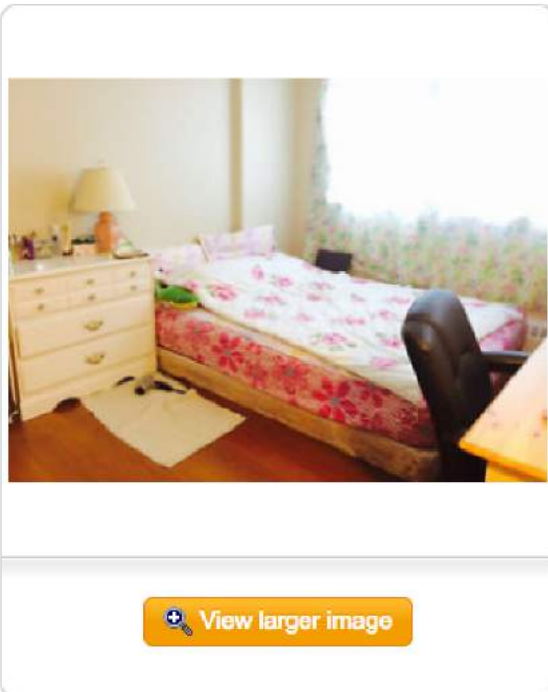


Figure 2.2.3: Shared Apartment with Rooms Rented Individually example from Kijiji.ca (Retrieved on May, 14, 2016).

Room Sublet in a Shared Apartment

Student tenants often sublet their rooms in an apartment to temporary tenants if they plan on being out of the city for multiple months, often at a reduced rate from the usual rent. The original tenant collects money from the sublet and transfers the rent to the landlord.

All included summer sublet near Dal (June & July)



View larger image

Date Listed 14-May-16
Price **\$430.00**
Address [redacted] Quingate Pl, Halifax, NS B3L [redacted]
Canada
 [View map](#)
Furnished Yes
Pet Friendly No

Seeking some one to sublet my fully furnished room. Room available for student or young professional (prefer female) looking to sublease a room from June 2nd to July 31st or August 8th. . All utilities included in rent (heat, hot water, power and high speed internet!). It is a two bedrooms apartment, with two other very friendly roommates and the place has just been renovated last year. (But this apartment don't have a living room.)

The room is located on Quinpool road and 15 minutes walk to Dalhousie and Kings Campus. Also, the apartment is just steps away from major bus routes that go to SMU, the Halifax Shopping Center, Downtown and more.

If you are interested, please text [redacted] or email me to come take a look ☺

Visits: 8

Figure 2.2.4: Room Sublet in a Shared Apartment example from Kijiji.ca (Retrieved on May, 14, 2016).

Rooming House without a License

Some buildings in Halifax operate and advertise themselves more or less as a rooming house but are not listed on the city's registry of rooming houses. Though they are required to obtain a license by law, there is no pressure for a landlord to do so unless the rooming house is formally reported to the city.

**██████████ Morris Str.
Halifax, Nova Scotia**

Price: \$500-\$1300

View Map



Description

Ideal Southend location near Spring Garden Rd, and Downtown. An extensively renovated Victorian Building containing bedsitting rooms, as well as one & two bedroom apartments. Units include heat, lights, Hot water, cable TV, and parking. The bedsitting rooms are all fully furnished.

Rents range from \$450 to \$550 for the bedsitting rooms and \$875 to \$1350 for the one and two bedroom apartments. This is a non-smoking building.

Figure 2.2.5: Rooming House without a License example from Kijiji.ca (Retrieved on May, 14, 2016).

A Complaint-Driven Approach to Licensing

As the last example suggests, a key factor that allows quasi rooming houses to go unrecognized in HRM is the fact that the city's licensing program for rooming houses is "completely complaint-driven" (Gulamhusein, 2005, p B7). With few exceptions, a rental unit can only be inspected if the tenant makes a formal complaint to the city. For this reason, many quasi-rooming houses go

undetected in HRM because tenants are unwilling to report their housing unit or simply don't know of the by-laws around rooming houses.

Locks on Bedroom Doors and Other Provisions

Even when a quasi-rooming house is discovered by the city, there can still be some question around whether it is a rooming house or not. Many often cite the existence of locks on bedroom doors as evidence for a rooming house (Murphy, 2015). However, in by-law M-100, bedroom locks are mentioned as a provisional requirement for rooming houses rather than a defining feature. Using the provision for locks as a definition for rooming houses ultimately overlooks SRO style accommodations where locks may not be necessary.

“It really became obvious that the definition isn't working”
(Matt Covey, HRM Building Inspector in Murphy, 2015)

Directions for Research

A lack of records on rooming houses coupled with the phenomenon of unlicensed, quasi rooming houses operating in Halifax suggests that our understanding of SRO housing in Halifax needs an update. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation encourages maintaining a clear record on the supply of SROs;

“Determining the number of existing units will enable municipalities to evaluate the impact of particular forms of legislation and regulations upon the sector. By tracking the change in the units available, the city can then determine the need to set up programs to increase the housing supply, or conversely, to permit de-conversion of units to other uses if the sector is found to be over-supplied” (CMHC, 2000, p. 7).

3. Research Purpose

Our project is guided by an understanding that locating rooming houses and quasi rooming houses in HRM and understanding their context in the community will be the first step in creating better policies and regulations to encourage well-managed and affordable private sector accommodations in the city. Knowing the geographic distribution of rooming houses will allow for subsequent analyses with other geo-coded data and help form geographically specific policies around rooming houses such as land-use by-laws. To achieve this, our research attempts to answer the following research questions;

- 1. Where were rooming houses and quasi-rooming houses located in Halifax from 1995 to the present?*

- 2. How many SRO units have been lost or gained in HRM from 1995 to the present and how?*

- 3. What are some differences between rooming houses and quasi rooming houses?*

4. METHODS



Quasi rooming house side lawn (Photograph taken by Uytay Lee, 2016)

4.1 Research Design

Data Triangulation

Official records for rooming houses in HRM seem to have come too late to document a significant decline in traditional rooming houses. The prevalence of quasi rooming houses also indicate that the licensing program fails to recognize all SROs that currently exist in the city. For the research, this meant that an accurate picture of SROs in Halifax would require combining information from various sources.

The project borrowed principles of triangulation in research methods originally defined by Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest (1966) as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon”. These authors originally proposed triangulation as a way to combine quantitative and qualitative datasets in the social sciences but Denzin (1978) later expanded this definition and divided triangulation into four categories: method, theoretical, data, and investigator triangulation. The methods used here can best be described as data triangulation where multiple data sources are used to contribute to the greater reliability and validity of results (Bazeley, 1999).

The benefits of triangulation are numerous and appropriate for this kind of study. It removes the potential bias that may occur in single-investigator studies and ensures greater reliability in data collection and analysis (Audrey, 2013). By combining sources, the researcher can crosscheck information to produce accurate results for certainty in data and expose the shortcomings of any one source to lead to an enriched explanation of the research problem (Denzin, 1978)

Criticisms of triangulation are typically directed to its lack of specific guidelines. Researchers often have to be creative in combining different types of data (qualitative and quantitative) as well as different methodologies (Duffy, 1987). This was not a huge concern for our study as the addresses we collected were already in the same format regardless of source (number followed by street name). Triangulation methods also have the tendency to be time consuming as much effort needs to be put into coordinating data collection across multiple sources (Duffy, 1987). Despite these challenges, there is general agreement in the literature that triangulation “has vital strengths and encourages creative and productive research undertakings” (Duffy, 1987 p.133)

Approaches from other rooming house studies

An earlier study on rooming houses in HRM by the Metro Non-Profit Housing Association adopted a similar data triangulation approach that consulted community members, residents' associations, volunteers from shelters, landlords, and municipal staff (MNHA, 1996). Addresses identified by residents were used as a "first pass" and were verified and cross-referenced with input from professionals as well as site visits (MNHA, 1996). A study documenting rooming house decline in the West Broadway and Spence neighbourhoods in Winnipeg by Kaufman and Distasio (2014) also faced difficulties of accurately calculating rooming house numbers and similarly collected addresses from various sources that included community organizations, residents, historical rooming house maps, visual property inspections and property assessment data.

4.2 Address Collection

The research began with collecting rooming house and quasi rooming house addresses from various sources to create a database. Rooming house and quasi rooming house addresses that the search identified were catalogued into an Excel sheet that noted the source and the source's date.

Criteria

The following criteria were used to identify an address as a rooming house or a quasi rooming house.

- Rooming House (RH)*** - Any address that is described, advertised, or registered as a rooming house.

- Quasi Rooming House (QRH)*** - A rental unit advertising 6 or more bedrooms (HRM's legal definition of a rooming house) that does not explicitly identify itself as a rooming house.

We used a broad criterion for rooming houses because definitions were not introduced in Halifax until 2001 when bylaw M-100 brought licensing requirements into place. The 6-bedroom rental definition for a quasi rooming house was used as it satisfied all three definitions given by the HRM Land Use By-Law, Building Standards By-Law M-100 and the Dartmouth Land Use By-Law (Wheeler, 2015).

Sources

Table 4.2.1 provides a summary of the sources used to complete the rooming house database. Each source is described in detail in the following sections.

Table 4.2.1: Summary of sources used for the study

Source	Dates Covered	Addresses Identified
Halifax City Directory	1995	80
News Articles	1997 - 2015	55
Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency and Halifax Regional Police Incident Reports (<i>partially successful</i>)	1995 - 2016 & 2007-present respectively	22
Halifax.ca	1998 - 2016	12
HRM Registry of Rooming Houses	2007 - 2016	27
Kijiji.ca	2015 - 2016	62

Building Services (HRM Data)

HRM's Building Standards department provided the city's current registry of rooming houses going back to 2007. It lists 36 rooming houses; 19 are listed as still active and 17 are now closed. Site visits verified these rooming houses and, due to overlapping addresses (for example, 6033 and 6035 South St. represented one building and was combined to 6033-6035) the number of active rooming houses was adjusted to 17.

News Sources

Certain rooming houses were notorious in the community (MNPH, 1996) and frequently mentioned by the media throughout their history. We searched several news publication archives in Halifax (listed in table 4.2.2) using the keyword "rooming house(s)". Articles that mentioned this keyword anywhere in the title or body of text were downloaded and catalogued into a searchable database. We searched digital archives of the Chronicle Herald, the Daily News, and CBC Nova Scotia were searched together using the Eureka.cc database. The archives of The Coast and The Metro were searched through each publication's website. Once all articles had been collected, we read through each article for any mentions of a rooming house address for the database.

Table 4.2.2: News publications used by the study

Newspaper Title	Dates covered	Number of Articles
Chronicle Herald	1995 - 2015	180
The Daily News	1997 - 2004	53
CBC Nova Scotia	2007 - present	41
The Coast	1993 - present	1
The Metro	2008 - present	17

An expected limitation from this search was a publication bias that would mostly yield notorious rooming houses that warranted media exposure. Thus, most rooming house addresses gathered from the news media search were associated with incidents such as fires, murders, unsanitary conditions, and overcrowding.

Halifax Regional Police (HRP)

A CBC story on quasi rooming houses reported that the police described rooming houses that were registered in several incident reports (Allen, 2015). A Freedom of Information (FOIPOP) request was sent to the police department requesting incident reports that mentioned a rooming house. The request was eventually rejected on the grounds that the search would be too time-consuming; staff did not have searchable digital records before 2005. Report summaries from 2012 - Present were available online through the HRP website and one address was found using this method.

Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency (HRFE)

After the adoption of by-law M-100, inspections for rooming houses were, in part, carried out by the HRFE (McGillicuddy, 2007). In a 2005 article from the Chronicle Herald, captain Craig MacDonald of the HRFE claimed the municipality had 77 rooming houses on record. Halifax's fire department is also mentioned by the CBC as having written fire reports describing rooming houses that were not in the city's registry (Allen, 2015).

Two FOIPOP requests were sent to the HRFE for the research. The first request was for all fire reports that mentioned a rooming house. The second was for the HRFE's old record of rooming houses cited in the Chronicle Herald article.

The first request was returned with several fire reports with addresses described as rooming houses. However, further analysis showed that the reports sent back from the request only included addresses that were currently in the city's registry. Furthermore, many fire incidents in rooming houses reported by the media (that may not be in the city's registry) were missing from the reports collected.

The second request was unsuccessful as HRFE staff was unable to locate the record and concluded the list must have been purged.

Halifax City Directory

The Halifax City Directory (published annually by the Polk Company for Halifax until 1999) included listings sorted by address and would often identify certain addresses as rooming houses. The 1995 city directory was manually searched for these mentions, yielding 80 addresses that were then recorded in the database.

Search on Halifax.ca

HRM's municipal website, Halifax.ca, hosts a wealth of resources including reports, council minutes, development agreements, and other documents pertaining to the municipality's activities. We searched for content through the site's search bar using the keywords "rooming house(s)". The resulting documents were downloaded into a pdf format and included into a searchable database. Any rooming house addresses that were identified by documents were entered into the database of addresses.

Online Listings (Kijiji.ca)

Quasi rooming houses that matched our "6 or more bedroom rentals" criteria were searched through the online listing site, kijiji.ca. Keywords "6 bedroom", "7 bedroom", "8 bedroom" (and so on) were used to find addresses that advertised rental units that fit our criteria for a quasi rooming house. Rooming houses were also searched on kijiji.ca using the keyword "rooming house". Searches were conducted periodically between April 2015 and March 2016 and any addresses identified by this method were documented in the Excel sheet inventory.

Omitted Data Sources

Historical rooming house records

Initially, we hoped to root the research in two previous datasets produced on rooming houses in Halifax; the list of 140 rooming houses from the Metro Non Profit Housing rooming house study (MNHA, 1996) and HRM's purported records of 77 rooming houses (Gulamhusein, 2005).

Unfortunately, neither organization could produce the records due to the time that had passed since they were collected.

Chronicle Herald Listings (1995-2015)

We originally planned to collect addresses by analyzing Chronicle Herald listings from 1995-2015. Digital records were not available for listings so the plan was to search a newspaper on microfilm for rooming house listings for every month of every year in the time period covered by the research (12 months x 20 years = 240 newspapers). However, listings for individual rooms for rent mostly gave out phone numbers rather than addresses; consequently, the method was dropped.

Limitations

Quality of Data Available from Sources

Limitations to the study arise from the quality of data available for the research. Several sources such as the current municipal registry of rooming houses and rental websites do go back to 1995, the first year of the timeline under study. Another consideration is that a significant portion of the data comes from news reports generally focused on rooming houses that were more 'newsworthy'. Data gathered from these sources are susceptible of publication bias, especially when characterizing rooming houses. To address these limitations, the study triangulated the data from various sources to produce a cross-referenced dataset that would be less susceptible to the limitations of any individual source.

Limitations from Broad Criteria

The results of this study come with one significant disclaimer which results from the broad criteria used to identify past and present rooming houses in Halifax. Despite being identified as a rooming house by several sources, the addresses collected from this research may never have been rooming houses under HRM's current definitions. In many ways, the licensing program introduced with by-law M-100 in 2001 was used to put specific definitions on what was a rooming house or

not. Therefore, some addresses (especially those identified before the introduction of M-100) may not have fallen under the city's definitions of a rooming house.

4.3 Follow Up Data Collection

Once a database of addresses had been created, we collected additional information on each rooming house and quasi rooming house. The follow up data collection was influenced by two key factors: the availability of the data for each address and the data's relevance to project objectives.

Current Status

The current status of each rooming house was important to verify as it pertained directly to our second research question of how many SRO units had been lost or gained between 1995 and early 2016. This information was determined by combining several sources that could indicate whether or not a rooming house was still operating.

For most rooming house addresses collected in the database, we have no indication of when they began or stopped operating as a rooming house. For this reason, the results only provided a 2-dimensional comparison between all rooming houses that existed between 1995 - 2016 and the current status of these addresses rather than a timeline of SRO change. Due to the paucity of records on quasi rooming houses, the research only provided a present-day snapshot of this form of housing.

HRM Rooming House Registry

Rooming houses that were documented as no longer active by the city's registry were recorded.

Google Maps Historical View

Google Maps offers a "Street View" option that allows a web user to observe 360° street-level imagery from a specific position on a street. Street-level imagery dating to July 2008 is available for most streets in the HRM, allowing for observations to be made on visual changes to rooming houses since that time period. Each rooming house address from the Excel sheet inventory were entered into Google Maps and observations from the following street view analyses were then recorded into the inventory using the following descriptions.

Empty: Property is now vacant

Painted: Building is the same but with a different coat of paint

Same: Building is the same

Renovated: Significant structural changes have been made to the building

Redeveloped: The original building (in 2008) has been replaced by a new development

Google.ca Search

Searching individual addresses through Google.ca also yielded more information on each rooming house and its current status. This method returned various sources from rental listings sites such as (Rentdonkey.ca, Houseme.ca and Kijiji.ca) as well as news articles, HRM reports and other documents that listed addresses specifically. Information from the results were coded into descriptors on the current status of rooming houses; they are listed below.

Active Rooming House - A licensed and currently active rooming house

Possible Rooming House - A previously identified rooming house that is operating like a rooming house but without a license.

Apartments - A previously identified rooming house that is currently described or advertised as a rental unit with 5 or fewer bedrooms.

Condominium - A previously identified rooming house that is now divided into condominiums.

Private Home - A previously identified rooming house is now identified as a private home by a website or document.

Building Permits

Permits are required for any building in HRM that is undergoing structural changes (such as additions or demolitions) as well as significant renovations costing over \$5000 (HRM, 2015b). Building permits issued within the HRM going back to 2003 are available through HRM's Open Data Portal available online at Halifax.ca with over 70,000 entries. The list was cross referenced with the Excel sheet inventory of rooming houses to retrieve all development permits issued to those addresses between 2003-2015. The permits were then entered into the Excel sheet inventory.

Media Articles

In the case where a news article reported the closing of a rooming house, this information was recorded onto the Excel sheet inventory.

Change in Property Assessment

Each year, the NS government assesses every property in the province for taxation purposes through Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC). The provincial government's Local Government Resource Handbook describes the annual assessment process as follows.

“When establishing the market value for a particular property, Nova Scotia Assessment considers the same characteristics as a purchaser. They include the size, layout, shape, age, finish, quality, number of carports, garages, sundecks and condition of buildings. Available services, location, views and neighbourhood may also influence a property's market value.

(Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, 2005)

The rationale to use property assessments in this research was that changes to property valuations would be an indicator to changes to a rooming house or quasi rooming house. In addition, property assessments would be a good indicator of the market value of SROs houses within the community. For this search, property valuations for the addresses were gathered from two sources: the NS archives for 1995 assessments and Viewpoint.ca, which lists assessments for every address in the HRM from 2008-2016 online. Initially, we planned to collect assessments for 2005 as a midpoint reference. However, after consulting with archivists at the Public Archives of NS as well as several email exchanges with PVSC representatives, we found that assessments between 1999-2008 were not available to the public.

Assessment relative to average price in CT 1996-2011

We analyzed assessments for rooming houses by comparing them to average property assessments in their census tracts for the years 1996 and 2011 (available through the Census Analyzer tool at dal.ca/libraries). This would account for geographic differences between addresses as well add a reference for how the assessments of rooming houses and quasi rooming houses compared to those of the average property in the neighbourhoods in which they were located.

Zoning

The current zoning for each rooming house and quasi rooming house address was recorded from Viewpoint.ca for analysis on how the distribution of SROs in Halifax aligned with the municipal government's zoning policies on housing.

Incidents

Information on incidents that took place at rooming houses were recorded from the news articles and HRFE reports from the original Excel sheet inventory. A follow-up search on Eureka.cc (article database for the Chronicle Herald, CBC, and the Daily News) for each address was conducted to ensure addresses not identified by the media search using the keyword “rooming house” would not be overlooked during this analysis. The incidents at each address were coded for the following terms.

- **Death**
- **Fire**
- **Assault**
- **Other** - Minor incidents including code violations, break-ins, and neighbourhood complaints

4.4 Analysis Methods

The data collected from the inventory and follow-up search was analyzed to provide answers to the original three research questions proposed by the study. The questions and the project's methodology to answer them are described below.

Research Q1: Where are rooming houses and quasi rooming houses in Halifax?

Rooming houses and quasi rooming houses map

Addresses collected on the Excel sheet inventory were mapped using ArcGIS with different colours representing rooming houses and quasi rooming houses.

Research Q2: To what extent is it possible to determine how many SRO units have been lost/or gained in the last few decades?

Conservative figure

A conservative figure of rooming houses lost was obtained by taking all rooming house addresses found from the research and subtracting all addresses confirmed closed from the current status search.

Where did we lose them?

Rooming houses were mapped with locations that were still rooming houses and locations that were no longer operating as rooming houses.

How did we lose them?

The current status of rooming houses were sorted into categories for analysis with other factors of price and zoning.

Research Q3: What are some differences between quasi rooming houses and rooming houses?

Location

Concentrations of rooming houses and quasi rooming houses were summarized and compared.

Assessments

The percent change in property assessment relative to the census tract for each rooming house and quasi rooming house address were mapped using ArcGIS. Medians of assessment changes were compared between quasi rooming houses and rooming houses. These figures were further divided into the current status categories for each rooming house.

Zoning

The land use zones in which rooming houses were located were compared to those for quasi rooming houses.

Incidents

The incidents that had occurred at rooming house addresses were compared to those in quasi rooming houses. A density map of articles on rooming houses in Halifax was created to show neighbourhoods that historically received the most media attention.

5. Results



Image used for a rooming house listing in Halifax on Kijiji.ca (Kijiji.ca, 2016)

5.1 Where are Rooming Houses in Halifax?

The study identified a total of 208 rooming house and quasi rooming house addresses that existed between 1995-2016 in the HRM; 151 were rooming houses and 57 were quasi rooming houses. With the exception of two outliers, all addresses were located within the regional centre (Halifax peninsula and Dartmouth within the circumferential highway). They are shown in Figure 5.1.1.

Where are rooming houses?

Rooming houses are spread out over Halifax peninsula & downtown Dartmouth with a few general clusters. We named three distinct clusters of rooming houses in Halifax that represented roughly half of all addresses (Figure 5.1.1).

North End Cluster: The north end of Halifax has a large concentration of rooming houses between 1995-2016 with 23 locations within the area bound by Agricola, Cogswell, Gottingen and North St and many others nearby.

South End Cluster: The south end of Halifax in the area bound by Barrington, Inglis, South Park, and South St. is another large cluster of rooming houses with 31 addresses.

Downtown Dartmouth Cluster: Downtown Dartmouth has a cluster of 16 addresses located a few blocks north of Alderney Drive.

Some rooming houses are located close to university campuses with clusters around Dalhousie's Studley and Sexton campuses.

Where are quasi rooming houses?

Quasi rooming houses are much more concentrated geographically than rooming houses and are mostly located near university campuses in Halifax. We identified one main cluster of quasi rooming houses just north of Dalhousie's Studley campus and south of Jubilee Rd. with 35 addresses (Figure 5.1.1).

How were rooming houses and quasi rooming houses identified?

Figure 5.1.2 shows the addresses identified by each source used for the study.

FIGURE 5.1.1 ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES IDENTIFIED IN HALIFAX (1995-2016)

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uyt'ae Lee

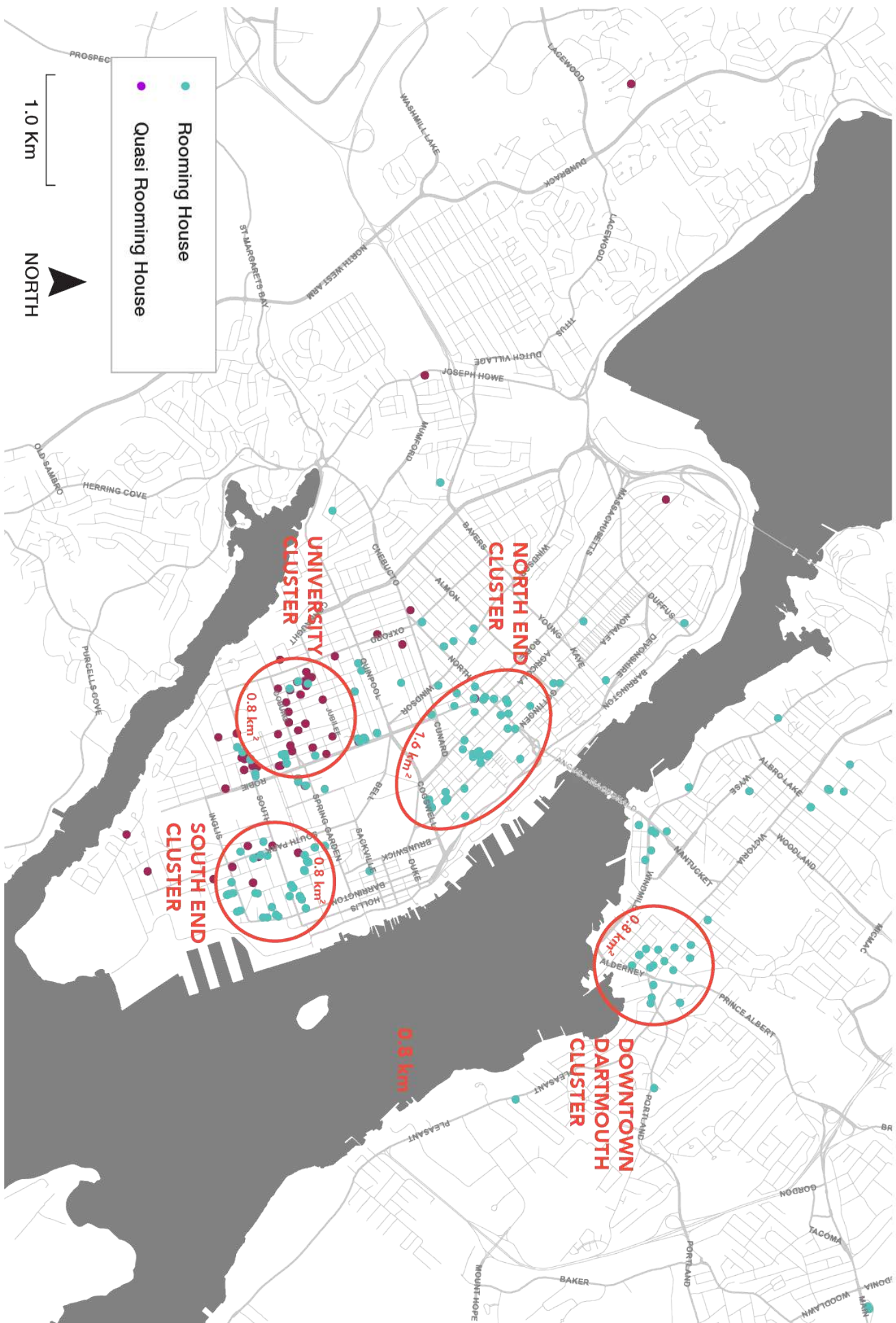


Figure 5.1.2: Addresses identified from the 1995 Halifax City Directory



Figure 5.1.3: Addresses identified from HRM's registry of rooming houses

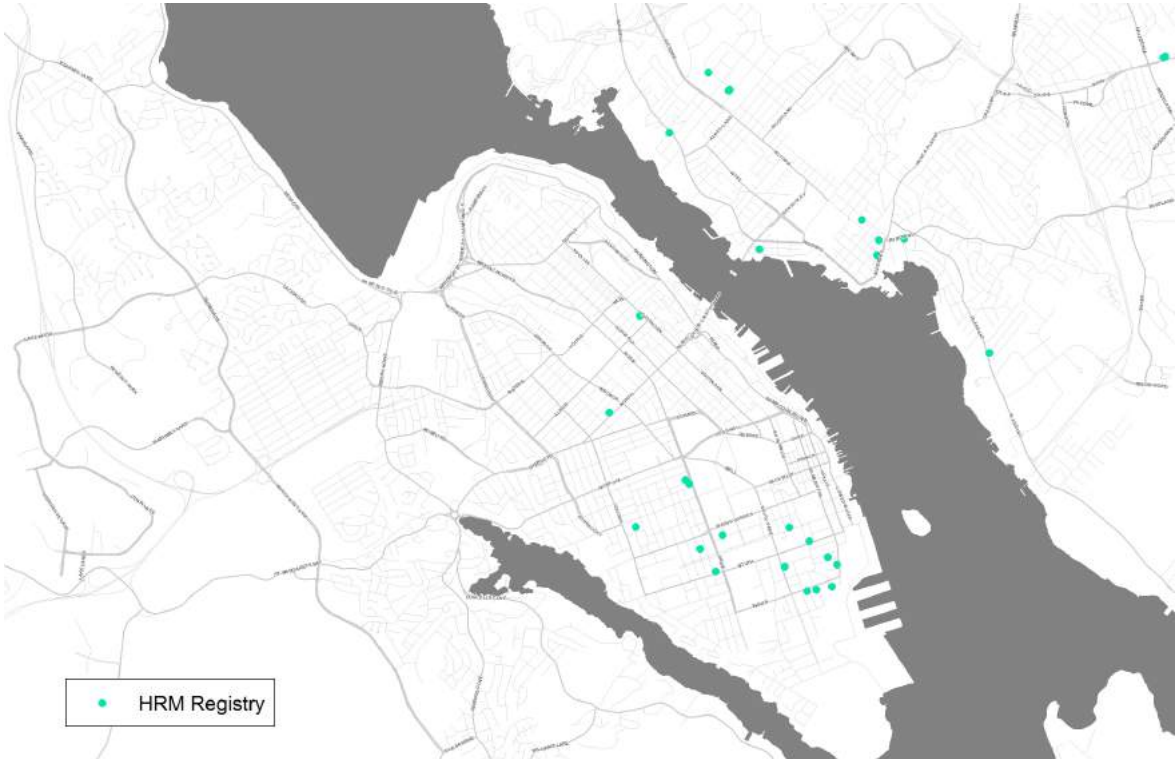


Figure 5.1.4: Addresses identified from HRFE reports



Figure 5.1.5: Addresses identified from news articles



Figure 5.1.6: Addresses identified from online listings



5.2 How many rooming houses have we lost?

Conservative Figure

Of all rooming houses identified between 1995 - 2016, **64.2% (97 of 151)** are no longer operating as a rooming house (Figure 5.2.1).

Figure 5.2.1: Current status of rooming houses in Halifax.

Current Use	Count
Active Rooming House	17
Possible Rooming House	11
No Longer Rooming House	97
Unknown Use	26

Quasi Rooming House Gains/Loss

All quasi rooming houses identified by the research were currently operating due to our research method of periodically looking through rental listing sites. Due to this methodology as well as a lack of records or documentation for quasi rooming houses, an analysis of housing gains or losses between 1995-2015 was not feasible

Where have rooming houses been lost?

Mapping the current status of rooming houses in Halifax reveals some critical information about where SRO housing has been lost in the city (Figure 5.2.2). The concentration of rooming houses in the North End of Halifax seems to have disappeared; only two possible rooming houses remain. Dartmouth, especially within its downtown core, seems to have lost most of its rooming houses as well. Licensed rooming houses still exist in the South End of Halifax, albeit in much smaller numbers than before.

Current Status

Licensed and Active Rooming Houses

Based on the registry of rooming houses obtained from HRM Building Standards department, **17** addresses are currently licensed and active rooming houses.

Possible Rooming houses

The study found **11** examples of addresses that had first been identified as a rooming house but, in the follow-up search, were found to be operating similarly to a rooming house without a license. Landlords often described such units as “bedsitting” apartments or advertise one unit at a time. In other cases, the media identified them as an unlicensed rooming house. Due to the original criteria set out by this study, these addresses were described as “Possible Rooming Houses” rather than “Quasi-Rooming Houses” as they had been identified as a rooming house at some point in their history.

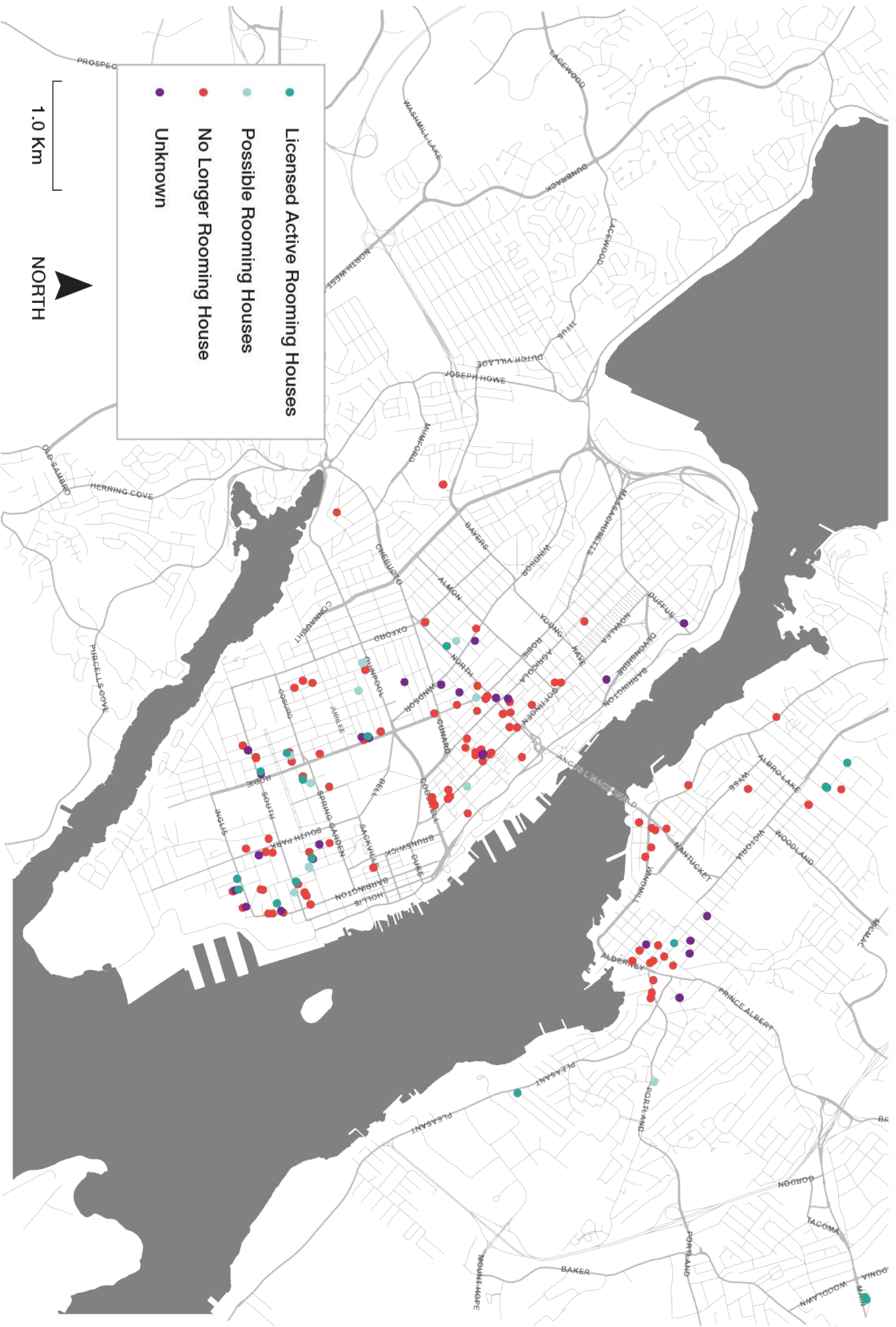
Unknown

There were **26** addresses where our follow-up data collection did not yield conclusive evidence for whether they were rooming houses or not. They were not advertised on rental sites, they did not have demolition permits issued (back to 2003) and historical street imagery on Google Maps did not show significant changes. The current statuses of these locations were labelled as “Unknown”. One possible explanation is that these rooming houses were converted into private homes without rental units and would not need to list the property online. Another possibility is that the addresses may still be rooming houses but the landlord is advertising units through media other than the internet.

No Longer Rooming House

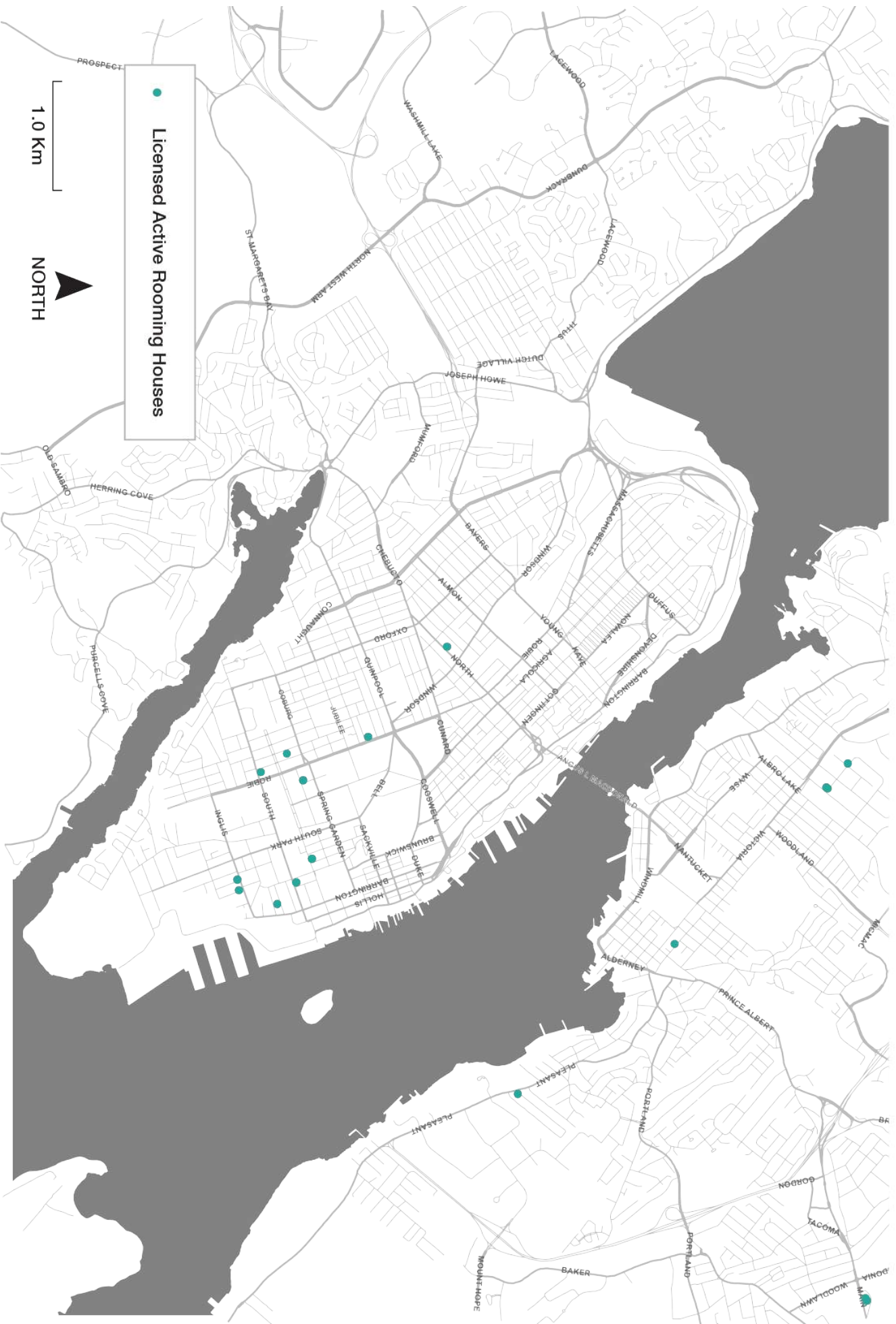
There were **97** addresses where a reasonable body of evidence obtained from the current status search showed that the property no longer operated as a rooming house. This was determined by analyzing a combination of building permits, Google Maps history, rental listings, and news articles for each address.

Figure 5.2.2 CURRENT STATUS OF ROOMING HOUSES



Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee

CURRENTLY LICENSED & ACTIVE ROOMING HOUSES



Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee

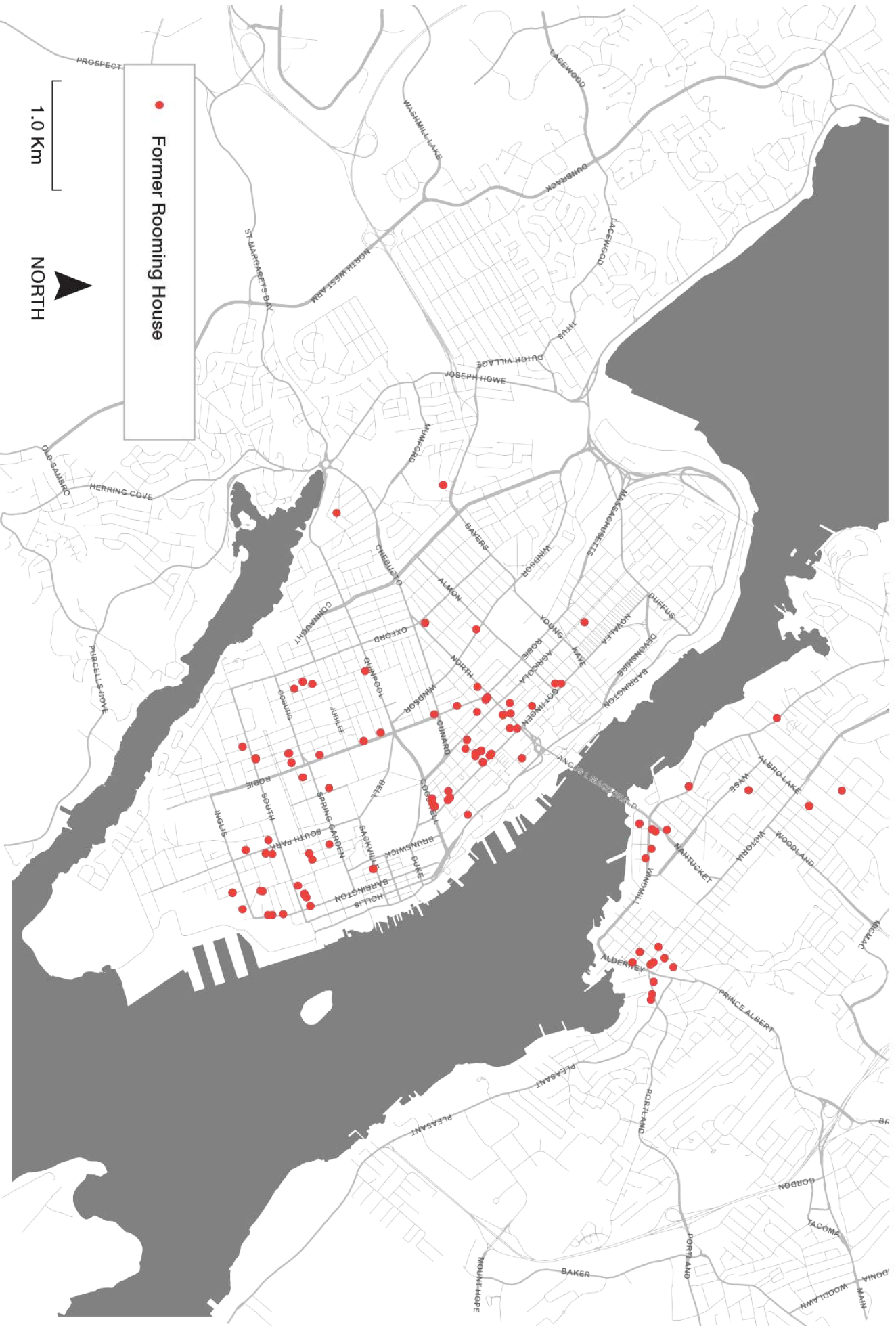
POSSIBLE ROOMING HOUSES

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee



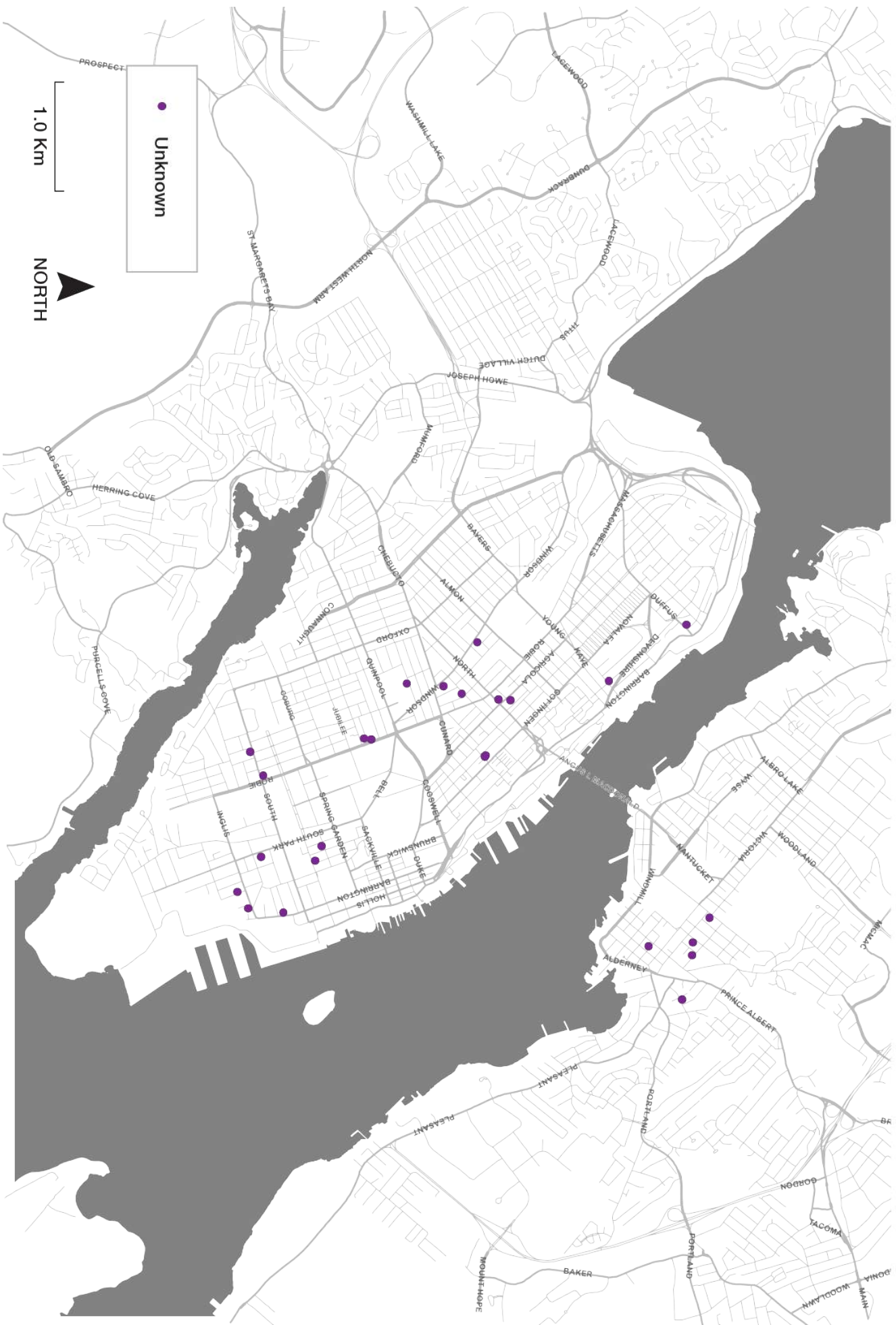
FORMER ROOMING HOUSES

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee



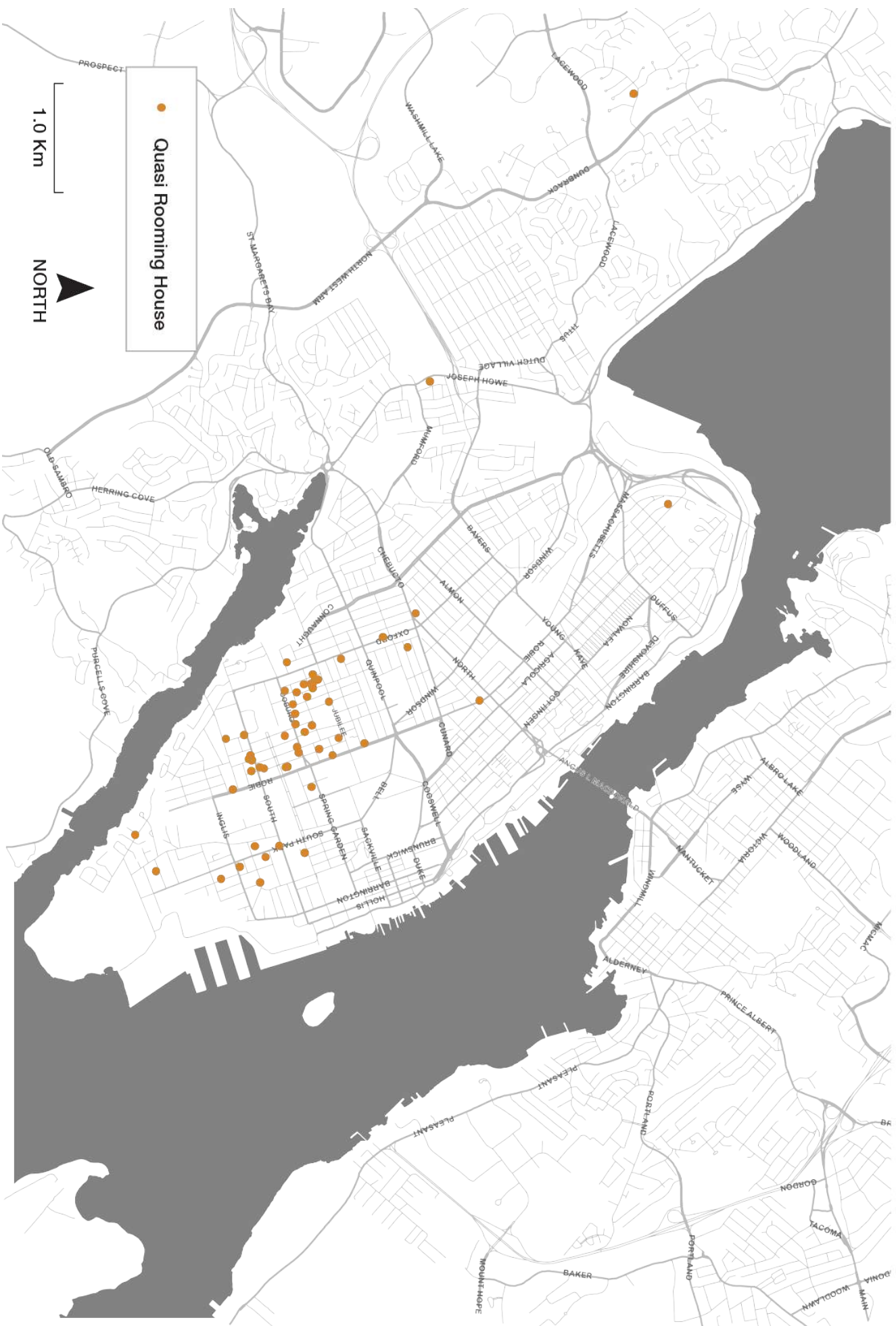
CURRENT STATUS UNKNOWN

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee



QUASI ROOMING HOUSES

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytæe Lee



How have we lost rooming houses?

The 96 rooming houses confirmed closed by the study have converted to various uses in the city (Figure 5.2.3). 58 former rooming houses are now renting out as apartments and are, by far, the most popular current use. Many others (17 addresses) have closed permanently and are currently empty lots awaiting redevelopment. The current uses of former rooming houses are summarized in the table below and are described in detail with examples in the following sections.

Figure 5.2.3: Current Status of Rooming Houses

Current Use	Count
Active Rooming House	17
Possible Rooming House	11
Social Housing	3
Apartments	58
Empty Lot	17
Private House	4
Condominium	3
Fraternity	2
Executive Suites	1
Closed - Current Use Unknown	9
Unknown - Changed	11
Unknown - Same	15

Apartments: Rooming house (either through conversion or redevelopment) is now rented as an apartment (units have 5 or less bedrooms).

Example: 1403 and 1413 Henry St.

This pair of former rooming houses were first listed in the 1995 city directory and have no mentions in the media. A Google Maps search reveals that both buildings have been redeveloped since 2007. A property listing obtained through the Google.ca search show that building is currently a 4-unit apartment (Figure 5.2.5).

Figure 5.2.4: Change between 2007 – 2016 for 1403 and 1413 Henry St. from maps.google.com



Figure 5.2.5: Property listing description for 1413 Henry St. Retrieved from http://www.century21.ca/allpoints/Property/NS/B3H3J7/Halifax/1413_HENRY_Street

1413 HENRY Street - Investors score an A+ with this great 4 unit property located next to the campus of Dalhousie University. This outstanding property has been totally renovated and must be seen to be appreciated. Property consists of one 2 bedroom + den, two 3 bedroom + den and one 2 bedroom + den. There is parking for 8 vehicles and each unit has its own laundry facility. Property also has potential to be converted to condominiums. Please add this quality listing to your viewing list. Request a full info package from selling agent.

Redeveloped Example: 226 Portland St., Dartmouth

One striking example of a rooming house to apartment conversion is 226 Portland St, Dartmouth. Originally identified from an article reporting a fire, the address has since been redeveloped (as evidenced by Google maps imagery) into an apartment complex known as Harbour Vista apartments.

Figure 5.2.6: Change between 2007 – 2016 for 226 Portland St. from maps.google.com



Empty: Rooming house has been demolished, leaving an empty lot

Example: 14 Victoria Rd., Dartmouth

This rooming house was listed in the 1995 city directory and shows up later in a 2009 Chronicle Herald article for an assault that took place there. Google maps imagery and a building permit issued in 2014 make clear that the rooming house has been demolished.

Figure 5.2.7: Change between 2007 – 2016 for 14 Victoria Rd. from maps.google.com

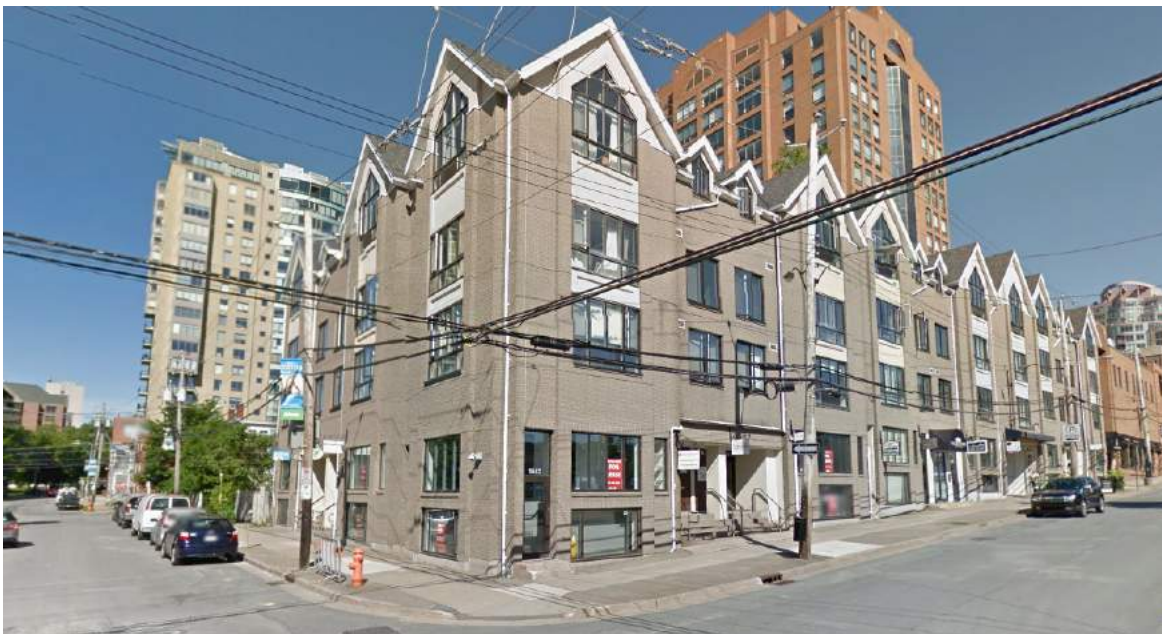


Condominiums: Rooming house is now a condominium

Example: 1463 Brenton St.

This address is only identified in the 1995 city directory as a rooming house. A follow up search reveals that it is currently the Greystones condominium.

Figure 5.2.8: Change between 2007 – 2016 for 1463 Brenton St. from maps.google.com



Social Housing: Rooming house is now a non-profit residence

Example: 2380-84 Gottingen St.

This rooming house is identified in 1997 in several articles reporting fires, deaths and poor living conditions. A search on Google maps reveals that the property has been redeveloped and Google.ca shows that it currently provides affordable women's apartments by Adsum House.

Figure 5.2.9: Change between 2007 – present for 2380-84 Gottingen St. from maps.google.com



Fraternities: Rooming house is now a fraternity house

Example: 6093 South St.

Identified as a rooming house in the city directory in 1995, 6093 South St. is now the fraternity house for Sigma Chi.

Figure 5.2.10: View in 2016 of 6093 South St. from maps.google.com



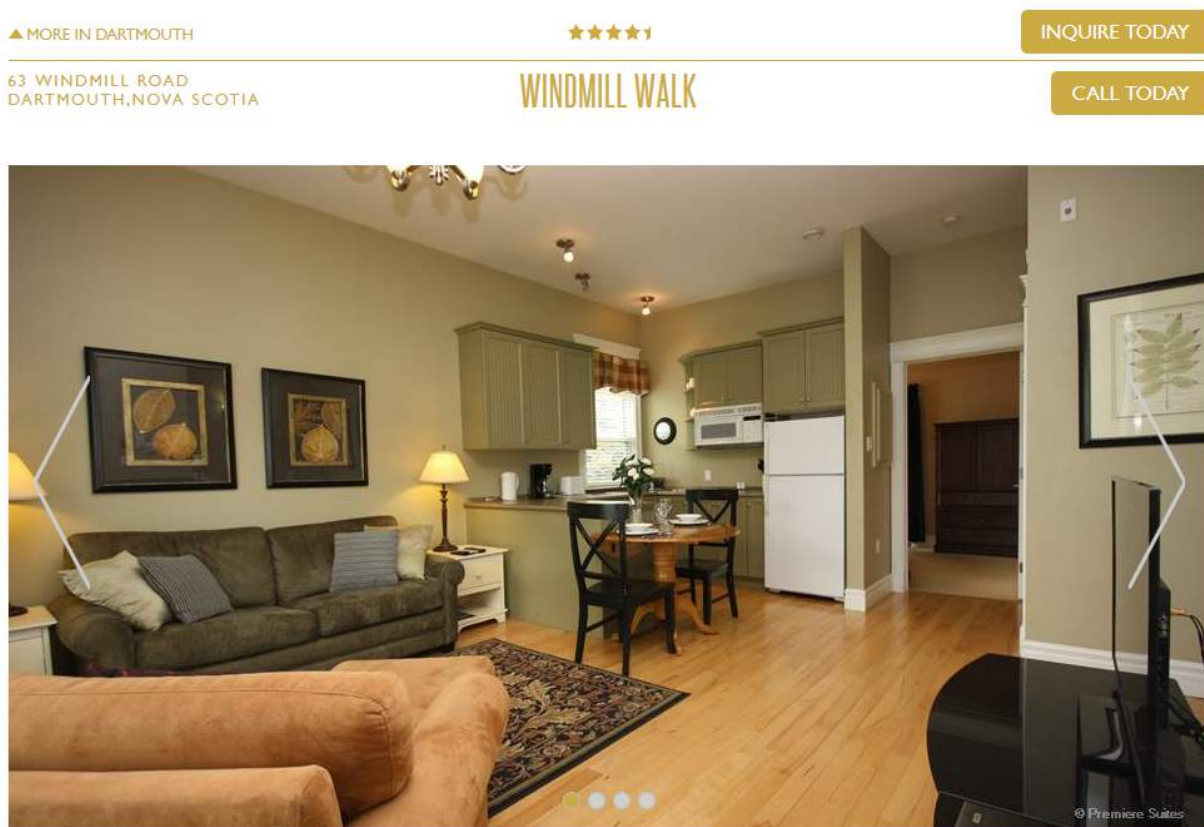
Executive Suites: Temporary, hotel style residences for professionals staying in Halifax

One address from the study was found to be an executive suite, a hotel style residence for professionals temporarily working in Halifax. Executive suites operate similarly to rooming houses but serve a demographic that is more affluent than traditional rooming houses.

Example: 63 Windmill Rd., Dartmouth

This address was identified as a rooming house in the 1995 Halifax city directory. A follow up search on Google shows that it is currently the Windmill Walk, offering weekly or monthly stays of fully furnished executive suites from 73\$/night.

Figure 5.2.11: Webpage for Windmill Walk at 63 Windmill Rd. from <https://premieresuites.com/furnished-apartments/dartmouth/windmill-walk/>



Closed - Current Use Unknown:

The city's registry of rooming houses confirmed that 10 previously licensed rooming houses were no longer active. Of those addresses, the current use of 7 could not be confirmed. Other rooming house addresses were mentioned in documents that proved they had closed, but their current use could not be determined.

Example: 5539-5543 Cogswell St.

This address was a notorious rooming house in the early 2000s. It was first identified in a 2003 article reporting a murder and was mentioned by the media 32 more times before its closure. A 2006 city document obtained through the follow-up data collection shows that the building was demolished and the property's zoning did not allow for the rooming houses to be rebuilt. The document shows that the owner is planning on developing the property for two single family dwellings. Google maps history view shows a building on the property since 2008 but follow-up searches on Google.ca do not confirm if the buildings are indeed family dwellings.

Figure 5.2.12: Peninsula community council discussing the redevelopment of 5539-5543 Cogswell St. Retrieved from

<https://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/pcc/documents/7.2deferredvarianceappealCogswell.pdf>

7.2

DRAFT minutes extract from the June 12, 2006 meeting of Peninsula Community Council

8.2.3 Appeal of the Development Officer's decision to approve an application for a Variance - 5539-5543 Cogswell Street, Halifax

- A staff report dated June 2, 2006 on the above noted was before Community Council.

Mr. Andrew Faulkner, Development Officer, Planning and Development Services, reviewed the report with Community Council. Mr. Faulkner indicated that this is an appeal of the Development Officer's decision to approve a variance from the GFAR and Lot Coverage requirements of the Halifax Peninsula LUB to permit construction of two single unit dwellings. Mr. Faulkner clarified the following:

- The lots are currently vacant due to a fire several years ago,
- The former buildings on the site were non-conforming and cannot be re-built,
- The proposed buildings are consistent with the neighbourhood and propose small increases in lot coverage,
- The proposal is for two five bedroom, single family dwellings, with one dwelling owner occupied.

Possible Rooming House

Example: Address on Morris St.

This address is first listed in the Halifax City Directory in 1995. It is identified next in a 2004 media article describing incidents and lack of upkeep. The property is not listed in the city's current registry of licensed rooming houses. However, a Google.ca search shows it belonging to rental company Cygnet Properties which describes it as containing "bedsitting rooms" (Figure 5.2.13).

Figure 5.2.13: Description of Morris St. address from Cygnet Properties website (<http://www.halifaxrentalproperties.com/morris.html>)



Ideal Southend location near Spring Garden Rd, and Downtown. An extensively renovated Victorian Building containing bedsitting rooms, as well as one & two bedroom apartments. Units include heat, lights, Hot water, cable TV, and parking. The bedsitting rooms are all fully furnished.

Rents range from \$450 to \$550 for the bedsitting rooms and \$875 to \$1350 for the one and two bedroom apartments. This is a non-smoking building.

Unknowns

The "unknown" category of rooming houses in Figure 5.2.1 can also be subdivided into two categories.

Changed Building - Unknown: The building at the rooming house address has significantly changed but the current use is unknown

Example: Address on Creighton St.

This address is listed in the 1995 city directory then later identified in several articles from 2000 referring to it as a "Crack House" as well as the location for a murder and fire. Google maps imagery shows that 2399 Creighton St. has gone through extensive renovations since 2008. The minutes from a Dangerous and Unsightly Premises Committee meeting on December 8, 2003 mention that the city planned to demolish the building later that year (HRM, 2003). The current use of 2399 Creighton St. is not listed online and it is unknown if the rebuilt structure is a rooming house.

Figure 5.2.13: Change between 2007 – 2016 for address on Creighton St. from maps.google.com



Unchanged Building - Unknown: The building at the address is unchanged and the current use is unknown

Example: Address on Waverley Terrace.

After having been identified as a rooming house in 2004 from a murder that took place here, this address shows no changes from historical Google Maps imagery. There is no follow up information available pertaining to its current use.

Figure 5.2.13: Change between 2007 – 2016 for address on Waverley Terrace. from maps.google.com



5.3 Rooming Houses & Quasi Rooming Houses

Location

As shown in section 4.1, rooming houses and quasi rooming houses appear in significantly different concentrations across Halifax.

Zoning

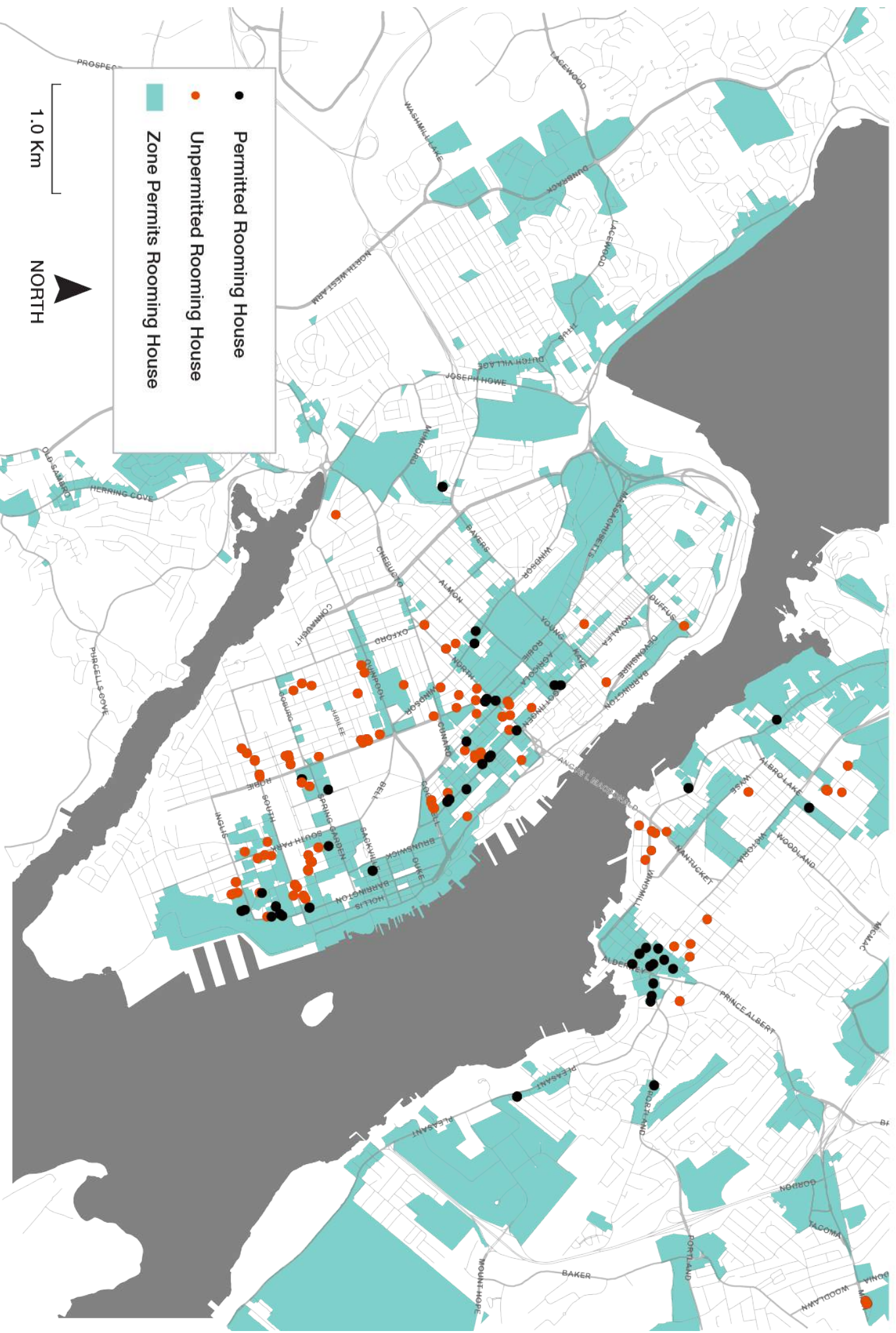
Rooming houses are located in various zones in Halifax and Dartmouth, many are concentrated within low density residential zones. A majority (58%) of rooming houses are located in zones that do not allow for a rooming house (Table 4.3.1). However, many others are located in commercial (C-2), downtown (DB, DH, and DH-1), and higher-density residential (R-3 & R-4) zones that allow for a rooming house.

Quasi rooming houses are overwhelmingly located in low-density residential zones (R-1 & R-2) and 95% (56 out of 57) of them are located in zones that do not permit a rooming house.

Table 5.3.1: Zones in which rooming houses are located

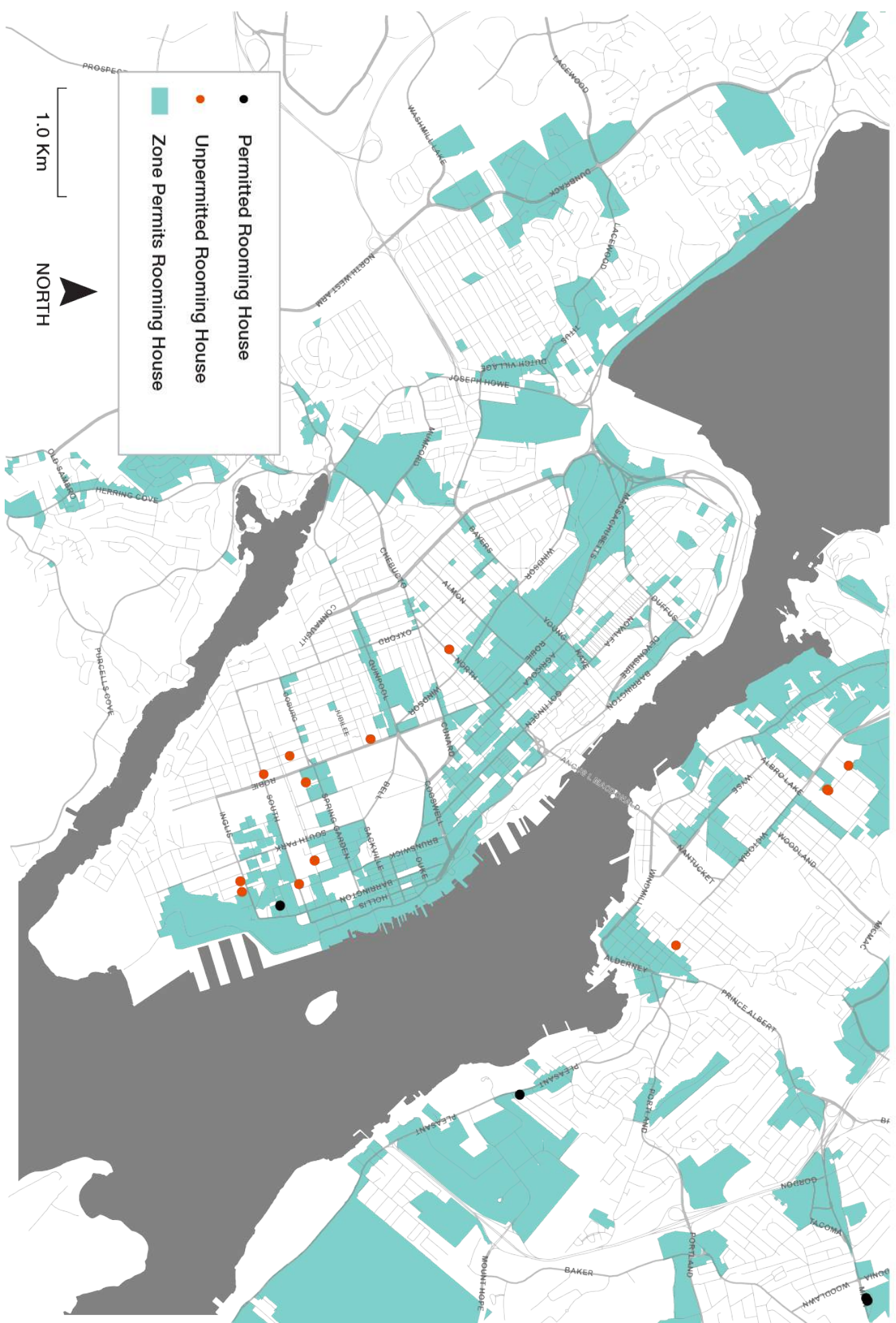
Zone	RH	QRH	Rooming House Permitted?
C-2	14	0	YES
DB	11	0	YES
DH	1	0	YES
DH-1	2	0	YES
DN	11	0	NO
K	0	1	NO
R-1	4	8	NO
R-1M	4	0	NO
R-2	59	41	NO
R-2A	20	5	NO
R-3	12	1	YES
R-4	1	0	YES
RC-3	6	0	YES
U-1	2	1	NO

Figure 5.3.1 ZONING FOR ROOMING HOUSES (1995-2016)



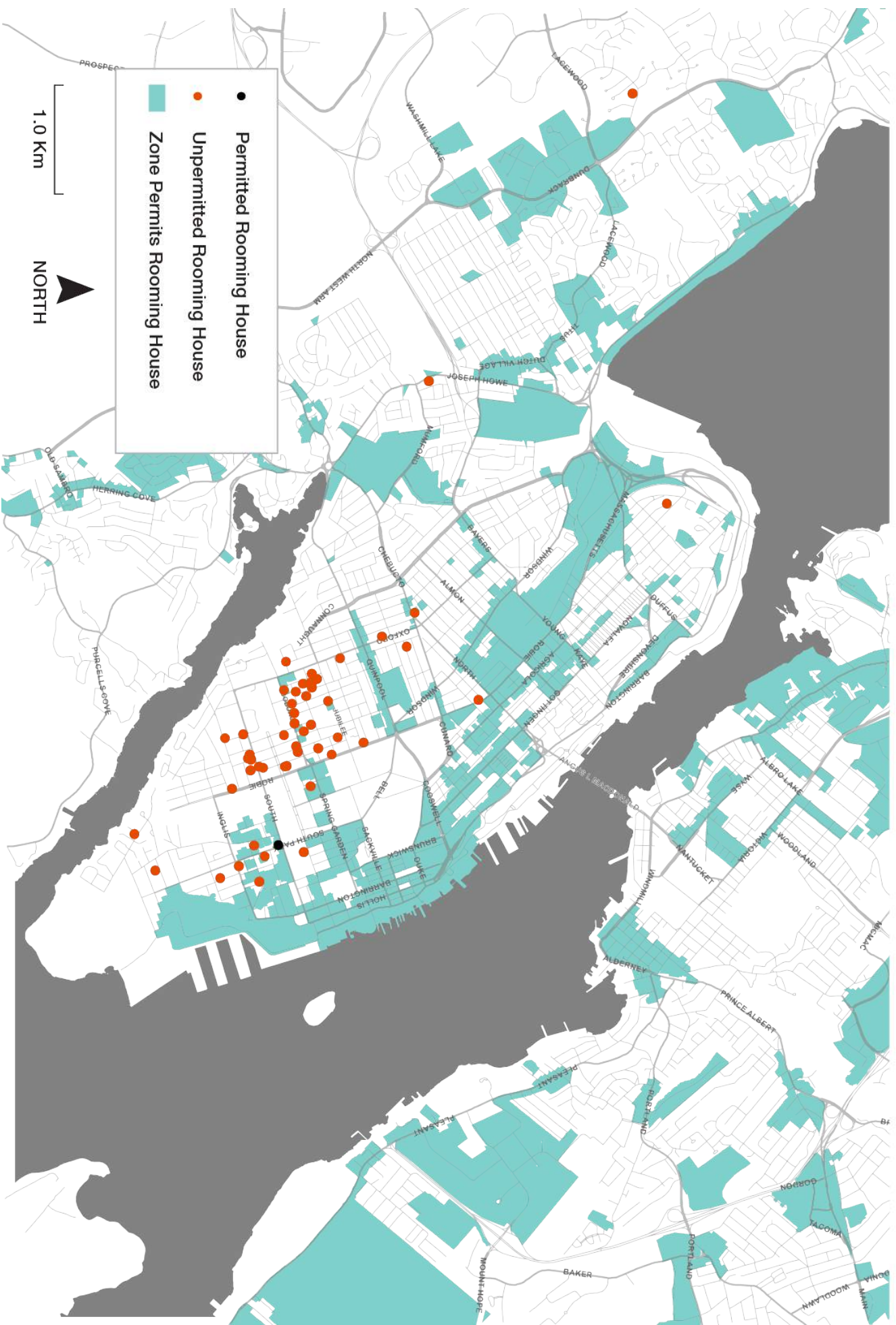
Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
 Map by Janelle Derksen & Yitae Lee

Figure 5.3.2 ZONING FOR CURRENTLY LICENSED ROOMING HOUSES



Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
 Map by Janelle Derksen & Uytae Lee

Figure 5.3.3 ZONING FOR QUASI ROOMING HOUSES



Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
 Map by Janelle Derkson & Uytae Lee

Incidents

Rooming houses are notorious for having incidents reported in the media; 38% (57 out of 151) of rooming houses have an incident associated with them in the media. These incidents include by-law code infractions, neighbourhood complaints, fires, and murders. In comparison, just one of the 57 quasi rooming houses are associated with incidents in the media. Despite a high rate of incidents at rooming houses, a less publicized majority (94 out of 151) of rooming houses seem to have operated in HRM without incident. Of the 80 rooming houses identified from the Halifax City Directory, only 6 were identified from the news article search. When news articles identifying a rooming house address are mapped out, it becomes evident that only certain neighbourhoods were reported in the local media (Figure 5.3.2 and 5.3.3). Media reports seem to have focused on the concentrations of rooming houses in Halifax's north end, south end and downtown Dartmouth. Many addresses were singled out in news reports frequently. For example, 5539-5543 Cogswell St. was mentioned in no less than 33 news articles between 1995 – 2016 for multiple deaths, fires, and its eventual closure.

Figure 5.3.3: Density map of articles mentioning a rooming houses or quasi rooming house address from 1995 to 2016.



Figure 5.3.4: Density map of all rooming houses and quasi rooming house addresses



Assessment

Figure 5.3.3 maps the assessment change of rooming houses and quasi rooming houses relative to that of their census tract. Addresses have been ranked from highest to lowest assessment change relative to their census tract and classified into quintiles that assign a different colour to every 20% interval.

Rooming houses have a large range of property assessment change. Four properties have seen property values decrease with the lowest decreasing by 25% over 1995-2015. The largest increase is a growth of roughly 8000% for a rooming house redeveloped into an apartment complex. The wide range of property assessment changes for rooming houses is an expected result because it reflects the various conversions of rooming houses, which would have significantly affected their property values.

Quasi rooming house property assessments have a smaller range assessment changes between 100% to 400% over the years 1995-2015. Two outliers have an assessment change of roughly 2500% and 3000% over the same period. When compared to property values in their census tracts, quasi rooming houses grow 19.79% (median figure) faster with the majority of addresses ranked within the top three quintiles of change (Figure 5.3.3).

Figure 5.3.5 CHANGE IN ASSESSMENT RELATIVE TO CT FOR ROOMING HOUSES 1995-2011

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
Map by Uytse Lee

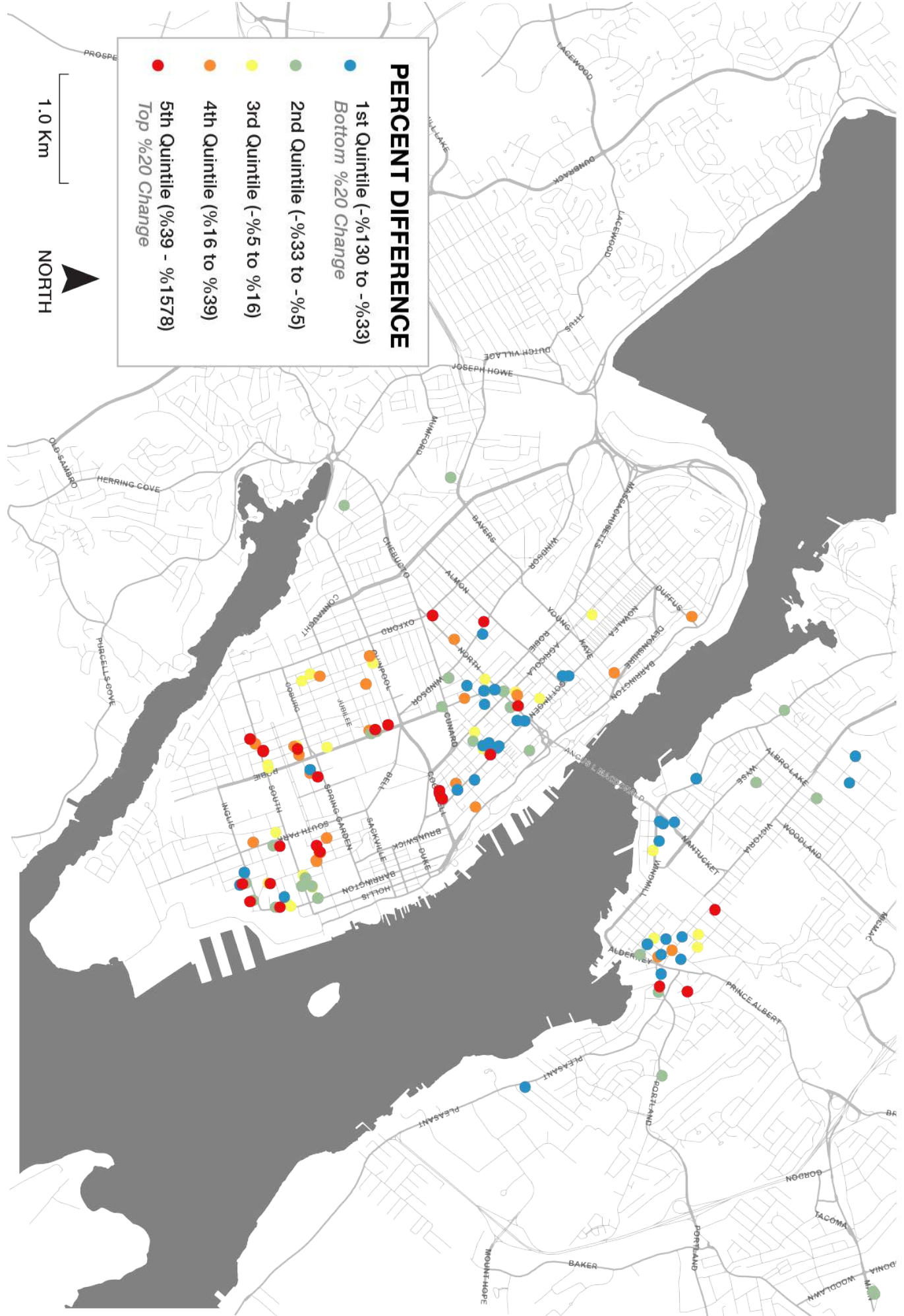
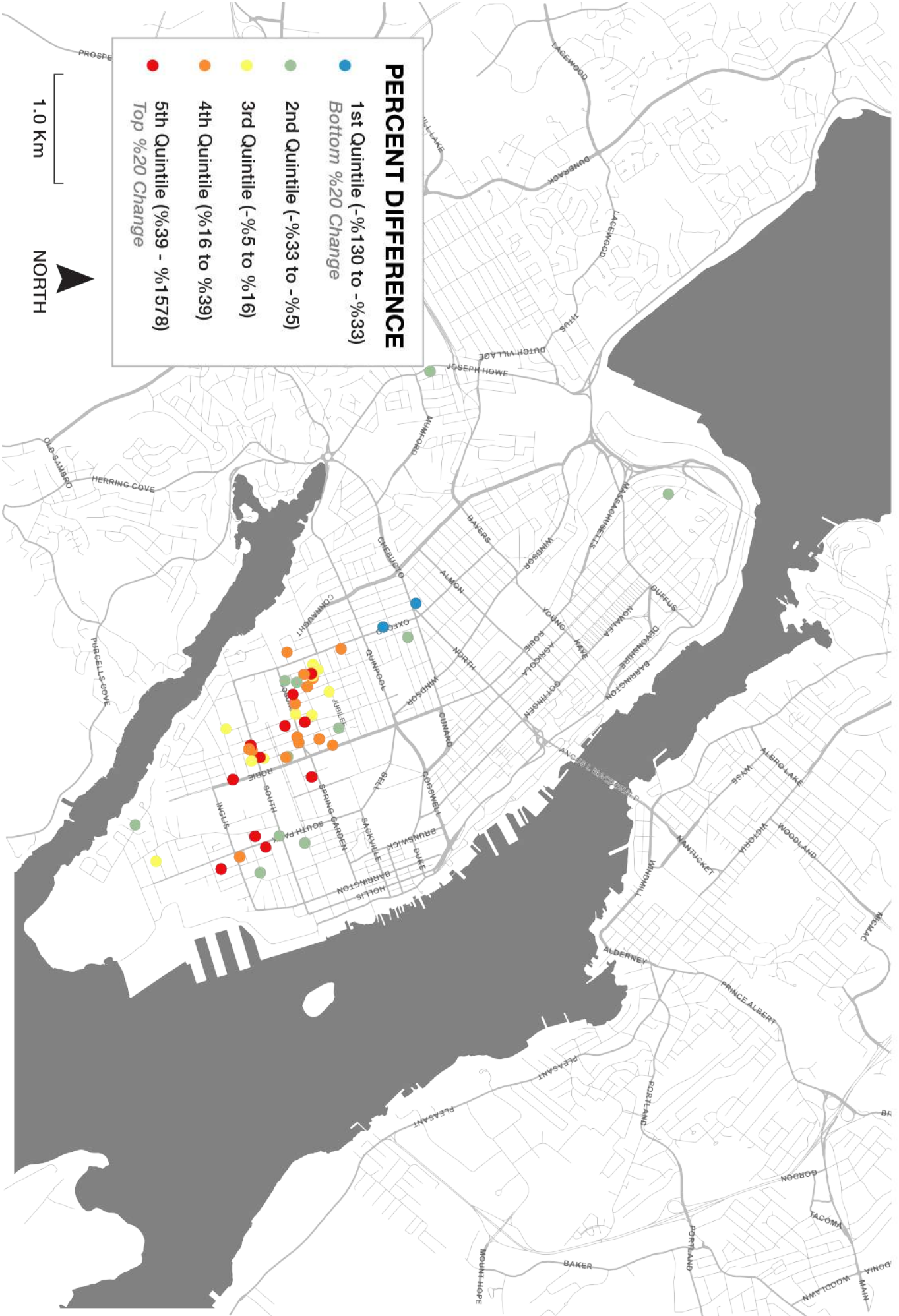


Figure 5.3.6 CHANGE IN ASSESSMENT RELATIVE TO CT FOR QUASI ROOMING HOUSES 1995-2011

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee



When property assessment changes are subdivided into the current use of rooming houses, trends in the assessment data become more apparent. After empty lots and social housing, active and licensed rooming houses rank lowest on both measurements of property assessment growth (Table 5.3.2). Property assessments for active and licensed rooming houses grew 13.88% (median figure) slower than other properties in their census tracts.

Table 5.3.5: Median price change relative to census tract 1996-2011

Current Use	Change relative to CT	Change/ft ²
Active Rooming House	-13.88%	188.98%
Social Housing	-75.21%	155.93%
Empty	-83.98%	92.57%
Apartments	5.68%	241.24%
Condominium	N/A	N/A
Closed - Current Use Unknown	28.14%	291.88%
Executive Suites	3.82%	248.27%
Fraternity	39.95%	263.11%
Private House	41.84%	320.04%
Possible Rooming House	24.77%	232.84%
Quasi Rooming House	19.79%	237.34%



6. Discussion of Results

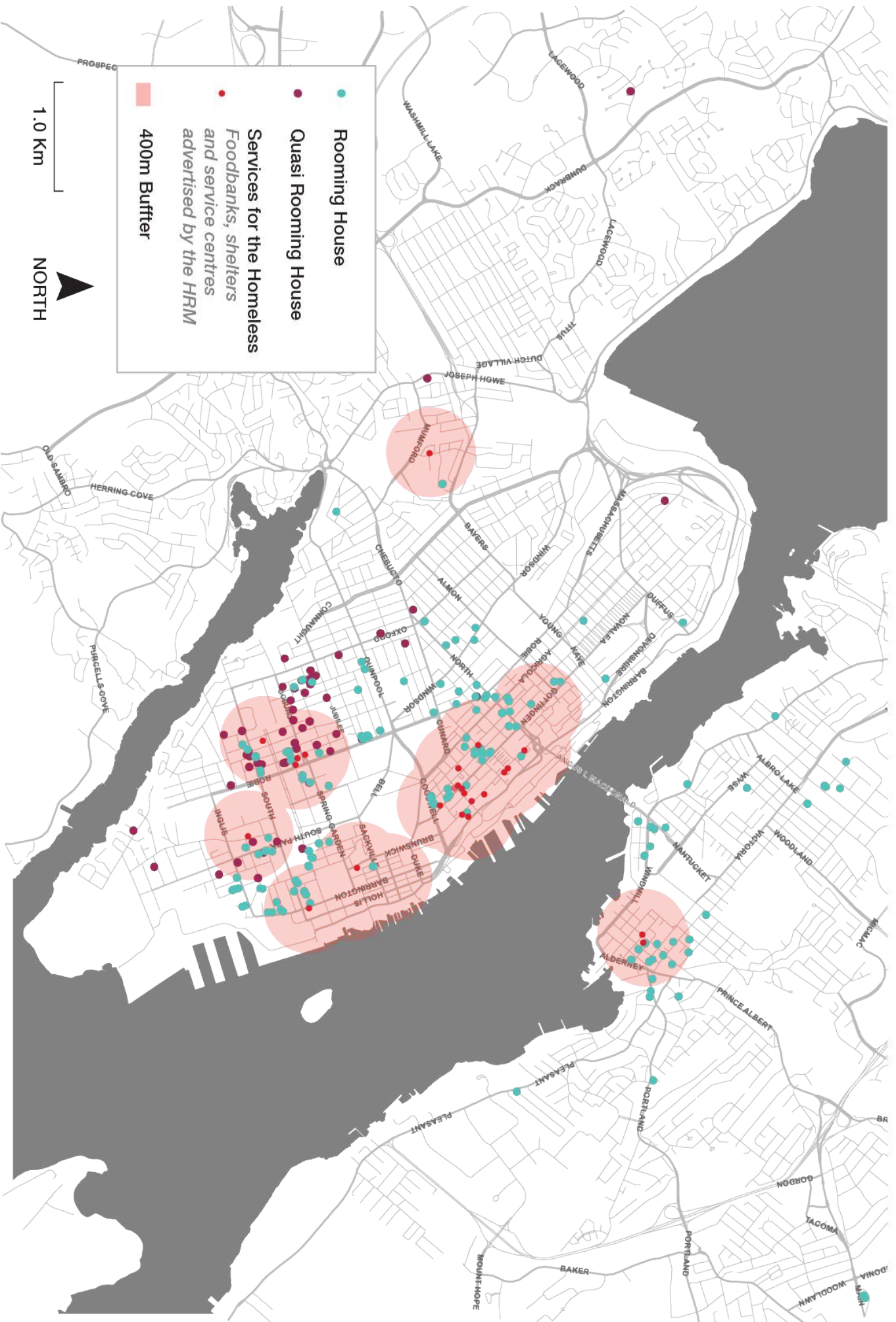
6.1 Why are SROs located where they are?

Rooming Houses

Rooming houses often house the most socially and financially vulnerable in our society (CMHC, 2006). In Halifax, the media frequently reported rooming house tenants to be mentally ill, drug addicted, or on social assistance (Simpson, 2004). An article from the Chronicle Herald reports that landlords were typically charging the maximum allowance of \$535 to tenants with the cheque often being deposited directly into the landlord's bank account (Smith, 2007). Such tenants would have needed some assistance from social services in the neighbourhood. This is confirmed to a degree by the distribution of rooming houses in the HRM between 1995 - 2016 found by this study. Figure 6.1.1 maps out the proximity of rooming houses and quasi rooming houses to services for the homeless (such as food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters) advertised by the HRM through <https://www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning/homelessness/>. Here, we can see that 86 of 151 rooming houses are located within 400 metres of a social service centre. The high concentration of these centres in the North End on Gottingen St. and Brunswick have 34 rooming houses within this distance.

The concentrations of rooming houses between 1995-present in Dartmouth are less known outside of incident reports by the media. One possible explanation is given by Dalton (2014) who describes many downtown Dartmouth rooming house tenants as those dealing with mental illness. The former Mount Hope Asylum for the Insane (currently the Nova Scotia Hospital), located just outside of downtown Dartmouth in Woodside, saw many of its patients moved to rooming houses after a move to deinstitutionalize and integrate people with mental illnesses into the community in the 1980s (Dalton, 2014). This reflects observations by Slater (2004) where the closure of the Queen Street Centre for Addiction and Mental Health saw thousands of patients discharged into the neighbourhood of South Parkdale in Toronto and eventually finding accommodations in rooming houses. Michael Dear and Jennifer Wolch (1987) grimly describe South Parkdale in the aftermath of this event as a neighbourhood where “deinstitutionalized patients, left to their own devices, bec[o]me... a spatial concentration of service-dependent populations and the agencies and facilities designed to serve them”(p. 9) or “service-dependent ghetto[s]” (p. 108). However, not all rooming houses in Halifax were located in service-dependent neighbourhoods. Our results also show many rooming house addresses, particularly those from the city directory search, that operated in other neighbourhoods in Halifax such as the South End, suggesting that they may have served a wider demographic of low-income tenants.

Figure 6.1.1 PROXIMITY OF RH & QRH TO SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS



Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee

Quasi Rooming Houses

Amidst the decline in the number of rooming houses, this study shows high concentrations of quasi rooming houses currently operating in neighbourhoods close to universities in the HRM. Upon further analysis, we can see that 47 of the 57 quasi rooming houses found by the study are located within 400 metres of a university campus (Figure 6.2.2). The neighbourhood adjacent to Dalhousie's Studley campus is especially popular for quasi rooming houses with 36 addresses within 400 metres of the campus.

The influence of university campuses on adjacent communities is widely reported in Halifax. The recently published HRM Housing Needs assessment study directly links this influence as a possible reason for quasi rooming houses in HRM;

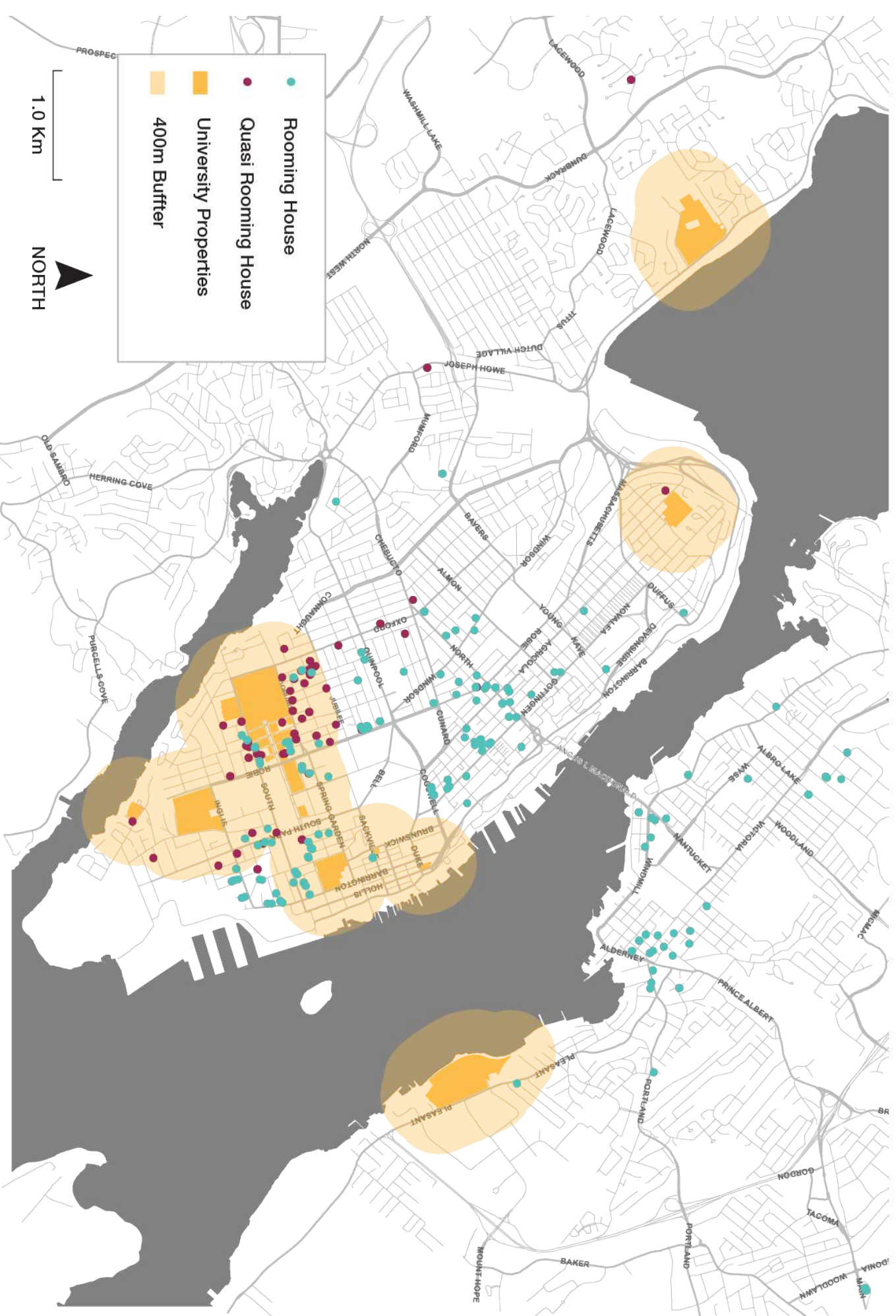
Universities in urban areas such as the Municipality are more likely to rely on the rental market and expect the majority of their students to live off-campus. This has a significant impact on the rental housing supply.

A stakeholder noted that this may also result in the proliferation of "quasi-rooming houses" in areas around universities." (HRM, 2015a, p. 70)

A large gap between the number of university residences and student populations is a significant reason for this impact. According to the HRM Housing Needs assessment, 31,589 students go to school in the city of when 4,771 are international students (HRM, 2015a). A calculation of all residence accommodations advertised by the universities in HRM show that only 4176 rooms are available, or roughly 13% of the total student population in Halifax (Table 6.1.1). Certain schools such as NSCAD don't provide any student accommodations.

An aggravating factor is the expense of university residences. The average rent for single bedroom university residences in Halifax is \$908.50/month (Table 6.1.1), higher than the average rent for a single bachelor in Halifax Peninsula South \$794/month or Halifax Peninsula North \$664/month (CMHC, 2015) and much higher than what quasi rooming houses are charging for rent (roughly 400 - 600\$/month). By comparison, residences at UBC cost \$725/month (UBC, 2015) against an average rent for a single bachelor of \$902/month in the Vancouver CMA (CMHC, 2014). The average monthly rents for university residences in Halifax are higher than the maximum \$840 (\$210/week) monthly allowance for living expenses granted by federal student loans (Nova Scotia Provincial Government, 2016).

Figure 6.1.2 PROXIMITY OF RH & QRH TO UNIVERSITIES IN HRM TO UNIVERSITIES IN HRM



Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012,
Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee

Table 6.1.1: Residence rental costs and units available at universities in HRM. (Information acquired through various university websites in 2016).

University Name	# of Students	# of Units	Rent/month (Single Bedroom)
Dalhousie University	19,831	2,452	\$915
Saint Mary's University	7,155	1,038	\$820
Mount Saint Vincent University	3,930	370	\$1,085
University of King's College	1,100	273	\$928
Atlantic School of Theology	140	43	\$436
NSCAD University	984	N/A	N/A
		Total Units	Weighted Average Rent
		4176	\$908.35

A lack of affordable residences on university campuses in the HRM puts students in direct competition with low income family households (HHP, 2014). “The Halifax Housing Needs Assessment (2015) reports that students often pool resources and share accommodations which can push low- and medium-income families out of major portions of the rental market” (p. 70). There are concerns in Halifax that students (especially international students) are often not aware of the local regulations and rules (HHP, 2014) and may tolerate higher rents for worse conditions. The prevalence of quasi rooming houses around university campuses in HRM and especially north of Dalhousie’s Studley campus is reminiscent of the “rooming house belt’ effect observed around other university campuses in North America (Gumprecht, 2006).

6.2 The Context behind SRO Change

Timelines of SRO Change

A conclusive timeline of SRO loss or gain is not possible as we were not able to obtain opening and closing dates for all rooming houses and quasi rooming houses from the sources we consulted. However, the identification dates of each address provide some indication of trends in the distribution of rooming houses over time. Figure 6.2.1 shows four, five-year time periods between 1995-present and the SROs identified in each. A clear transition can be seen from SROs in the North End and Downtown Dartmouth to the neighbourhoods of quasi rooming houses suggesting different narratives for the two types of housing. We discuss this in the following sections.

Reasons for Rooming House Decline

This study confirms estimates from the city, media, and other organizations (Table 2.2.2) that many rooming houses have been lost in Halifax since 1995. This decline mimics similar losses in other Canadian cities such as Montreal (Alfaro, 2010), Toronto (Slater, 2004), Winnipeg (Kaufman & Distasio, 2014), and Vancouver (Paulsen, 2007). Rooming house closures in Halifax were widely reported by the media in the mid 2000s when fires and by-law infractions saw several notorious rooming houses close (Fraser, 2004). However a less publicized reason dominates the narratives of former rooming houses we found; a large number have been converted to housing that caters to the upper end of the housing market. This is in line with other reports that cite redevelopment and conversions as primary reasons for SRO decline in other cities (Paulsen, 2007).

The decline of rooming houses in Halifax seem to have occurred against the backdrop of gentrification in many parts of the urban core, a process whereby an influx of wealthier residents displaces lower-income residents. The Downtown Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy cites steady growth within the downtown peninsula for the last decade as indicative of a renewed interest in urban living (HRM, 2009). Neighbourhoods that were once popular for rooming houses, such as the North End and downtown Dartmouth, have been seeing increased development and an influx of more affluent residents, bringing about concerns from existing residents about displacement (Beaumont, 2013 & Dalton, 2014). In South Parkdale, Toronto, Slater (2004) writes

that rooming houses were among the first properties to be purchased when middle-class homeowners and tenants resettled in the community, displacing lower-income tenants.

A compounding factor in the loss may have been licensing and regulation requirements introduced in the mid-2000s in HRM. In the discussions leading up to the licensing requirements in By-law M-100, many expressed concerns that landlords may simply choose to close their buildings rather than keep them up to code (Moar, 2001). These concerns were echoed by anti-poverty activists in response to closures in 2004 that saw many tenants evicted without support for replacement housing (Fraser, 2004). A follow-up report by the HRFE claimed that the occupancy standards By-law (M-100) was rarely used to close a building entirely (HRM, 2004). However, the report mentions that the HRFE have responded to over 1000 complaints regarding building code infractions (HRM, 2004), suggesting rooming houses were experiencing pressure for repairs.

Historical Context for Quasi Rooming Houses

Very little has been documented on the history of quasi rooming houses in Halifax but their rise in the city seems to have occurred towards the end of the 20th century. The local media reports that city council attempted to pass a “bed-check” bylaw in 1986 aimed to limit the number of people living in a property located in an R-1 or an R-2 zone (Maley, 1986). Though this bylaw was later dismissed by provincial court, it represented the first of several attempts by the city to stop family homes from being converted to quasi rooming houses for students. These efforts culminated in 2005 with an amendment to the Halifax Peninsula land-use bylaw that limited the number of bedrooms for buildings located in low-density residential zones (Bornais, 2005). Media articles from this period report apprehension from the general community around “quasi rooming houses that threaten to ruin some of Halifax’s toniest neighbourhoods” (Bornais, 2005). In a Chronicle Herald article from 2005, HRM’s development officer is quoted as having investigated “60 alleged rooming house violations over the last six months or so” (Fraser, 2005, p. B1) related to illegal rooming house operations. While our data is unable to confirm this, we offer several theories as to why such conversions may have been popular in Halifax at this time.

Universities across Canada saw increased enrolment in 1990s through the early 2000s, which many attributed to the children of the baby boomer generation coming of age for post-secondary education (Carr, 2001). Foot (2006) describes this as the “Echo Boomer” generation (born 1980-

95) and cites Statistics Canada population projections, which show the 20-24 year age group growing by 2.3 percent over 2006-2016 then declining by 9 percent over the following decade.

In 2003, the Ontario school board eliminated Grade 13 and two years worth of high school students graduated that year. As a result, schools in Nova Scotia adjusted acceptance rates to accommodate the wave of extra students.

In 2002, local news outlets reported spikes of 29% increased international student enrolment at Dalhousie University as well as other universities in Halifax when the political climate of the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks increased restrictions and scrutiny in the U.S. student visa application process (Delaney, 2002).

Against a backdrop of rooming house decline and increases in student population, it is plausible that there was significant pressure on the rental market in HRM to provide more affordable housing for students, driving the quasi rooming house conversions. This is a hypothesis and requires further research.

6.3 Quasi Rooming Houses and Rooming Houses

This project analyzed the media coverage, zoning, property assessments of rooming houses and quasi rooming houses with the hope of differentiating between the two. What has emerged from this data is a discussion on what factors contribute to whether SROs go into decline like rooming houses or flourish like quasi rooming houses.

Rooming Houses

Negative social perception

With 40% of rooming houses associated with an incident in the news, it is quite possible that the public holds a negative perception of this type of housing. Over the last couple decades, articles describing fires, murders, and drug dealing, and other illicit activities at rooming houses were published frequently (Simpson, 2004). A particularly scathing article from the Chronicle Herald in 2004 interviewed tenants of a notorious rooming house who stated “the place isn’t even fit to live in” (Simpson, 2004, A1). In Toronto, Campsie (1994) describes sensational reporting by the media as a significant contributor to the dislike of rooming houses by the public.

The stigma around rooming houses in HRM continues. For example, in 2014, the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission celebrated the closing of a rooming house on Victoria Rd. by posting photographs of the demolition to its Facebook page (Figure 6.2.1). An online landlord's guide to running rooming houses is prefaced by,

*“Rooming houses as a category typically invoke some rather nasty thoughts. Problem tenants, drugs, sketchy areas and the list goes on. And truthfully, it can be this way, but it doesn’t have to be.
(The Educated Landlord, 2013)*

Figure 6.2.1: Downtown Dartmouth business commission posts about the demolition of a rooming house on its Facebook page (May, 16, 2014)



Unpermitted by zoning

Most rooming houses are located in zones that do not permit them. This is the case for 12 of the 17 currently active rooming houses in Halifax.

Economic pressures for conversion and redevelopment

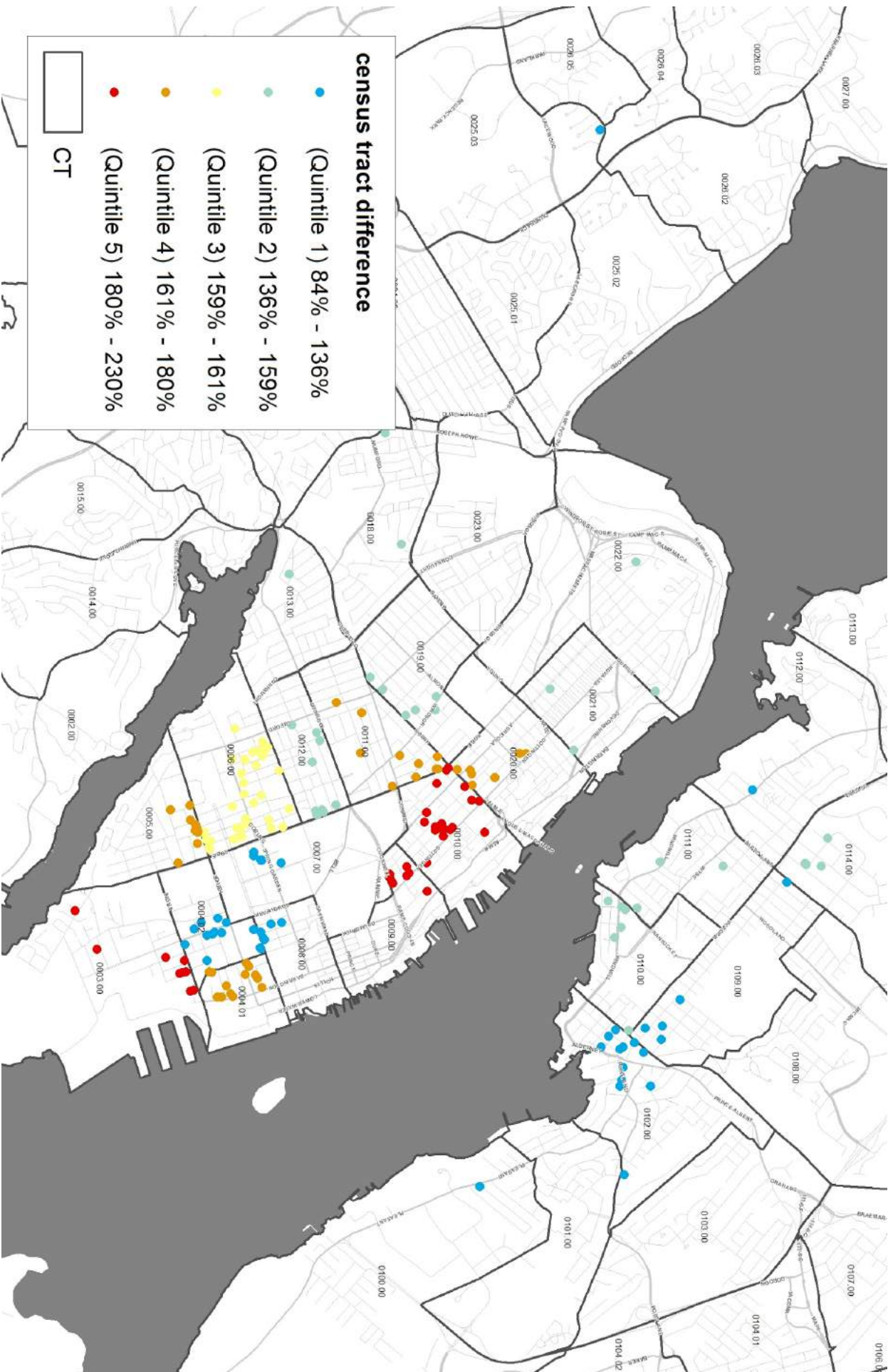
As private sector housing, rooming houses are ultimately driven by market forces. With a property assessment growth that is, on average, 16.43% slower than other properties in their census tracts, it is apparent that licensed rooming houses are not highly appreciating investments. This suggests that there are economic pressures for rooming houses to convert into other uses that would accelerate their property value growth. Rooming houses, particularly in the north end of Halifax, are located in areas that are seeing rapid property value growth. Rising housing and land values are generally not conducive for properties remaining as rooming houses (Kaufman & Distasio, 2014). As areas improve, rooming house properties may be more valuable for other uses. Many point out that a federal shipbuilding contract awarded to the shipyard in the North End has driven speculation on property prices in this neighbourhood (Bousquet, 2013). Data from the 1996 and 2011 census confirm has seen dramatic increases in property value recently (Figure 6.2.3) and this may be leading many rooming houses to be sold and renovated as apartments (Bousquet, 2013).

Quasi Rooming Houses

Less Public Attention

Quasi rooming houses are much less prominent in the media compared to rooming houses with only one address being identified for an incident by a newspaper since 1995. Mentions of quasi rooming houses in the news were mostly discussions around policy regarding their regulation. Articles discussing quasi rooming houses link them with overcrowding, excessive noise, and unkempt properties (Fraser, 2005). However, these characteristics hardly compare to the fires, murders, drugs dealing, and inhospitable conditions that were widely associated with rooming house addresses by the media (Simpson, 2004). The relative anonymity of quasi-rooming houses in the media may be changing as recent articles have begun to identify them by address (CBC News, 2015).

Figure 6.2.3: Average assessment change in census tracts 1996-2011



We likely won't be seeing any more quasi rooming houses

Despite the prevalence of quasi rooming houses near universities in Halifax, this type of housing is generally not permitted under the current zoning by-law. Like rooming houses, most (95%) quasi rooming houses are located in zones that no longer allow rooming houses; they have likely been grandfathered in as houses that were converted before by-law amendments in 2005, which allowed them to remain. The Halifax Peninsula zoning by-law indirectly recognizes these grandfathered units in its time-stamped definition of a rooming house.

“A one family dwelling house, excepting that the number of bedrooms contained therein is six or more and that any number of said bedrooms are established on or following September 17, 2005.”

(HRM, 2005, p.11)

A 1990 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development commission to investigate regulatory barriers to affordable housing found government zoning and housing regulations were some of the largest constraints to the provision of a wider variety of low rent housing in the US, whether public or private (Downs, 1991). The report goes on to state that these regulations were heavily influenced by existing residents who pressured elected officials to prevent the creation of lower-cost housing near them (Downs, 1991). This seems to be in line with the state of quasi rooming houses (and, to a certain extent, rooming houses) in Halifax. The land-use bylaw changes introduced in 2005 were, by design, intended to put a stop to quasi rooming house conversions in certain neighbourhoods. Community council minutes regarding the by-law change show that residents overwhelmingly supported it (HRM, 2005a).

Lucrative income properties

Despite their illicit status, it is unlikely that quasi rooming houses will be closing anytime soon. With healthy property assessment growths that outpace other properties in their neighbourhoods, quasi rooming houses are clearly valuable uses. Real-estate listings for quasi rooming house properties often advertise themselves as “income properties” that can provide lucrative incomes for landlords. As grandfathered units, they operate in locations with high demands for housing with limited threat of future competition. Furthermore, they cater to a student demographic that is likely to pool resources and share accommodations (HRM, 2015), allowing them to charge higher rents. In Vancouver, as vacancy rates of SROs reach close to zero (Paulsen, 2007), many

rooming houses have become more restrictive in tenant selection by marketing themselves as student-only housing (City of Vancouver, 2010).

7.0 Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to document and deepen our understanding of SROs in HRM. Our results reveal rough concentrations of rooming houses in Halifax's north end, south end and downtown Dartmouth in the last two decades as well as specific concentrations of quasi rooming houses currently operating in neighbourhoods adjacent to Dalhousie's Studley campus. We further confirm the decline of rooming houses; many of which have been converted to higher-end housing such as apartments and condominiums. When we combine these findings with an analysis of media coverage, zoning and property assessment change, two distinct narratives emerge for rooming houses and quasi rooming houses in Halifax.

Rooming houses in HRM may face an uphill battle to remain as providers of affordable housing. Currently licensed rooming houses observe slower increases in property assessments relative to their census tracts, suggesting that they face economic pressures for redevelopment and conversion similar to other former rooming houses in HRM. The current zoning climate is also unfavourable to rooming houses; the majority of them are located in zones that do not permit them. Additionally, rooming houses have a history of bad press in Halifax and may be negatively perceived by the community.

Quasi rooming houses may be a relatively stable form of affordable housing in Halifax. Their proximity to university campuses cater towards a student demographic that represents a relatively reliable and affluent tenant base. Property assessments for quasi rooming houses consistently outpace other properties in their census tracts, confirming the market value of these properties. The overwhelming majority of quasi rooming houses are located in zones that do not permit their current uses but a grandfathering policy allows them to continue operating. This may be a significant advantage for quasi rooming houses as they are able to provide housing in areas where demand is high without the threat of future competition. Quasi rooming houses are also currently less obvious in the local media than traditional rooming houses. However, historical attempts to outlaw quasi rooming houses suggest that they are not welcomed by existing residents.

Our project provides a broad, general analysis of rooming houses in HRM. It is clear that more research needs to be done to better understand SROs. To continue to expand an understanding of SROs and how to best accommodate them through policy, we suggest the following directions for future research.

How are rooming houses perceived in Halifax?

More research needs to be done on the specific differences between rooming houses and quasi rooming houses in Halifax to better inform licensing.

How are rooming houses perceived in Halifax?

While this study provides a broader, data driven narrative of SROs in HRM, it would be useful to gather information on the understanding of rooming houses from the perspective of students, landlords, community organizations, political leaders and other groups.

Policies from abroad

What policies are being adopted outside of Halifax? What are some best practices for rooming house regulations?

Should quasi rooming houses be regulated?

Articles often report quasi rooming houses to be “overcrowded” but little else is known about the conditions inside quasi rooming houses and to what extent they should be regulated.

Verifying the database with other sources

The database from this study could be expanded by including sources that we did not have the time or resources to pursue such as professional organizations.

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