ARE WE LOSING ROOMING HOUSES IN HALIFAX?

Uytae Lee
Advisor: Dr. Jill Grant
NCRP Meeting
May 19th, 2016
BACKGROUND
WHAT ARE ROOMING HOUSES?

Also known as
SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCIES (S.R.O.)
NCRP RESEARCH ON ROOMING HOUSES

Andrew Kaufman and Jino Distasio (2014) Winnipeg’s Vanishing Rooming Houses: Change in the West Broadway and Spence Neighbourhoods

SPENCE NEIGHBOURHOOD
“Our most conservative estimate is that there has been a 23% decrease in the number of rooming houses in Spence between 2002 and 2014. A more likely estimate is a 40% decrease when both confirmed and possible rooming houses are taken into account.” (Kaufman & Distasio, 2014, p.7)

WEST BROADWAY NEIGHBOURHOOD
From 1995 to 2014, there has been a 45% decrease in possible rooming houses. A more probable estimate is a 63% decrease in confirmed rooming houses. (Kaufman & Distasio, 2014, p.8)
CONTEXT OF HALIFAX, NS

Image source: http://theplanner.ca/destination-halifax/
ROOMING HOUSES MAY HAVE DECLINED IN HALIFAX

“In 2007, there were 153 rooming houses in HRM; last year there were just 25, and five of those are for sale” (Bousquet, 2013)

“The number of rooming houses has declined by over 90% in the last decade” (AHANS, 2014, p.19)

“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.” (HRM, 2015, p. 54)
QUASI ROOMING HOUSES IN HALIFAX

“A boom in quasi rooming houses that threaten to ruin some of Halifax’s toniest neighborhoods”
(Bornais, 2005)

“Residents across Halifax, but especially in the south end, have watched with growing apprehension as former single-family homes and duplexes have been turned into apartments with as many as 12 bedrooms.”
(Bornais, 2005, p.7)

“A CBC News investigation has found numerous examples of buildings that even police and fire services call rooming houses, but which don't show up on the city's list of licensed properties.”
(Murphy, 2015)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Where were rooming houses and quasi-rooming houses located in Halifax from 1995-2016?

2. How many rooming houses have been lost or gained over the last two decades and how?

3. What are some differences between rooming houses and quasi rooming houses?
METHODS
METHODS: Database of Rooming Houses

RESEARCH CHALLENGES

- No official record of rooming houses in HRM available before 2007.
- Past records from Metro Non-Profit Housing and Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency have been lost.
- Multiple legal definitions for a rooming house in Halifax.
METHODS: Database of Rooming Houses

CRITERIA

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 that does not explicitly mention itself as a rooming house.
METHODS: Sources Used

- PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING ASSOCIATION OF NOVA SCOTIA
  - TRANSIENT HOUSES & SHELTERS
  - DALHOUSIE LEGAL AID
  - METRO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION
- CURRENT REGISTRY OF ROOMING HOUSES
- ONLINE LISTINGS
  - AIRBNB.CA
  - KIJJI.CA
- HALIFAX REGIONAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY
- HALIFAX.CA
- COUNCIL MINUTES
  - DEVELOPMENT REPORTS
  - STAFF REPORTS
- HALIFAX CITY DIRECTORY (1995)
- NEWS ARTICLES
  - CHRONICLE HERALD
  - THE METRO
  - THE DAILY NEWS
  - THE COAST
  - CBC
- SUCCESSFUL
- PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL
- UNSUCCESSFUL
METHODS: Follow-up Data Collection

CURRENT STATUS
- GOOGLE.CA
- RENTAL LISTINGS SITES
- NEWS ARTICLE
- HRM REGISTRY OF ROOMING HOUSES
- GOOGLE MAPS HISTORY
- BUILDING PERMITS

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT CHANGE
- VIEWPOINT.CA
- 1995 PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES

INCIDENTS REPORTED BY MEDIA
- NEWS ARTICLES FROM DATABASE
- FOLLOW-UP SEARCH WITH SPECIFIC ADDRESS THROUGH EUREKA.CC

ZONING
- VIEWPOINT.CA
RESULTS: Addresses Found by the Study (1995-2016)

57 QUASI ROOMING HOUSES

151 ROOMING HOUSES
WHERE ARE ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES IN HALIFAX?
ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES IDENTIFIED IN HALIFAX (1995-Present)

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
Map by Uytae Lee
PROXIMITY OF ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES TO UNIVERSITIES

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

Contact: Uytae Lee, uytaelee@gmail.com
FIGURE 6.1.1 PROXIMITY OF RH & QRH TO SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS (1995-2016)

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

Legend:
- Rooming House
- Quasi Rooming House
- Services for the Homeless
  Foodbanks, shelters and service centres advertised by the HRM

Scale: 1.0 Km

Contact: Uytae Lee, uytaelee@gmail.com
HOW MANY ROOMING HOUSES HAVE WE LOST?
### CURRENT STATUS OF ROOMING HOUSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Use</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Rooming House</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Rooming House</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Lot</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Suites</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraternity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Rooming House</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private House</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condominium</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
5538 Inglis St. (Source: maps.google.ca)
ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES
**RH & QRH: Assessment Change**

- Quasi rooming houses have relatively high and stable growth in property assessments
- Former rooming houses are have a much wider range of property assessment change
- Licensed rooming houses see much slower growth in property assessment
### RH & QRH: Assessment Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Use</th>
<th>Change relative to CT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Rooming House</td>
<td>-13.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Rooming House</td>
<td>24.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Housing</td>
<td>-75.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi Rooming House</td>
<td>19.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>5.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed - Current Use Unknown</td>
<td>28.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condominium</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Lot</td>
<td>-83.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Suites</td>
<td>3.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private House</td>
<td>41.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraternity</td>
<td>39.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RH & QRH: Incidents and Media Coverage

- Rooming houses have much more incidents associated with them than quasi rooming houses
- Certain notorious rooming house locations are mentioned much more frequently in the media
RH & QRH: Incidents Covered by the Media

1

Out of 57 quasi rooming houses

54

Out of 151 rooming houses
DENSITY MAP OF ARTICLES ON ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES
(1997-Present)

DENSITY MAP OF ROOMING HOUSES AND QUASI ROOMING HOUSES
(1995-Present)

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

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

- The majority of rooming houses (71%) are located in zones that do not permit them.
- 13 of the 17 licensed rooming houses are in zones that do not permit them.
- The overwhelming majority of quasi rooming houses (98%) are located in zones that do not permit a rooming house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning</th>
<th>RH</th>
<th>QRH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH-1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DN</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-1M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-2A</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ROOMING HOUSES AND THEIR ZONING

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
Map by Janelle Derkson & Uytae Lee
Figure 5.3.2 ZONING FOR CURRENTLY LICENSED ROOMING HOUSES

Data Sources: HRM Geodatabase 2012, Rooming House Database
Map by Janelle Derkson & Uytae Lee
QUASI ROOMING HOUSES 
AND THEIR ZONING

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

Different Concentrations in Location
Rooming houses and quasi rooming houses are located in different concentrations across Halifax.

Rooming Houses Have Declined
The majority of rooming houses that existed in HRM over the last two decades have since closed. Many have been converted to more upscale forms of housing.

Currently Licensed Rooming Houses May be Disadvantaged
Slower property assessment growth for licensed rooming houses
Frequent, dramatic and not necessarily representative reporting in the media
The majority are located in zones that do not permit a rooming house

Quasi Rooming Houses are Predominantly Meeting Demand for SROs
Healthy property assessment growth
Not mentioned frequently in the media
Overwhelmingly located in zones that do not permit a rooming house
May not serve the same demographic as traditional rooming houses
REFERENCES


Bornais, S (2005, September 13). City moves to plug housing loopholes. Daily News


