



**DISTRICTS 7 & 8 PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
May 9, 2016**

PRESENT: Ms. Sunday Miller, Chair
Mr. Ashley Morton, Vice Chair
Mr. Michael Bradfield
Ms. Sarah MacDonald
Mr. Joe Metlege
Councillor Wayne Mason
Councillor Jennifer Watts

REGRETS: Ms. Katherine Kitching
Mr. Grant Cooke

STAFF: Ms. Melissa Eavis, Urban Designer 1
Mr. Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Program Manager
Mr. Iain Grant, Planning Technician
Ms. Krista Vining, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Cailin MacDonald, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Districts 7 & 8 Planning Advisory Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/D78PAC/160509d78pac-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. and adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Olympic Community Centre, 2304 Hunter Street, Halifax and introduced the Planning Advisory Committee and its purpose in hosting the public meeting.

2. PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

2.1 Case 20510: Regional Council-initiated amendment to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law to create a site specific zone for 6067 Quinpool Road, the former St. Patrick's High School property

The Chair invited Mr. Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Program Manager and Ms. Melissa Eavis, Urban Designer 1 to present Case 20510: Regional Council-initiated amendment to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law to create a site specific zone for the former St. Patrick's High School property.

Mr. Ritchie stated that staff worked within a framework of the Quinpool Road commercial area plan and described how staff arrived at the proposed new zone which helps to determine: the exact scale and massing, what will be protected and what will be changed. Mr. Ritchie commented that staff wanted to understand from residents more about development in this community and any feedback from residents on the proposed amendment.

Mr. Ritchie described the history of the site as well as its context. He commented that staff undertook preliminary planning which included understanding objectives of the existing commercial area plan, consideration of urban design principles as well as known limitations for the site. He went on to describe the process which included two publicly attended open houses, before reaching the current proposal.

Ms. Eavis explained the shift from this site being designated for community to commercial facilities and the changes affecting the MPS. She commented that the site would shift from a Zone P, park and institutional, to Zone RC-5, Quinpool Residential/Commercial. Ms. Eavis described the accepted and unaccepted land being proposed uses for the site. She commented that the proposal limits the lot coverage to 50 percent above ground and 100 percent for underground. She further commented on the importance of maintaining the human scale of the streetscape along this site, noting that commercial uses are required for 75 percent of the ground floor area of buildings located along Quinpool Road with storefronts no greater than 12 metres in width and that the majority of residential units along Windsor Street and Quingate Place will have individual access. She also outlined the importance of active street frontages as well as reviewed streetwall heights and widths and streetwall setbacks. Ms. Eavis described the options for massing. She commented that height focused on the site's North West corner which would allow 18 storeys while the remainder of the site would allow 10 storeys. She outlined building depth for the site which would help protect the interior of the site. She described the importance of light and air to the site and how this would be achieved. Ms. Eavis explained the significance of public space to this project and outlined the provisions related to open space, landscaping and pedestrian connections. She went on to highlight the proposed parameters around parking and signage.

Mr. Ritchie described the outstanding issues for the site which included: items not addressed in the proposed amendments like density bonusing and detailed design guidelines, subdivision of the property as well as right of way. He also outlined the implications of these issues.

The Chair opened the floor to comments from the public.

Ms. Janet Stevenson, Central Halifax shared concerns with having Centre Plan discussions the same week as this Public Information Meeting. She also shared concerns about the conclusions of the report being presented particularly as the development relates to wind. She commented that no standards were identified to manage wind conditions for pedestrian safety and comfort. She asked how the proposal could draw conclusions regarding wind given no modeling had taken place and expressed concerns that the proposal identifies general principles rather than specifics for the site.

Mr. Ritchie explained that wind standards exist for developments within the downtown core; however these standards do not extend to the site in question.

Ms. Susan Tyrone, Armdale commented that she believed that the property was originally part of the Halifax Common and shared her concerns that the Common has been encroached upon. She went on to comment on the importance of creating welcoming spaces and walkways for passersby to promote inclusivity and not only use of residents within the complex.

Mr. Anthony Kawalski, Halifax Needham questioned the internal space of the design and commented that if it will be a park, asked whether the interior frontages would be inner-facing rather than the backs of buildings given the landscaping will be a focal.

Ms. Eavis responded that staff envisioned the space as flexible with potential to be internal-facing commercial space or gardens. Mr. Ritchie added that the proposal does not intend to have buildings all the way around the site to help make it a more viable public space and compel better design.

Mr. Samir Mansour, Quinpool Road shared concerns about the high volume of street traffic on Quinpool Road and the surrounding area and noted concerns for emergency vehicles given the site's proximity to a hospital. He also expressed concerns about limited parking available in the area.

Mr. Steven Parcell, Duncan Street shared concerns about the municipality's desire to increase density on the peninsula and questioned why there are no target numbers or dates identified. He also questioned how the height and density for the site was determined. Referring to page 51 of the report, Mr. Parcell asked why the Schedule A boundary is being stretched to include this site. He also noted that according to his calculations based on numbers listed in the report, the population density is more than twice what is permitted in this area and more than what would be permitted downtown. Mr. Parcell questioned how staff came to achieve 272 persons per acre. As well, he questioned the neighbourhood compatibility of the proposed height and asked why a maximum six storey height criteria would not be satisfactory. Mr. Parcell shared his concerns that the open space examples referenced on page 100 and 101 of the report are misleading as the areas presented do not reflect the scale of the proposed design. He asked whether the open space would be owned and operated by the municipality as a public park or by the developer as a private space.

Mr. Ritchie commented that staff did not start planning by determining the height and density of the project and explained that they started with the preservation of open space, perforations within the site as well as concentrating most of the height to the back west corner. He also commented that increasing the density of the site was intentional and that staff prioritized floor area over height. Mr. Ritchie acknowledged the height concerns being shared by the community this evening.

In reference to massing, Mr. Ritchie explained that staff intended to put more people on the site than 125 people per acre by creating a balanced build-out of the site and commented that economic development was a factor. He continued to explain the rationale behind the decision to build the site up as well as close to the perimeter as well as maintain an appropriate scale.

In reference to stretching the boundary, Mr. Ritchie explained that staff looked to assess the validity of the site and looked at a different approach to achieving density on the site in relation to the community with an aim to release pressure on the surrounding R2 areas.

In reference to open spaces, Mr. Ritchie commented that the site would not be owned by the municipality.

Mr. Ian Porter, Welsford Street echoed concerns about wind, road access and design. He questioned the project's limited mandate and expressed concerns of approaching this development without considering the two other major developments planned for the area. Mr. Porter commented that he supports increasing the density of the site although shared concerns with the proposed tower.

Ms. Gail Broom, Lawrence Street shared concerns about open space, significance of wind in the area and vehicle access. She also shared that she would like to see greater than 2-bedroom units be a priority. She shared concern about the quality of the windows given the site's proximity to the hospital as well as visitor parking.

Mr. Peter Zimmer, Willow Street commented that he has been attending many consultations for varying projects in and around the area. He commented that he would like to see more innovative technology and ideas be considered for the site given its proximity to the downtown core and ability to serve as a transportation hub. He suggested that the open space be developed as a U-shape rather than accessed by alleyways. Mr. Zimmer suggested considering arcades along the street frontage. He encouraged staff to include public shareable infrastructure in its proposal.

Mr. Tristan Cleveland, Duncan Street commented on European design principles and how those could be incorporated into this design. He expressed his support for density on the peninsula. Mr. Cleveland commented that the proposal should articulate clearly what the community and municipality want. He also challenged staff to consider allowing the lot to be subdivided to allow for smaller scale developments.

Ms. Karen Davidson, Quingate Place shared concerns with the location of the back-of-house functions as well as vehicle access to the site including commercial servicing of the site. She also expressed concerns with how the density for the site was achieved.

Mr. Ritchie explained that there would be an access point off of Quingate Place and that the creation of a new street would be a secondary option. He also commented that most of the site would be able to be serviced underground. In reference to density, Mr. Ritchie commented that vacancy rates are at 3 per cent. He continued to explain design principles incorporated into the proposal which will help address the wind and the rationale for the height. In reference to the loading bay, Mr. Ritchie commented that the municipality would look to work with delivery companies to find accommodation.

Mr. Graham Reed, Armdale commented that he does not support the proposed design. He commented that he would like to see an alternate proposal presented which considers the current planning guidelines. Mr. Reed suggested that the area should be designed similar to the townhouse development between Gottingen and Brunswick Streets or the Hydrostone. He also expressed concerns of the tower height proposed and the preservation of greenspace.

Ms. Chris Annand, Wellington Street commented on the Centre Plan process and questioned the approach to this development as site specific zoning. Ms. Annon questioned how this exercise for the St. Pat's site will interact and influence the Centre Plan and expressed concern that many development exercises are happening in tandem with the Centre Plan and decisions are being made before the Plan has been created.

Mr. Ritchie responded by sharing that the urban design team is running both the Centre Plan as well as this project and they are looking for continuity. He commented that the Municipal Planning Strategy has

not been updated since before amalgamation and continued to explain the Centre Plan and site specific amendments processes and how those are fitting in to the Centre Plan.

Ms. Annon further commented that it would be interesting to consider the site for uses other than commercial/residential, like a new hospital or the new art gallery. She also expressed concern about the “wedding cake” design and commented that she would like to see better innovative design.

Ms. Ann Marie McAdams, Windsor Street commented that she looks forward to seeing the site developed beyond a rental property. Ms. McAdams shared that she would like to see the site developed as a transportation hub and parking garage which would enable carpooling, taxi stands and bixi bikes. She also suggested ways to make the development sustainable and have a greater community feel.

Mr. Ben Wedge, John Street shared moderate concerns regarding tower height and expressed support for the style of the design to minimize impact on pedestrians. He shared concerns with the density on the site. Mr. Wedge commented that the design could improve the number of family units and he supports the incorporation of townhouses, particularly on the quieter streets which may not be able to support commercial. Mr. Wedge he commented that the bicycle parking requirement was unambitious considering the site’s proximity to biking corridors. He also commented that the proposal should limit storefronts to four, five and six metres to encourage smaller local shops as tenants and suggested having one exception per street front to enable one larger anchor tenant. Mr. Wedge commented that he supports the inclusion car-sharing on the site. He also encouraged that affordable housing for families be incorporated into the proposal.

Ms. Margie MacDonald, Cedar Street shared concerns around the density and height being proposed and worried it would be precedent-setting. She echoed concerns around affordable housing and shared the need for more diversity within the neighbourhood.

Ms. Pat Whitman, Wellington Street commented on the unique character of Quinpool Road and shared her support of small business. She expressed concerns for reduced parking in the area. Ms. Whitman also expressed concerns with the other proposed developments in the area being considered in isolation. She expressed concern with delivery servicing and commented that it would not be sufficient enough to support businesses. Ms. Whitman also shared that she would like to see public art incorporated into the design.

Ms. Pam Cooley, Clifton Street shared that she is a cofounder of Car Share Atlantic. She commented that she would like to see the healthy neighbourhood perspective be a priority for this development and suggested that mobility, in all aspects, plays an important role in achieving this. Ms. Cooley expressed concerns with height being proposed and the precedence that the municipality is setting. She also shared concerns with site specific zoning being accommodated before the completion of the Centre Plan. As well, Ms. Cooley questioned the sustainability requirements for this project.

Mr. Ritchie responded that presently sustainability has not yet been addressed in the Land Use By-law and commented that staff focused on influence of form and mass rather than performance of the development. He shared that staff would look to reconsider the encouragement of a sustainable development.

Mr. Steve Parcell, Duncan Street shared his disappointment with the WSP report as well as the changes made to the RC5 provisions. He suggested that the information presented in the proposal could also be summarized in chart form to make it easier to identify what is fixed, variable and missing. He continued to discuss how improvements could be made to the process. He commented that with the current proposal the developer would still be controlling areas of significant impact on the neighbourhood including, population density, unit mix, unit size, total number of units, affordability of units, parking and wind impact. He questioned why the municipality would assign these decisions to a developer.

Mr. Tristan Cleveland, Duncan Street shared his disappointment that the project would not provide a density bonus and shared that he would like to see a way to provide for a community benefit. He also expressed concerns of the streetwall height and encouraged that it promote a friendly and walkable experience. Mr. Cleveland also echoed comments made related to sustainability best practices.

Mr. Ian Porter, Welsford Street questioned access and parking restriction for this development. He also expressed concerns with the impact of this development on traffic in the area and asked for further clarification.

Mr. Ritchie responded that the intent is to keep traffic to main arterials including Oxford and Quinpool. He acknowledged the high traffic rerouted to Monastery Lane and Allan Street. He continued to discuss measures being incorporated to alleviate traffic congestion in the area.

Mr. Ritchie and Ms. Miller thanked the community for attending the Public Information Meeting.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Cailin MacDonald
Legislative Support