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Item No.

Marine Drive, Valley & Canal Community Council
March 26, 2008

TO: Chair and Members of Harbour East Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: Cathie O'Toole
Cathie O'Toole, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: March 1, 2008

SUBJECT: Canal Greenway Phase II - Coordinated Open Space Development Plan

ORIGIN

Staff undertook a public open space development planning exercise for the former Starr Manufacturing Lands to further conceptual work already completed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Marine Drive, Valley & Canal Community Council:

- 1) Approve the Canal Greenway Phase II - Coordinated Open Space Development Plan as the preferred direction for the public lands associated with the Starr Property.
- 2) Forward this information to Regional Council to inform their discussions with respect to the five year Capital Plan.

BACKGROUND

HRM commissioned the firm of CBCL Ltd and their associates (Ekistics, CRM Group and LandDesign Engineering) to prepare a Coordinated Open Space Development Plan for the former Starr Property and surrounding lands in Downtown Dartmouth. Consultants turned in their final report late fall of 2006 (attached). Further work was undertaken in the summer of 2007 to assess the value of archeological assets on the site associated with the three industrial uses of the site (first canal, second canal and inclined plane, and Starr Manufacturing). The decision was made to move ahead with a full archeological dig prior to any further detailed planning work when a preliminary dig in the fall of 2006 uncovered more artifacts than were previously understood to be in the location of a major planned park element. The benefit of this further work served to bring refinements to the design work for purposes of phasing and budgeting.

The Municipality acquired the Starr Manufacturing site in Downtown Dartmouth in 1996, and two adjacent parcels on Pine Street extension in 1997. In subsequent years, HRM considered plans for site redevelopment for commercial and residential uses, but these were largely abandoned due to the extent of artifacts of archaeological significance related to the Shubenacadie Canal found on the property. Only a small portion of the site was sold and redeveloped (Provident Developments Inc. constructed a four storey, 36 unit condominium) and the remainder of the property was rezoned to 'Park and Open Space' by HRM in 2005.

In 2002, HRM and the Shubenacadie Canal Commission commissioned the Canal Greenway Study Phase I to explore, at a very conceptual level, opportunities for development of a heritage park and trail through the Starr property. These opportunities were explored at a more detailed level in the Phase II study attached, which is the subject of this report.

A steering committee consisting of staff from the various business units who would ultimately be involved in project implementation worked with consultants in the preparation of this study including staff from Planning & Development, Capital District, Recreation, Tourism & Culture, Public Works & Transportation, Real Property & Asset Management, Design Services, and Environmental Management Services. A member of the Shubenacadie Canal Commission also sat on the steering committee.

DISCUSSION

The attached study shows the great potential of the Starr site and surrounding lands to be developed as a linear heritage park which links the Trans Canada Trail between Sullivan's Pond and the Dartmouth Waterfront. Along the trail various features could be interpreted, both natural and cultural. The main focal point of the park is proposed to be an interpretation of the features that unites the many historical eras of the site. Of particular interest is the turbine chamber, roughly in line with the terminus of Pleasant Street. The turbine chamber contains two original walls dating from the era of the first canal and once contained the turbine which powered the hauling of ships

along the inclined plane and later supported manufacturing activities at the Starr Factory. The 2007 archeological dig uncovered a rich history of industrial use highlighting “adaptability and ingenuity” as the primary story to be interpreted. Other features of the park are described briefly below, and in more detail in the attached report. The consultants also evaluated the site for its suitability as a potential location for a small museum, but for a number of reasons, ultimately recommended that the best use of the site was for passive open space.

Public Participation

Two public information meetings were held in association with this project. The first was held early on in the design process to solicit ideas and feedback from the public. Over 100 members of the public turned out and after a brief presentation, worked together in groups to put on paper their visions for the site. The second meeting was held after the consultant’s had completed the bulk of their design work, but before they finalized the report. The purpose of the second meeting was to test the final design ideas, and this meeting reaffirmed the great deal of support that exists in the community for developing a high caliber interpretive park at this location

Proposal Overview

Completion of Trans Canada Trail between Sullivan’s Pond and Dartmouth Waterfront

Through the Starr Property, the trail would follow the original alignment of the inclined plane marine railway which was part of the Shubenacadie Canal, reinforcing the importance of this alignment as a centuries-old transportation corridor.

Intersection Realignment

To improve pedestrian friendliness of a number of intersections, but specifically to create space for a multi-use trail on the south side of Alderney Drive between Portland/ Prince Albert (at Marine House) and the waterfront. This initiative needs to be co-ordinated with other planned improvements for the intersection.

Daylight Piped Watercourse

Sawmill Creek runs through a portion of the site as a piped watercourse taking drainage waters from Sullivan’s pond to the harbour. The proposal contemplates daylighting a portion of this watercourse and re-establishing fish passage, if possible.

Pine Street Extension Closure

The proposal shows that it would be possible to close the end of Pine Street off in a cul-de-sac so as to make more space to daylight the piped watercourse and allow a more continuous trail connection.

Interpretative features

Turbine chamber interpretive feature, reconstruction of ‘cradle and rails’ used to haul ships up the marine railway, symbolic ‘outline’ of the footprint of the Starr Factory, excavation and presentation of the power house, headrace and portions of the first canal are all elements for interpretation. Panels or artifacts to display the complex history of the site are proposed. Of particular interest is the Canal

and Starr Factory, its designation as a national historic industrial event and what was manufactured there.

Other

Sidewalk on the park side of Prince Albert Road, landscaping, a children's playground, level area for a possible outdoor community rink (not refrigerated) on site of old skate factory are also proposed park elements.

Next Steps and Issues

Detail design is underway for the first phase of the park which will entail landscaping and completion of the trail. Some detailed work is also underway on presentation of the archeological remains at the center of the site.

One issue Council may face is whether or not to proceed to daylight the stream. It is very costly proposition largely because of the amount of excavation, retaining walls, and soil disposal that would be required. There is also question as to adequate storm flows to maintain a recreated stream. The consultants' conceptual grading plan showed that not all of the soils that would need to be excavated to accommodate the natural channel could be retained on site. Soil disposal from this site is very costly due to in ground contaminants that are the legacy of 100 years of industrial use on the property.

Policy Overview

Implementation of this project is supported by a number of policies in the Downtown Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy as provided in Attachment A.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

While this is an information report only, and Council is not being asked to commit any monies to this project at this time, a brief overview of the detailed budget for project implementation is provided in this section

Overall budget to design and construct the entire project has been estimated at approximately \$5.4 million. The largest item from a budget perspective is the redevelopment of the Alderney/Portland/Prince Albert intersection (\$1.4 million) which includes about \$740,000 allocated towards a worst case scenario that the 9' diameter storm pipe needs to be replaced through the intersection (the pipe has been identified as requiring upgrades, however lining it may be a less expensive option).

Stream Daylighting-- \$568,519 and Marine Railroad Basin-- \$468,900 (this may be partially offset by the fact that the pipe needs to be replaced or lined anyway, but may increase if soil cannot be disposed of locally)

Detailed Design -- \$300,000

Park Elements - such as playground, interpretive elements, landscaping, lighting, etc – \$595,756

All project elements will be subject to annual capital budget approvals of Regional Council

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

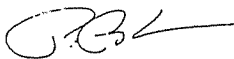
- 1) Community Council could choose not to adopt the plan in principle and direct staff to pursue other directions for the municipal lands associated with the project

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Relevant Policies of the Downtown Dartmouth MPS
Attached under separate cover Consultant’s Report titled Canal Greenway Phase II -
Coordinated Open Space Development Plan.

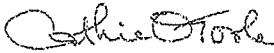
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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Attachment A

Relevant Policies of the Downtown Dartmouth MPS

Intersections

There are several intersections which cause confusion among motorists, or are seen as dangerous to pedestrians. Foremost is the Portland Street/Alderney Drive/Prince Albert Road intersection, where the roads meet at odd angles. This area is seen as dangerous by many pedestrians because of the number of lanes and volume of traffic with several left and right turn possibilities, awkward intersection alignments, and incomplete sidewalks which inhibit crossings. Access to the Shubenacadie Canal park along the waterfront is a major problem, and the intersection is an obstacle to completing the multi use trail between the waterfront and Sullivan's Pond.

Other intersections which do not function well are at Prince Albert Road/Ochterloney Street, Crichton Avenue/Ochterloney Street, Victoria Rd/Thistle Street, Five Corners (Portland/Pleasant/Albert) and many intersections along the length of Ochterloney Street between Pine Street and Alderney Drive where grades impede driver's visibility. Possible solutions include redesign and reconstruction, a potential reduction of traffic turning movements, or improvements to pedestrian and vehicular signage.

Policy T-1

The municipality in cooperation with the Downtown Dartmouth Development Corporation shall undertake a transportation study of the downtown by 2002 to determine the need and priority for capital improvements to streets and intersections in the downtown, to address possible traffic pattern changes, pedestrian and cyclist needs, and on-street parking. In particular, the study shall address the following issues:

- intersection improvements at Five Corners; Portland/Alderney/Prince Albert; Ochterloney/Prince Albert; and Crichton/Maple/Ochterloney, Victoria Road south; and any others as determined by the study;*

Policy T-8

The completion of the Trans Canada Trail from Sullivan's Pond to the Bridge, and along the harbour should be a priority to encourage increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic (refer to open space policies).

There is an expressed community desire that the widening of existing roads not be undertaken at the expense of community character. This concern particularly relates to the Prince Albert Road corridor. Where widenings are seen as necessary, area residents should have full opportunity to consult with municipal staff and councillors in a public forum.

Policy T-10

Prior to undertaking any road widenings, public consultation should be undertaken to ensure local

input. Road widening shall be discouraged where it is not compatible with the area, or where improved transit would be a viable alternative.

Downtown Action Program

A total of 50 items are contained within the ten year action plan containing a mix of action items including projects requiring capital expenditures, programs which tend to on-going and come out of operating budgets, studies for initiatives requiring more research and analysis, and regulations which involve land use, development review or other municipal policies or processes which may need to be implemented. The action items are presented under the various sections of this plan, and cross references are included for the specific policies. Three timeframes are set out which reflect the relative priority levels: short term (1-3 years), medium (4-6 years), long (7 or longer). Ongoing refers to initiatives already underway.

Key high priority initiatives are:

2. Development of residential opportunity parcels
3. **anchor development on the Starr/Greenvale site**
4. Alderney landing theatre/market complex
5. **Completion of the Multi-use trail**
6. Waterfront trail and physical improvements in Dartmouth Cove area

Financing the Action Program

In times of fiscal restraint, creative solutions will be needed to fund the various programs, projects and studies required to implement the downtown action program.

Previously streetscape improvements referenced in section 4.2 of this plan were funded directly through Provincial Main Street programmes which no longer exist. Starting in the 1999 budget year, limited municipal funds will be made available on a project basis to be shared between all downtown business organizations within HRM for streetscape improvements. Downtown Dartmouth Development Corporation should seek to obtain a portion of these funds to undertake the streetscape improvements identified by this plan. The 1999-2000 capital budget contains a total of 150,000 for all projects within the municipality for this budget year.

Many jurisdictions employ techniques such as “tax increment financing” which allows local governments to fund projects by keeping the increase in property tax collections that normally results from new construction and rising assessments in an area. This money is used for funds needed to upgrade buildings, acquire properties, institute public capital improvements, create incentives for the private sector to redevelop vacant or underutilized properties. In effect, the tax rate is frozen for the benefit of local governments and any tax revenues that result from increases in the tax base flow from the collection office to a designated redevelopment agency, rather than to general revenues. Unfortunately, in this province, legislation precludes municipalities from using this tool, however

discussions should be undertaken to explore this option possibly through provincial programs.

Another option which would be immediately available to Council is to implement an area rate applied to a larger area encompassing for example, the former city of Dartmouth which would mean overall the impact would be relatively small, with the larger community (who benefits) paying for the physical improvements needed.

Partnerships with other public agencies, the private sector and various community groups will be another means by which this action program will be implemented.

Although not desirable, Council may choose to distribute the action program over several additional budget years to minimize the impact on the public at large.

Policy I-5

Council should investigate alternative financing strategies to fund the initiatives included in its action plan. The following measures should be considered: tax increment financing, area rates, partnerships with the community and private sector, and if deemed necessary extension of the action plan over a longer implementation period.

Starr/Greenvale Site Reuse/ Redevelopment (Policy B-9)	Project	✓(short term				HRM
Trans Canada trail Sullivan's Pond to Bridge (O-7)	Project	✓				HRM/Private Sector