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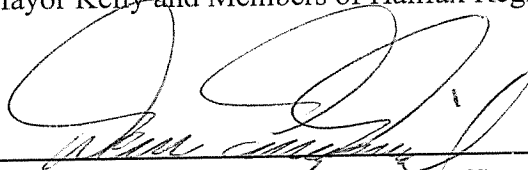


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Halifax Regional Council
September 26, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer

Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: June 12, 2006

SUBJECT: Bloomfield

ORIGIN

Information report dated April 4, 2006 stated a status report would be forthcoming
May 30, 2006 Centre for youth at Bloomfield - Councillor Murphy
May 02, 2006 Petition - Bloomfield Centre Maintenance - Councillor Murphy
Staff update on project status

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- ▶ approve the guiding principles and criteria for Phase III of the Bloomfield Project
- ▶ approve proceeding with Phase III

BACKGROUND

HRM has been reviewing Bloomfield Centre, prompted by the facility's recurring operating deficit and the poor condition of the buildings. The status of the site indicates that either a major re-configuration or replacement is required. Through the efforts of the area Councillor, there is an opportunity to move beyond the programming constraints imposed by what presently exists to create a new vision - one that is sensitive to the character and needs of the existing neighborhood while engaging residents and stakeholders in a vision of what is possible and desirable for the future.

DISCUSSION

The Bloomfield review has been developed in three phases of which Phase I and II are complete.

The **first phase** set out to gather information about the tenants and user groups of the Bloomfield center. A historical overview was conducted as well as a review of recreational programs and service delivery in the area and on the site.

The **second phase** focussed on the needs and opportunities at the site, including a building condition and environmental assessment, community consultation, financial assessments, heritage and cultural development factors, demographic profiles and a program and service alignment assessment with current tenants and user groups.

Summary of findings:

1. **Tenants:** The Bloomfield site provides inexpensive rental accommodations for an array of non profit organizations **several of whom have no formal link to HRM in terms of mandate and alignment of programming.** Some tenants have mandates that are social service, justice, religious or politically based and **are only indirectly related to HRM's mandate.** Some tenants have remained in the building even though the Service Exchange with the Province was enacted in 1996. Staff are researching the best approach for transition options for these tenants in a timely manner over the next 18 months to coincide with Council's decision on the best reuse or redevelopment options for the buildings. A transition plan will be developed and implemented that is sensitive to the physical requirements of the affected tenants while also respecting their sense of belonging to their broader community and will coincide with Phase III consultation. The CAO has approached the Deputy Minister of Community Services to initiate discussions related to social service related groups.

In addition, leasing currently tends to be on a per room basis, rather than a per square foot costing, and tenants become accustomed to facilities that might exceed their ability to maintain should rental rates increase to match costs or if availability ceases and they are displaced into the market. Any space allotted in the potential redevelopment for tenants will ensure congruency between the tenant's mandates and those of HRM.

2. *Program Users and Future Program Direction:* The majority of the general recreation program users reside in the immediate neighbourhood and are predominately seniors and persons with disabilities. This population can be vulnerable in terms of low income, mobility and social isolation. Within the neighbourhood there are boarding homes, group homes, rental accommodations, and seniors housing. Recreation and cultural programming for persons with special needs (mental health consumers, disabled persons, seniors) emphasizes passive recreation and leisure pursuits, such as television or film viewing, small group games (cards, board games), arts and crafts, day trips, etc. and is aligned with the HRM programming mandate. HRM's mandate in recreational and cultural programming emphasizes public access, affordability, and entry level instructional opportunities, therefore, the recreation programs on site conform to HRM priorities in terms of inclusion. As stated in a previous report, staff recognize this requirement for building space on the Bloomfield site for such purposes.

3: *Rentals and other adult programming:* Active recreational activities, such as organized sport, focuses on instructional classes or competitive leagues for adults. Sport groups are facility specific, ie a function of the gymnasium and as such would be transferable to alternative convenient locations with comparable or more upgraded amenities such as changing rooms and parking. Please note that the Bloomfield gymnasium would remain opened until the Citadel gym is officially opened.

4: *Outdoor:* The outdoor amenities, such as basketball court and tennis courts, are not used in a highly organized fashion and are in poor condition. There are upgraded courts in other areas of the district. Based on the initial community consultation, there is a greater need to create space for a "neighbourhood square" concept and expanded green space.

5: *Community Consultation:* As part of the initial neighborhood consultation and focus groups, general themes that emerged included an emphasis on culture, community based recreation programs, design excellence, landscape architecture and opportunities for heritage preservation, social gatherings, seniors, volunteerism and programming for persons with disabilities. Opportunities for youth did not emerge as paramount; most likely because of the close proximity of Needham, George Dixon, St. Andrew's, and the Pavilion that already focus on youth programming and service delivery. The first three recreation centres listed above are strategically located in neighbourhoods with a concentration of public housing owned and operated by Halifax Regional Metropolitan Housing Authority. Census data shows these neighbourhoods have a high representation of new immigrants and racially visible persons, along with low income or single parent households who maybe vulnerable and at risk of social marginalization. Arguably, such neighbourhoods should be considered a higher priority in terms of serving at risk children and youth.

However , as part of the consultation in Phase III, staff will research Councillor Murphy's request to consider a youth based facility. There may be potential to include some combined youth and cultural initiatives should a full or partial redevelopment of the site be approved.

6. *Buildings:* The buildings themselves are not designed for their present use. The interior design is that of a typical school featuring wide corridors and stairways, the size of individual rooms tends to be comparatively large with multiple windows and few built in amenities. These factors, among

others including the overall infrastructure deterioration, and the \$6.6 million required to remediate the buildings contribute to higher operating costs such as cleaning, heat and ventilation, and security. As such, it will most likely not be feasible to retain the majority of the site but rather invest in a partial or full scale redevelopment.

Phase III

The Bloomfield Centre presents an opportunity for residents to participate in creating a new vision for this property. The next stage of the review process can use the information gathered in Phase I and II to maximize the opportunities presented by this site:

- ▶ what changes can be made to the existing site to achieve the “highest and best public use” of these public lands through “adaptive reuse”.
- ▶ how can a redesigned site contribute to the cultural, social, and economic vitality of the neighbourhood?
- ▶ what changes could enhance people’s pride of place, preserve a sense of local identity (it’s distinct character and history), and position the site as a dynamic participant in the region’s social and economic growth

The following are proposed Guiding Principles for the strategic renewal, re-use &/or re-development of buildings and site

- Project must strive to be self-funded (i.e. through sale of part of property and/or from a commercial undertaking associated with project).
- Recognize the historical and heritage features of the site
- Program needs are determined by HRM mandate & the CRS Blueprint
- Maximization/strategic use of private and public partnerships including community partnership opportunities in site redevelopment and operations
- Integrate Regional Planning mixed use principles
- Integrate Urban Design Principles (fit new buildings into existing urban fabric, possible signature building)
- Environmental Design Principles and Greening of the site

Criteria for refining program needs and space requirements

- Indoor Facility Master Plan
- Bloomfield Centre Rationalization and Review: Phase I & II Reports
- Halifax Regional Council Priorities (i.e Youth, Community Recreation, Community Development)
- Focus on seniors and persons with disabilities as per Phase II research
- Corporate Initiatives and projects including the Cultural Plan and Immigration Action Plan
- Neighborhood based programming
- Avoid duplication of programs and services offered within the community
- Program outcomes and public benefit need to be measurable
- A strong public art and community gathering component
- Improved budget/financial implications
- Public needs/wants via consultation process that are congruent with the above requirements.

Note: The above Guiding Principles and Criteria screen out duplications of programs and services offered within the community and therefore such facilities as a gymnasium would not be included within future program and service recommendations.

High Level Financial Sensitivity Analysis

Following Phase II staff drafted a series of potential options for the Bloomfield site for the purposes of examining, *at a very high level*, the respective cost, constraints and opportunities. These Options are presented in the Table below and were developed based on the following *key assumptions*:

- ▶ Site will be developed as Mixed Use (Commercial/Residential/Institutional)
- ▶ The analysis does not address building design/form or placement
- ▶ 188 Residential Units
- ▶ 56,064 SF Commercial Building Lot (net of parking)
- ▶ Demolition \$700,000 (all three buildings)
- ▶ Environmental Risk \$150,000
- ▶ Market Contingency 5%
- ▶ HRM Community Centre Component is 20,000 SF

This information is intended to provide some context to the financial aspect of the project. Council should be advised that the figures presented, although conservative, are only indicative for planning purposes and are subject to further financial refinement through formal appraisal and environmental and design due diligence concurrent with and following the completion and recommendations of Phase III.

Financing is planned as a redevelopment of an HRM site using site assets to finance future directions, not as sale of land. (although some redevelopment options may include a component of land sales)

Option	B	C	D(1)	D(2)	E
	Retain Fielding Building and Courtyard and sell balance	Retain Fielding and Commons Buildings and Courtyard and sell balance	Retain Land to Build HRM Community Center and Sell Balance	Sell entire site for redevelopment and lease back HRM Community Center space	Sell entire site and reinvest proceeds in other HRM Centers in District 11 ¹
Estimated Sale Proceeds	\$3,487,677	\$2,793,707	\$4,164,846	\$4,772,846	\$4,772,846
HRM Reinvestment	\$1,762,500	\$4,037,300	\$4,080,000	\$4,500,000	
Balance	\$1,725,177	(\$1,243,593)	\$84,846	\$272,846	\$4,772,846

Proposed Public & Tenant Planning Process

The aim of this initiative is to maximize the benefits of the site for the neighbourhood, surrounding community and general public. Those benefits can come in many forms and include but very likely go beyond recreation programming. However, the public needs to direct staff as to the most pertinent and highest priority benefits, as the site cannot be all things to all people. Therefore, staff are planning to engage the community, building on the findings to date, to further refine existing work regarding the best re-use of the Bloomfield site. Staff intend to use a similar public process as was recently used by HRM and the Province to plan the Spring Garden Public Lands. The process would be designed within the framework provided by the guiding principles and criteria. That public process is regarded as very successful and there are many similarities between the goals of the two projects.

The proposed process involves an analysis of surrounding conditions, demographics, historic and cultural research, urban design, economic trend and market analysis as well as other staff analysis and public input to date. This information will be packaged and shared in a series of public workshops and meetings to collaboratively develop a set of options for the site in plan form. Special consideration is given to the impact and benefits to the surrounding neighbourhood. Proposed time lines would see the formation of a stakeholder advisory committee this summer and public consultation taking place this fall. Community and/or Regional Council would be presented with the results in the new year for their consideration. Depending upon the Council's direction, a plan for implementation would be formulated and carried out by staff for both the redevelopment option and transition plan for tenants.

¹ St. Andrews, Dixon, Needham, Devonshire, Existing Parks/Open Spaces etc.

Tenants:

With respect to property rationalizations and consolidations and in the event that the property, or some portion of the property is re-developed, HRM staff are proposing some long-term tenants may be relocated to other HRM-owned facilities or displaced into the market. In the event of a re-development, a portion of any operational savings, if any are accrued, could be designated to provide short-term transition assistance to some long-term tenants displaced into the market in accordance with formal criteria and procedures approved by Regional Council. Such assistance would only be provided through the re-allocation of operational savings or from a re-allocation of existing funds from a departmental budget.

During Phase III staff will conduct meetings with appropriate Provincial Community Services Staff on clarifying roles and responsibilities with respect to those indirectly related to HRM's mandate. As well, staff will continue to update tenants and user groups throughout Phase III.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The approved 06/07 capital budget includes \$75,000 for the Bloomfield Redevelopment in project CB300773.

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) Council could choose to not proceed with Phase III and the project not move forward. This is not a recommended alternative as the full study has not been completed which would outline the best options and the benefits to the community and HRM would not be realized.
- 2) Council could choose not to proceed with Phase III and instead direct staff to redevelop or retain various portions of, or retain the full site. This is not a recommended alternative as the full study has not been completed which would denote the best options.

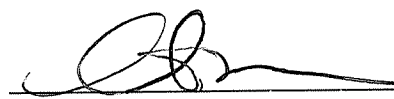
ATTACHMENTS

1. Site map

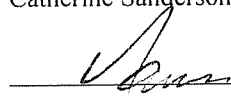
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.


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