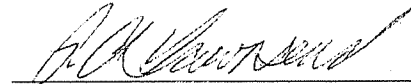


**Harbour East Community Council
June 9, 2011**

TO: Chair and Members of Harbour East Community Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Phillip Townsend, Director Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: May 27, 2011

SUBJECT: **Dartmouth Common Master Plan**

ORIGIN

CAO award of RFP 08-168 on January 06, 2009, for Consulting Services - Dartmouth Common Master Plan

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Harbour East Community Council:

1. Approve the Dartmouth Common Master Plan in principle as a guideline for future management and development of the Dartmouth Common; and
2. Refer the short and medium term investment priorities to the Capital Steering Committee for possible inclusion in the Five Year Project Budget.

BACKGROUND

The Dartmouth Common is located at the northern edge of Downtown Dartmouth near the foot of the MacDonald bridge; a significant gateway into the City. This location is significant as it sits within the regional centre (HRM's urban core) which has been identified for residential and commercial densification under HRM's Regional Municipal Planning Strategy. The Common is also significant to the regional and urban open space network and is the largest park space in Downtown Dartmouth.

The Dartmouth Common was established in 1788 when King George III granted 150 acres of land to be held in special trust for the people of Dartmouth. During these early years of settlement, the Common was shared by the community to be used for basic needs including the grazing of livestock and burying the deceased. Over time it has evolved to encompass more recreational and educational use. Large areas have also been developed for commercial and residential use resulting in a permanent alienation of Common lands. Today there are approximately 99 acres of Municipally-owned lands within the Dartmouth Common boundary including open space, public facilities, and roadways (ATTACHMENT A). The very definition of what a Common is and should be has sparked public debate and controversy surrounding the development of these lands since its early inception. Similar debate has also taken place with respect to the development and use of the Halifax Common.

Growing concern about encroachment on Common land resulted in the adoption of the Dartmouth Common Act in 1986. This provincial legislation was adopted to preserve and protect the Common for the use and enjoyment of present and future inhabitants of the City of Dartmouth. The intent of the Act is to protect the Common as public open space. However, amendments to the Act enable the future enhancement and expansion of the Dartmouth Sportsplex to ensure it continues as a viable public recreational facility. Dartmouth High School and Bicentennial Junior High also located on the Common, are permitted renovations provided no additional land is built upon. More recent legislative amendments were approved in 2008 to permit the future development of a transit terminal on up to six acres of land. ATTACHMENT B shows the evolution of the Dartmouth Common Boundary and legislative amendments.

The need to plan for the future protection, enhancement and management of the Dartmouth Common was identified by the community in the mid 1980's, resulting in the 1989 Dartmouth Common Enhancement Plan. Although the Plan was never officially adopted by the City of Dartmouth, the issues that emerged through that work have carried through to more recent planning efforts. In 2005, the need for a master plan was identified in the HRM Capital District business plan. Funding was secured at that time through ACOA; however, organizational changes caused a delay in initiating the project. The advancement of various facility development projects on the Common has again raised the need for a Plan in order to set clear goals and objectives for managing these historically significant public lands. The Dartmouth Common Master Plan was initiated in January 2009 by HRM. Local consultant CBCL was hired to assist with the Plan's development.

DISCUSSION

Planning Context & Rationale:

The HRM as public trustee of the Common, is obligated to care for, protect and manage the Common for the inhabitants of the Municipality. Without a vision and strategy for how the Common will be cared for, the Municipality cannot adequately fulfill this role.

There is a need for a Dartmouth Common Plan which reflects current issues and opportunities and development needs. Past planning and development efforts, including the 1985 Dartmouth Common Enhancement Plan, were reflective of the community's needs and values at the time and were important in raising the profile of the Common as a historically significant public asset. At this point in the history of the Common, there is a need to better define the legislative, policy and regulatory framework that governs the use and management of Common lands. The Municipality, as trustee, is taking the initiative to work with the community and government partners to develop a compelling vision and strategy for protecting the Common for years to come.

In the past two years alone, expansion plans for the Transit Terminal, Dartmouth Sportsplex and Dartmouth High School have been developed. None of these plans were considered from the full perspective of the larger Dartmouth Common Open Space network or the Dartmouth Common Act which aims to protect green space. The Master Plan helps to align these facility projects for the greater benefit of the public and the community's objectives for protecting the Common. Ensuring a more functional and sustainable open space network is top priority.

The direction under the Dartmouth Common Master Plan is also linked closely to several of HRM's focus areas and current priorities including those related to land-use, open space, culture, recreation, transportation and urban design. The master plan recognizes the social, environmental and economic value of the Common as a regional asset and will have a positive impact on Council's ability to advance several municipal objectives for sustainable regional development.

The Plan has been developed through extensive public and stakeholder engagement, and community and site analysis. The final draft of the Plan was completed in June 2010 and has been endorsed by the public and a project Steering Committee. With support from the community, staff is now bringing the Master Plan to Harbour East Community Council for consideration and approval.

The planning process was aimed at:

- Establishing a vision, values & actions for the future use, enhancement & protection of the Common;
- Recognizing and enhancing the public image and character of the Common;
- Building collaboration for future development and improvement of the Common; and
- Developing objectives and an implementation framework to guide capital investment and strategic planning for the HRM and its partners.

Study Area & Common Boundary

The original Common boundaries granted by the Crown have been used to define the Master Plan study area (ATTACHMENT A). While some of the lands within this boundary no longer fall under the Dartmouth Common Act (now incorporated under the Halifax Charter), there are recommendations in the Plan that can help to reconnect these lands to the Common including a common design language for built elements, promotion of the Common through interpretive signage and markers, urban design and landscape design treatments, and emphasis on active transportation connections both within and outside of the Common boundaries.

Municipally owned open space lands that fall within the Common boundary are subject to the Dartmouth Common Act and cannot be built upon. Should any existing public facilities on the Common be removed in future, those lands will be repatriated back into the Common as open space. Other Common lands that have been privately developed are not subject to the Dartmouth Common Act.

Vision & Values

“The Dartmouth Common is a gateway to a great community; both a welcoming, open oasis of green-space and a lively civic core that sets the stage for both commonplace and extraordinary aspects of our lives.”

The Vision reflects the desire to protect the Dartmouth Common as an important public open space and civic gateway to Dartmouth. The role of the Common as a public destination and hub for education, recreation and pedestrian movement, is also integral to the vision.

The Master Plan recognizes that over the years the use of Common lands has evolved into a more dynamic and multi-functional public realm. It addresses the need to balance open space and facility uses and to ensure that thoughtful design, public engagement, and strategic objectives guide all future decisions impacting the Common.

The Plan is shaped by community values including open space, community-building, recreation & health, quiet reflection, beauty & views, heritage, arts & culture, connection, education & ecology, and sustenance. The community has expressed concern that there is a gap between what they value and what is seen on the Common; the Master Plan aims to mend this gap.

Goals & Guiding Principles:

A number of goals and actions form the basis for the Master Plan. They have been developed through public and stakeholder consultation, site analysis, case study research and design.

Goal #1: A strong sense of place

The Plan aims to ensure that the Dartmouth Common maintains a strong sense of place and identity within the community and the region. This means building on its strengths as an identifiable gateway into Dartmouth and its character as a special place.

Guiding Principles:

- **GP1 Define strong edges** – people should know when they are entering the Common
- **GP2 Allow for deep connectivity** – build legible and linked nodes, streets and pathways
- **GP3 Develop a Common Language** – tie the visual aspects and character together

Goal #2: A Landmark Destination

The Dartmouth Common should be a place that attracts people whether they are commuting by transit, walking through or coming for an activity or event. It should work as an interconnected open space network that fulfills all of these functions in harmony.

Guiding Principles:

- **GP4 Establish the Common as a hub of activity** – support events and intentional community programming
- **GP5 Promote and Celebrate the Common** – tell the story - recognize important sites and historical and cultural identity
- **GP6 Recognize Opportunity Sites** – use vacant lands and corridors to weave together Common lands

Goal #3: Enhance the Common Experience

The Common should provide a great place for people who access it daily whether they are travelling, working, or playing. Special events and activities will also be recognized as an important activity on the Common.

Guiding Principles:

- **GP7 Enhance Existing Public Functions** – understand the community importance of schools, and other public facilities to the vitality of the Common
- **GP8 Space for Community Building & Events** – enable a diversity of spaces (informal and formal) that enhance the overall public function of the Common
- **GP9 Facilitate Daily Travel** – travel needs to be safe, enjoyable and convenient. Public transportation and active transportation paths must work in harmony. Transportation must respect the Common first and foremost as an open space.
- **GP10 Foster Health and Safety** – give special consideration to children, youth, seniors & those with physical mobility issues. Reduce the negative effects of cars and buses. Use design to reduce crime.
- **GP11 Preserve Views** – protect spectacular views and promote them as part of the overall experience on the Common

Goal #4: Improve Green-space and Open Space

Open spaces on the Common will not be treated as left-over land. They must be regarded as central to the form and function of the Common as an accessible, safe, and enjoyable place.

Guiding Principles:

- **GP12 Respect the Natural Context** – design to respond to the environment. Respect the balance between people & nature. Plant & wildlife can be restored in small but significant ways.
- **GP13 Improve Connectivity between Spaces** – create connected corridors, nodes and destinations within the Common
- **GP14 Better Landscaping and Maintenance** – ensure better defined and cared for spaces to encourage more appropriate public use, beauty and respect for the Common

Implementation:

Open Space Recreation Concept – Recreation is the most cherished quality on the Common. Current fragmentation of under-used space should be addressed. A number of passive and active recreation enhancements are recommended.

Highlights:

1. Improvements to the urban wilderness Nantucket Grove area to enhance user enjoyment, safety and natural landscape;
2. Enhancements to St. Paul's Cemetery and waterfront area including repatriation of open spaces and trails connections;
3. Enhancements to Green Road Park area and stronger connections to the Common; and
4. Closure of Thistle Street from the proposed transit terminal to Victoria Road in order to recapture open space.

Circulation Concept – Linking the Dartmouth Common to the surrounding community and the Region is critical to rejuvenation efforts. This includes directions under HRM's Active Transportation Plan to develop a functional and safe network for pedestrians and cyclists (see ATTACHMENT C).

Highlights:

1. Active transportation linkages including multi-use trails connecting important routes along the waterfront, over the bridge, and to Lake Banook;
2. Local neighbourhood connections through smaller internal trails and pedestrian pathways connecting to the schools, Sportsplex, transit terminal and other important nodes; and
3. Improved pedestrian comfort and safety along ROW corridors including Wyse Road and Alderney intersection, Nantucket Avenue and Thistle Street.

Facilities Concept – A strategy for the development of new facilities and renovations to existing facilities is a critical piece of the Master Plan. A detailed analysis and conceptual design exercise was done for the Central Common and the public facilities on those lands. Plans for an expanded transit facility have prompted public debate and community concerns around the loss of open space and more fragmentation of Common lands. While there is public support for transit as a sustainable transportation option, the location on the Common has been controversial. The need to ensure the ongoing viability of facilities on the Common is important. However, this places increasing pressure on a very limited land area. The existing legislation to protect open space must also be taken into consideration. Striking a balance between open space as a top priority and public facility needs will

be addressed through sensitive design, sustainable open space management and coordinated project development.

With respect to outdoor recreational facility development, the Master Plan considers a number of design and functional improvements to key sites. Only built structures that would support outdoor recreational use are considered. Legislative revisions to enable this kind of building on the Common would be required and are recommended as an implementation priority.

Highlights:

1. A coordinated facility enhancement plan that considers future renovations to the High School & Sportsplex, construction of a transit terminal, and a regulation size artificial turf sportsfield (ATTACHMENT D);
2. A new outdoor gym, skating rink, and skate park on the former park school site; and
3. A new outdoor orientation centre on the former City Hall/Library site.

Investment Strategy:

The implementation strategy for the Master Plan is opportunistic in that it seeks to maximize the broad benefits and spin-off impacts of each investment. This approach aims for enhancement projects on the Common that achieve multiple Municipal objectives and maximize cost-sharing opportunities between departments. When ROW or facility improvements are being considered, Real Property Planning will coordinate to implement capital projects under the Dartmouth Common Plan that can improve the outcomes of Councils overall investment. For example, open space enhancements will occur in and around the new transit terminal in order to help integrate that facility into the Common network and increase the usability and quality of green-space within the “urban wilderness” area adjacent to the terminal and Dartmouth High School.

Although the costs to fully implement the Master Plan open space improvements are estimated at \$28,000,000 million dollars over 7 plus years, staff understand the significance of this investment and recognize that a measured and tactical approach is needed. As with each one of HRM’s master plans, staff will work strategically with Council through the annual capital budget process to identify sustainable priority projects for implementation.

The projects presented in the Master Plan represent opportunities identified through the study process. They are a guide to future investment in the Dartmouth Common. Owing to financial realities, pending budget availability, staff is comfortable putting forth for Council consideration as part of future budgets, the following projects for implementation over the next 1 to 7 years. All other projects will need to be considered, prioritized and approved by Council when and if opportunities for implementation present themselves. A full list of enhancement projects under the Master Plan can be found in ATTACHMENT E.

Dartmouth Common Implementation Priorities		
Short to Medium Term Priorities (1 to 7 years)		
Project	Scope	Cost
PARKS PROJECTS		
Urban Wilderness Area & Nantucket Grove	Raise canopy, planting Pathways & lighting Amenities	\$500,000.00
Green Road Trail & Urban Park	Park enhancements Pathway upgrades	\$200,000.00
St. Paul's Cemetery & Waterfront Park	Trails system Removal of invasive plants Landscaping improvements	\$75,000.00
Leighton Dillman Park	Upgrade walking paths New furniture interpretive signage	\$200,000.00
Feasibility & Siting Study for Sportsfield & Ice Surface	Review viability of proposed sportsfield and ice surface on the Common	\$10,000.00
Viewplane Protection	Identify new viewplanes	underway
ROADWAY PROJECTS		
Nantucket Avenue Detailed Design	Design and costing for ROW enhancements	\$150,000.00
Traffic Study: Geary Street & Thistle Closure	Feasibility of traffic realignment	\$60,000.00
Victoria Road enhancements	In alignment with Dartmouth High renovations	\$200,000.00
Alderney Wyse Road detailed design and upgrades	Streetscape improvements in alignment with Sportsplex renovations	\$800,000.00
		TOTAL: \$2,195,000.00

Council could choose to establish a stakeholder and citizen advisory committee to provide advice into the ongoing implementation of the Plan, including prioritization of projects. It is also important that HRM departments are coordinating with respect to budget discussions and capital project implementation. The Master Plan will provide the decision-making framework to support HRM's ongoing decision-making.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time. Harbour East Community Council's approval of the Dartmouth Common Master Plan in principle will provide a decision-making framework and guidance to staff and Council in determining future business plan and budget priorities. Future implementation of the Master Plan will be advanced through the annual capital budget process.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public and stakeholder engagement was key to developing the Master Plan. The methodology included extensive consultation and communication that aimed to involve as many people as possible. The planning team is confident that the community was effectively engaged and that the collective opinions and wishes of the community are reflected in the Plan.

Engagement Process

- Community Design Workshop and Public Open House
- A "Walk in the Park" Community Based Workshop
- Draft Plan Presentation and Public Open House
- Two survey questionnaires
- E-mails, faxes and phone calls
- Stakeholder interviews – resident groups, school staff, students and school board, Sportsplex, businesses, church groups, Mi'kmaq community, government agencies, HRM staff, park users, local councillors
- Staff Steering Committee and focus groups
- Community Meeting for proposed transit terminal
- Communication initiatives – project web-site, stakeholder e-mail list, local newsletters, school and church bulletins, newspapers, community signs

ALTERNATIVES

1. Harbour East Community Council may choose to approve the Master Plan in principle. This is the recommended action.
2. Harbour East Community Council may choose to revise the Master Plan. This action may necessitate further public engagement and staff reports and is not recommended.

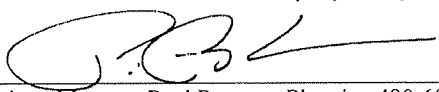
ATTACHMENTS

- ATTACHMENT A Dartmouth Common Study Boundaries
 - ATTACHMENT B Evolution of Dartmouth Common Boundary and Legislative Amendments
 - ATTACHMENT C Active Transportation Connections
 - ATTACHMENT D Facility Capital Projects
 - ATTACHMENT E Dartmouth Common Facility Projects
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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Holly Richardson, Coordinator Real Property Policy, Real Property Planning 490-6889

Report Approved by:

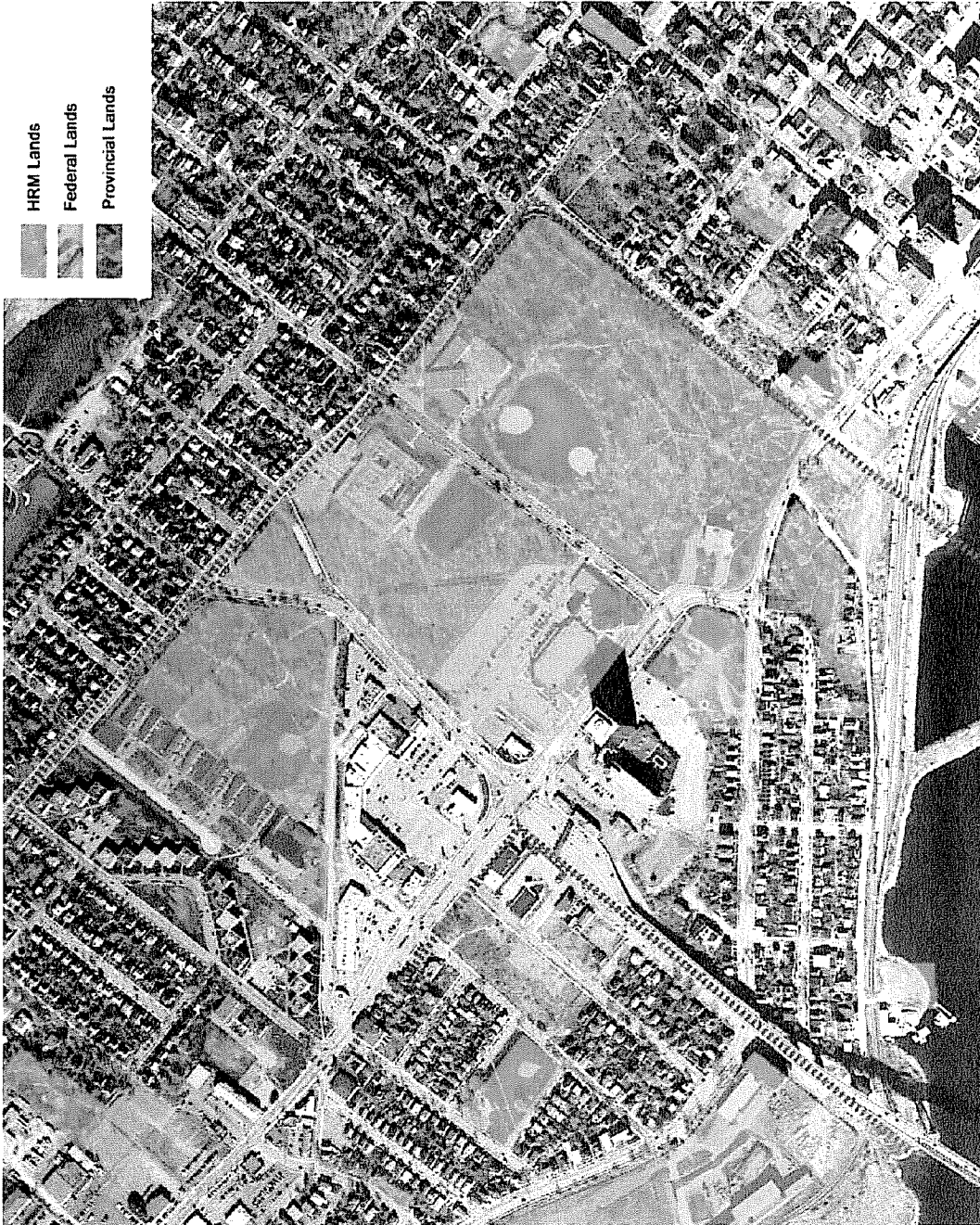

Peter Bigelow, Manager Real Property Planning 490-6047



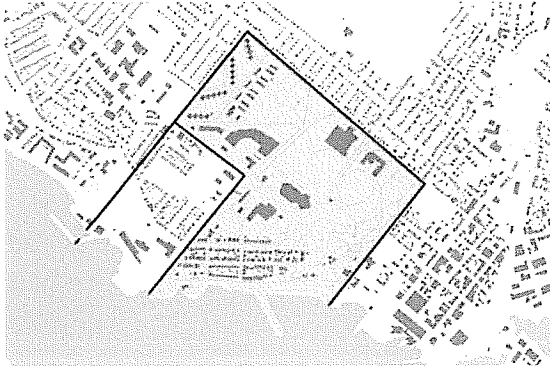
Financial Approval by:

Bruce Fisher, MPA, CMA, A/Director of Finance, 490-6308

ATTACHMENT A
DARTMOUTH COMMON STUDY BOUNDARIES

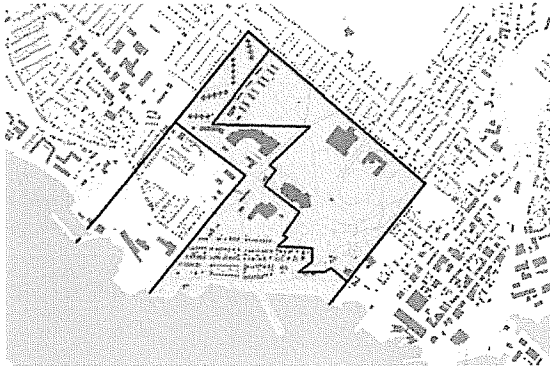


ATTACHMENT B EVOLUTION OF DARTMOUTH COMMON BOUNDARY & LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS



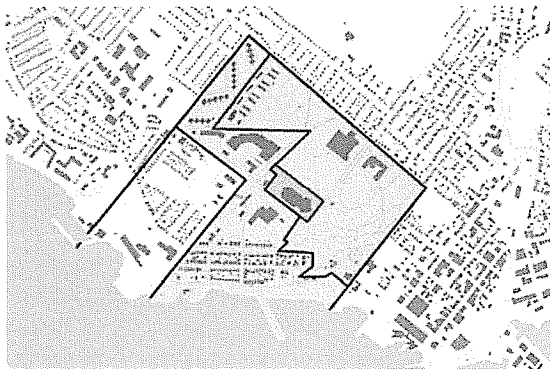
Original Land Grant

- Early years of settlement: Dartmouth Common lands set aside but not formally "granted"
- July 1788: 37 acres granted by King George III; not to the community but to three Quakers (legal title passed from the Crown to these private land owners)
- September 1788: 150 acres formally granted "in special trust" to representatives of the community



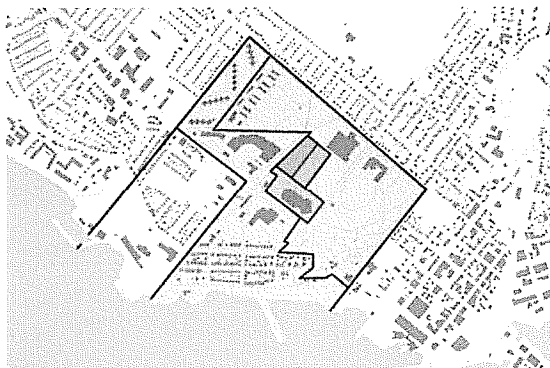
1986 Dartmouth Common Act

- The purpose of this Act is to preserve and protect the Dartmouth Common for the use and enjoyment of present and future inhabitants of the City of Dartmouth.
- The City of Dartmouth shall not sell, lease or otherwise alienate the Dartmouth common nor shall



1994 Amendment Dartmouth Common Act

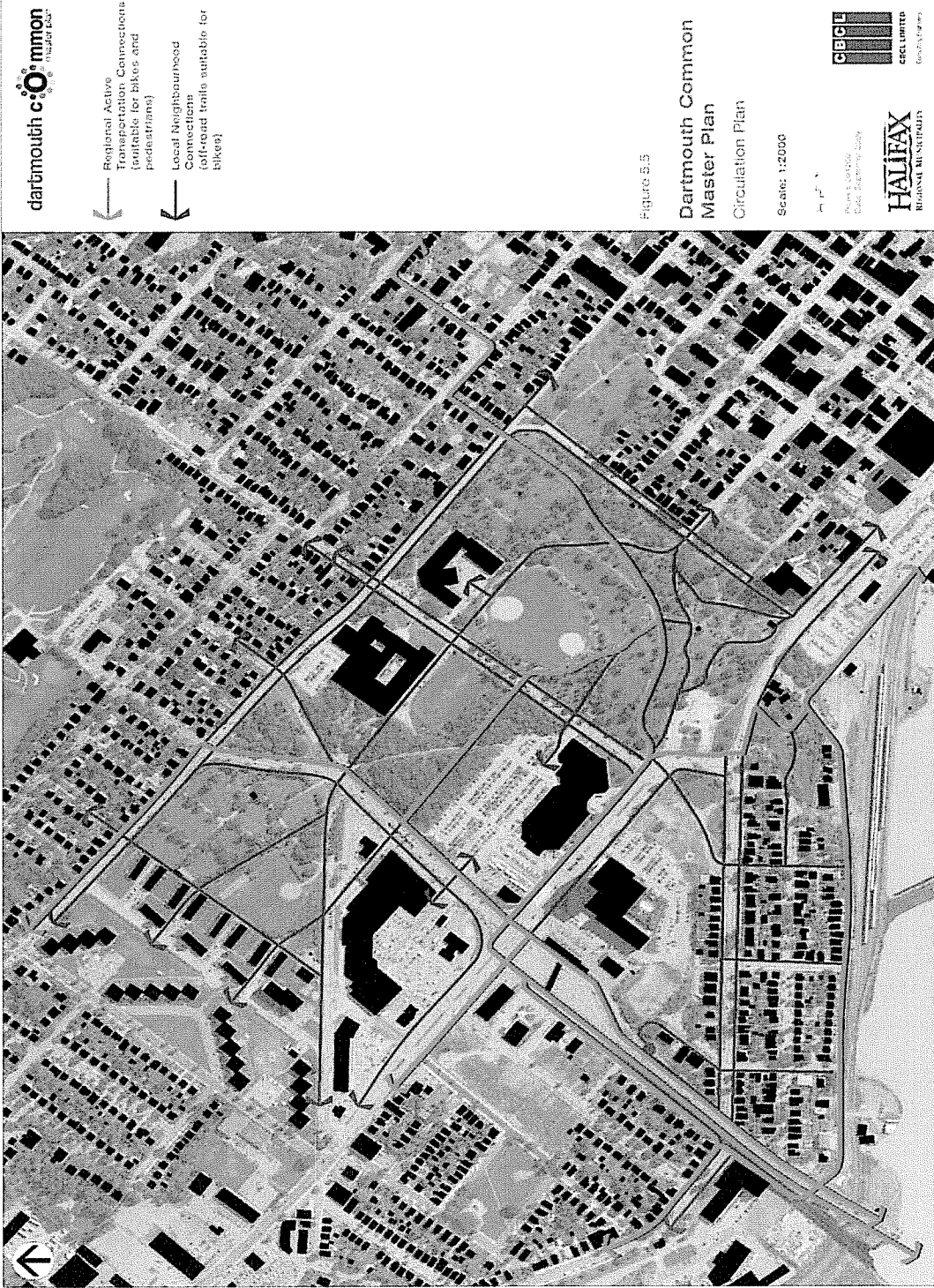
- (...) any person may build an addition to a building (Sportsplex) that was located on the lands described in the Schedule to this act (...) if the building and the addition are both totally located on those lands.



2008 Amendment Dartmouth Common Act

- The Municipality may build, expand or improve public transit facilities on that part of the Dartmouth Common adjacent to Nantucket Avenue and not exceeding six acres.
- When the lands (...) are no longer used by the Municipality for public transit facilities, the lands revert back to their use as part of the Dartmouth Common.

ATTACHMENT C ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS



ATTACHMENT D

DARTMOUTH COMMON PROPOSED FACILITY PROJECTS



ATTACHMENT E
DARTMOUTH COMMON CAPITAL COST ESTIMATES

PARK RELATED ITEMS	Total	Ongoing	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Mid-Term (4-6 years)	Long-Term (7 years +)
General Items	\$660,000	\$385,000	\$45,000	\$230,000	\$0
Facilities Concept	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
The Outdoor Gym	\$2,090,000	\$0	\$2,090,000	\$0	\$0
The Urban Wilderness / Nantucket Grove	\$610,000	\$0	\$83,000	\$527,000	\$0
Green Road Trail / Urban Park	\$2,070,000	\$0	\$201,000	\$0	\$1,869,000
The Bridge Welcoming Feature	\$165,000	\$0	\$11,000	\$154,000	\$0
St. Paul's Cemetery/Waterfront Park	\$1,540,000	\$0	\$0	\$119,000	\$1,421,000
Former City Hall/Museum Site	\$680,000	\$0	\$0	\$680,000	\$0
Bridgehead Park	\$280,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$280,000
Leighton Dillman Park	\$470,000	\$0	\$200,000	\$30,000	\$240,000
*New Sportsfield (in Leighton Dillman Park)	\$4,990,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,990,000
The Cemeteries	\$560,000	\$0	\$0	\$560,000	\$0
Architectural Guidelines	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Safety Guidelines	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL COST PARK RELATED ITEMS	\$14,115,000	\$385,000	\$2,630,000	\$2,300,000	\$8,800,000

ROAD RELATED ITEMS	Total	Ongoing	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Mid-Term (4-6 years)	Long-Term (7 years +)
Thistle Street Right of Way	\$2,168,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,168,000.00	\$0.00
Wyse Road/Alderney Drive Right of Way	\$7,500,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,500,000.00	\$0.00
Nantucket Avenue Right of Way	\$3,569,000	\$0.00	\$232,000.00	\$3,037,000.00	\$300,000.00
Enhance Green Road	\$533,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$533,000.00	\$0.00
Enhance Victoria Road	\$140,000	\$0.00	\$140,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Enhance Boland Road	\$68,000.00	\$0.00	\$68,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL COST ROAD RELATED ITEMS	\$13,978,000	\$0	\$440,000	\$13,238,000	\$300,000

TOTAL COST ALL ITEMS	\$28,093,000	\$385,000	\$3,070,000	\$15,538,000	\$9,100,000
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