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MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair and Members of District 7 and 8 Planning Advisory Committee

FROM: Carl Purvis, Acting Supervisor, Community Planning - Planning & Development
Jill MacLellan, Planner, Development Approvals - Planning & Development

DATE: January 20, 2016

SUBJECT: Case 18966 and Case 19281: Amendments to the Halifax MPS and the Halifax Peninsula LUB, 6009 and 6017 Quinpool Road, and 2032-2050 Robie Street Halifax

Applications were received for the proposed development of two sites at 6009 and 6017 Quinpool Road and 2032-2050 Robie Street. Both proposed developments require amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax. The planning processes for these applications were jointly initiated by Regional Council in on June 10, 2014 with Council providing direction that a single policy should be developed for the properties. Please see Attachment A for a copy of the initiation report.

Location

The subject area:

- is located at the northwest corner of Quinpool Road and Robie Street in Halifax (Maps 1, 2 & 3);
- is comprised of 8 properties (2 properties for Case 18966 and 6 properties for Case 19281); and
- contains various uses including a parkade, office building, funeral home and a single unit dwelling;

Please see the Site Description and Surrounding Uses section of the initiation report (Attachment A) for more detail regarding each site.

Designation, Zoning

Despite the two sites abutting each other, each site is designated and zoned differently. Please see the Designation and Zoning section of the Initiation Report (Attachment A) and Maps 1 and 2 for more detail regarding the designation and zoning.

Height Precinct

The Quinpool Road site (Case 18966) is:

- located within two height precincts; civic 6009 Quinpool Road is within the 145 foot height precinct and civics 6017 Quinpool Road and 2017 Parker Street are within the 45 foot height precinct (see Map 4).

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The Robie Street site (Case 19281) is:

- located within two height precincts; a small portion of the Robie site is within the 145 foot height precinct and the remaining properties are within the 35 foot height precinct (see Map 4).

Current Proposal

The Quinpool Road site (Case 18966) (Attachment B) is proposing a mixed use commercial and residential building in the form of a single 29 storey tower with a street wall that ranges from 7 to 4 stories. The main floor contains primarily commercial-retail space with a residential lobby located mid-block on the Quinpool Road elevation. The tower portion of the building containing the majority of the 209 residential units is oriented in an east-west direction both in an effort to minimize shadow impact on the adjacent Halifax North Common, as well as to maximize distance between the tower and lower density residential uses. Parking is divided between 2 levels of underground and 4 partial levels above grade for a total of 199 stalls, all of which are located from a single access in the northwest corner of the property fronting Parker Street.

The Robie Street site (Case 19281) (Attachment C) is proposing a mixed use commercial and residential building in the form of a single 25 storey tower inclusive of a 4-storey podium base. The proposed ground floor is mainly used for access to the building and includes 7000 square feet for a hotel lobby and general commercial retail use; floors 2 to 4 are for the hotel use containing 81 rooms; and the remainder of the building will be comprised of 112 residential units. Parking is mainly located in 2 levels of underground parking with 13 spaces located at grade. The applicant is further proposing that the 5th floor be utilized as a large amenity space for the building's residents.

Public Meetings

Several public meetings have been held for the two applications. A joint open house was held on October 1, 2014 in conjunction with a survey which was mailed to residents to discuss the general building form and general direction for new land use policies for the two sites. Public Information Meetings (PIM) were held for each proposal and were each chaired by the District 7 and 8 Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC Chaired Public Meeting for Case 19281 was held on May 21, 2015. Minutes from this meeting are included as Attachment D. The PAC Chaired Public Meeting for Case 18966 was held on September 17, 2015. Minutes from this meeting are included as Attachment E.

Changes to Proposals Since Initiation from Regional Council

Since the initiation there have been several changes to each proposal. Please see Attachment F, which outlines the changes to each site as the proposals have been brought forth for public discussion.

Analysis of Proposals

At the time this process was initiated, Council resolved to require the applicants for these projects to address the 5 key design control principles of building height, mass, density, shadowing, and spacing between towers. The following provides a brief evaluation as to how these issues have been addressed through the process to date.

Building Height

Quinpool Road Site (Case 18966)

Since the time of initiation, this project has been redesigned to a single tower format while adding an additional 7 storeys in height. The applicant has indicated additional height has been added to the project primarily due to the redesign to a single tower format, and due to the economics of the project.

Although the siting of the tower on the site in the southeast corner, as well as its orientation with the narrow end directed toward the Halifax North Common is supported in order to minimize impact on adjacent properties and uses, the overall height is still thought to be problematic due to the surrounding existing and proposed building heights and close proximity to low density residential uses.

Robie Street Site (Case 19281)

Since the time of initiation, the width of the proposed tower has been reduced while adding an additional 7 stories in height. The applicant has indicated that the additional height is required to replace the loss in units by reducing the tower width.

Similarly to the Quinpool Road site, staff have concerns regarding the overall height of the proposed tower. Further to the concerns described for the Quinpool Road site, the Robie Street site has less property depth, less overall road frontage, has more frontage abutting single family homes, and is not situated on an intersection which make the locating of a large tower more untenable.

Mass

Quinpool Road (Case 18966)

The currently proposed building has been designed so as to minimize the shadow impact on the Halifax North Common to the east, to locate the tallest portion of the building as far away from the existing single family homes as possible, and to design a podium which transitions gradually in height from a high point of 7 storeys at the corner of Quinpool Road and Robie Street to a low point of 4 storeys adjacent to the lower density residential uses to the northwest. The tower portion of the building measures at 58 feet in its narrowest point facing the Halifax North Common with a 130 foot long elevation facing Quinpool Road. A 130 foot wide tower is considered very wide for a tower of this size and would not typically be considered appropriate. With this said, given the site location at the gateway of the Quinpool Road commercial corridor, additional mass could be justified. Additionally, the applicant has indicated this width being a necessary trade-off for the narrow elevation facing the Common.

Robie Street (Case 19281)

Since the time of initiation the proposed tower width has been reduced from 145 feet to 110 feet along Robie Street. Although the reduction in the tower width is welcome, the proposed width of 110 feet is still considered wide for a tower of such a height. While the proposed tower width is 20 feet less than the Quinpool Road project, Staff have concerns regarding the width as it is oriented in such a manner that it maximizes the amount of shadow cast on the adjacent Halifax North Common. Further, as the tower is not located at the intersection of Quinpool Road and Robie Street such a width cannot be justified as a gateway to the commercial corridor.

Further the proposed tower is located approximately 24 feet from the rear property line which is shared with low density uses located on Parker Street. A larger setback is encouraged to ease the transition of the large tower from the low density residential uses.

Density

Quinpool Road (Case 18966)

The proposal has grown by 44 residential units although decreasing by just over 1,600 square feet in its available commercial space through a re-allocation of parking stalls within the podium. The location of a higher density residential development at this location is supported given the presence of amenities and services, and as such the concern for density in this project relates only to how it is reflected in the mass and overall height.

Robie Street (Case 19281)

The proposal has decreased the overall number of residential units by 8 units, but has increased its commercial floor area by 200 square feet. As noted for the Quinpool Road site, the location of a higher density residential development at this location is supported given the presence of amenities and services, and as such the concern for density in this project relates only to how it is reflected in the mass and overall height.

Shadowing

Quinpool Road (Case 18966)

The redesigned tower has been created so as to minimize the dimension of the portion facing the Halifax North Common and as such minimizing the shadow impact on this well used public space. Due to the height of the building, there will undoubtedly be an impact on this space, however analysis indicates that the resulting shadow will be a long and slim fast moving shadow.

Robie Street (Case 19281)

As noted when discussing the mass of the Robie Street site, the proposed tower width of 110 feet is considered wide for tall towers. As the tower width is oriented North-South it will cast a slower moving wider shadow on the Halifax North Common than a more narrow tower. Staff have concerns regarding the overall width of the proposed tower and the shadow impact such a tower would create on the Halifax North Common.

Spacing Between Towers

Quinpool Road (Case 18966)

With the redesign of the project to a single tower format, the new design appropriately addresses previous concerns regarding tower spacing between towers on the same site. Regarding spacing to other properties, the proposed tower is located 18.8 feet from the shared property line with the Robie Street site. Although such a tower step back is less than typically required, due the proposed tower separation on the Robie Street site (see below) and the unique nature of this site such a stepback could be considered acceptable.

Robie Street (Case 19281)

The Robie Street site is long enough in its north-south orientation to provide for more than adequate tower spacing between it and the existing Welsford development to the north, as well as between the Quinpool Road development to the south. This said, it is not of an adequate length to accommodate two towers on the same site. Staff have identified no issues with the existing proposal regarding tower to tower spacing.

The proposed tower and its spacing to the adjacent single unit homes to the immediate west may however present an issue. As noted previously, a larger tower stepback than the proposed 24 feet is encouraged to provide adequate separation from the adjacent single unit homes.

Input Sought from the Committee

Pursuant to the Committee's Terms of Reference, feedback is sought from the Committee relative to the proposed development. The recommendation will be included in the staff report to Regional Council and Community Council. Specific items that the Committee may wish to address include the following:

- Has the direction from Reginal Council been followed to ensure both designs have addressed in regards to "...the design control principles for building height, mass, density, shadowing, and spacing between towers" ?
- What is considered success for the two sites in regards to:
 - o Height
 - o Transition to Low Density Residential
 - o Built Form
 - o Streetscape Design
 - o Parking

Attachments

Map 1: Generalized Future Land Use Map
Map 2: Zoning Map
Map 3: Context
Map 4: Height Precinct

Attachment A: June 10, 2014 Initiation Report
Attachment B: Current Plans – Case 18966
Attachment C: Current Plans – Case 19281
Attachment D: Public Information Meeting Minutes – Case 19281
Attachment E: Public Information Meeting Minutes – Case 18996
Attachment F: Changes to Proposals since Initiation from Regional Council