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Kelly Denty
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Halifax Regional Municipality

Re: Development Agreement Application – Dartmouth Crossing Special Plan Area

Kelly,

ZZap Consulting Inc., on behalf of our client North American Developments Limited (NADL), are applying for a Development Agreement to enable the development of approximately 4,000 units. On March 24, 2022, the Nova Scotia Housing Task Force identified 2,500 for the Dartmouth Crossing Special Planning Area. With the inclusion of approximately 2 million sf of approved office park in the City of Lakes Business Park, we believe there is capacity in this area for approximately 4,000 units, focused around a transit-oriented urban core. To support this application, the following materials are enclosed.

- Attachment A: Proposed Development Concept Plan (Development Vision)
- Attachment B: 2017 Correspondence with Halifax Water
- Attachment C: Frenchman Lake Development Permit
- Attachment D: Frenchman Lake Approved Concept Plan
- Attachment E: Development Agreement on Pad 60 Lands

[1.0 Introduction and Site Context](#)

The Executive Panel on Housing in Halifax Regional Municipality identified Dartmouth Crossing as a “Special Planning Area” (Figure 1, below). The Provincial objective in establishing these areas is to rapidly advance housing construction through a modified and expedited development agreement process.

The subject Special Planning Area (SPA) is approximately 90 ha (222ac), and unlike many of the other SPA's, the area is fully serviced, and fully planned for development. The entire area is designated Industrial, and comprised of two unique planning regimes - Dartmouth Crossing and City of Lakes Business Park.



The undeveloped Dartmouth Crossing land (23.5 ha) north of Commodore Dr. was opened to enable commercial and residential development (through the BCDD zone) in 2006. While undertaken in advance of the Regional Plan, overall “masterplans” for site remediation, traffic, stormwater, sewer and water, and parkland were undertaken in order to size, plan, and calculate the cost-sharing for the off-site infrastructure (e.g., Wright Avenue interchange, Wright Avenue extension, trunk sewer extension from Lake Mist Terrace, etc.), as well as meet Provincial and Federal environmental requirements. These “masterplans” were also attached/associated with the Concept Subdivision Plan which covers the entirety of Dartmouth Crossing, and in some cases Tentative Subdivision Plans for the various phases, and in this way the “masterplans” provide for the sizing and location of on-site trunk infrastructure including the major traffic arteries, stormwater ponds, multi-purpose trails and sewer and water. Since these early masterplans were undertaken, 2500 units of residential development in Dartmouth Crossing has been identified and anticipated in each subsequent HRM Regional Plan, and built infrastructure capacity has been created by NADL for these units.

The second/southern (south of Commodore Dr.) portion of the land included in the “Special Planning Area” is part of the original City of Lakes Business Park and has been open for development since the early 1990's when Burnside Drive was constructed (the lands are within the original Burnside Drive servicing area). The City of Lakes portion allows for the construction of 5-storey office buildings within a campus environment. DCL currently has a Development Permit for 2 million sf of office space on these lands, and a Tentative Subdivision Plan for the design and location of streets (Eileen Stubbs extension) and municipal infrastructure. In terms of built and designed infrastructure capacity, this office use can be converted to an additional approximately 1,500 units of residential development. Converting excess commercial/office land uses to residential uses is a proven approach to expanding residential unit capacity. Including this location will also expand the range of residential uses offered at Dartmouth Crossing, including opportunities for live-work units, smaller shared staff units supporting Burnside businesses, and units for seniors.

Taken together, the remaining Dartmouth Crossing Lands and the City of Lakes lands within the SPA have a planned, and largely constructed infrastructure capacity to support approximately 4,000 units of residential development. These two areas conjoin on Commodore Drive, which with significant public infrastructure, including recreation facilities, a public school, and existing and proposed transit amenities, offers an opportunity to create a transit-oriented community centre within walking distance of both residential nodes. The entire area is adjacent to one of the largest job markets and commercial amenity areas in HRM, as well as the Shubie Regional Park, which is increasingly interconnected with multi-purpose trails.



Figure 1: Dartmouth Crossing Special Plan Area Boundary

2.0 Summary of Development Vision

Our client's overall vision is to build off the success of the Dartmouth Crossing retail component and offer a variety of housing options for approximately 4,000 units. This new community will have direct access to the shops and services offered in Dartmouth Crossing as well as the jobs and amenities of neighbouring Burnside Industrial Park. The proposed Bus Rapid Transit Purple line brings rapid transit to the central intersection of this new growth community. Further details around the project vision are below:

1. Parks and Open Spaces

- A large central esplanade provides active and passive open space for the new community
- A large park provides access to and passive openspace on Frenchman Lake
- Multi-purpose Trail connections to adjacent Dartmouth Crossing network
- Trail links into Shubie Regional Park
- Buffer and trail connections around Frenchman Lake

2. Site and Building Design

- Variety of residential forms including stacked townhouses, low-rise, mid-rise, and tall mid-rise buildings
- Pedestrian oriented building facades and ground-oriented units fronting the esplanade and parkland.
- Underground parking areas to support residential uses.
- Integration of appropriate commercial, office and retail uses to support the expanded residential use, especially focused around the Commodore Drive and Eileen Stubbs intersection.

3. Transportation Network

- Private driveway connects Findlay Drive to Commodore Drive
- Extension of Eileen Stubbs as a public street through the southern portion of the plan area, south of Commodore Drive (Street has Tentative Subdivision Approval)
- Pedestrian pathways, walkways, sidewalks or trails that support pedestrian connectivity within the community and to surrounding areas.
- East West trail connections to promote pedestrian connectivity to the existing retail amenities.

3.0 Application Request

We are open to staff input and recommendations as to how to best and most rapidly advance NADL's vision. We believe that it is advantageous to open up lands in all areas (existing Dartmouth Crossing, Frenchman Lake, and the transit-oriented centre adjacent to Commodore Drive) in order to have a wide a range of units under construction and to construct amenities together with unit construction.

Dartmouth Crossing has an existing development agreement in place on Dartmouth Crossing lands providing for 385 units on approximately 12 acres, and with a structure that allowed the agreement to be expanded over 25 acres through amendment. During detailed design for the first phase of this residential development with HRM and HRWC engineers, NADL was required to provide preliminary infrastructure design for an area of approximately 50 acres and 1,800 units. Extending this existing development agreement over the planned infrastructure area (50-acres) would offer an effective approach to rapidly achieve the Special Planning Area objectives.

Including the Frenchman Lake lands and ensuring a transit-oriented development focus will require amendments to the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy to create site specific policy. This policy could be made applicable to the entire Special Plan Area lands and include the following criteria to be addressed through a Development Agreement:

- Overall Density
- Intent to develop as a compact, walkable residential community that prioritizes pedestrians, supports access to transit, recreation, everyday amenities and employment
- Locate parks and open spaces as focal points for the community and support retention of environmentally sensitive space
- Provide space for a mix of programmed and passive activities, naturalized areas that support stormwater objectives, and connections to existing active transportation networks via paths and trails.
- Support housing needs in the municipality by:
 - o requiring a mix of housing types
 - o considering the use of inclusionary zoning on-site; and
 - o collaborating with other levels of government and the private sector on delivering specific housing outcomes.

4.0 Planning Rationale

Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister John Lohr has designated nine Special Planning Areas in Halifax Regional Municipality, one of which is the Dartmouth Crossing Lands. The designation allows the Minister to assume authority for development approvals in this SPA as outlined in the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act. While our clients development vision is consistent with the provinces initiative to respond to the current housing crisis through this special plan area designation, it is also aligned with HRM's Regional Plan and other Region wide plans such as the Integrated Mobility Plan.

The surrounding area is a mix of residential commercial, recreation and employment uses. The site is strategically located between Burnside and Dartmouth Crossing Commercial Centre and is identified as an 'Urban District Growth Centre' within the Regional Plan.

Urban District Growth Centres are intended to include a mix of low, medium, and high-density residential housing – in proximity to local commercial, institutional and employment uses. The growth centres were identified in locations where access to transit connects to other centres within the municipality and the Regional Centre. Future development in these centres is intended to enhance pedestrian and AT connections, have high quality streetscaping and interconnected private and public open spaces.

The site's development potential is aligned with the Regional Plan and contributes to bringing significant supply to the housing market in a manner that supports sustainable and complete communities. Construction on any undeveloped infill lands promotes the economical use of existing infrastructure and is a remedy for sprawl to outlying areas. Typically, there are lower infrastructure costs to extend services for infill projects making the long-term maintenance costs more feasible for municipalities. This is particularly relevant for this development proposal as the majority of the transportation network is proposed private driveways other than the extension of Ellen Stubbs Ave. This a great example and opportunity for smart growth that is compact and walkable, offers a mix of uses, and creates a sense of place.

Complete Communities

The residential development completes the vision for Dartmouth Crossing by integrating residential development into this major retail centre. As Dartmouth Crossing has built out, it has become much more than retail. Within 500m of the site, you'll find:

- Two grocery stores
- Mosaic Secondary School

- Recreation facility – ice rink, and turf fields
- Offices – City of Lakes Business Park
- Employment uses throughout Burnside Park
- Retail ranging from small local to large national chains
- Restaurants
- Entertainment – Playdium and theatre
- Regional Park (Shubie Park)
- Walking trails
- Existing bus service (and proposed BRT stop)
- Access to 100 series Provincial highway

Transit Oriented Development

HRM's Integrated Mobility Plan speaks to the need to support transit-oriented development, development that is located near "existing or proposed high level of transit service to support the development of walkable, affordable transit-oriented communities" (IMP Policy 2.2.5b). The subject property is currently located along Route 72 and Route 56 – both of which connect to major transit terminals within the existing transit network. The site is currently serviced by existing transit. It also speaks to a desire for "pedestrian-oriented site design and human scale massing at street level for all new multi-unit housing" (IMP Policy 2.2.5e).

HRM's Rapid Transit Strategy states that the highest mixed-use densities should be directed to areas within 400 metres of Rapid Transit stations, with moderate densities up to 800 metres (Bus Rapid Transit Plan pg. 41). Sites such as underutilized parking lots, shopping plazas, undeveloped infill lands, and institutional properties should be encouraged to be redeveloped following transit-oriented principles and best practices. Pedestrian supportive, mixed-use redevelopment should be encouraged through as-of-right development where possible (Bus Rapid Transit Plan pg. 41). As mentioned prior, the Bus Rapid Transit Purple line brings rapid transit to the central intersection of this new growth community (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Bus Rapid Transit Purple Line

Strategic Growth

The proposed development supports the objectives of HRM and Halifax Water by adding density within the existing service boundary. Although the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality identified 2,500 units within this special plan area. Water, sanitary and storm services are in the surrounding streets and were sized appropriately to handle this development as proposed with approximately 4,000 units.

Demographic, social and economic trends

Demographic, social, and economic trends shape the way people live and, by extension, their demand for real estate. Demographic changes - more seniors looking for homes that better meet their needs, more millennials forming new households, and more singles in all age categories—are likely to drive demand for infill development. There is demand for both rental and for-purchase homes that better match the needs of empty-nesters and retirees. Millennials are biking, walking and taking public transit more often and driving less. Social changes - single-person households are now the second most common household. People living alone are attracted to places with a sense of community and proximity to everyday amenities and services. Economic trends - consumer preferences for the amenities that infill locations offer are likely to grow as changing demographics affect the housing market. In the next 20 years, the needs and preferences of aging baby boomers, new households, and one-person households will all drive real estate market trends— and infill locations are likely to attract many of these people. The Dartmouth Crossing lands represent a key growth opportunity that supports and aligns with these trends



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5.0 Closing

2,500 units of residential development has been planned for Dartmouth Crossing since inception, and have been anticipated in the HRM Regional Plan since 2006. Expanding the residential use to 4,000 units and including the Frenchman Lake lands, offers an opportunity for a transit-oriented community centre between the two areas that is consistent with the current land use planning context, demand for new housing, and Regional Plan direction. The amendments requested for this property are in keeping with land use planning best practices as well as the policy guidance provided by Halifax Regional Council to HRM staff. Approving the proposed development would assist in carrying out the will of Regional Council, the Regional Plan, functional plans and the vision of the Housing Task Force.

We trust that the enclosed materials satisfy the application requirements, and we look forward to working with Staff and Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality throughout the application process. Should you have any questions, clarifications or comments regarding this application, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,
Original Signed
Greg Zwicker MCIP, LPP

cc:
Carl Purvis - HRM
Glenn Munro – North American Developments Limited
Margot Young – EDM