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May 30, 2023

Leah Perrin
Regional Plan Review
Planning and Development
Halifax Regional Municipality
Via email: perrinl@halifax.ca

RE: Proposal for Development – 686 Bedford Highway

Dear Leah,

zzap Consulting Inc. on behalf of our client, Adam Randell, is pleased to submit this request to the municipality to review and consider a development proposal for two multi-unit buildings at 686 Bedford Highway (PID: 00288514). The subject site is within the urban service boundary, has a total area of 94,500 ft² (8779 m²), and approximately 380 feet (117 meters) of frontage on Bedford Highway (see Appendix A).



Figure 1: Proposed Development Location

1.0 Site Context

The site fronts onto Bedford Highway and is approximately 350 metres north of the Larry Uteck Boulevard intersection. This section of Bedford Highway and surrounding areas includes a range of land uses – retail, personal service, institutional and residential. The Larry Uteck corridor, from the Bedford Highway to Nine Mile Drive, is a relatively dense residential environment with numerous apartment towers, mid-rise and townhouse developments, and bordering areas consisting of mainly single-unit residential dwellings. The images below depict the diverse land uses surrounding the site.



Figure 2: Land Use Context





The site is within 200m of two bus stops serviced by Routes 8 & 93. These routes connect the site to downtown Halifax and the Sackville and Cobequid Transit Terminals. Route #8 runs every 20 minutes during peak ridership hours. Route #93 is a commuter line, offering peak period, peak direction connection along the Bedford Highway to downtown Halifax. At the Larry Uteck intersection, Route 90 provides local service to West Bedford and Water Street Terminal. Finally, Route 91 provides local service to West Bedford and Mumford Terminal.

1.1 Planning Context

The site is located within the Halifax Plan area and is regulated by the Bedford Highway Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (SMPS) and Halifax Mainland Land Use Bylaw (LUB). It is designated Low Density Residential (LDR) on the Bedford Highway SMPS Generalized Future Land Use Map and zoned R-1 Single Family Dwelling. This zone restricts residential uses to single-unit dwellings.

The Bedford Highway is an important corridor within HRM's transportation network and is identified in HRM's 2017 Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) as a Transit Priority Corridor. A Functional Plan for the Bedford Highway was completed in 2019 and identified opportunities to create a multi-modal corridor. The functional plan outlines potential transit enhancements, including new active transportation infrastructure, improved transit services, and changes to address pedestrian safety and comfort.

2.0 Development Request

This proposal includes two multi-unit buildings fronting onto Bedford Highway. A combination of concealed and surface parking would be utilized and accessed from a single driveway. Assuming a height of eight storeys, approximately 162 units (with an average unit size of 850 ft²) could be accommodated on the site.

We are requesting that through the Regional Plan review and Suburban Plan process, HRM modify the existing zoning to permit higher density residential and commercial uses along the Bedford Highway, an arterial corridor where higher density land uses align with modern planning principles.

3.0 Planning Rationale

This development proposal is supported by several Regional Plan policies as well as policy in the IMP and Rapid Transit Strategy (RTS).

3.1 Regional Plan Policy

The site is in the Urban Settlement designation under HRM's Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS). The RMPS establishes several policies and goals related to housing including:

- Focusing new growth where supporting services and infrastructure are already available (Chapter 3: Settlement and Housing, Objective #3).
- Encouraging density and mixed-use development near current and planned transit (Policy G-9A(e), Policy S-30(a), Policy T-9)
- Supporting housing affordability (Policy S-30)

This proposal addresses these goals – densifying an area close to existing services and amenities and providing significant new housing supply in a very limited housing market. The site has access to frequent transit and active transportation corridors and is near a future rapid transit terminal (the proposed Larry Uteck Rapid Ferry).

The site is also in the Bedford South Growth Centre - an Urban District Growth Centre identified in the Regional Plan. The intended future land use and design characteristics of these centres are outlined in the Regional Plan as:

- Mix of low, medium and high density residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational uses.
- In established residential neighbourhoods, low to medium density residential uses
- Encourage infill or redevelopment of large parking lots into traditional blocks with streetwalls and stepbacks.
- Pedestrian oriented facades.

This proposal aligns with that intent, filling in currently vacant lots to provide a mix of medium and high-density residential uses.

3.2 Population Growth and Housing Demand

The population growth experienced within HRM has exceeded the projections contained in the 2014 Regional Plan update (source: Regional Plan Report, Supplemental Report, Population and Housing, December 2021). The unanticipated population growth has resulted in a corresponding and unforeseen housing demand evidenced by historically low vacancy rates in HRM (1.0% in 2022).

The need for housing in HRM is well established. The 2014 Regional Plan targets 75% of new population growth in the Regional Centre (25%) and Suburban (50%) geographies of HRM. Regional Centre SMPS, adopted in 2021 is “designed to accommodate at least 40% of HRM’s growth by the year 2031.” The targets in the IMP confirm that 90% of HRM’s projected population growth would need to be within these two geographies to create transit-supportive densities. To meet these targets, housing units must be built. In 2021 the province established the Executive Panel on Housing and nine Special Planning Areas to fast track the approval of housing in HRM. This action acknowledges the acute housing shortage facing the municipality where an estimated deficit of 5,600 units a year is compounding the impact of an already limited housing supply (See 2022 HRM Housing Development Barrier Review).

While the Regional Centre Secondary Plan has enabled considerable density in the Regional Centre, outdated policies in Suburban areas limit growth in well-served suburban communities. The single unit zoning applied to this site works against the regional housing targets, and limits density in a suburban site with access to amenities and services. We believe that a substantial opportunity exists to reconsider the growth and settlement patterns in Halifax's suburban communities by applying higher density zones in strategic areas. We believe this site is a good candidate for increased density.

3.3 The Integrated Mobility Plan and Rapid Transit Strategy

Both the IMP and the RTS underscore the critically important synergy between land use and transit. Sufficient ridership bases are key to supporting frequent, reliable transit, and locating development close to transit maximizes the public benefit of transit services. The project site is located within the 800m walkshed for the proposed Larry Uteck Ferry Terminal identified in the Rapid Transit Strategy. Ferry service is a key part of providing rapid transit service to the Larry Uteck area, where Bus Rapid Transit is not feasible. Accommodating the projected population growth through reliable transit is key to mitigating the traffic impact of more people in this rapidly growing area. The RTS correctly identifies the importance of densifying suburban areas around transit terminals and along strategic corridors. We believe this proposal is aligned with these principals.



Figure 3: Excerpt from Rapid Transit Strategy, p. 42, Rapid Transit Walksheds (notation added)

The site also offers access to current and planned active transportation infrastructure connecting cyclists and other AT users to the Halifax Peninsula. Planned bikeways (see Figure 4) will address existing gaps in the AT network and support non-car-oriented density along the Bedford Highway.



Figure 4: Excerpt from Rapid Transit Strategy, p. 15, existing and proposed transportation near subject site (notation added)

4.0 Closing

Our proposal includes two mid-rise, eight-storey buildings containing approximately 162 residential units. We believe the increased density at this location is supported by policies contained in the Regional Plan as well as the RTS and IMP functional plans. These plans encourage infill development in serviced areas where increased transit service can be supported through higher density, transit-oriented development. Finally, this proposal responds to the acute housing shortage by enabling new units as-of-right.

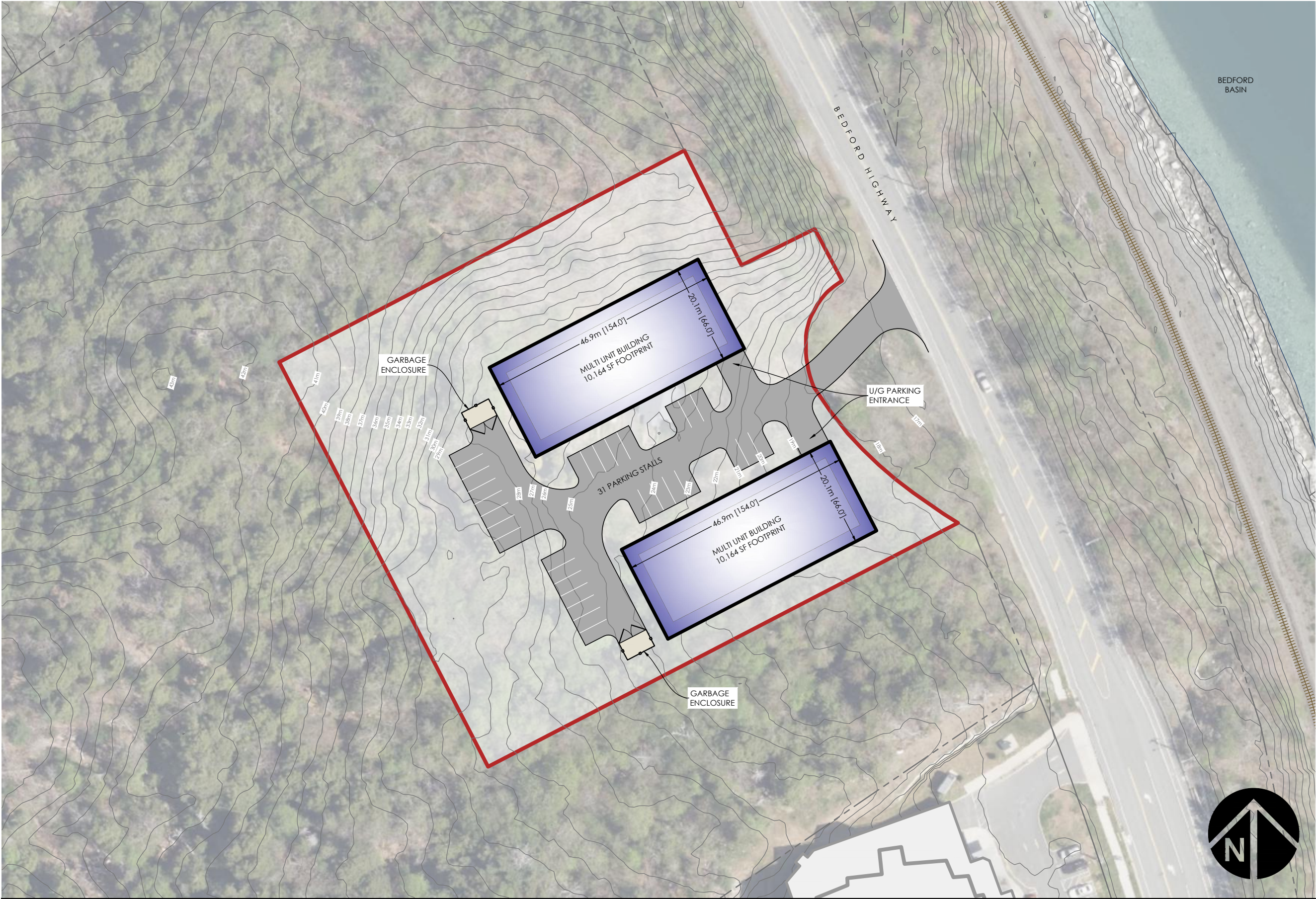
We ask that this proposal be considered under the current Regional Plan review process. Should you have any questions, clarifications, or comments regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Original Signed

Greg Zwicker, MCIP, LPP
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902-266-2941

FILE: C:\Users\Ken\Zwickler Zareski Architecture & Planning\Projects - 2023 Projects\23-002 Adam Randell - Bedford Highway\4_Planning\1-DWG\23-002-SITE_PLAN-102.dwg SHEET: 11x17



LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- - - Adjacent Property Boundary

SITE SUMMARY:

- PID: 00288514
- Total Land Area: 94,500 sf
- Existing Zone: R-1

NOTES:

- Subject to survey. Property lines and topographic features are approximate only.
- Site subject to by-law review and regulations.

SOURCES:

- Property lines and topographic features are from Provincial Mapping.

SCALE:

0 5 10 20 35m
1 : 750