SUNROSE

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Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Ross Grant, MCIP, LPP
HRM Planner III
Planned Growth Projects/Strategic Projects

Dear Ross:

RE: Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area (SPA) – Annapolis Lands

On behalf of my Client, Annapolis Group Inc., this letter provides planning rationale of our proposal for the Annapolis US (Urban Settlement) zoned lands, which form part of the above noted SPA. The Annapolis lands are 279.5 acres of the total SPA area of approximately 630 acres. You asked me to provide "...a planning rational which addresses HRM's existing policies which are relevant to the application (i.e. Regional Plan, IMP, RTS, GNP, and HalifACT, etc.)"

In providing this planning rationale, I note that Annapolis has asked HRM to advise as to its intentions for the adjoining Urban Reserve (UR) zoned lands. Standard planning principles would dictate that adjoining lands be taken into account in planning the US lands. I understand that HRM has advised that the UR lands are outside its mandate.

Regional Plan

The Annapolis SPA proposal carries out the intent of the 2014 Regional plan as well as the Provincial Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations that state in part: *"4A (2) (a) "Mandatory Content related to housing supply: include a statement of policy that expressly recognizes that the Province and, in particular, the Municipality are experiencing a housing shortage crisis and specifies that the most urgent priority in municipal land-use planning, regulation and development approval is to rapidly increase the supply of housing in the Municipality;"*

The Highway 102 West Corridor SPA lands are located within the Urban Settlement (US) Designation and Zone of the Regional Plan. The lands are adjacent to the 701 acres of lands designated and zoned Urban Reserve (UR) which were originally designated and zoned UR in the 2006 Regional Plan for future serviced development. The proximity and time frame of the UR lands make it appropriate that they be taken into consideration by HRM during the SPA process.

Large portions of both the UR and US designations are identified on the Regional Plan Map 1 Settlement and Transportation as an Urban District Growth Centre. Section 3.3 and Table 3-1 outline the characteristics that are desired for the Urban District Growth Center, which are similar to the characteristics identified in the other priority plans. These characteristics include: a mix of low, medium, and high density housing forms; residential, commercial, institutional and recreation uses; provision for transit; pedestrian corridors; walkability; pocket parks; tree lined streets; interconnected private and public open spaces linked with greenbelt corridors; waterfront parks and trails; and cultural heritage. The Annapolis SPA proposal is based on sound planning principles and include the characteristics desired for an Urban District Growth Centre.

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The adjacent 701 acres of UR lands are fundamental to the area and the Urban District Growth Centre. The Bedford West Sub-area 11 is also adjacent to the Annapolis SPA lands, some of which are owned by Annapolis. At this time, without knowing the status of both of these areas, the Annapolis SPA proposal has provided transportation links to both the UR and Bedford West Sub-area 11 lands. Some of the existing surrounding infrastructure has already been sized and constructed to accommodate both the UR and US zoned lands.

The road network for the Annapolis SPA proposal is laid out based on the grades of land, appropriate access points and connections to adjacent lands. A mix of land uses are proposed with their placement based on efficiency between land uses. Significant green open spaces are provided as both public and private spaces as well as an extensive active transportation network.

The residential housing provides a range of low density (single unit, semi-detached, and townhouse units) and high density mixed-use buildings. A future school site of 20 acres is identified in the event that the Province wishes to pursue a school in this area.

The 2014 Regional Plan requires a 20 meter setback from watercourses and wetlands that are contiguous to a watercourses. Parkland dedication is provided in the Annapolis SPA proposal through the minimum 20 meter watercourse setback in all areas, many of which actually have a greater setback. In addition, eight acres of land is provided as park that includes a very beautiful swim area on Quarry Lake. This parkland includes a beach near the dam and an area for a boat launch. There is an ideal area that could accommodate a parking lot that is fairly level with open access. There are also six other parkland areas ranging in size from 1.5 acres to 10.7 acres and the ability to create smaller pocket parks within the neighbourhoods.

IMP (Integrated Mobility Plan)

This 2017 priority plan has several maps and analyses that apply to existing developed areas, which exclude this SPA. There are some maps that include both the US and UR zoned lands of this Urban District Growth Center, including: Figure 10: Potential Transit Oriented Communities as a "Regional Plan Growth Centre"; Figure 14: Existing Sidewalks which includes all of the US and UR zoned lands as potential urban areas; Figure 20: Proposed Transit Priority Corridors Map that shows the US lands in the transit corridor boundary which follows the US designation; and Figure 23: 2014 Regional Plan Recommended Road Network Projects identifies the "Highway 102 Bayer's Road Corridor Expansion" to "...accommodate planned suburban growth areas along the Bedford-Halifax Corridor" which includes the UR and US lands.

The IMP promotes "complete communities" which have the following characteristics: provision of mobility choices; mixed uses in the community; complete streets in terms of design and maintenance; promotion of active transportation; enabling transit (reference to Figure 20); intention to meet updated Municipal Design Guidelines; and an increase in curbside parking to reduce parking requirements on site.

The Annapolis SPA proposal has these characteristics and addresses what the IMP calls "moving people" by providing a road network that will accommodate transit, an extensive active transportation network with sidewalks and trails; and mixed land uses within the community so that residents may not need to own a car.

The main collector road is centered along the property line between Annapolis and the Stevens Group. This is appropriate from a grade perspective and also equitably shares the frontage and expense of the road. Road reserves are identified to access the adjacent UR lands and Sub-area 11 lands.

RTS (Rapid Transit Strategy)

The Highway 102 West Corridor SPA is outside of the area that was studied for rapid transit. However, this SPA is near many transit routes that serve the area including some of the transit secondary priority projects identified in the RTS such as Lacewood and Kearney Lake/Parkland. The SPA is near two 102 interchanges and could provide a road connection to Bayers Lake. The transportation network on the Annapolis SPA proposal follows sound transportation engineering by using a hierarchy of roads with multiple access points.

The current road congestion on Highway 102 and surrounding road networks is caused by the existing HRM population as well as people from outside of HRM that use these regional roads. The SPA development will not necessarily be adding to the existing congestion because many people who will live in this area would be relocating from other areas of HRM and beyond, thereby already utilizing Highway 102 and the surrounding road network. By developing this SPA area as a complete community, the residents of the SPA should not need to access Highway 102 and the surrounding road network for their daily needs.

GNP (Green Network Plan)

The Annapolis SPA proposal provides many features that are discussed in the GNP. This includes an interconnected open space system by linking the watercourse setbacks to walkway connections and the road network's sidewalk system. This interconnectedness includes access points to the adjacent public parkland to the north and the lake system via a proposed swim area and boat launch. There are also possible future road and pedestrian connections to the adjacent UR zoned lands which are situated between the SPA and the extensive Provincial Wilderness lands.

The GNP has several "concepts" and maps. "Concept 1 Regional landscape Planning" supports the need to consider the possible future land uses of the UR lands and the Bedford West Sub-area 11 lands. The Annapolis SPA proposal provides connections to these surrounding lands.

Concepts 2, 3 and 4 focus on open space features, riparian buffers, streetscapes, schools, utility corridors, and local history. The Annapolis SPA proposal provides these features which can be further refined during the development agreement stage.

Local and cultural history could be shared through education about the Annapolis owned dam system that controls the lake levels and how it has affected the lakes over time. The 2022 SGE report, which is quoted in a Stantec report says, "...maintenance of the dams are critical to the recreation use of the lake system." There is a long and impressive history of the Minas Basin Pulp & Power Company Limited which was founded in 1927 and became owners of these lands primarily in the 1950's by the company that is now the Annapolis Group.

"Concept 5 : Community Resilience" focuses on building communities that are economically viable, environmentally aware, addresses affordability, and are designed for livability. The Annapolis SPA proposal is economically viable, utilizes efficiencies in servicing infrastructure; utilizes economies of scale; recognizes environmental features. These characteristics help alleviate the current housing crisis by providing much needed housing in a range of housing forms which will help with affordability both within the development and by the increased vacancy in other locations when people move to this SPA.

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The Annapolis SPA proposal is designed based on the natural features of the land and concentrating residential housing density in a range of building heights that enable smaller building footprints, thereby disturbing less land. The proposed density of 35.7 units per acre is reasonable in order to achieve economies of scale while still providing sustainable livability and significant open spaces.

HRM has recently approved a variety of developments that range in density from 9 units per acre to over 100 units per acre. The HRM website for this SPA states that the density may be 11,500 units on 630 acres = 18.25 units per acre. Other "Opportunity Sites" in the Regional Plan are proposed at 50 and 52 units per acre (Bedford Commons and Exhibition Park). Other SPA sites range in density from 9 units per acre (Port Wallace) to 36 units per acre (1226 Cole Harbour Road). The Stantec studies for the Sandy Lake SPA discuss density ranges between 9 units per acre to 35 units per acre and also notes that the Paper Mill Lake SPA is estimated to be 35 units per acre. The Bedford West sub-areas range in density from 6 units per acre to over 20 units per acre. The density of the redevelopment of the former military housing area "Ocean Breeze" site was recently increased from 57 units per acre to 93 units per acre.

The Annapolis SPA proposal was not driven by a target density, but instead was driven by appropriate engineering and planning principles. The Stantec studies point out that for a development to support transit service, the appropriate development density should be in the range of 30-50 units per hectare which is equivalent to 74 to 123 units per acre. Smart Growth design principles are not driven by density targets and generally result in densities of 60 units per acre or more.

The proximity of the SPA to the UR zoned lands and the Provincial Wilderness park beyond makes this SPA suitable for a high population so that people are located near the park so that they can access the park easily. Having high populations near a park of this size is also important because it provides safety and security to the park users by being visible and accessible by the nearby residents. The 2013 Stantec report states, "Even with population growth expected to 2031, the region boasts substantially more park space than the generally accepted total park standard of 5 to 10 hectares per 1000 residents", particularly in the rural and suburban areas of HRM.

The GNP has several maps. Map 1: Ecological Open Space Values shows that this SPA has mostly low values with a few patches of medium value. Map 2: Working Landscape Open Space Values shows portions of the SPA as having good areas for supporting the economy via extraction, agriculture, and industrial. The Annapolis portion of the SPA are in the "minimal working landscape value". Map 3: Socio-Cultural Landscape Values show the SPA with minimal values with medium values around the lakes and watercourses. Map 4: Summed Values show the SPA as having low values with areas of medium values around the large lakes. Maps 5, 6 and 9: Green Network Ecology Map shows potential connections between existing parkland areas which point to the UR lands but not the SPA lands. Maps 7 and 8 show the quarry site of the SPA. Maps 10 and 11: identify the BMBCL Wilderness Park. Maps 12 and 13 Cultural Landscapes do not identify anything on the SPA lands.

HalifACT

This priority plan focusses on methods for HRM to undertake to address the climate crisis such as reviewing its carbon budget, retrofitting buildings for residential use, and supporting updates to the National Building Code and HRM's Building By-law.

The Annapolis SPA proposal carries out the intent of this priority plan by designing the community with active transportation linkages and mixed-use buildings so that residents will not need to leave the community to meet their daily needs. The availability of transit and car share will reduce the dependency

of individual car ownership. The development will use modern building technologies that allow for rooftop solar as well as provide extensive vegetation and natural open spaces throughout the community.

Summary:
The Annapolis SPA proposal carries out the intent of the Regional Plan and the Priority Plans by providing a mix of residential housing including low, medium and high density in a range of housing types and sizes. Commercial uses are provided in mixed-use multiple residential buildings. A school site is provided to address institutional and recreational uses. The roads are designed to accommodate transit and pedestrian sidewalks and corridors. A range of parks and open spaces are provided that include a swim area, a boat launch, linkages for trails and access to the lake network and existing adjacent parkland. All of these characteristics are designed to provide much needed housing, economies of scale, sustainable livability, and the preservation of local and cultural heritage.

The Annapolis SPA proposal follows comprehensive planning methods, similar to other SPA areas in HRM that involve more than one landowner. These include: allocating density numbers that are equally distributed between landowners; density calculations of units per acre based on gross land area; development shown on both sides of streets; and having mixed use development (commercial uses on the first and second floors of multiple unit buildings). These methods were not consistently taken into consideration in the Stantec reports which is acknowledged in their statement, "These development scenarios should not be considered to be land use plans for any of the study areas."

I look forward to working with you and other HRM staff on this very important Special Planning Area.

Sincerely:

Jenifer Tsang, MCIP, LPP

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