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Item No. 15.1.5
Halifax Regional Council
May 31, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 6, 2022

SUBJECT: **Case 23600: Amendments to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy to enable high rise redevelopment on Ridge Valley Road and Cowie Hill Road, Halifax**

ORIGIN

Application by ZZap Consulting, on behalf of Universal Properties, for 30 Ridge Valley Road
Application by ZZap Consulting, on behalf of Hazelview Investments, for 41 Cowie Hill Road

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter), Part VIII, Planning & Development

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Initiate a process to consider amendments to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and Halifax Mainland Land Use By-law to modify zoning requirements for two R-4 zoned properties located at 30 Ridge Valley Road and 41 Cowie Hill Road; and

2. Follow the public participation program outlined in the Community Engagement section of this report.

BACKGROUND

Two applications have been received requesting amendments to the Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (SMPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) to allow:

a) two new high-rise buildings at 30 Ridge Valley Road, Halifax; and
b) two new high-rise buildings at 41 Cowie Hill Road, Halifax

Both sites currently have one existing building each and surface parking. The Ridge Valley site has a 12-storey apartment tower with 190 units that utilizes seven percent of the property. The Cowie Hill site has an 11-storey apartment tower with 110 units that takes up 11% of the property.

Neither proposal meets the current zoning standards or the current limits for residential density set in the LUB. Regional Council cannot consider the proposal under existing MPS policies. The applicants are requesting that Regional Council amend the Halifax MPS and Halifax Mainland LUB to enable their proposals. The two sites are only approximately 200 metres apart, and the changes being requested to the R-4 zoning requirements are identical for both properties and are therefore being considered together in one report.

Subject Property	30 Ridge Valley Road (PID 00274407)
Location	Ridge Valley and Cowie Hill Road, Halifax
Regional Plan Designation	Urban Settlement
Community Plan Designation (Map 1a)	HDR: High Density Residential in the Mainland South Plan Area
Zoning (Map 2a)	R-4 (Multiple Dwelling) Zone
Size of Property	Approximately 1.7 hectares (4.2 acres)
Street Frontage	Ridge Valley Road: Approximately 160 metres (525 feet) Cowie Hill Road: Approximately 80 metres (262 feet) Bromley Road: Approximately 88 metres (289 feet)
Current Land Use(s)	12-storey apartment tower with about 190 units, plus substantial surface parking.
Surrounding Use(s)	Nearby properties on Ridge Valley Road, Bromley Road and Limerick Road are two-storey townhouses. There are single-unit homes across the street on Cowie Hill Drive. Chebucto Heights Elementary School and a park are next to the site on Cowie Hill Drive.

Subject Property	41 Cowie Hill Road (PID 00274241)
Location	Cowie Hill Road and Margaret Road, Halifax
Regional Plan Designation	Urban Settlement
Community Plan Designation (Map 1b)	HDR: High Density Residential in the Mainland South Plan Area
Zoning (Map 2b)	R-4 (Multiple Dwelling) Zone
Size of Property	Approximately 0.85 hectares (2.1 acres)
Street Frontage	Cowie Hill Road: Approximately 186 metres (610 feet) Margaret Road: Approximately 106 metres (348 feet)
Current Land Use(s)	11-storey apartment tower with about 110 units, plus substantial surface parking.
Surrounding Use(s)	Two- and three-storey single residential buildings opposite the site on Cowie Hill Road, and single-unit dwellings to the rear of the site. A three-storey apartment building opposite the site to the east on Margaret Road.

Proposal Details

30 Ridge Valley Road
The applicant is proposing two multi-unit buildings next to the existing 12-storey building at 30 Ridge Valley Road. The main aspects of the proposal are as follows:

- two new buildings on the site, with a green space between them;
- 16 and 10 storey buildings (approx. 50 and 30 metres high), in a tower and podium style, with townhouse units in the podium;
- 298 new residential units;
- driveway access off Bromley Road; and
- new underground parking garage, alongside existing surface parking.

Specifically, the applicant is seeking higher density (approx. 282 units per hectare, or 114 units per acre), lower parking requirements, and form-based massing regulations instead of angle controls for building design. While SMPS policy enables high density developments, there is no zone in the LUB that permits a proposal with this level of density.

41 Cowie Hill Road
The applicant is proposing two multi-unit residential buildings, with plans to potentially upgrade the existing 11-storey building at a later date. The main aspects of the proposal are:

- Two new buildings on the site constructed in two phases (a total of approximately 180 new units):
  - phase one would be an 8-storey building on the triangular-shaped portion of the western-end of the property;
  - phase two would be a 17-storey building constructed on the surface parking lot behind the existing 11-storey building. It would have a 3-storey podium and a 14 foot stepback to provide a transition to the low scale residential buildings backing on to the site off Knob Hill Crescent and Mountain Road;
- Transition surface parking underground, with driveway access off Margaret Road as well as maintaining existing driveway access off Cowie Hill Road; and
- A 40 foot vegetative buffer along the northern lot line bordering Knob Hill Crescent and Mountain Road.

Like the Ridge Valley application, the applicant is seeking higher density (approx. 341 units per hectare, or 138 units per acre), reduced parking requirements, and form-based massing regulations instead of angle controls. Like 30 Ridge Valley Road, 41 Cowie Hill Road is designated High Density Residential, but the R-4 zone does not allow this amount of density.

Neighbourhood Context
The area is a mix of R-2 (Two-Family Dwelling), R-2P (General Residential) and R-4 properties, which include single family residential, townhouses, and multi-unit buildings. Both sites are in close proximity to Herring Cove Road, a major arterial road linking Spryfield with the urban core. Chebucto Heights Elementary School abuts the 30 Ridge Valley Road property. J. Albert Walker sports field is close by, as are several neighbourhood parks.

MPS and LUB Context
Both properties are designated High-Density Residential (HDR) by the Mainland South Secondary Plan Area, which is part of the Halifax SMPS. HDR policies provide the following direction:

- permit low, medium and high-density residential buildings;
- permit multi-unit residential buildings exceeding four storeys;
- regulate the size and scale of multi-unit buildings through the land-use by-law;
- permit a mix of family and non-family apartment units; and
- allow neighbourhood commercial uses in buildings with more than 100 units.

Both properties are zoned R-4 (Multiple Dwelling) under the Halifax Mainland Land Use By-law (LUB). The R-4 Zone allows a mix of residential uses, including

- detached-dwellings, as per the R-1 (Single Family Dwelling) Zone requirements;
- semi-detached dwellings, as per the R-2 (Two-Family Dwelling) Zone requirements;
- stand-alone townhouse buildings, as per the R-2T (Townhouse) Zone requirements; and
- apartment houses.

The R-4 Zone regulations for Halifax Mainland were adopted in the 1970s. They include:

- a maximum density of 75 persons per acre, due to servicing capacity restrictions at the time;
- angle controls that set building mass, height and design; and
- at least one parking space per dwelling unit.

Regional Plan Context

The Regional Plan designates both sites Urban Settlement. This designation encompasses areas with existing or proposed municipal water and wastewater servicing. The Regional Plan directs at least 75% of new housing to be developed in the Regional Centre and urban communities; provide housing opportunities for a range of social and economic needs; focus new growth in centres where supporting services and infrastructure are already available; design communities that protect neighbourhood stability and support neighbourhood revitalization; and be accessible to all mobility needs and are well connected with other communities.

DISCUSSION

The MPS is a strategic policy document that sets out the goals, objectives and direction for long term growth and development in the Municipality. While the MPS provides broad direction, Regional Council may consider MPS amendment requests to enable proposed development that is inconsistent with its policies. Amendments to an MPS are significant undertakings and Council is under no obligation to consider such requests. Amendments should be only considered within the broader planning context and when there is reason to believe that there has been a change to the circumstances since the MPS was adopted, or last reviewed.

Applicant Rationale

Both applications provided the following rationale to support the proposed amendments:

- they are not introducing new land uses into an established neighbourhood, and instead requesting that Council consider updated zoning regulations that would expand existing uses;
- the proposals would create several hundred new units at a time when housing is needed and vacancy rates are at historic lows;
- the proposals align with the Regional Plan objective to direct new housing to urban communities near the Regional Centre;
- new policy for the subject properties would allow development that is more consistent with new planning documents (e.g. Centre Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, Bus Rapid Transit Plan, and Herring Cove Functional Plan); and
- new policy would reflect the needs of modern residential buildings.

Attachments A and B contain the application letters and conceptual building drawings.

Review

Staff have reviewed the request, considering the site context, the surrounding land uses and the existing planning policy. Staff advise that the request has merit for the following reasons:

Policy Direction
The Regional Plan directs the majority of new housing to be constructed in urban and suburban communities. Specifically, Regional Plan housing objectives include:

- developing at least 75% of new housing in the Regional Centre and in urban communities;
- focusing new growth where services are already available;
- protecting neighbourhood stability; and
- designing communities to support neighbourhood revitalization.

This requires new housing in built-up areas. Other more recent policy documents, such as the Centre Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan and Bus Rapid Transit Strategy, also encourage higher density housing near transit corridors and routes.

Housing
The Ridge Valley and Cowie Hill proposals would create infill housing in an area with existing municipal services. The properties are located along local bus routes, an express bus line, and are a short distance away from a corridor route on Herring Cove Road. There is also an elementary school and parkland nearby.

HRM is experiencing unprecedented population growth, accompanied by the need for more housing. Halifax grew to over 460,000 people between 2020 to 2021 – a 2.05% increase, making it the third fastest growing metropolitan area in Canada (Statistics Canada, January 2022). Vacancy rates are at historic lows. CMHC's Housing Market Assessment from September 2021 assigns Halifax a high level of market vulnerability due to low housing inventories and overheated price acceleration. More housing is needed, particularly in areas where supporting services already exist.

Water Services
The subject properties are designated High Density Residential, but the R-4 Zone only allows 75 people per acre or about 33 units per acre (82 units per hectare). This restriction was implemented due to servicing capacity issues in the 1970's. However, water servicing has since improved and the site can support more density.

Parking
The R-4 Zone requires at least one parking space per dwelling unit. The Centre Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) and the Regional Parking Strategy Functional Plan all recommend lower parking requirements, especially near transit hubs. The IMP includes direction to reduce parking requirements when considering MPS and LUB amendments. Lower parking requirements can help support increased residential density, lower car use, and lower construction costs.

The current building onsite at 30 Ridge Valley Road uses only 7% of the available area, with the majority dedicated to surface parking. 41 Cowie Hill Road is similar, with the existing building using only 11% of the site. These proposals would introduce infill housing on land that currently is used mainly for parking.

Urban Design
Angle control regulations in the R-4 Zone result in 'towers in the park' – tall buildings surrounded by large lawns or parking lots that can feel inhospitable to pedestrians. Angle controls were a popular urban design tool in the 1970's, but today are not considered desirable as they emphasize a separation of uses, lack human-scale streetwalls to foster a welcoming atmosphere, and tend to have large unprogrammed and unused space that discourages casual street-level interactions. Council's more recent policy direction concerning urban design set out in the Centre Plan focuses on streetwall heights, stepbacks, and at-grade building design to support a pedestrian-friendly, human scale experience.

Updated zoning regulations could improve urban design standards and walkability. For example, an urban design best practice is to place buildings closer to the street, to shorten walking distances and create enclosure for streetscapes.

Density
The HDR Designation in the Mainland South Secondary Plan does not provide detailed policy direction, and in fact the proposals for 30 Ridge Valley Road and 41 Cowie Hill Road meet the minimal policy direction provided. However, there is no zone in the LUB that enables any development with density over 75 people per acre. This density cap is at odds with the Council policy decisions described above and is no longer required with increased servicing capacity.

Plan and By-law Simplification Program:
HRM currently has 21 SMPSs and LUBs that apply to different areas of the Municipality. Most of these documents were adopted prior to the 1996 amalgamation, with some dating back to the 1970s and1980s. Given the diverse nature of these planning documents, existing SMPSs and LUBs use a variety of formats, definitions, policies, and processes to regulate land use and development. The Secondary Plan & By-law Simplification Program aims to reduce the number of planning documents, clarify inconsistent land use controls and respond to current planning challenges, by consolidating, simplifying, and modernizing all secondary planning documents in the Municipality. The first stage of this project was recently completed with the adoption of the Centre Plan. The next phases of the program will focus on updating and simplifying both the rural and the suburban planning frameworks, including the Mainland South area. Principles for this review are being established under the Regional Plan Review, and include "directing most growth to mixed use, transit-oriented communities that can be served by transit, walking, wheeling and cycling."

It will take a number of years for the Suburban Plan to develop a complete, updated set of land use planning rules. The zoning and policy review being proposed for 30 Ridge Valley Road and 41 Cowie Hill Road could enable new development in a shorter timeframe, while supporting the emerging Suburban Plan principles. These two applications may also provide opportunities to inform early work on the Suburban Plan.

Review Items
A full review would consider:

- the scope and appropriateness of different amendment options in coordination with the Secondary Plan and By-law Simplification program;
- the policy direction in the Regional Plan Review (Themes and Directions), Centre Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan and Herring Cove Road Functional Plan;
- demographic and housing market trends;
- feedback received through community engagement;
- Halifax Water's input on servicing capacity; and
- input from other HRM business units and teams.

Conclusion
Staff have reviewed the proposed MPS amendment applications and advise that the requests have merit. The area has more servicing capacity than originally planned for when the density cap was implemented, as well as access to transit, recreation, schools, and services. A review of the R-4 zoning requirements for the two sites is an opportunity to consider more density in a well-served area, while updating urban design regulations that support a more pedestrian-friendly, human scaled streetscape. Proceeding with these two applications in advance of the Suburban Plan would also allow HRM to consider more housing in the short-term in coordination with the Secondary Plan and By-law Simplification program. Therefore, staff recommend that Council initiate a process to consider amendments to the MPS and LUB to modify zoning requirements for the two subject sites.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Should Regional Council choose to initiate the MPS amendment process, the *HRM Charter* requires that Regional Council approve a public participation program. In February of 1997, Regional Council approved a public participation resolution that outlines the process to be undertaken for proposed MPS amendments

which are local in nature. This requires a public meeting, at a minimum, along with any other measures needed to obtain public opinion.

If Council initiates the MPS amendment process, the proposed level of community engagement is consultation, achieved by:

- placing a sign on the subject property;
- sharing information via mail and the HRM website; and
- a public information meeting, subject to all public health protocols in force and contingent upon public gatherings of the necessary size being permitted.

Regional Council must hold a public hearing before considering approval of any amendments.

Amendments to the Halifax Plan Area will potentially impact the following stakeholders: residents and nearby property owners.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications. The HRM costs associated with processing this planning application can be accommodated within the approved 2022-2023 operating budget for C320 - Regional Policy Program.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations contained within this report. This application involves proposed MPS amendments. Such amendments are at the discretion of Regional Council and are not subject to appeal to the N.S. Utility and Review Board. Information concerning risks and other implications of adopting the proposed amendments are contained within the Discussion section of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council may choose to initiate the consideration of potential policy that would differ from those outlined in this report. This may require a supplementary report from staff.

2. Regional Council may choose not to initiate the MPS amendment process. A decision of Council not to initiate a process to consider amending the Halifax SMPS is not appealable to the NS Utility and Review Board as per Section 262 of the *HRM Charter*.

ATTACHMENTS

Map 1a:	Generalized Future Land Use – 30 Ridge Valley Road
Map 1b:	Generalized Future Land Use – 41 Cowie Hill Road
Map 2a:	Zoning and Notification Area – 30 Ridge Valley Road
Map 2b:	Zoning and Notification Area – 41 Cowie Hill Road

Attachment A: Application Letter and Conceptual Drawings – 30 Ridge Valley Road
Attachment B: Application Letter and Conceptual Drawings – 41 Cowie Hill Road

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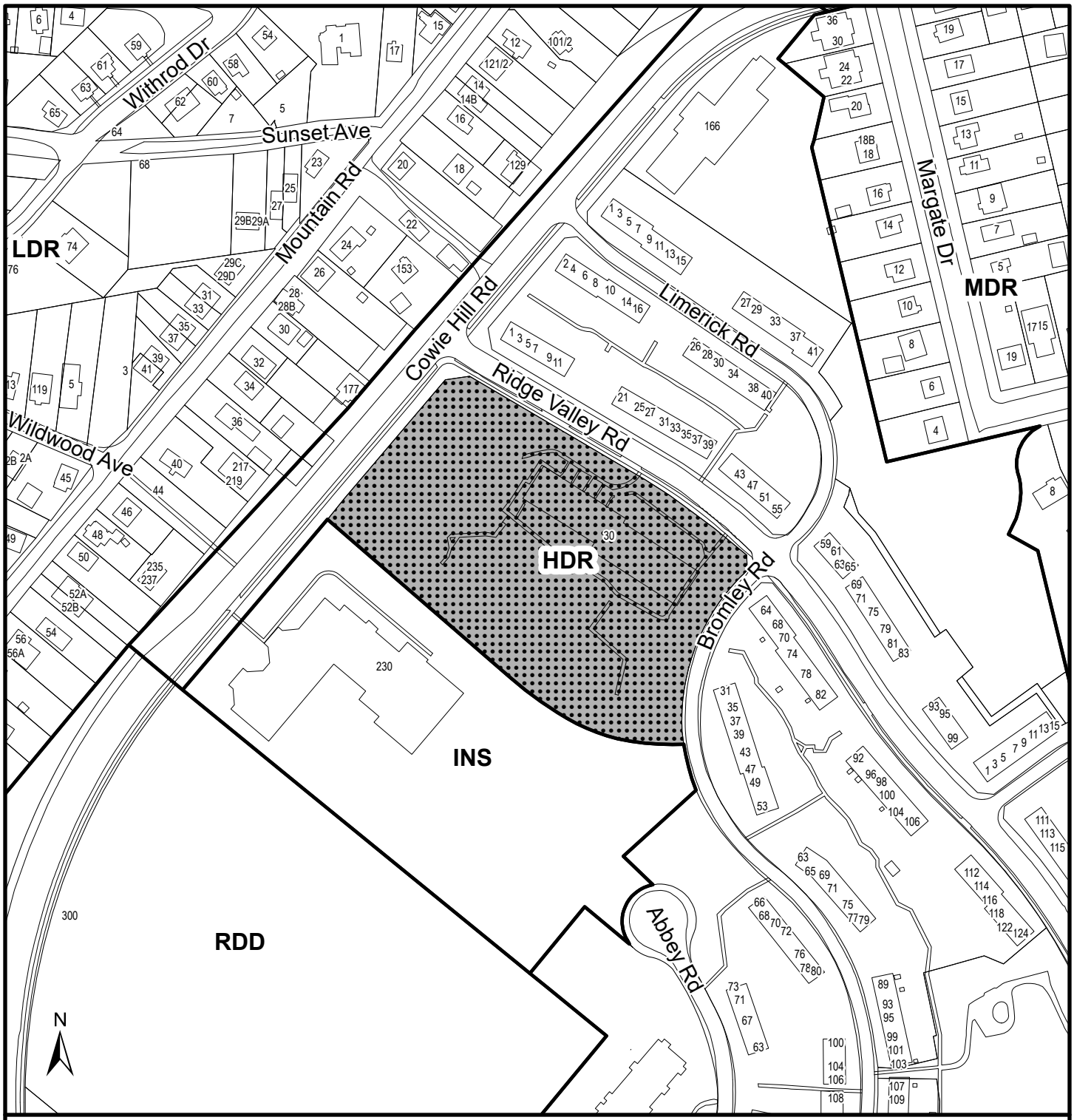
A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Anne Totten, Planner II, 902-476-8245



Map 1 - Generalized Future Land Use

30 Ridge Valley Road,
Spryfield

HALIFAX

Subject Property

Designation

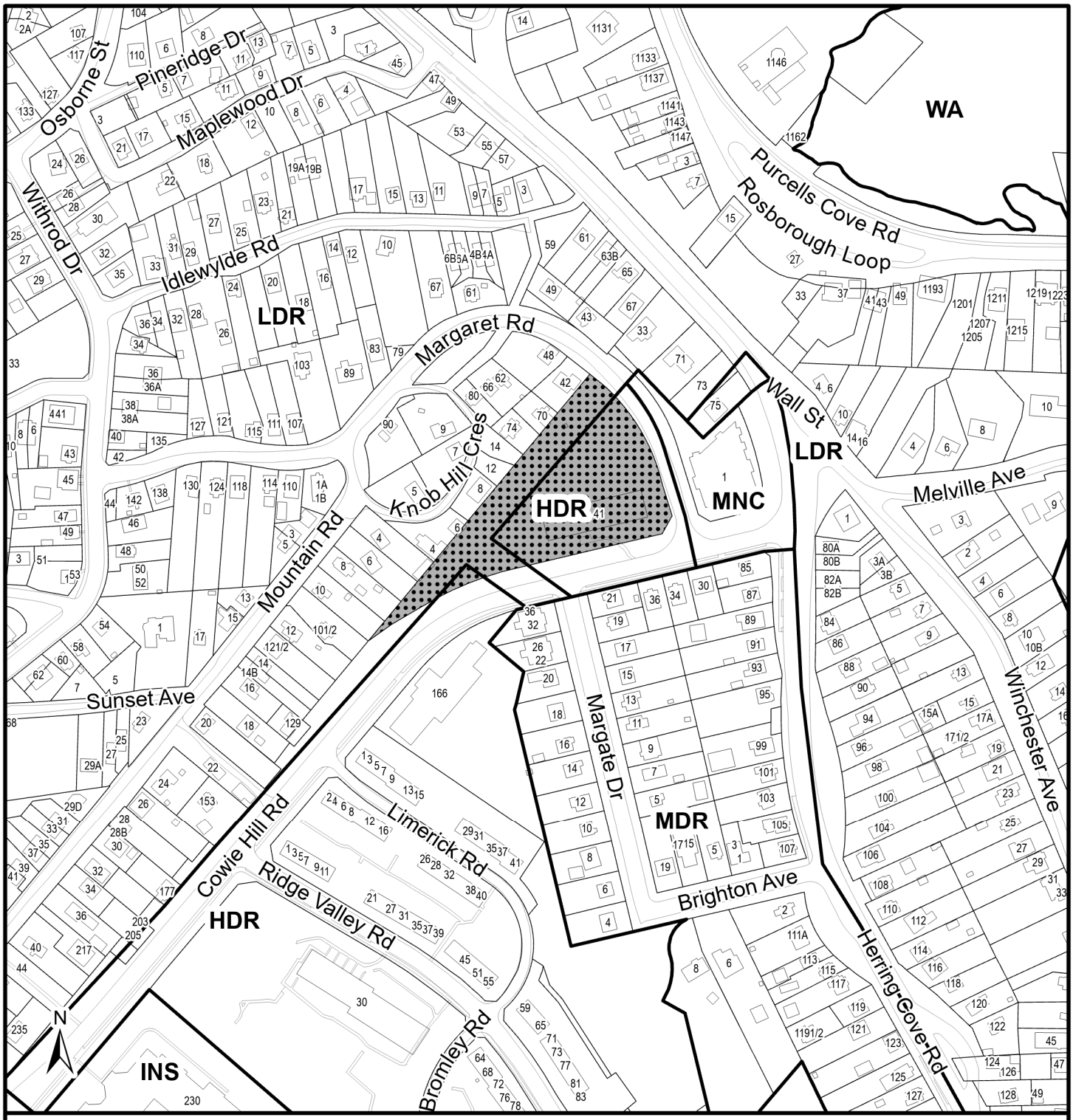
HDR	High Density Residential
INS	Institutional
LDR	Low Density Residential
MDR	Medium Density Residential
RDD	Residential Development District

0 40 80 m

This map is an unofficial reproduction of a portion of the Generalized Future Land Use Map for the plan area indicated.

The accuracy of any representation on this plan is not guaranteed.

Halifax Plan Area



Map 1 - Generalized Future Land Use

41 Cowie Hill Rd.,
Halifax

HALIFAX

Designation

Subject Property

Mainland South	LDR	Low Density Residential
	MDR	Medium Density Residential
	HDR	High Density Residential
	MNC	Minor Commercial
Halifax Plan	WA	Water Access Area

0 40 80 120 m

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Halifax Plan
Mainland South Secondary Plan

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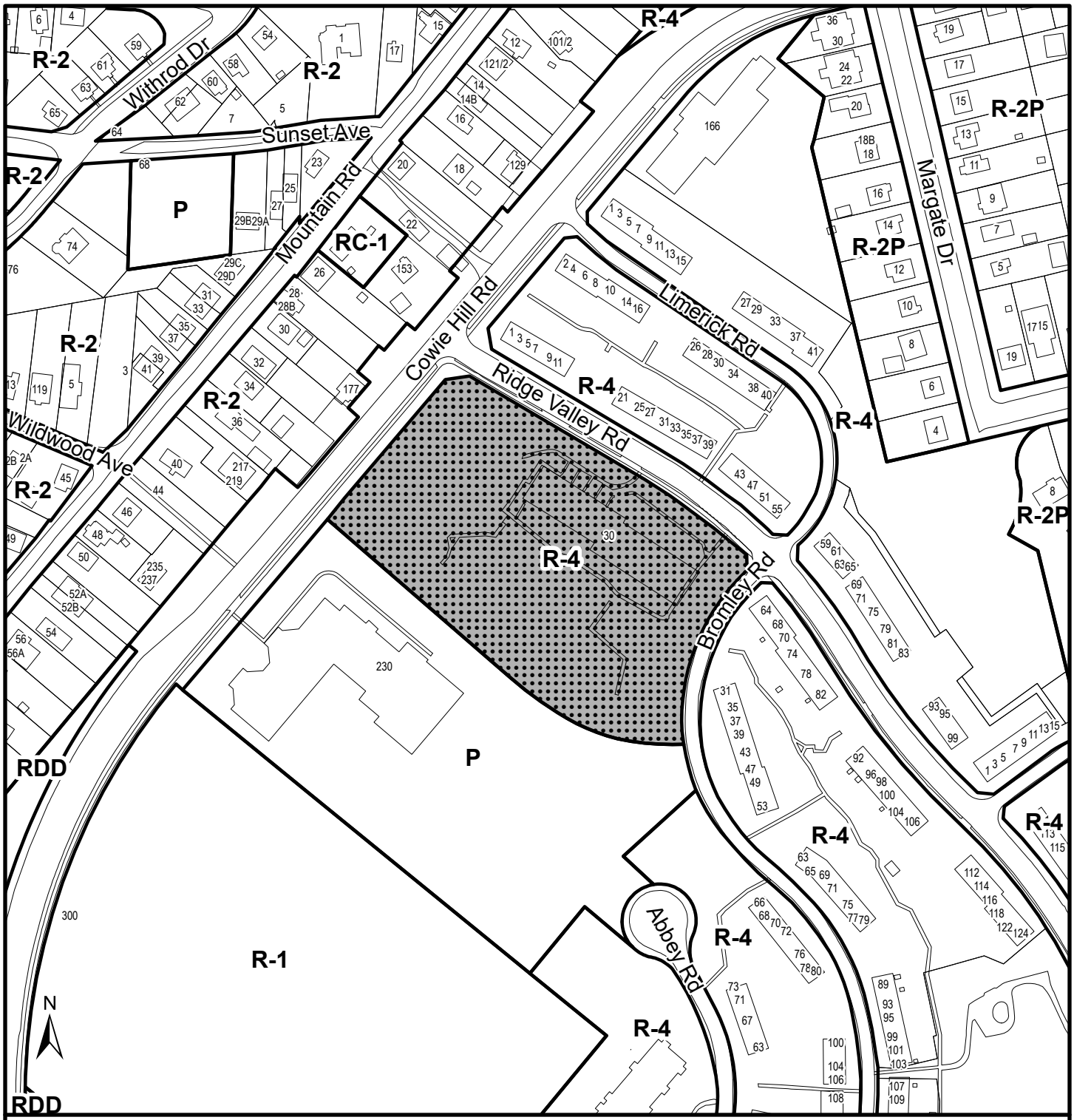

Map 2 - Zoning

30 Ridge Valley Road,
Spryfield

HALIFAX

Subject Property

Zone

P	Park and Institutional
R-1	Single Family Dwelling
R-2	Two Family Dwelling
R-2P	General Residential
R-4	Multiple Dwelling
RC-1	Neighbourhood Commercial
RDD	Residential Development District

0 40 80 m

This map is an unofficial reproduction of a portion of the Zoning Map for the plan area indicated.

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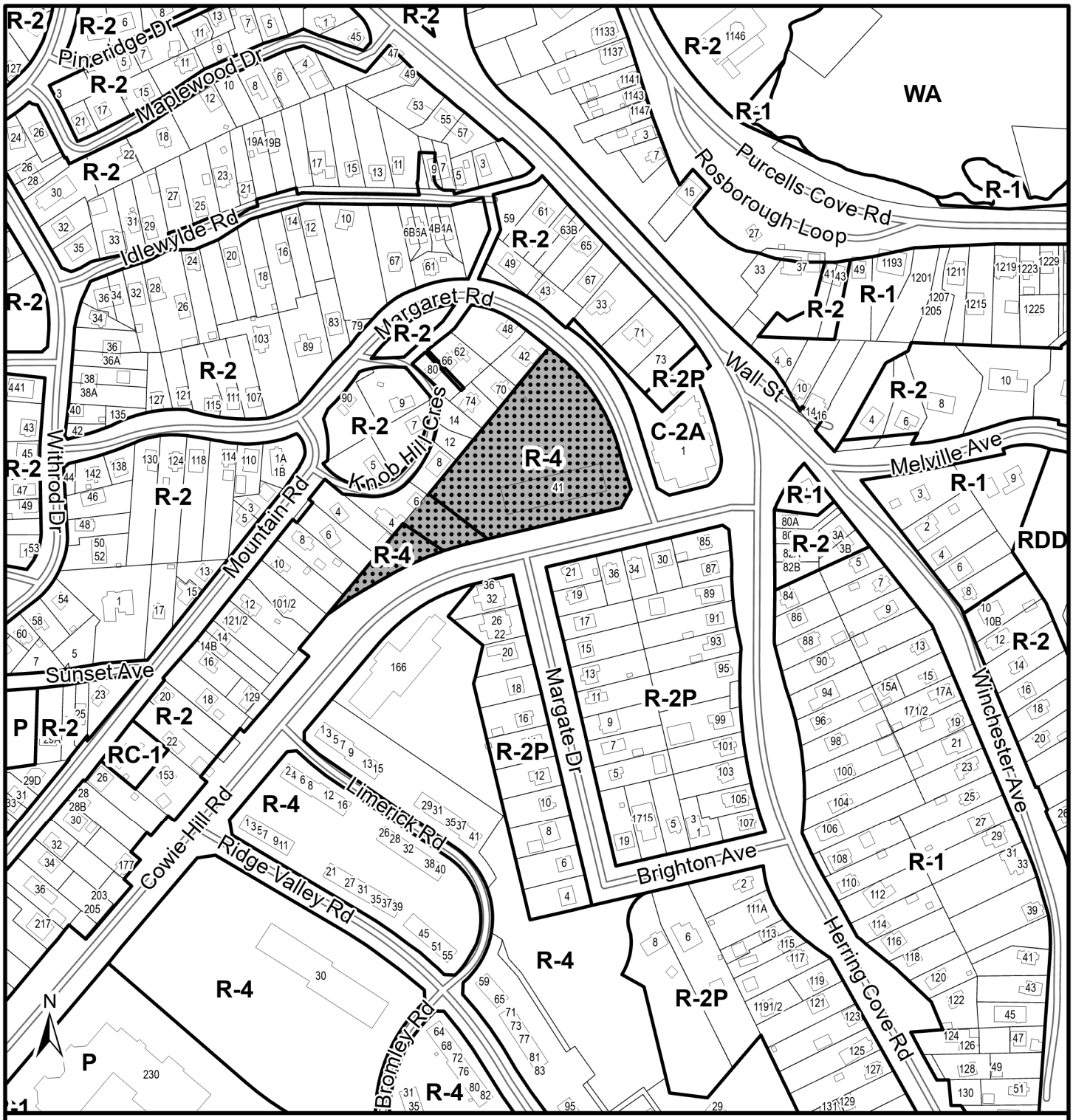
Halifax Mainland
Land Use By-Law Area



Map 2 - Zoning and Location

41 Cowie Hill Rd,
Halifax

HALIFAX

Subject Property

Halifax Mainland
Land Use By-Law Area

Zone

R-1	Single Family Dwelling
R-2	Two Family Dwelling
R-2P	General Residential
R-4	Multiple Dwelling
RC-1	Neighbourhood Commercial
RDD	Residential Development District
P	Park and Institutional
WA	Water Access

0 40 80 120 m

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Attachment A: Application Letter and Conceptual Drawings

April 28th, 2021

Miles Agar
Principal Planner
Urban Enabled Applications
Planning & Development | Regional Planning

Re: Application for Municipal Planning Strategy Amendment, 30 Ridge Valley Road (PID: 00274407)

Dear Miles:

On behalf of our client, Universal Properties Inc (Universal), ZZap Consulting Inc. (ZZap) is pleased to submit a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) amendment application for a mixed-use development located within the Halifax Plan Area at 30 Ridge Valley Road (PID: 00274407). To support this application submission, the following materials are included as appendices:

- Completed Planning Application Form
- Appendix A: Conceptual Building Drawings and Site Plan

1.0 Site Description and Location

The subject site is located within the Halifax Plan Area and has direct frontage on Cowie Hill Road, Ridge Valley Road, and Bromley Road. The site is approximately 174,240 ft^2.

The site is designated 'High Density Residential" within the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and is zoned R-4 (Multiple Dwelling) within the Mainland Halifax Land Use By-law. This zone allows for apartment houses subject to angle controls and density restrictions.

Subject Site

2.0 Summary of Development Proposal

The site is currently underutilized with existing building takes up approximately 7% of the site area. Universal is seeking to develop two new residential buildings on the subject site reaching a height of 16 habitable storeys, plus a non-habitable penthouse. It is Universal's desire to efficiently maximize the potential of the site through carefully planned urban infill. Appendix A illustrates a potential development scenario that in the opinion of this planner, effectively meets the goals of the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and Regional Plan using modernized development controls. The proposal provides for a total of approximately 298 residential apartment units and includes driveway access off Bromley Road in addition to the existing driveway access off Ridge Valley Road. Underground parking stalls and existing surface parking spaces would maintain parking for the existing building and the new buildings. The proposal

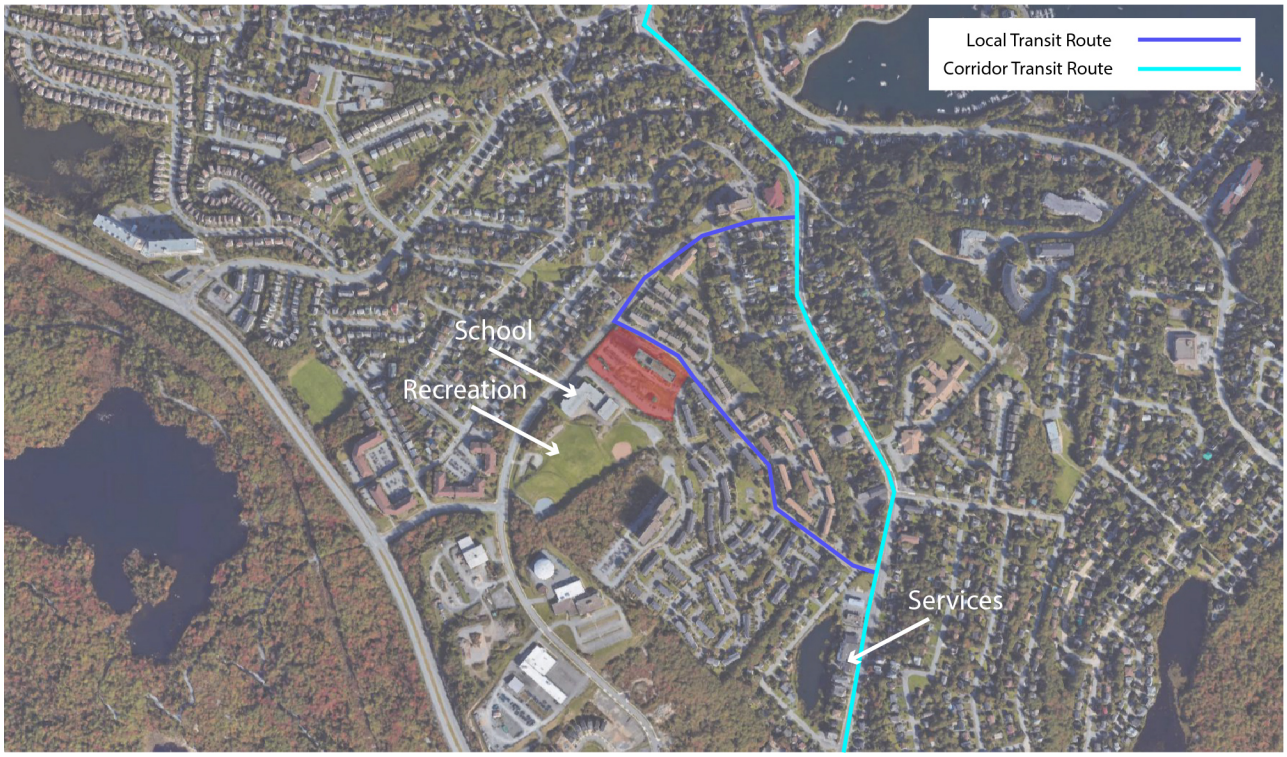
recognizes the abutting low scale residential buildings and the need to transition to that scale of development. It responds to the this built form by mirroring the townhouse style along the eastern lot line and separates the new towers by a park area connected to the Chebucto Heights Elementary School.

To promote pedestrian-oriented and human scale design, the proposal contains residential dwellings with street access on the ground floor, providing frequent entrances and transparent windows.

3.0 Background

The site is within walking distance of a suite of amenities located along Herring Cove Road as well as the Chebucto Heights Elementary School, and J, Albert Walker Memorial Sports Field.

Surrounding Area Services



Planning Background

The Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy is more than four decades old. Portions of the plan area are currently being re-evaluated by way of the Centre Plan public engagement process, to adapt to current social norms and the desires of the current residents of the area. However, the portion of the plan and connected Land Use By-law are not included as part of the Centre Plan Review. The existing MPS and LUB designated the properties along Cowie Hill Road as High Density Residential. However, the density limit imposed on these lands (75 persons per acre) are a relic leftover from a time where servicing capacity was limited in the area. Service capacity has vastly improved in this area since that policy came into force and is no longer an issue for this site. Additionally, the parking requirements for high-density residential uses are no longer consistent with Council's direction to shift away from single-occupancy vehicle use and towards trips made via active transportation and public transit. Lastly, the existing angle controls used to dictate building volumes do not allow for human scaled design of buildings. It is our understanding that this area will be part of the next phase of Municipal Plan and Land Use By-law reviews, but a timeline has not been established for that project. Given the uncertain timeline of the completion of the next phase of Municipal Plan review, Universal Properties requests that Regional Council consider changes to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy to allow the property owner to develop the property using modernized development controls. This includes:

1. Form-based massing regulations
2. Reduction of parking requirements
3. Service capacity restrictions based on current, modern infrastructure.

4.0 Rationale for Application Request

The proposed amendments to the MPS and LUB would enable a development scenario on the subject properties through policies that are more consistent with HRM's most recent planning frameworks for urban areas within the region (i.e., Centre Plan, Downtown Halifax Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, Bus Rapid Transit Plan, and Herring Cove Functional Plan) and are also more reflective of the basic needs of modern residential buildings. Our proposed development is keeping within the policy goals of the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, while proposing development controls more aligned with the form-based code provisions in the Downtown Halifax LUB, Centre Plan Package A, R4-A and R4-B zone of the Mainland Halifax Land Use Bylaw.

Alignment with the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy

The applicant's proposal aligns with the RMPS objective of directing new housing to urban communities surrounding the Regional Centre, which contain supporting services and infrastructure.

The applicant's request is generally consistent with the MPS city-wide policies for Residential Environments, as well. They are not seeking to introduce new land uses into an established neighbourhood, rather they are requesting that new zoning regulations be considered for existing uses.

The proposed development aligns with the following Halifax MPS residential policies as outlined in the table below:

Policy		Rationale
2.1	Residential development to accommodate future growth in the City should occur both on the Peninsula and on the Mainland, and should be related to the adequacy of existing or presently budgeted services.	The proposed development aligns with this policy by providing additional housing options in Mainland Halifax.
2.2	The integrity of existing residential neighbourhoods shall be maintained by requiring that any new development which would differ in use or intensity of use from the present neighbourhood development pattern be related to the needs or characteristics of the neighbourhood and this shall be accomplished by Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate	This application does not propose a change in use for the property but does propose an increase in intensity of the current residential use. The proposed increase in intensity of residential uses is adapting to the changing needs of the community. The current vacancy rate in the Mainland South area is 1.7% overall (CMHC Housing Market Information Portal), compared to a 1.9% vacancy rate for the whole of the Halifax Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). This indicates that there is certainly a demand for more housing supply in the area.
2.3	The City shall investigate alternative means for encouraging well-planned, integrated development.	Policies 2.3 -2.3.2 apply to ribbon development and are not applicable to this proposal.

2.4	Because the differences between residential areas contribute to the richness of Halifax as a city, and because different neighbourhoods exhibit different characteristics through such things as their location, scale, and housing age and type, and in order to promote neighbourhood stability and to ensure different types of residential areas and a variety of choices for its citizens, the City encourages the retention of the existing residential character of predominantly stable neighbourhoods, and will seek to ensure that any change it can control will be compatible with these neighbourhoods.	The existing character of the area is predominantly residential, and this proposal will maintain that character. Additionally, the surrounding properties are predominantly multi-unit/multi-storey residential buildings, and this proposed development maintains that character while incorporating planning and design principles that enhance the public realm and mitigate impact on adjacent uses. Universal Properties is open to providing a mix of unit types and sizes as dictated by market demand.
2.5	The City shall prepare detailed area plans for predominantly unstable neighbourhoods or areas. The priorities and procedures by which the City shall prepare these plans shall conform to the official City report entitled Areas for Detailed Planning and subsequent amendments which may be made by the City thereto as set forth in Part III, Section I of this document.	Not applicable to this proposal. The site is not within the "Areas for Detailed Planning"
2.6	The development of vacant land, or of land no longer used for industrial or institutional purposes within existing residential neighbourhoods shall be at a scale and for uses compatible with these neighbourhoods, in accordance with this Plan and this shall be accomplished by Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate.	Not applicable to this proposal. The current land is not vacant, or of an industrial or institutional use.

2.7	The City should permit the redevelopment of portions of existing neighbourhoods only at a scale compatible with those neighbourhoods. The City should attempt to preclude massive redevelopment of neighbourhood housing stock and dislocations of residents by encouraging infill housing and rehabilitation. The City should prevent large and socially unjustifiable neighbourhood dislocations and should ensure change processes that are manageable and acceptable to the residents. The intent of this policy, including the manageability and acceptability of change processes, shall be accomplished by Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate.	The proposed development would not displace any existing residents as the proposed development area of the property is currently used for parking. The existing site is considered a "brownfield" site and redevelopment should be considered infill housing and rehabilitation of the existing condition.
2.8	The City shall foster the provision of housing for people with different income levels in all neighbourhoods, in ways which are compatible with these neighbourhoods. In so doing, the City will pay particular attention to those groups which have special needs (for example, those groups which require subsidized housing, senior citizens, and the handicapped).	The proposed development targets the adult active living demographic. This includes seniors who are looking to downsize from existing single-family homes. Universal Properties is open to working with the municipality to make affordable units available in their development to address the housing needs of people with different income levels in the neighbourhood.
2.9-2.18	N/A	Not Applicable to this proposal.

Alignment with Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and other HRM plans

The Regional Plan (RMPS) chapter on settlement and housing includes objectives that focus new growth in centres where supporting services and infrastructure are already available. The objectives also aim to design communities that support complete neighbourhoods (mixed-use, diverse, affordable, accessible) and neighbourhood revitalization.

The 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 located along Route 14 and Route 32. Route 14 is a local bus route servicing the Cowie Hill Road area with a direct connection to Downtown Halifax. Route 32 is an express line that runs between Downtown Halifax and Cowie Hill. Additionally, Route 9, a designated Corridor Route in the Moving Forward Together Plan, which has a high level of service is accessible within a 400-metre walking distance. The site is well 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).

The 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, 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). Additionally, the subject site is located within 400 metres of a proposed bus rapid transit line and stop on Herring Cove Road.

The proposed MPS amendments request minor changes to planning policy in order to provide adequate flexibility to accommodate larger scale, complex, new developments. Therefore, we believe that the proposed amendments are still in alignment with recent planning policies including the RMPS.

Why current SMPS policy is no longer appropriate

Universal is in support of the general intent of the MPS policies as written, however it has become evident that the policies do not include enough flexibility to account for large scale, modern residential buildings that have complex functional elements.

Larger scale modern buildings have an inherent demand for larger scale mechanical and other functional building elements. This inherent demand is contemplated in HRM's most recent planning frameworks for urban areas within the region (i.e. draft Centre Plan, Downtown Halifax Plan & Downtown Dartmouth Plan), however it is not contemplated in the Halifax Plan Area MPS and Halifax Mainland Land Use By-law.

The density restriction of 75 persons per acre, regulated by the Halifax Mainland Land Use By-law, severely inhibits modernized development and directly impedes the goals outlined for Urban Local Growth Centres in the Regional Plan, and Transit Oriented Development goals outlined in the Integrated Mobility Plan, and Rapid Transit Strategy. A modernized development control would be more applicable for sites of this size.

One such modernized development control is the use of Floor Area Ratio (FAR). This type of development control is contemplated under Centre Plan for sites of this size and scale and could prove to be a more useful tool to meet the residential policies under the current Municipal Planning Strategy for similar sized sites. For comparison, the Young Street Superstore site (PID: 41120148) is 4.28 acres and, under the draft Centre Plan, is
given a FAR of 7; Universal's proposal has a site area of 4.2 acres and a FAR of 1.9.

Impact on local community and broader region

The proposed MPS amendments will only impact development of the specific properties. The amendments will have a minimal impact on the local community and the broader region as they are minor in nature and are limited to a small geographical area. We believe that the proposed amendments will provide adequate flexibility to enable complex new construction within the Halifax Plan Area, that is aligned with the general intent for development in this area under the Regional Plan and the Integrated Mobility Plan.

Why this consideration cannot wait until the next HRM initiated SMPS review

This request stems from the urgent need for rental housing in the Mainland South area of HRM. The most recent CMHC rental market report identified a 1.7% rental vacancy rate in the Mainland South area. This is below t Canada's national vacancy rate (2.4%) and on par with the vacancy rate for the whole of HRM. CMHC suggests that a healthy vacancy rate is 3-4%. The need for additional rental housing is pressing and demands additional units.

5.0 Conclusion

Many of the supporting documents included with our application reflect discussions we have had with various HRM planning staff. We remain open to further revisions and improvements to the development plan as we move forward with more a detailed design in a collaborative manner with you and your colleagues.

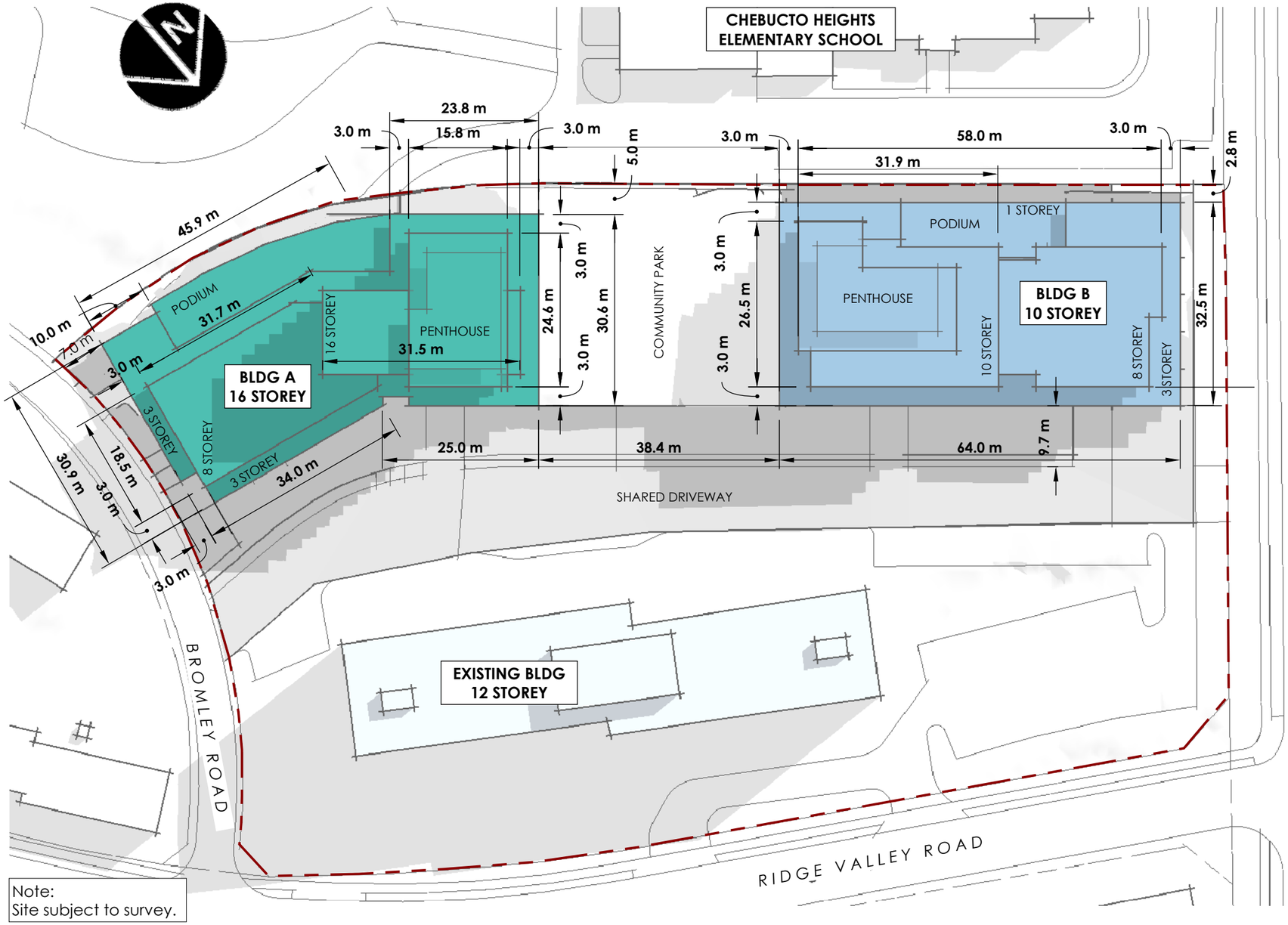
We respectfully request that you provide us with an anticipated schedule for the plan amendment and development agreement process.

Please advise if you require any further information at this time in order to prepare the initiation report for this project.

Kind Regards,

Original Signed

Chris Markides MCIP, LPP
Urban Planner
ZZap Consulting



Note:
Site subject to survey.

LOT AREA: 181,436 SF

BLDG A GFA

LG	8,800 SF
L2	6,800 SF
L3	12,120 SF
LVL 4-8	12,180x4=48,720 SF
LVL 9-16	6,420x7=44, 940 SF
TOTAL	121,380 SF

BLDG B GFA

LG	9,700 SF
L2	8,050 SF
L3	20,230 SF
L4-8	12,470x4=49,880 SF
LVL 9-10	8,070x2=16,140
TOTAL	104,000 SF

Plan View

Zwicker Zareski architecture + planning
1Canal Street, Dartmouth, NS B2Y 2W1 | ZZap.ca

UNIVERSAL REALTY GROUP

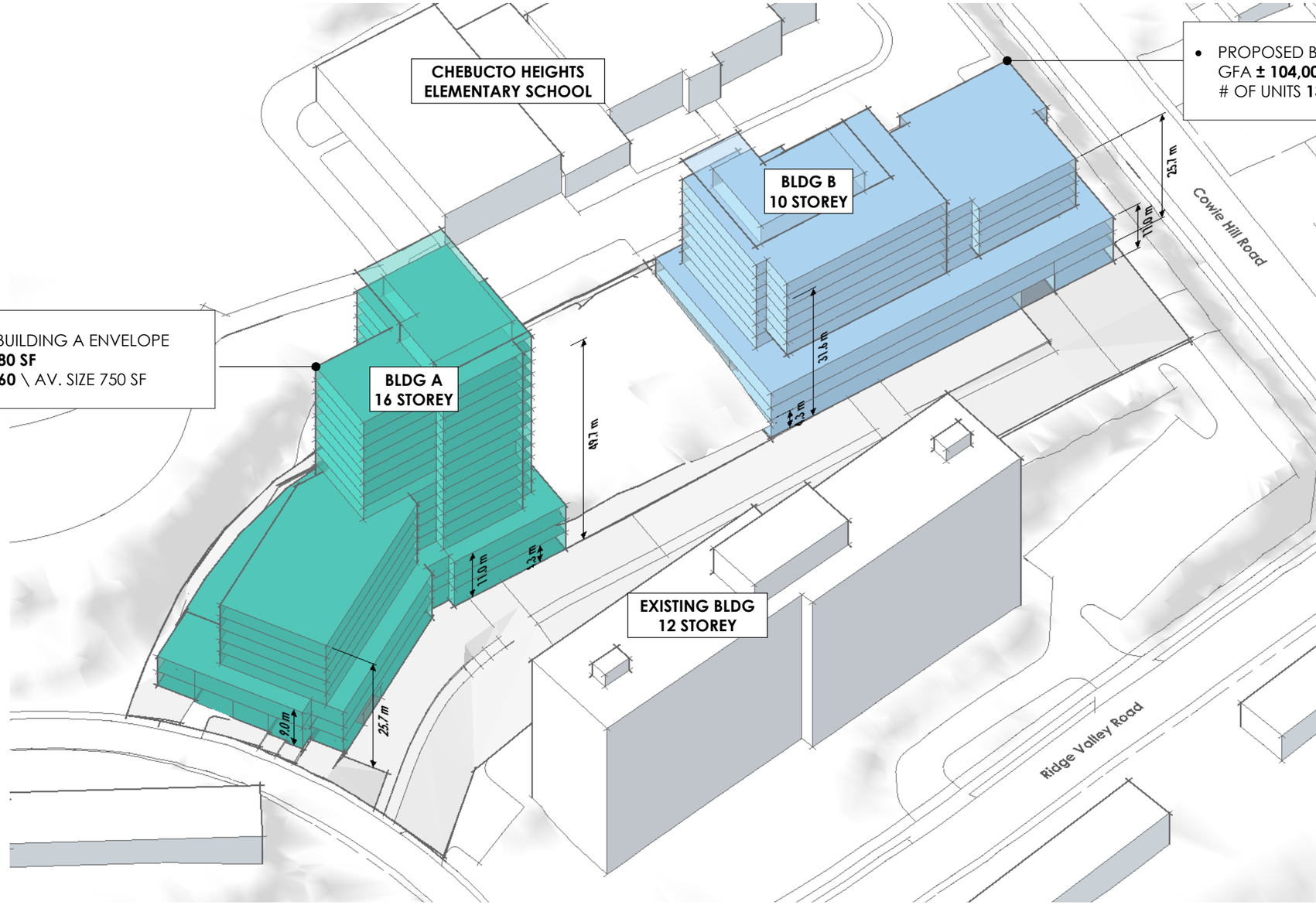
RIDGEWAY TOWERS EXPANSION
Halifax, NS

PRELIMINARY STUDY

Subject to Survey. Property lines are approximate only.
This drawing is not intended to be used for contract pricing or fabrication purposes.
All content is subject to change.

A01

ISSUED FOR REVIEW
DATE: July 2, 2020



Perspective View (North)

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UNIVERSAL REALTY GROUP

RIDGEWAY TOWERS EXPANSION
Halifax, NS

PRELIMINARY STUDY

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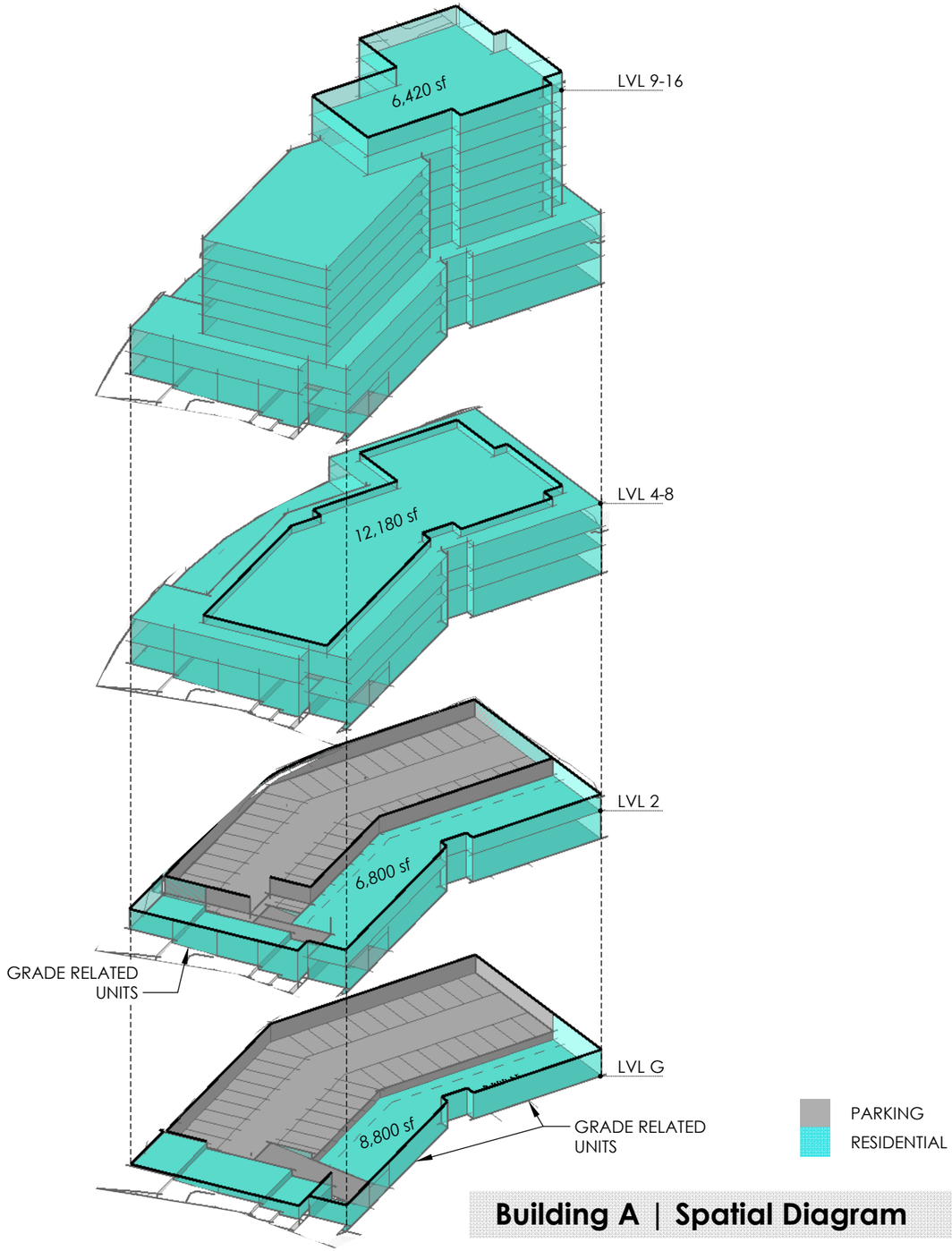
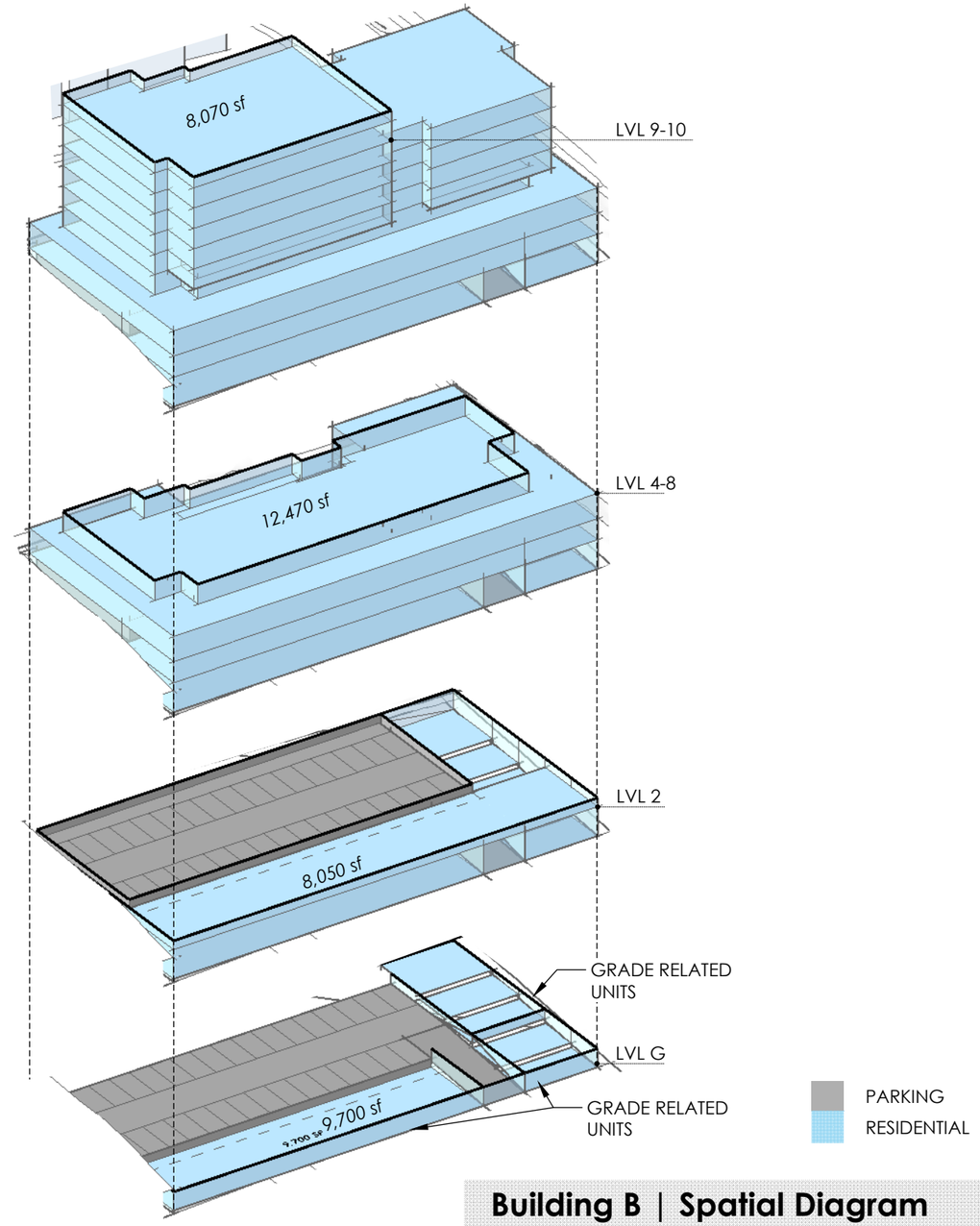
All content is subject to change.

A02

ISSUED FOR REVIEW
DATE: July 2, 2020



Building A | Spatial Diagram



Building B | Spatial Diagram

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UNIVERSAL REALTY GROUP

RIDGEWAY TOWERS EXPANSION
Halifax, NS

PRELIMINARY STUDY

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All content is subject to change.

A03

ISSUED FOR REVIEW
DATE: July 2, 2020

architecture + planning
1 Canal St, Dartmouth NS B2Y 2W1
www.zzap.ca

February 24, 2022

Anne Totten
Planner II
Urban Enabled Applications
Planning & Development | Regional Planning

Re: Application for Municipal Planning Strategy Amendment, 41 Cowie Hill Road (PID: 00274241)

Dear Anne:

On behalf of our client, Hazelview Investments, zzap Consulting Inc. (zzap) is pleased to submit a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) amendment application for a residential infill development located within the Halifax Plan Area at 41 Cowie Hill Road (PID: 00274241). To support this application submission, the following materials are included as appendices:

- Completed Planning Application Form
- Appendix A: Plan Amendment Rationale
- Appendix B: Conceptual Building Drawings and Site Plan

Many of the supporting documents included with our application reflect discussions we have had with various HRM planning staff. We remain open to further revisions and improvements to the development plan as we move forward with a more detailed design in a collaborative manner with you and your colleagues.

We respectfully request that you provide us with an anticipated schedule for the plan amendment and development agreement process.

Please advise if you require any further information at this time in order to prepare the initiation report for this project.

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

Chris Markides MCIP, LPP
Urban Planner
ZZap Consulting

Plan Amendment Rationale

1.0 Site Description and Location

The subject site is located within the Halifax Plan Area and has direct frontage on Cowie Hill Road, & Margaret Road. The site is approximately 91,476 ft^2.

The site is primarily designated 'High Density Residential" within the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and is primarily zoned R-4 (Multiple Dwelling) within the Mainland Halifax Land Use By- law. This zone allows for apartment houses subject to angle controls and density restrictions. A small portion of the site is bisected by a "Low Density Residential" designation and R-2 zoning. Figure 2 shows the land use designation context of the site and Figure 3 shows the land use zoning context of the site.

Figure 1: Subject Site

Figure 2: Land Use Designation

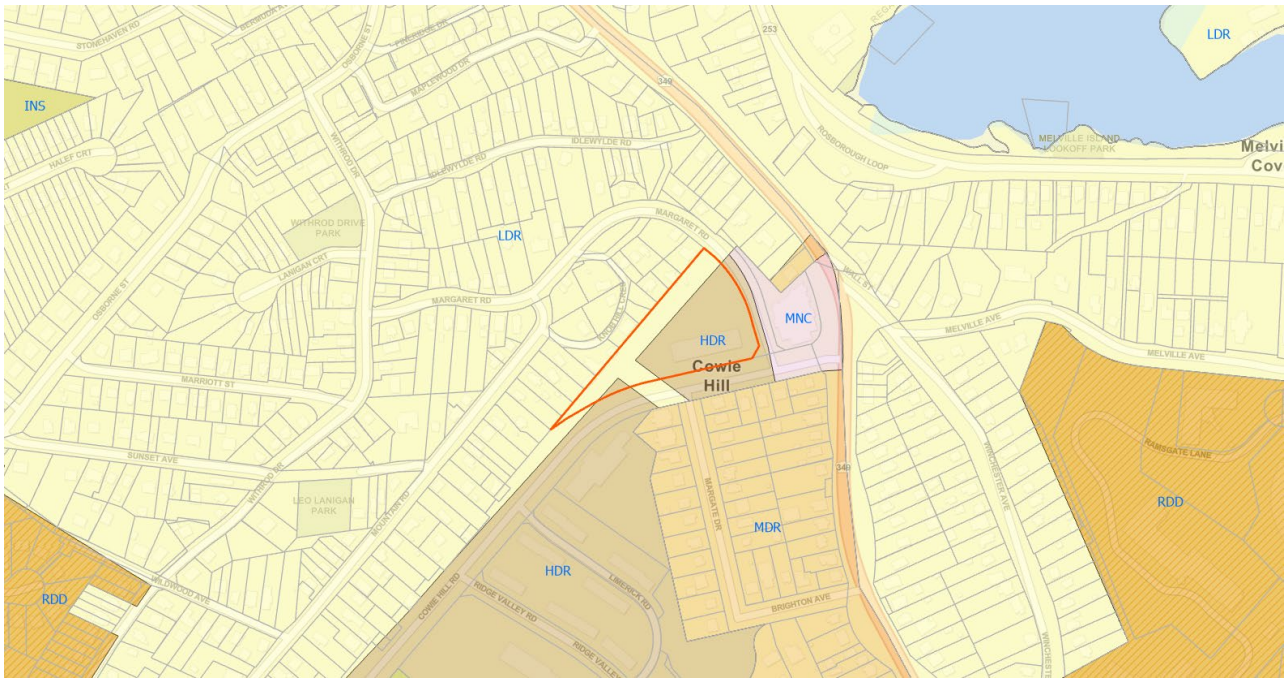


Figure 3: Zoning Map

2.0 Summary of Development Proposal

The site is currently underutilized with the existing building taking up approximately 11% of the site area. Hazelview is seeking to develop two new residential buildings on the subject site. Phase 1 is the development of an 8-storey residential building on the western portion of the site. Phase 2 incorporates the development of a 17-storey residential building, plus a non-habitable penthouse. Phase 3 involves providing a potential envelope upgrade, other upgrade options to the existing building will be determined during the development stage.

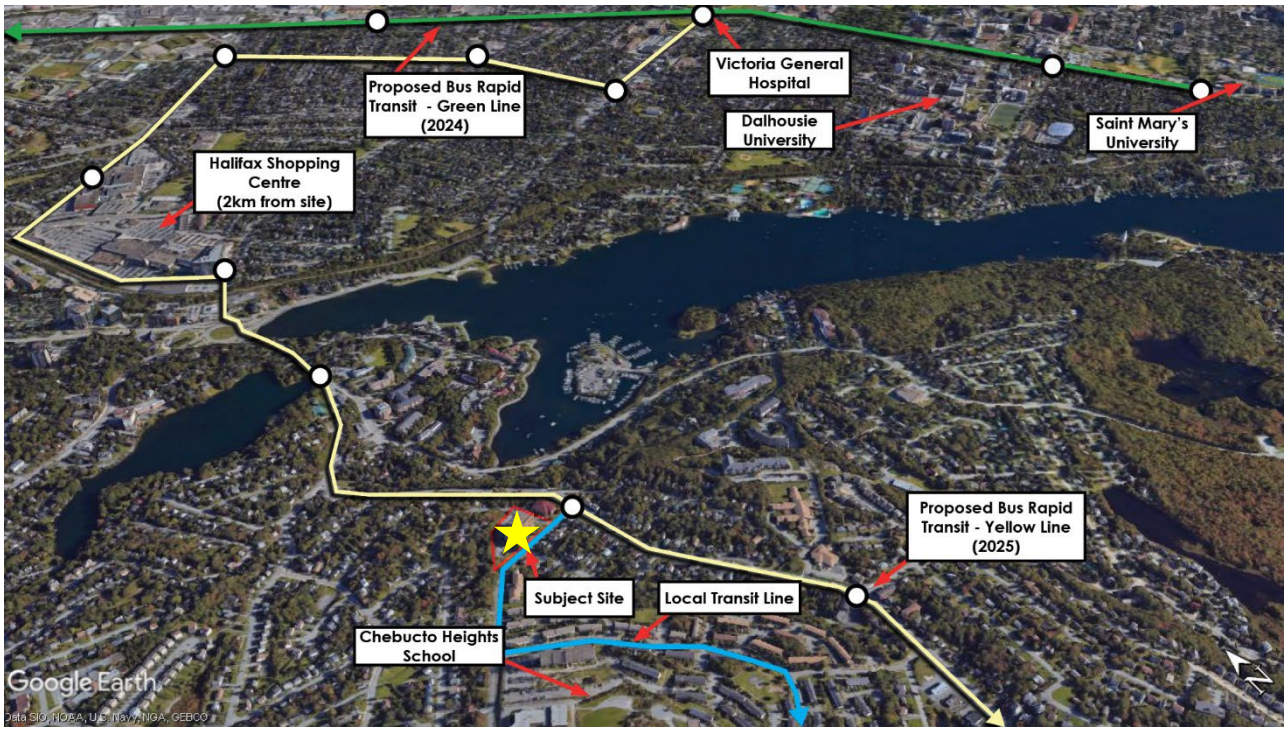
It is Hazelview's desire to efficiently maximize the potential of the site through carefully planned urban infill. Appendix A illustrates a potential development scenario that in the opinion of this planner, effectively meets the goals of the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and Regional Plan using modernized development controls. The proposal provides for a total of approximately 290 residential apartment units inclusive of the 110 units in the existing building and includes driveway access off Margaret Road in addition to the existing driveway access off Cowie Hill Road. A phased approach would provide a transition from the existing surface parking to underground parking stalls to maintain parking for the existing building and add parking for the new buildings. The proposal recognizes the abutting low scale residential buildings and the need to transition to that scale of development. It responds to the built form by creating a three-storey podium before stepping back a minimum of 14 feet to a slender tower as well as providing a significant (40 foot) vegetative buffer along the northern lot line.

To promote pedestrian-oriented and human scale design, the proposal contains residential dwellings with street access on the ground floor, providing frequent entrances and transparent windows.

3.0 Background

The site is within walking distance of a suite of amenities located along Herring Cove Road as well as the Chebucto Heights Elementary School, and J, Albert Walker Memorial Sports Field. The site is also along existing Corridor and Local Transit Lines and a proposed Bus Rapid Transit line that will connect the site to a broad range of shops and services (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Surrounding Area Services



Planning Background

The Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy is more than four decades old. Portions of the plan area are currently being re-evaluated by way of the Centre Plan public engagement process, to adapt to current social norms and the desires of the current residents of the area. However, the portion of the plan and connected Land Use By-law are not included as part of the Centre Plan Review. The existing MPS and LUB designated the properties along Cowie Hill Road as High Density Residential. However, the density limit imposed on these lands (75 persons per acre) are a relic leftover from a time where servicing capacity was limited in the area. Service capacity has vastly improved in this area since that policy came into force and is no longer an issue for this site. Additionally, the parking requirements for high-density residential uses are no longer consistent with Council's direction to shift away from single-occupancy vehicle use and towards trips made via active transportation and public transit. Lastly, the existing angle controls used to dictate building volumes do not allow for human scaled design of buildings. It is our understanding that this area will be part of the next phase of Municipal Plan and Land Use By-law reviews, but a timeline has not been established for that project.

Given the uncertain timeline of the completion of the next phase of Municipal Plan review, Hazelview Investments requests that Regional Council consider changes to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy to allow the property owner to develop the property using modernized development controls. This includes:

1. Form-based massing regulations
2. Reduction of parking requirements
3. Service capacity restrictions based on current, modern infrastructure.

4.0 Rationale for Application Request

The proposed amendments to the MPS and LUB would enable a development scenario on the subject properties through policies that are more consistent with HRM's most recent planning frameworks for urban areas within the region (i.e., Centre Plan, Downtown Halifax Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, Bus Rapid Transit Plan, and Herring Cove Functional Plan) and are also more reflective of the basic needs of modern residential buildings. Our proposed development is keeping within the policy goals of the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, while proposing development controls more aligned with the form-based code provisions in the Downtown Halifax LUB, Centre Plan Package A, R4-A and R4-B zone of the Mainland Halifax Land Use Bylaw.

<u>Alignment with the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy</u>

The applicant's proposal aligns with the RMPS objective of directing new housing to urban communities surrounding the Regional Centre, which contain supporting services and infrastructure.

The applicant's request is generally consistent with the MPS city-wide policies for Residential Environments, as well. They are not seeking to introduce new land uses into an established neighbourhood, rather they are requesting that new zoning regulations be considered for existing uses.

The proposed development aligns with the following Halifax MPS residential policies as outlined in the table below:

Policy		Rationale
2.1	Residential development to accommodate future growth in the City should occur both on the Peninsula and on the Mainland, and should be related to the adequacy of existing or presently budgeted services.	The proposed development aligns with this policy by providing additional housing options in Mainland Halifax.

2.2	The integrity of existing residential neighbourhoods shall be maintained by requiring that any new development which would differ in use or intensity of use from the present neighbourhood development pattern be related to the needs or characteristics of the neighbourhood and this shall be accomplished by Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate	This application does not propose a change in use for the property but does propose an increase in intensity of the current residential use. The proposed increase in intensity of residential uses is adapting to the changing needs of the community. The current vacancy rate in the Mainland South area is 1.7% overall (CMHC Housing Market Information Portal), compared to a 1.9% vacancy rate for the whole of the Halifax Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). This indicates that there is certainly a demand for more housing supply in the area.
2.3	The City shall investigate alternative means for encouraging well-planned, integrated development.	Policies 2.3 -2.3.2 apply to ribbon development and are not applicable to this proposal.
2.4	Because the differences between residential areas contribute to the richness of Halifax as a city, and because different neighbourhoods exhibit different characteristics through such things as their location, scale, and housing age and type, and in order to promote neighbourhood stability and to ensure different types of residential areas and a variety of choices for its citizens, the City encourages the retention of the existing residential character of predominantly stable neighbourhoods, and will seek to ensure that any change it can control will be compatible with these neighbourhoods.	The existing character of the area is predominantly residential, and this proposal will maintain that character. Additionally, the surrounding properties are predominantly multi-unit/multi-storey residential buildings, and this proposed development maintains that character while incorporating planning and design principles that enhance the public realm and mitigate impact on adjacent uses. Hazelview Investments is open to providing a mix of unit types and sizes as dictated by market demand.
2.5	The City shall prepare detailed area plans for predominantly unstable neighbourhoods or areas. The priorities and procedures by which the City shall prepare these plans shall conform to the official City	Not applicable to this proposal. The site is not within the "Areas for Detailed Planning"

	report entitled Areas for Detailed Planning and subsequent amendments which may be made by the City thereto as set forth in Part III, Section I of this document.	
2.6	The development of vacant land, or of land no longer used for industrial or institutional purposes within existing residential neighbourhoods shall be at a scale and for uses compatible with these neighbourhoods, in accordance with this Plan and this shall be accomplished by Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate.	Not applicable to this proposal. The current land is not vacant, or of an industrial or institutional use.
2.7	The City should permit the redevelopment of portions of existing neighbourhoods only at a scale compatible with those neighbourhoods. The City should attempt to preclude massive redevelopment of neighbourhood housing stock and dislocations of residents by encouraging infill housing and rehabilitation. The City should prevent large and socially unjustifiable neighbourhood dislocations and should ensure change processes that are manageable and acceptable to the residents. The intent of this policy, including the manageability and acceptability of change processes, shall be accomplished by Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate.	The proposed development would not displace any existing residents as the proposed development area of the property is currently used for parking. The existing site is considered a "brownfield" site and redevelopment should be considered infill housing and rehabilitation of the existing condition.
2.8	The City shall foster the provision of housing for people with different income levels in all neighbourhoods, in ways which are compatible with these neighbourhoods. In so	Hazelview will complete extensive market studies to determine the target demographic groups. Hazelview Investments is open to providing housing for different income levels.

	doing, the City will pay particular attention to those groups which have special needs (for example, those groups which require subsidized housing, senior citizens, and the handicapped).	
2.9-2.18	N/A	Not Applicable to this proposal.

Alignment with Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and other HRM plans

The Regional Plan (RMPS) chapter on settlement and housing includes objectives that focus new growth in centres where supporting services and infrastructure are already available. The objectives also aim to design communities that support complete neighbourhoods (mixed-use, diverse, affordable, accessible) and neighbourhood revitalization.

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The proposed MPS amendments request minor changes to planning policy in order to provide adequate flexibility to accommodate larger scale, complex, new developments. Therefore, we believe that the proposed amendments are still in alignment with recent planning policies including the RMPS.

Regional Plan Review Context

Our understanding is that the Regional Plan is currently under review and that the Themes and Directions "What We Heard" report was presented to Regional Council on January 25th, 2022. In that report, staff recommended that a separate study be

conducted to direct most growth toward mixed-use, transit-oriented communities that can be served by transit, walking, wheeling and cycling. At that meeting, Regional Council approved a motion to direct the CAO to prepare a staff report outlining the process to initiate updated secondary plans for the areas identified as BRT Walksheds and consider prioritizing BRT corridors for rezonings that support transit oriented complete communities.

As this property is located approximately 200 feet from a proposed bus rapid transit stop, there is merit to considering amendments to the existing land use framework that will support that Council motion.

Why current SMPS policy is no longer appropriate

Hazelview is in support of the general intent of the MPS policies as written, however it has become evident that the policies do not include enough flexibility to account for large scale, modern residential buildings that have complex functional elements. Larger scale modern buildings have an inherent demand for larger scale mechanical and other functional building elements. This inherent demand is contemplated in HRM's most recent planning frameworks for urban areas within the region (i.e. draft Centre Plan, Downtown Halifax Plan & Downtown Dartmouth Plan), however it is not contemplated in the Halifax Plan Area MPS and Halifax Mainland Land Use By-law.

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Why this consideration cannot wait until the next HRM initiated SMPS review

This request stems from the urgent need for rental housing in the Mainland South area of HRM. The most recent CMHC rental market report (2020) identified a 1.7% rental vacancy rate in the Mainland South area. This is below Canada's national vacancy rate (3.2%) and below vacancy rate for the whole of HRM (1.9%). CMHC suggests that a healthy vacancy rate is 3-4%. The need for additional rental housing is pressing and demands additional units.

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the current land use planning context, demand for new housing, and intended Regional Plan review direction, the amendments requested for this property are keeping in line with land use planning best practices as well as the policy guidance provided by Halifax Regional Council to HRM staff. Approving the proposed amendments would assist in carrying out the will of Regional Council, the Regional Plan, and the Regional Plan's supporting functional plans.

Plan View scale 1"=50'

zzap architecture + planning
1 Canal St, Dartmouth NS B2Y 2W1 | zzap.ca

CLIENT
HAZELVIEW DEVELOPMENTS

PROJECT
41 COWIE HILL ROAD DEVELOPMENT
Halifax, Nova Scotia

DRAWING
PRELIMINARY BUILDING ENVELOPE ANALYSIS

PROJECT NO. **21-137**
DRAWN BY: JMB
ISSUED FOR REVIEW
DATE: NOV. 24, 2021

DRAWING NUMBER
100

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PHASE 1: *CONSTRUCTION BUILDING 1*

BUILDING SUMMARY			
	STOREYS	GFA(sf)	UNITS
BLDG 1	8	~42,350 SF	58
BLDG 2	17	~115,870 SF	122
TOTAL		**158,220 SF**	**180**

CONSTRUCTION BUILDING 2 -SOME PARKING RELOCATED TO UNDERGROUNG, BLDG 1 **:PHASE 2**

Plan View scale 1"=100'

Note:
Site subject to survey.

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CLIENT
HAZELVIEW DEVELOPMENTS

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Perspective View (eastern)

Perspective View (western)

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CLIENT
HAZELVIEW DEVELOPMENTS

PROJECT
41 COWIE HILL ROAD DEVELOPMENT
Halifax, Nova Scotia

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