

P.O. Box 1749 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3A5 Canada

> Item No. 15.1.3 Halifax Regional Council January 11, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** December 6, 2021

SUBJECT: Case 23820: Southdale Future Growth Node Master Planning Initiation

#### **ORIGIN**

On August 17, 2021, the following motion of Regional Council was put and passed:

THAT Halifax Regional Council Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

- a. prepare a report to initiate a process to amend the Regional Centre Secondary Planning Strategy to develop site specific Comprehensive Development District (CDD) policies and an associated development agreement to enable a neighbourhood scale affordable housing development on the Southdale Future Growth Node site; and
- b. return to Council for consideration of the initiation report after the notice is published in a newspaper informing the public that the municipal planning strategy and its implementation land-use by-law are in effect.

#### 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 amend the Regional Centre Secondary Planning Strategy and Land Use-Bylaw to develop site-specific Comprehensive Development District (CDD) policies and an associated development agreement to enable development on the Southdale Future Growth Node site that considers the review items identified in the Discussion Section of this report; and
- 2. Follow the public participation program as set out in Attachment A.

#### **BACKGROUND**

On August 17, 2021, Regional Council directed staff to prepare a report to initiate a process to amend the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (RCSMPS) to develop a master neighbourhood plan for the Southdale Future Growth Node (FGN). This process will include Council's consideration of site-specific development agreement criteria through an amendment to the RCSMPS and the Regional Centre Land Use By-law (RCLUB), as well as a development agreement prepared as part of a parallel process.

The FGN designation is intended to support a comprehensive planning process needed to effectively guide the development of mixed-use communities with supporting public infrastructure. The following sections provide information on the site location and context and key enabling policies.

#### **Southdale Future Growth Node Context**

The Southdale Future Growth Node is located at the south-eastern edge of the Regional Centre, in Dartmouth, immediately adjacent to Highway 111 ("Circumferential Highway") as illustrated on Map 1. The FGN is composed of four separate lots. Three of the four lots are held by one landowner and are undeveloped, including a significant wetland. The fourth lot is under separate ownership and is occupied by an office building, located on Research Drive.

Subject Site	Southdale Future Growth Node (PIDs 41362161, 40003600, 41280546 and 40305328)
Location	Dartmouth, immediately north-west of Highway 111 Exit 8, at the terminus of Neptune Crescent and Lynn Drive, north of Woodside Industrial Park
Regional Plan Designation	Urban Settlement
Urban Structure Designation	Future Growth Node (see Map 1)
Zoning	Comprehensive Development District 1 (CDD-1) (see Map 2)
Size of Site	Approximately 45 hectares (111 Acres)
Street Frontage	Approximately 250 metres (820 feet) on Lynn Drive, Neptune Crescent, Mount Hope Avenue, Fenwick Street and Research Drive.
Current Land Use(s)	Office, undeveloped woodland and wetland
Surrounding Use(s)	Industrial, low-rise residential, highway

#### **Property Owner Submission**

During the Centre Plan Package B process, a development concept plan was submitted by ZZap Consulting and Clayton Developments on behalf of one of the FGN landowners, A.J. Legrow Holdings Limited. The concept includes a mix of residential units including single-unit dwellings, townhomes, four-unit dwellings and multiple unit dwellings containing a total of 700 dwelling units. The concept proposal is contained in Attachment B.

The property owner's proposal includes the provision of "attainable housing". This market-based approach includes building compact units on smaller lots with the objective of lowering the cost of housing, making them attainable to a wider range of households compared to larger buildings and lots. The submission also includes trails, including around the wetland area, in addition to dedicated park space for the required parkland contribution.

The owners of the additional parcel of land in the FGN, 101 Research Drive (PID 40305328) have been informed that Council provided direction to initiate the master planning process. The landowners are interested in pursuing mixed-use development on the site, but have not submitted any specific requests or concept plans at this time. Staff are continuing to work with these landowners to gather information about their property and vision for its development.

#### **Site Access**

The site has frontage on Mount Hope Avenue, Neptune Crescent, Fenwick Street, and Lynn Drive. Existing public lands abut adjacent streets near the FGN's southernmost lands, but no public paths directly connect to or go through the site. An informal path crosses private lands within the FGN connecting Fenwick Street to Lynn Drive; other informal paths cross the lands or access its interior at several other points. Research Drive, which is partially a private drive, previously allowed some level of public access when the lands were owned by the Province of Nova Scotia but is now privately held and closed to the public.

There are no public street or active transportation connections directly between Gaston Road, north of the FGN, or Lynn Drive. Gaston Road and the surrounding area is well-connected through a network of public streets and paths which link to the Penhorn FGN and transit terminal, but the Southdale FGN lacks a transportation network and does not have direct connections to the surrounding streets and paths.

Transit services are located on Mount Hope Avenue and Gaston Road, which connect to the Penhorn Terminal and the Woodside Ferry.

#### **Regional Plan Context**

The area is designated Urban Settlement under the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS), which supports serviced development. The area lies on the edge of the Woodside Regional Local Growth Centre. The plan envisions the growth centre developing with a mix of medium to high-density residential uses, a mixing of uses, strong transit links and a high-quality public realm.

Regional Plan policy S-30 requires Council to consider methods to encourage housing affordability when amending secondary planning strategies. Such strategies may include creating opportunities for a variety of housing types, reduced lot sizes and dimensions, and permitting housing for vulnerable populations, among others.

#### Secondary Plan and Land Use By-law Context

The Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (RCSMPS) is the secondary plan for the Regional Centre, which generally includes the Halifax Peninsula and Dartmouth inside the Circumferential Highway (Highway 111):

- Designation: The RCSMPS establishes a "Future Growth Node (FGN) Designation" for large sites, which can accommodate significant growth and require master planning prior to development taking place. Future Growth Node sites are typically vacant or under-utilized that will benefit from a comprehensive approach to new development. Master neighbourhood planning enables the municipality to coordinate mobility links, public parkland and infrastructure, land uses, and urban design.
- Zoning: The lands are zoned "Comprehensive Development District (CDD-1)" under the Regional Centre Land Use By-law (RCLUB). This zone requires a comprehensive planning process with a lower amount of residential development than other Future Growth Nodes. This is due to the presence of a large wetland and given the site's low-density residential context. Without a development agreement, the zone permits existing and ER-1 Zone uses on existing lots only within buildings that may be up to 11 metres in height. Amendments to the RCLUB can also be considered for the expansion of existing uses, provided that the expansion does not compromise the ability for the site to develop comprehensively in the future.

The RCSMPS envisions each FGN developing in a coordinated manner based on a master neighbourhood plan that considers its environmental, social, cultural, and economic context. This requires a plan amendment process for the Southdale Future Growth Node to develop Comprehensive Development District (CDD) Development Agreement Criteria. Once Council has adopted the CDD Criteria for an FGN, development is intended to proceed by development agreement.

1. Provide for diverse and inclusive opportunities for public engagement during the master neighbourhood planning process;

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- 2. Identify and preserve significant environmental and cultural features;
- 3. Support the development of mixed-use neighbourhoods with a range of housing opportunities, places of employment, and services where daily needs of residents can be met:
- 4. Support a transportation network that prioritizes transit, pedestrians and cyclists, and is connected to surrounding communities;
- Provide public parks, open spaces, and community facilities that meet the recreational needs of residents:
- 6. Integrate new developments with surrounding uses and neighbourhoods;
- 7. Support the creation of healthy and pedestrian-oriented places that consider human-scale design, food security, urban agriculture, and the conservation of energy;
- 8. Mitigate overland and coastal flooding, and manage stormwater on-site; and
- Consider risks, impacts and opportunities associated with nearby railways, highways, and hightraffic arterial roadways.

RCSMPS Policy F-3 guides the initiation of FGN master neighbourhood planning processes. It requires the municipality to consider opportunities to coordinate with transportation network investments, the need for development within the surrounding area and the Regional Centre, and the readiness of landowners to proceed with development.

Policy F-4 lays out specific considerations for Council when adopting development agreement criteria. This policy guides assessments of the site including its suitability for development, infrastructure requirements, permitted land uses, building design and the transportation network.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The RCSMPS is a strategic policy document that sets out the goals and objectives for long term growth and development in the Regional Centre. It specifically requires master planning and an SMPS amendment to permit redevelopment in the Southdale FGN. Therefore, an SMPS amendment to allow comprehensive development of the Southdale FGN is consistent with RC SMPS policies. The following sections outline the proposed planning process, property owner's interest, and staff review of key issues.

#### **Master Neighbourhood Planning Process**

The RCSMPS does not set out an order of when each FGN should be initiated, or a timespan for their development. Regional Council is under no obligation to initiate a plan amendment to create development agreement criteria at this time. In this case, there is an opportunity to enhance connectivity in this area along with the provision of new housing and public amenities. Given the current pressure on housing supply and affordability, the property owner's interest in supporting compact ground-oriented and multi-unit housing, and the readiness of the landowner to proceed with development, staff are supportive of advancing the master neighbourhood planning process for the Southdale FGN.

Should Council choose to initiate the master planning process, it will lead to the development of CDD development agreement criteria consistent with the objectives of the FGN Designation, and SMPS Policy F-4. The process to create development agreement criteria includes:

- completing the required infrastructure, environmental, culture and heritage and site context assessments as required by policy F-4;
- following a public consultation program, as set out in Attachment A;
- the development of a high-level site-development concept plan, similar to those as contained with the SMPS for other FGNs;
- an analysis of applicable RSMPS policies, including the Regional Centre Design Manual (Appendix 2);

- any other studies or analysis necessary to support the development of the site; and
- presenting the proposed policies for Council's consideration.

Given the opportunity to support additional housing on this site, staff support streamlining the planning process by concurrently preparing one or more development agreements for the landowners that are prepared to proceed with development. The development agreement would be presented to Harbour East Marine Drive Community Council for consideration once the RC SMPS amendments are in effect.

#### **Applicant Rationale**

The applicant has offered the following rationale to advance the master neighbourhood planning process based on their proposal:

- contributes to complete communities by placing new housing in proximity to existing services;
- supports human scale design by way of providing stepbacks, weather protection and pedestrian design elements in buildings;
- includes more compact forms of market housing, which may be attainable to a wider range of household incomes;
- supports pedestrians by providing public streets, sidewalks and pathways; and
- develops an undeveloped piece of land in the Regional Centre, thereby contributing to the strategic growth goals of the plan.

#### **Staff Review**

Staff reviewed the applicant's rationale and advise that there is sufficient merit to warrant consideration. The following items have been identified for more detailed discussion.

#### **Mobility Connectivity**

Existing street and public pathway connectivity in the vicinity of the subject lands is limited. Street and public pathway connections through the FGN to the existing street network could improve connectivity for current and future residents. Connectivity could be further improved by connecting the FGN to existing streets and pathways. A direct connection to Gaston Road would enable access to transit from the subject lands and improve connectivity between the surrounding area to services in Woodside and on Baker Drive.

#### Parkland and Open Space

The size, configuration and location of parkland will be determined through a parkland needs assessment, conducted by HRM staff as part of the master planning process. Any land contributed as part of a required parkland dedication by the landowner must meet the useable land definition and HRM Parkland Quality of Land Criteria as contained within the *Regional Subdivision By-law*.

The wetland on the site would not meet the definition of useable land and therefore cannot be accepted as part of the required parkland dedication. However, the municipality may accept the wetland for passive recreation uses in addition to lands meeting the requirements for parkland dedication, and subject to any potential constraints.

#### Bonus Zoning, Inclusionary Zoning and Housing Affordability

The RCSMPS requires that public benefits be provided in accordance with the incentive or bonus zoning requirements. Each FGN requires a specific bonus rate to be adopted, based on the appraised value of the lands after the adoption of a development agreement by Regional Council. The public benefit categories and required affordable housing money-in-lieu allocation are set out by the RC SMPS and RCLUB. Funds collected for affordable housing may be used in accordance with *Administrative Order Number 2020-007-ADM Respecting Incentive or Bonus Zoning Public Benefits*.

The Provincial government recently amended the *HRM Charter* to grant the Municipality the ability to use "inclusionary zoning". Inclusionary zoning is a planning tool which typically requires a certain number of housing units in new development be provided at below market rates. Certain inclusionary zoning programs also permit public benefits to be provided off-site. The intention is to provide housing that is accessible to existing residents of neighbourhoods where the new development is taking place. In coordination with

region wide research, the use of this new tool may be explored through the master planning process and staff will consider how it may contribute to supporting the development of affordable housing in relation with the existing bonus zoning program.

Through the FGN planning process, Council may also consider specific requirements for housing forms and types. A mix of housing types provides opportunities to meet the housing needs of a diverse population. This may include multi-unit dwellings, two to four-unit dwellings ("ground-oriented housing"), townhomes, and secondary or backyard suites.

#### Mixed Land Use

The SMPS envisions FGNs developing as walkable, mixed-use communities. While the intensity of uses may vary from node-to-node, the inclusion of a variety of land uses, particularly commercial and institutional uses, can support the development of complete communities. A mixing of land uses provides opportunities for employment, supports walkability and can reduce trips by car, by making services available to the local and nearby residents. This can also support vibrant communities by creating places for community members to gather and socialize. The master planning process will consider the appropriate mix of land uses, transitions and built forms.

#### **Landowner Coordination**

The separate land ownership within the Southdale FGN presents both challenges and opportunities for the master planning process. Staff will help coordinate communication, studies, and participation in public engagement to ensure that the proposed policies consider the site in a comprehensive manner. This may include the possibility of proceeding in a phased approach, given that the wetland separates the two areas and the landowners may be ready to proceed with needed studies and development plans along differing timeframes.

#### Conclusion

Initiating the master neighbourhood planning process for the Southdale FGN will support new housing and public amenities to be built for current and future residents. This Future Growth Node is unique in that it presents a rare opportunity for ground-oriented housing development in the Regional Centre, and one of the landowners has indicated a strong interest in exploring partnerships and other opportunities to create affordable housing. A parallel master planning process and development agreement will enable the process to proceed in an efficient manner. Therefore, staff recommend that Council initiate the RCSMPS and RCLUB amendment process to develop site-specific CDD policies for the Southdale FGN, and a parallel development agreement process.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Should Regional Council choose to initiate the SMPS amendment and development agreement process, the *HRM Charter* requires that Regional Council approve a public participation program. In February of 1997, Regional Council approved a public participation resolution for proposed local MPS amendments. This requires a public meeting to be held, at a minimum, and any other measures deemed necessary to obtain public opinion.

The proposed Public Participation Program is set out in Attachment A. Staff are proposing a two-phased approach that includes a combination of virtual meetings/open houses, and in-person meetings if feasible in the context of changing public health protocols. The proposed program also includes direct mail-outs, online tools, stakeholder outreach, and a project website. Key stakeholders will include local residents, community organizations, stakeholders, utilities, other regulators, and property owners. Staff will continue to monitor public health protocols and adjust community engagement methods as required.

In addition to this public participation, the *HRM Charter* requires a public hearing to be held before Regional Council can consider approval of any plan amendments.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The HRM costs associated with undertaking the master neighbourhood planning process can be accommodated within the approved 2021-22 operating budget. The landowners will be responsible for the costs associated with providing required background studies and information. The need for any Local Improvement Charges or Capital Cost Contributions will be considered as part of the planning process.

#### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations contained within this report. Secondary plan amendments are at the discretion of Regional Council and are not subject to appeal to the N.S. Utility and Review Board.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Development envisioned by the Regional Centre SMPS Future Growth Node policies is compact and mixed use with access to transit and active transportation facilities. This form of development has the potential to reduce private automobile dependency and encourage walking and cycling to services and amenities thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

There is a large wetland on the subject lands. Policy F-3 requires that a land suitability assessment be undertaken to identify sensitive ecological elements, including wetlands. Wetland protection is a shared responsibility between the Province and the Municipality. Wetland alteration is the jurisdiction of the Province and the municipality regulates development adjacent to watercourses and wetlands. The Regional Plan requires minimum setbacks from wetlands and watercourses. The master neighbourhood planning process will consider additional protections for the on-site wetland.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

- 1. Regional Council may choose to initiate the consideration of potential policies that would differ from those outlined in this report. This may require a supplementary staff report.
- 2. Regional Council may choose not to initiate master neighbourhood planning to enable the comprehensive development of the Southdale Future Growth Node. A decision of Council not to initiate a process to consider amending the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy is not appealable to the N.S. Utility and Review Board, as per Section 262 of the *HRM Charter*.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Map 1: Generalized Future Land Use

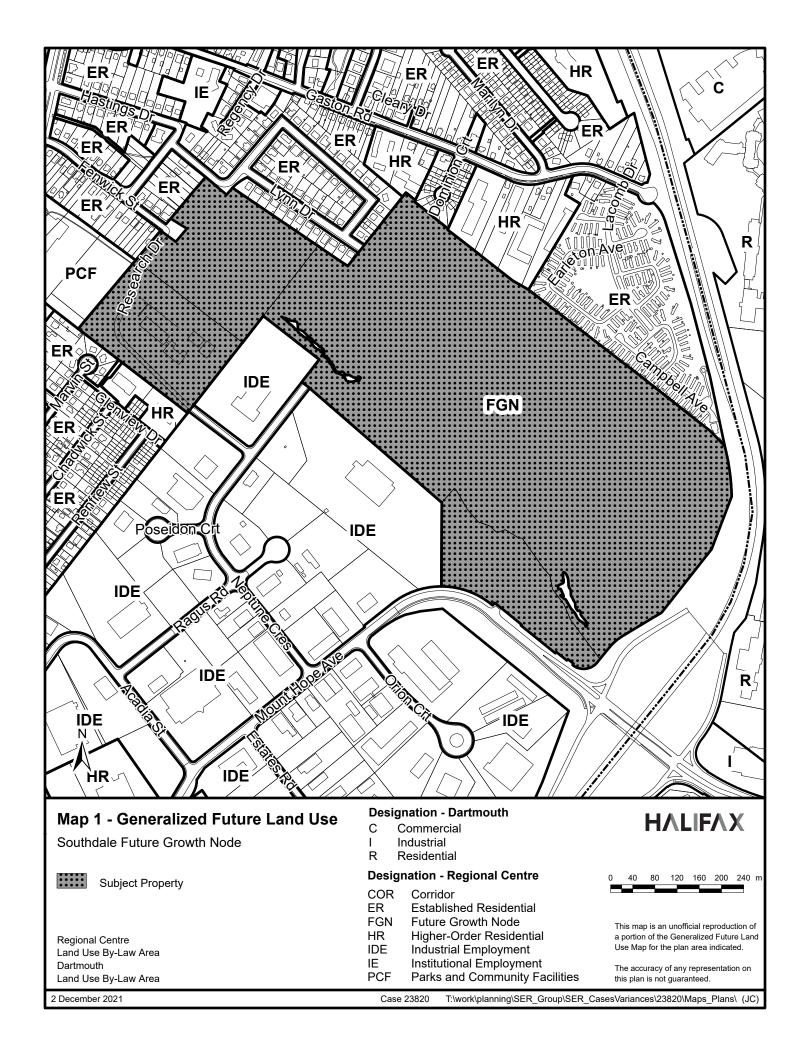
Map 2: Zoning

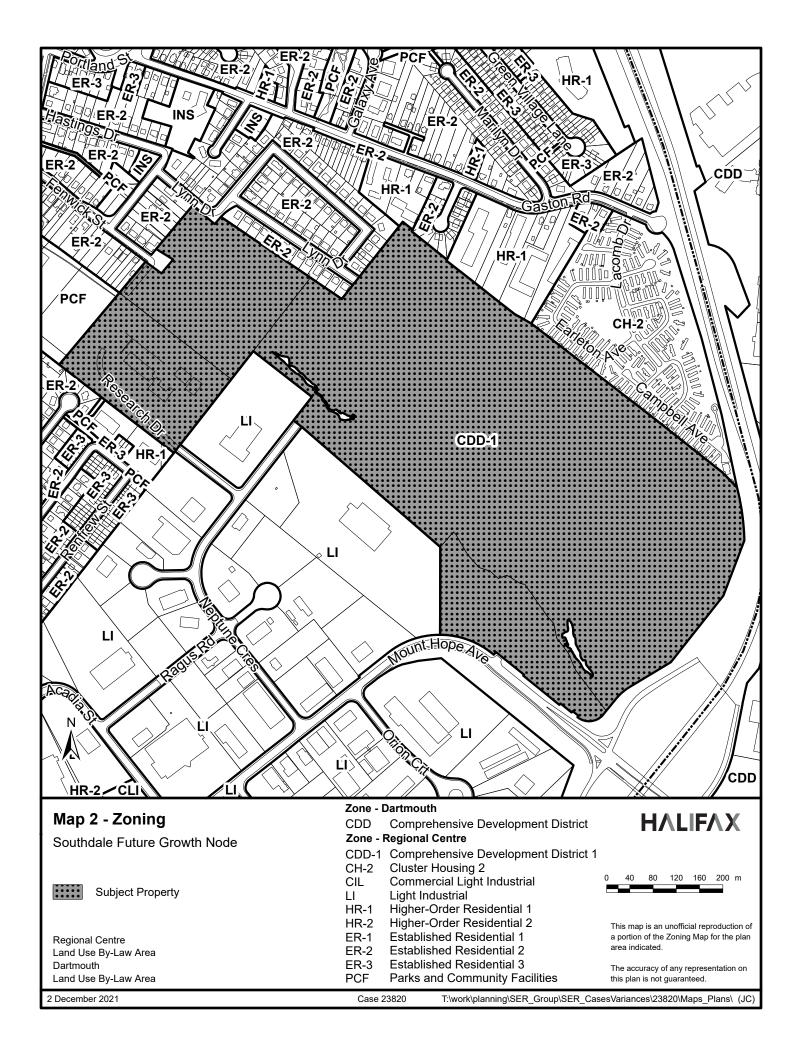
Attachment A: Public Participation Program

Attachment B: Property Owner Submission for PIDs 41280546, 41362161 and 40003600

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <a href="https://halifax.ca">halifax.ca</a> or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Ross Grant, Planner II, 902.717.5524





#### Attachment A

#### Case 23820 – Southdale Future Growth Node Public Participation Program

#### Public and Stakeholder Engagement Goals:

- Create awareness of the master planning process for the Southdale Future Growth Node;
- Invite a diverse range of residents and stakeholders to participate in the master planning process;
- Create a welcoming, accessible engagement process;
- Involve and collaborate with residents and key stakeholders, in particular the surrounding neighbourhoods, in the development of policy for the growth node; and
- Solicit feedback on the proposed policy and key development agreement controls once drafts are prepared.

#### Public Engagement Activities:

- Maintain a project website and Shape Your City site.
- Phase 1:
  - Use online tools to allow community members to provide initial feedback;
  - Direct mail-outs to the immediate surrounding community and stakeholders inviting them to participate in the process;
  - Host a virtual initial public meeting/open house to share the purpose of the process, enabling planning policies, and to seek input about the site within the context of Centre Plan policies; and
  - Directly engage property owners, residents, community groups and other stakeholders.

#### Phase 2:

- Use online tools to allow community members to provide focused feedback on the proposed policies and concepts; and
- Host a public meeting/open house to present and review draft master neighbourhood plans and key development agreement controls. A virtual format is proposed with an additional in-person meeting subject to public health protocols at the time.



May 17, 2021

Community Design Advisory Committee

Via email: <u>clerks@halifax.ca</u>

Re: Requested Changes to Proposed CentrePlan Package B Policies for Southdale (Mount Hope) Future Growth Node (PIDs: 41280546, 1362161, 40003600)

Dear Members of the Community Design Advisory Committee,

Clayton Developments Limited and our partners, A. J. Legrow Holdings Limited are pleased to submit this proposal to you. This proposal is a dedicated effort to address affordable and attainable housing needs in HRM, targeting below market price points for the entire project. Homes will be based on a sixteen-foot wide, by varying depth, footprint that enables us to reach cost efficiencies that are not available in the current market. The majority of the multiple residential buildings will be low-rise, wood-frame construction that will provide more affordable rents.

#### Concept Plan / Housing Form:

The plan provides housing in the form of single unit dwellings, townhomes, four-plex units, and low-rise apartments. With the primary access from Mount Hope, the plan is designed with three crescents, creating opportunities to disperse traffic and provide options for efficient transit service.

Homes in this community are targeted at modest price points. With this in mind, particular attention has been directed to the specific form of housing being offered. The units, in the form of single units or townhomes, will be based on a standard 16-foot wide by approximately 50-foot deep footprint (see Housing Footprint sketch below). This provides 800 sq.ft. of living space per floor. We can customize the amount living space by adding a second storey and / or basement. This standardization of footprint permits the ability to provide for housing in three incremental sizes: 800 sq.ft, 1,600 sq.ft. and 2,400 sq.ft, facilitating fine-grained customization of affordability.

A rather unique housing form we are proposing is an over/under four-plex. This housing form will be suited to condominium ownership model and will likely be a competitive form of first time home ownership. These units offer an 800 sq.ft. home option which will be less expensive than other housing options, but will still provide home ownership investment opportunities.









**Housing Footprint** 

Livability is a paramount to designing a community. Although the concept is targeted toward attainable housing, the plan is not sparing on public parkland and amenities. The plan includes 15 acres of parkland including a one acre central park, which is intended to be fully developed with access trails, play structure, and site amenities such as benches and shade trees. Physical activity is important for the well-being of residents. To encourage outdoor exercise, we are incorporating a network of 1.5km of trails that surround the significant wetland. This provides residents the opportunity to go for a leisurely walk, while enjoying the natural and diverse environment provided by the wetland. A pedestrian connection is also being proposed to the north in an effort to link existing communities.









#### Attainable Home Ownership:

Much of the focus on affordable housing has been directed to the rental market. While this effort is needed, we as a development community need to also recognize the benefits of home ownership. The importance of home ownership shouldn't be understated. Home ownership provides tremendous social benefits such as:

- 1. Stability in housing and associated finances;
  - o Home ownership is a leading indicator of economic well-being.
- 2. A sound investment that can build multi-generational wealth;
- 3. Home ownership creates financial options, (equity can be leveraged for a variety of future needs such as: education and retirement);
- 4. Home owners are more likely to create a stable neighbourhood becoming more involved with community activities;
- 5. Home ownership creates a sense of belonging.







The Mount Hope project is a substantial opportunity to create an entire community that is designed to be well planned, mixed-income, and in a location that is highly walkable. This opportunity to focus entirely on attainable housing product is rare in a market were most efforts are directed at maximizing return on investment.

Please find attached planning submission (Zzap) for consideration. We look forward to discussing this initiative with you and are excited about the opportunity to bring a project to market that addresses a substantial need in the municipality.

Yours truly,

### original signed

Kevin Neatt Vice President, Planning and Development Clayton Developments Limited







# CONCEPTUAL

## MOUNT HOPE **PROPERTY**



- CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT ONLY.

GRADING IS NOT FINALIZED; WALL HEIGHTS AND **ELEVATIONS ARE SUBJECT** 

- FINAL GRADING TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH HRM SPECIFICATIONS & APPLICABLE DESIGN
- FINAL PLANS TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT AND APPLICABLE LAND USE

SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

