

# Mainland Commons Development, Halifax NS

PID 00330845, 40550774, and 41477720

**ATTN:** Maggie Holm, *MCIP LPP*  
Principal planner – Urban Enabled Planning Applications  
Development Services | Planning and Development

**Submitted by:** WM Fares Architects

**Date:** March 27, 2023

**Subject:** Substantive Amendment Application to Stage 1 Development Agreement for Mainland Commons Development (Case 19532)

Dear Ms. Holm,

Please consider the following application, on behalf of Rank Inc, as a request to amend the existing Development Agreement for the Mainland Commons Development (Case 19532). The proposed amendment would enable the construction of multiple mixed-use buildings, under the provisions of the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and Mainland Land Use Bylaw, in accordance with the applicable policies and guidelines.

Enclosed are the required application form and Master Concept Plan outlining our proposal. Please note that the provided Perspective drawing is intended to illustrate general massing and form. Architectural design including building articulation will be provided at a future date.

## 01 LOCATION, DESIGNATION, AND ZONING

**District:** Halifax Mainland North Plan Area

**Location:** Mainland Commons Area, Halifax NS (PID 00330845, 40550774, and 41477720)

**Lot Size:** 189 264m<sup>2</sup> (46.77 acres)

**Designation:** Residential Environments

**Zone:** Schedule K

**Context:** The Mainland Commons Development is at a unique intersection of areas within Halifax that have quite varying characteristics which will contribute to the success of the proposed development. To the East of the site is the Mount Royal Subdivision which is home to roughly 2 500 residents and contains a mix of low- and high-density

dwellings, and minor commercial uses while to the West of the site are more high-density residential uses and the Bayers Lake Business Park which serves HRM with access to many large retailers and service shops. To the North of the site are several community recreational facilities including the Canada Games Centre, BMO Soccer Centre, and Mainland Common Park and Trail. Halifax West High School, Fairview Junior High, and Fairview Heights Elementary are within close proximity to the site as well and serve the local communities of Fairview and Clayton Park. To the South of the proposed development is mainly forested green space and an extension of the Bayers Lake Business Park which features more industrial and retail uses.

While the areas surrounding the development are quite successful in providing a variety of goods and services to the local population, access to these communities is restricted to two main routes; through Clayton Park via Lacewood Drive or through Bayers Lake via Washmill Lake Drive. While both routes are major collectors and provide access within the plan area, there is a gap left between Lacewood and Washmill Lake which the proposed development intends to fill. Extending Regency Park Drive through the proposed development bridges Lacewood and Washmill Lake Drive connecting people with the goods and services they require, without having to navigate through Clayton Park or Bayers Lake. This connection significantly reduces the travel time from areas such as Halifax West Highschool to the Mount Royal Subdivision or from Dunbrack Street to parts of Lacewood Drive. By establishing the proposed development as a connection between Fairview and Clayton Park, the unique characteristic of the different neighbourhoods mentioned above are brought together while the proposal serves as a new destination at the centre of these communities providing valuable housing stock and commercial services.

## **02 ENABLING POLICIES + BYLAW CONTEXT**

The Land Use By-Law and Zoning Maps for Halifax Mainland identifies Schedule K zoned properties, which are to be developed as Comprehensive Development Districts through a two-stage Development Agreement process. The Stage I agreement regulates general provisions such as land use, density, parkland dedication, and road networks while the Stage II agreement regulates detailed items such as unit breakdown and building design.

The objective of the Residential Environments designation which is *the provision and maintenance of diverse and high-quality housing in adequate amounts, in safe residential environments, at prices which residents can afford* allows Council to consider applications of a variety of residential zones and uses if policy criteria is met within the application. The application to amend the existing Stage I Development Agreement is enabled by Part 6 of the existing agreement, and the revised plan aligns with the applicable policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy as listed below.

Policy	Comment
<p>2.1 Residential development to accommodate future growth in the City should occur on the Mainland and should be related to the adequacy of existing or presently budgeted services (RC – Oct 26/21; E – Nov 27/21).</p>	<p><b><i>There are adequate municipal services to support the proposed mixed-use development</i></b></p>
<p>2.1.2 On the Mainland, residential development should be encouraged to create sound neighbourhoods through the application of a planned unit development process, and this shall be accomplished by Implementation Policy 3.3. It is the intention of the City to prepare and adopt a planned unit development zone subsequent to the adoption of this Plan.</p>	<p><b><i>The new development – following the intent of Schedule K requirements – will be designed as a comprehensive plan area that promoted the success of surrounding communities and develops a framework for well-planned mixed-use neighbourhoods in the Mainland area.</i></b></p>
<p>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</p>	<p><b><i>A variety of unit and housing types have been included in the proposal to accommodate various needs. Different forms of multi-unit building have been located on the site to correspond to the surrounding neighbourhoods and the character they possess.</i></b></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><b><i>The proposed development remains predominantly residential and aligns with the policy to maintain the richness of the Mainland area. This site provides a prime opportunity for densification while meeting all good planning principals. Not only are we proposing density where all amenities and infrastructure are readily available, we are providing a better and safer link between existing established communities and existing amenities and public services.</i></b></p>
<p>2.6 The development of vacant land, or of land no longer used for industrial or institutional</p>	<p><b><i>The subject site is vacant and zoned Schedule K; as per the Land Use By-</i></b></p>

<p>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.</p>	<p><b><i>Law, the land can be developed through the Stage I + II Development Agreement Process.</i></b></p>
<p>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).</p>	<p><b><i>The amended proposal includes two main housing types, an array of unit types, and multiple building forms all intended to align with the surrounding communities and provide options for people with different income levels and needs.</i></b></p>

The objective of Part 3 – Commercial Facilities is *the provision of commercial facilities appropriately located in relation to the City, or to the region as a whole, and to communities and neighbourhoods within the City.* The proposed amendment is intended to align with the following policies:

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<p>3.1 The City shall encourage a variety of commercial centres to serve the variety of community needs and shall seek to do so under Implementation Policy 3.7. Provision shall be made for neighbourhood shopping facilities, minor commercial centres, shopping centres and regional centres.</p>	<p><b><i>The local commercial shops included in the development will serve the new development as well as the surrounding communities by providing access to goods and services that the area is currently lacking.</i></b></p>
<p>3.1.1 Neighbourhood shopping facilities in residential environments should service primarily local and walk-in trade, and should be primarily owner-occupied. They shall be required to locate at or adjacent to the intersections of local streets rather than in mid-block. Neighbourhood shopping facilities may include one business, for example a corner store or a cluster of businesses. This policy shall serve as a guideline for rezoning decisions in accordance with Implementation Policies 4.1 and 4.2 as appropriate.</p>	<p><b><i>The intention of the proposed development is to promote local business by providing quick access – through various modes of transportation – to the shops and services that will be included in the design. Through well-designed pedestrian access routes, the development will serve as a local commercial hub for small businesses and connect the surrounding neighbourhoods.</i></b></p>
<p>3.1.2 Minor commercial centres should service several neighbourhoods. They should locate</p>	<p><b><i>The proposed development will include a variety of at-grade</i></b></p>

<p>along principal streets with adequate provision for pedestrian, transit, service and private automobile access. Parking provision should be allowed on surface lots servicing single businesses, as long as conditions preclude nuisance impact on adjacent residential areas. Access to any parking area from the principal street should be controlled. The City should define the geographic limits of minor commercial centres, and shall encourage contiguity of commercial or associated uses within those limits. Minor commercial centres should offer a wider range of services than neighbourhood shopping facilities including local office, restaurants, cinemas, health centres and multiservice centres. Notwithstanding any other policy in the Municipal Planning Strategy or Secondary Planning Strategies, billboards advertising off-site goods and services shall be prohibited in Minor Commercial areas. This policy shall serve as a guideline in rezoning decisions in accordance with Implementation Policies 3.1 and 3.2 as appropriate.</p>	<p><b><i>commercial uses, including retail, office, personal service, and other uses that will service the residents of the development and the surrounding communities. Access to these services has been considered and is intended to promote walkability throughout the site while also accommodating those that must access the site by vehicle or public transit. The detailed design of these commercial spaces and access to them will be addressed in subsequent stages.</i></b></p>
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### 03 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will provide a considerable inventory of new housing stock and local commercial uses in the centrally located Fairview/Clayton Park area. The development will consist of a variety of housing types and sizes including approximately 2,500 multiunit residential units and 75 townhouses. The townhouses will be incorporated into the design of the multi-unit buildings to create an integrated and comprehensive design approach, while providing housing types to accommodate different family types and living arrangements. Local commercial uses will be introduced at-grade to contribute to the community character and walkability of the development. Not only will these commercial uses serve the development but will also benefit the surrounding areas such as the Mount Royal Subdivision which is currently lacking the presence of local commercial services. The introduction of retail spaces, restaurants, and personal service shops will establish the proposed development as a destination within Mainland North and enhance the success of existing communities in the area.

Considering the proximity to many recreational facilities and trails, well-designed pedestrian and vehicular access through the site is critical in connecting the proposed development to the surrounding communities. As mentioned previously, a major gap exists in the transportation system between Fairview and Clayton Park which limits travel to Lacewood and Washmill Lake Drive and makes access from existing established neighborhoods to existing amenity and retail areas almost exclusively by personal vehicle. The proposal will not only complete the connection from Regency Park Drive to Washmill Lake and improve traffic flow within the larger plan area by taking stress off Lacewood and Washmill Lake, but it will also provide the surrounding areas with services they currently do not have access to. The proposal considers the role of active transportation in connection with HRMs Integrated Mobility Plan and the inventory of parks and trails that surround the development. By connecting to these existing pathways and creating well-defined areas for pedestrian circulation throughout the proposal, various modes of transportation are accommodated.

The following items have been considered to promote connectivity within the proposed development:

- *dedicated parkland and connection to existing trail systems;*
- *landscaped areas, amenity spaces, and pedestrian boulevards throughout the development;*
- *perimeter landscaping and pedestrian pathways to promote connectivity to surrounding areas;*
- *provisions for controlled intersections to mitigate traffic impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods.*

We recognise that our request to amend the existing Development Agreement requires new servicing and traffic assessments to account for the proposed additional density. We have engaged a consulting team to review our proposal and provide the required studies to our application. These studies are currently in progress and preliminary results indicate that there is sufficient infrastructure to support growth in this area.

## 04 CONCLUSION

Policy 2.1 of the Mainland Municipal Planning Strategy states: *Residential development to accommodate future growth in the City should occur on the Mainland and should be related to the adequacy of existing or presently budgeted services.*

The proposed development aligns with this policy and presents a unique opportunity to create much needed housing in an ideal location. Not only are we providing density where amenities and infrastructure are readily available and meeting all good planning principals, through this proposal we are also providing for a better and safer link between existing established communities and existing amenities and services.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you.

**John Dib**

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