

400 Sackville Drive DA Application (PID 00376848)

DA Review Updates: PLANAPP-2023-00656

Dear Megan,

Thanks for your meeting with us today to discuss the final changes on our application for this project. We were pleased to see the positive feedback from the open house and online survey, so thanks for sharing that information. Based on the results of the survey, the client has agreed to:

1. Reduce the height of Building B down to 10 storeys (keeping Building A at 8 storeys).
2. Based on feedback and concern about the river stairs and trail across the river, we have removed the trails and stairs from the plan.

This letter outlines our response to your second round of 'prior to decision' comments from Feb 28, 2024, and it accompanies the changes to the application attached. We have structured our responses to your Feb 28 letter.

Planning Policy Review

1. The Site plan identifies a set of stairs along the frontage of Building B however other plans within the application do not reflect this grade change. Can you provide further information about how Building B interfaces with the street? What is the grade change, setback etc.? How does the proposal address policy SS-4(a)(a) for Building B (i.e. buildings shall be oriented to the street and entrances oriented to the sidewalk)?

We have attached an updated grading plan to better show the relationship of the building B finished floor elevation (FFE=31.5m) and Sackville Drive. The east end of the building near the driveway is slightly lower than the driveway which enters the site at about 32m, and the west end of the building is about 1.3m below Sackville Drive. We could either add a small retaining wall at the west end (as shown on the grading plan) or we could bring the grade around the building in this area up to match Sackville Drive but that would prevent any doors or entries along this west face. The commercial plaza in front of building B will be a fully accessible entry into Building B from the driveway and sidewalk on Sackville Drive. No steps or retaining walls will be needed. Generally, the

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building matches the existing grade of Sackville Drive relatively closely. Building A closely matches the elevation of Sackville Drive.

2. **There is a lack of indoor amenity space. The urban standard is 2.5m² per unit and considering the suburban nature of this development, the assumption is the development should be providing more than this. Please revise your proposal to include an appropriate amount of indoor amenity space.**

We have revised our proposal to meet the suggested urban standard 2.5m² per unit indoor amenity space. After reducing the building height and therefore the number of units, the indoor amenity space calculation is 194 units x 2.5m²/unit = 485m² (5,220.5 ft²). In addition to the level 1 and level 4 amenity space provided, additional indoor amenity space was provided on levels 2 and 9. The total indoor amenity space we are providing for the project is now approximately 5,259 ft².

Should there be further reduction in the number of units in the project, the indoor amenity space will be recalculated accordingly to provide at a minimum the suggested urban standard of 2.5m² per unit.

3. **The response provided in regards to Policy SS-4(a)(c) does not address how this proposal is compatible with the surrounding community. As detailed in the policy matrix, compatibility doesn't necessarily mean "the same as". Describe how the massing and setbacks will mitigate the impacts of the increased height and density proposed on the site.**

The buildings have been meticulously designed to minimize the impacts on the low density residential neighbourhood to the south by proposing a street-related development that brings the buildings close to Sackville Drive. The rear yard setback from the back of the buildings to the rear yards of the neighbouring single detached homes is over 70m (230'). Most of the rear yards of these homes are at least 20m (66') from the rear of the homes as well giving a total setback of almost 300'. Rear stepbacks have been added to the rear of each building at the 4th floor to reduce the scale of the midrise portion above. For building B, there is an additional 60' stepback for the tower portion of the building above the 8th floor, with a vastly reduced floor plate for the tower portion of floors 9 and 10. The 30-50m rear yard setback will preserve the existing trees along the Sackville River corridor, further screening the new building from the neighbouring back yards. Overall, the significant setbacks, landscape buffer preservation, and stepbacks proposed on both buildings will reduce the impact of the proposed 8-storey and 10-storey buildings on the neighbourhood to the south. The shadow impacts from these buildings will also be minimized but adding only about 1 hour of additional shade during the equinox on these homes from 7-8am in the morning for about 6 homes.

Along Sackville Drive, there are a range of 5 storey buildings along the length and several of them are located 20-30' above sackville Drive creating the appearance of buildings that are 7-8storeys in height. With the recent change in zoning that allows height to be measured from average grade rather than from Sackville Drive, there will be many more as of right buildings on the north

side of Sackville Drive that will feel like 8 storeys due to the steep slopes on the north side. We know there also be many future DA applications for height increases above the 5 storey limit due to the housing pressures and walkability/transit on Sackville Drive. These major collectors in HRM are ideal places for additional height. While this may be the tallest building in Sackville now, we expect there will be continued pressures for upzoning lands along Sackville Drive for more height and more density.

Again we contend that many of the zones in the Regional Centre Plan allow for substantially more height than 12 storeys directly bordering on R1 neighbourhoods on Wyse Road, Gottingen Street, Robie Street, Windsor Street, Spring Garden Road, etc. These streets are also major collectors, and while they are located in the regional centre, they have many of the same characteristics of what Sackville Drive should aspire to in the future. These collectors have been identified as growth areas in the Regional Centre despite the fact that they directly border on low density neighbourhoods. Outside of the regional Centre, there are many examples of tall buildings bordering on R1 neighbourhoods including Larry Uteck, Bedford Highway, Seton Ridge (up to 18 storeys bordering on R1), Dutch Village, Lacewood, Innovation Dr, Future Port Wallace, etc. HRM has already determined that these uses and scales are compatible so long as strict form based codes are followed. We have adopted many of the built form requirements from these areas in developing the plans for these buildings on Sackville Drive. For many of the residential neighbourhoods to the south of Sackville Drive, the area is further buffered by the Sackville River greenway which provides additional setbacks and vegetation. We would contend that the future Suburban Plan should rethink the artificially low heights placed on developments on Sackville Drive from the 1999 Sackville Streetscape Study. In fact, that study should be updated to make it more modern and responsive to the new needs of the community.

4. Provide a desktop study for the wind effects to support your statements in the design rationale.

See attached

5. The surface parking in front of Building A is not supported by policy as outlined in the matrix.

Policy 6.3 does not prohibit parking in the front yard of new buildings on Sackville Drive but it sets out some requirements to minimize the impact of vehicles on pedestrians and visual quality. As noted in previous submissions a small 14 stall parking lot is proposed to activate the commercial uses being proposed. Without parking, the commercial uses will not work. There is no room on the sideyards for this parking and we have reserved the public green space between the buildings as a car-free public plaza area. Only about 26% of the frontage is reserved for parking and as per policy 6.3.1, we will provide a landscape buffer to screen the cars from the street while being cognisant not to impede sightlines to exiting or entering traffic. This policy also notes that space for pedestrians should be reserved between the building and the street, and we have included some very large plazas fronting on the building side of these parking lots. Similarly, we have reduced the potential for pedestrian vehicle conflicts (policy 6.3.3) by providing a sidewalk connecting the Sackville

Drive sidewalk to each building on both sides of the parking lot without having to cross the parking lot. The proposed parking lot only has 7 stalls directly fronting onto Sackville Drive or 20m of the 83m of lot frontage.

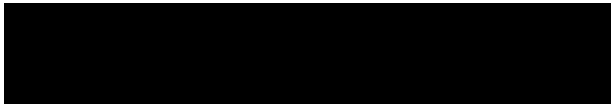
6. As per policy I-5(a), either provide a review of Part 7: General Streetscape Design or the DA can refer to this section as a requirement. Note, there is some leeway provided within this section for parking to be located in front of a development provided certain criteria are met.

Part 7 of the LUB sets out some general streetscape design guidelines which address signage, parking, driveways and landscaping. For the most part, this submission meets many of the Part 7 requirements.

- *Signage - We will meet all signage requirements projecting signs, ground signs, fascia signs, and window signs.*
- *Architecture - the buildings have been designed to meet the articulation requirements of this section.*
- *Driveways and loading area - The parking requirement of 1.5 spaces per unit will not be met and this is consistent with the City's move to substantially lower or eliminate parking requirements in the regional centre and on DA applications. The plan shows a total of 261 parking spaces for about 190 units (1.37 parking ratio). There will be 1 mobility space per 30 units or about 6 accessible parking spaces. We will meet the minimum 6.1m driveway width requirement for 2 way traffic.*
- *Landscape - we will meet the Appendix B tree species requirements and the number of trees as specified in the LUB (section 33 and 34).*
- *Loading spaces - we have identified 2 loading spaces as part of the 14 surface spaces. For these spaces, the curbs will be mountable so that larger trucks can drive into the public plaza for loading. We have not anticipated indoor loading for vehicles taller than an SUV as the floor to floor height on the parking garage will be between 9-10'.*
- *Bike parking - we will meet the requirements*
- *Landscaping - we anticipate being able to meet all landscape requirements.*

If you have any questions about this application, please feel free to reach out to me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



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