

Summary of Public Engagement



HRM Planning Application Website



Signage Posted on the Site



Mailout to residents and property owners



Online Survey

Information Sharing

Information on Case 2023-00319 was shared through the HRM planning applications webpage, signage posted on the subject site, notices mailed to property owners within approximately 250 feet surrounding the proposed development (with the boundary extended to include the Oliver/Hamilton/Balsam Street community), and an online survey on Shape Your City.

The proposal involves the construction of four townhouse dwelling units, two backyard suites, and one secondary suite, a new common shared private driveway off of St Margarets Bay Road, and a shared outdoor amenity area. Therefore, the applicant submitted the following documents as part of their application: Application Letter, Property Plan, Site Plan, Building Drawings, Traffic Impact Statement, and a Servicing Schematic. These documents were posted online for public viewing.

Public Engagement Statistics:

Notices Mailed to Area Residents	
Number of notices mailed within notification area	356
Direct Communication with the HRM Planner	
Number of calls received (unique callers)	0
Number of emails received from the public (unique email addresses)	2
Online Survey	
Number of Responses	19

Online Survey

The online survey was posted on Shape Your City from May 5, 2023 to June 2, 2023 and asked participants four open-ended questions and provided one additional opportunity for open-ended comments (see #5) to gain their feedback on the proposal:

1. *What do you like about this proposal?*
2. *Is there anything that concerns you about this proposal?*
3. *Are there any other considerations we should be aware of? If so, please explain.*
4. *Do you think the proposal reflects the type of development needed in the community? Why/why not?*
5. *Please share any other comments you have.*

The online survey elicited feedback from nineteen participants regarding the proposed development. The major themes expressed by respondents can be summarized as follows:

Preservation of Existing Greenspace

- 12 respondents expressed concerns about the proposed removal of trees and the effects it would have on the surrounding community, including wind impacts, water runoff/flooding, loss of habitat for wildlife, loss of recreational space, and loss of a visual and sound barrier between existing residents and the proposed development.
 - *"The green space was one of the reasons we bought this house. It provided privacy and a buffer from the noise from St. Margaret's Bay Road. More recently it's helped act as a wind break now that there are no trees where Whopper drop used to be and the wind is so much stronger. And it gave a bit of beauty and a hint of the natural world in a city that is increasingly just concrete and stunted little trees on boulevards."*
- Several residents were under the impression that this site was protected greenspace left over from adjacent development in Beechville Estates and are surprised that development is permitted at all.

Traffic, Parking, Access

- Six respondents raised concerns about increased traffic congestion and inadequate parking space resulting from the proposed development.
- One respondent emphasized that they are concerned about sharing a driveway with the proposed development:
 - *"I have two children that every time the head out front door I would worry who's racing up and going to hit them."*

Historical and Cultural Significance

- Two participants emphasized the historical and cultural significance of the existing house on the property, particularly in relation to the African Nova Scotian Heritage Community.
- A participant claimed that there is a building foundation on the site that dates back to the 1800s.
- The greenspace has been used by several community members as a garden and shared recreational space for generations.

Density of Proposal

- 10 respondents stated that they believe the proposal is too dense for the site and are concerned about overcrowding in the neighbourhood.
- Several residents feel that the developer is attempting to maximize units for profit without designing a proposal that fits the neighbourhood character.
 - *"The lot is awkwardly shaped, but the developers seem to want to cram as many houses as they can on there. It's too much for this area of Beechville."*

Impact on Neighbors and Environment

- Many participants expressed concerns about the potential negative impact on neighboring residents and the surrounding environment. Concerns included loss of privacy, increased noise levels, and removal of the tree line that serves as a protective barrier against water runoff.
 - *"The ongoing construction in Bayer's Lake and Lovett Lake has been active for the past 3 years. Lovett Lake is in phase 1 of 3 in terms of housing development completion. As well, residents are receiving notice of an additional development"*

plan between Ridgecliffe Middle School and Highway 103, where they are planning to clearcut an entire forest once again.”

Alternative Suggestions

- Affordable Housing: Five respondents are concerned the units will not be affordable enough and suggested exploring alternative options that prioritize more affordable housing solutions, particularly for families in the community.
- Seniors' Housing: A few participants proposed the development of detached single-level homes to cater to the needs of seniors in the area.

Miscellaneous

- Positive Aspects: A small number of respondents mentioned positive aspects of the proposal, such as attracting more people to the community, demolishing the existing dilapidated structure, and potential to stimulate commercial businesses.
- Developer should be required to build active transportation connections to connect this proposal into the existing network. Without these connections the proposal is contributing to urban sprawl.
- Two respondents expressed concerns with school capacity if Beechville continues to be developed so densely.
- Landownership concerns:
 - *“I would like the option to buy the rest of the back my property since I have personally spent the past 10 years maintaining and landscaping it. I planted a tree in memory of my mother with permission from the original owners, 8 years ago. I would like it to remain. We were promised that when the original owner sold that they would give us the option to buy it...”*
- General maintenance of site (e.g. plans for snow and garbage removal).
- Concern with public notification (i.e. notification sign was blown down by winds).
- There is already enough housing/development in area, this is unnecessary.

Email/Phone Correspondence

Two community members directly emailed the planner in opposition of the proposal. The first respondent's primary concern is the removal of trees which they understood to be a protected green belt.

The second respondent expressed many concerns that mirrored online survey responses including: tree removal, construction impacts to existing Beechville residents, that the proposal is too dense for site, driveway access is dangerous for additional users without a turning lane, lack of parking, and general maintenance of development.

Additionally, the second respondent stated that they are concerned about:

- the new land owners not introducing themselves to adjacent property owners who will be affected by the proposal; and
- loss of Beechville cultural heritage:

- Believes this site should be protected by HRM and Provincial government as the old foundation on site dates back to 1800s.
- Beechville is one of the oldest African Nova Scotian communities in Canada.
- Her mother's remains are buried on the site where the backyard suites are proposed;

No phone correspondence was received.

Conclusion

Overall, the majority of residents expressed general opposition to the rezoning and proposed development based on the removal of trees, traffic and parking, cultural significance of site, density and additional impacts to existing residents. Eight respondents expressed that they could see the benefits of developing this site, however only two of the eight were generally pleased with the proposal as designed. The other six have concerns similar to the list above.

Given the feedback received, and that the proposal is located in an African Nova Scotian community, staff recommend a meeting between the applicant and the Planner to discuss the feedback received and how to move forward with incorporating feedback into the proposal.