

October 27, 2020

Carl Purvis, LPP, MCIP
Planning Applications Program Manager
Planning & Development
Halifax Regional Municipality

Dear Mr. Purvis,

RE: Amendment to the serviced area provisions of the R-1 zone of the Beaverbank, Hammonds Plains, Upper Sackville Land Use By-Law

Clayton Developments Limited is requesting amendments to the Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains, Upper Sackville Land Use By law, to amend the R-1 zone for lots with municipal sanitary and water services, to enable development of single family dwellings with reduced frontage, compared to the existing R-1 zone permissions. We propose the reduction of frontage requirements from 60 feet, down to 40 feet minimum. Narrower lot provisions have a range of benefits to the environment, municipality and the end users, and remain aligned with planning policy, as will be discussed in greater detail throughout this letter.

Attachment 1: Application Forms
Attachment 2: Land Owner Authorization Letter
Attachment 3: Block RL-1 PID 00468694 Survey Plan
Attachment 4: Concept Plan
Attachment 5: 2014 Traffic Impact Study
Attachment 6: Teardown Scenarios
Attachment 7: MPS Policy Matrix

Site Context & Project Description

The reason for this application is specifically to support the timely and efficient build out of Carriagewood Estates, Beaver Bank, NS. Phase 1B (Splinter Court) and a portion of Phase 1A (Daisy Drive Extension) of Carriagewood Estates are complete, and an approved concept plan is on file with the Municipality. Block RL-1 is an 88 acre parcel, representing the remaining undeveloped lands of the subdivision (see survey plan – Attachment 3), and approximately 88% of all remaining vacant R1 lands within the service boundary in this plan area. The local community is characterized by single family dwellings on streets branching off Beaver Bank Road. Several schools, a small park, and church hall are located nearby.

A revised concept plan for the subdivision has been developed, pursuant to the requested amendments (see Figure 1 and 2 below, and Attachment 4 - Concept Plan). The revised plan includes narrower lots with 40 foot frontage and up, and maintains 60' homes against existing development for the highest level of consistency. The total number of proposed units is 270 single family residential units, including existing phases. The development of 270 units is consistent with existing approvals, supported by a Traffic Impact Study (see Attachment 5 – 2014 Traffic Impact Study).

The street network also remains similar, and maintains the approved access point through to Trinity Lane. However, the revised version removes four cul-de-sacs; provides an enlarged natural buffer abutting wetland areas; and



Figure 1 – The proposed Conceptual Site Plan for Carriagewood Estates (subject to this amendment). See attachment 2 for full detailed plan.



Figure 2 – The existing approved concept plan, designed in accordance with existing standards.

increases Parkland and open space towards the North end of the property. The Parkland consists of 13.6 acres, representing 15% of the parcel, and is designed with recreational trails, providing connections throughout the community. In addition to this, 22.8 acres of dedicated open space will ensure the conservation of existing wetlands. This wetland area is intended to be taken over by HRM as open space. In the event that HRM does not wish to take ownership, alternative measures of protection can be considered, such as registering restrictive covenants and holding in current ownership, or donating the lands.

Proposed R-1 Amendments & Impact

Table 1 compares the existing, to the proposed, R-1 provisions. The proposed provisions are consistent with existing provisions, with the exception of the reduced minimum frontage requirements and, incidentally, lot area.

Table 1 – Zone Comparison	
Existing R-1 Zone	Proposed R-1 Zone
Minimum Lot Area: on-site services 29, 064 square feet (2700 m2) central water 12,000 square feet (1118 m2) central sewer 10,000 square feet (929 m2) Sewer and water services 6,000 square feet Minimum Frontage: on-site services 100 feet (30.5 m) central sewer 75 feet (23 m) Sewer and water services 60 feet Minimum Front or Flankage Yard 20 feet (6.1 m) Minimum Side or Rear Yard 8 feet (2.4 m) Maximum Lot Coverage 35 per cent Maximum Height of Main Building 35 feet (10.7 m)	Minimum Lot Area: on-site services 29, 064 square feet (2700 m2) central water 12,000 square feet (1118 m2) central sewer 10,000 square feet (929 m2) Sewer and water services 4,000 square feet Minimum Frontage: on-site services 100 feet (30.5 m) central sewer 75 feet (23 m) Sewer and water services 40 feet Minimum Front or Flankage Yard 20 feet (6.1 m) Minimum Side or Rear Yard 8 feet (2.4 m) Maximum Lot Coverage 35 per cent Maximum Height of Main Building 35 feet (10.7 m)
Note: Grey text applies to unserviced lands only and is not impacted by this amendment.	

Carriagewood Estates represents the vast majority (~88%) of remaining vacant lands within the serviced R-1 zone. Figure 3 below demonstrates that, if the vacant lands were eventually to be developed with 40 foot frontages, rather than 60 foot frontages, the net impact would be minimal, estimated at 14 additional lots under the proposed amendments.

However, the amendments will apply to all lands that are currently developed within the serviced R-1 zone (as shown in yellow in Figure 3), and the impact of this change must be considered. There is no change in land use proposed, and the single family, suburban character of the area is upheld. No non-conforming uses would be created, since the provisions are becoming slightly less stringent.

The decrease in frontage requirements does provide some amount of increase in property development potential. It is therefore prudent to evaluate the likelihood of existing stock being redeveloped to create a larger number of 40’ lots. Upon review, redevelopment is highly uneconomical with the currently proposed amendments. The 20 foot decrease in require frontage does not allow a recuperation of the costs to redevelop in this area. Attachment 6, outlines a rough pro forma for three different scenarios, all of which demonstrate a lack of profitability, and therefore, a low likelihood of potential redevelopment as a result of the amendments to the R-1 zone.

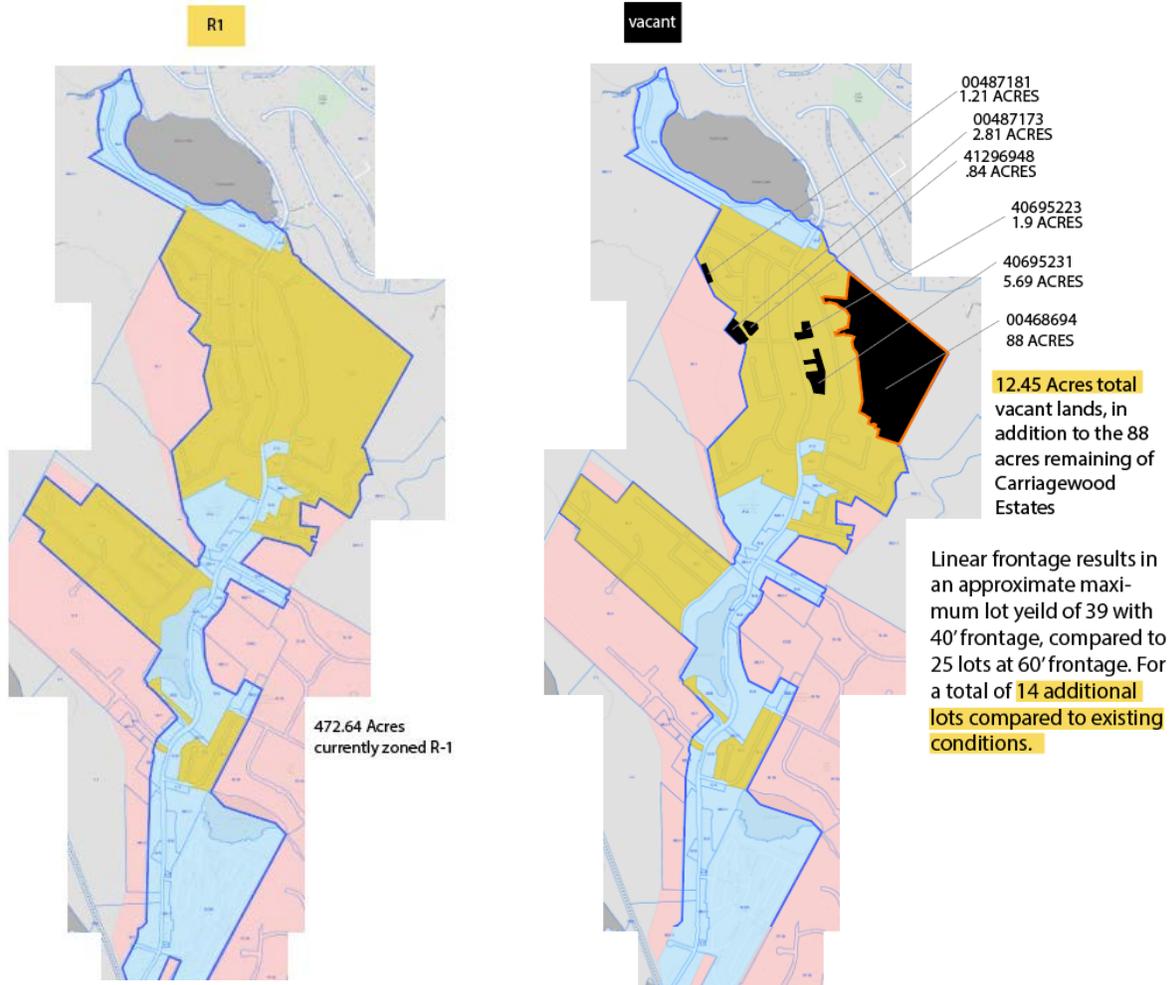


Figure 3 –The above plans demonstrate that there is a limited amount of vacant land affected by the proposed amendment.

Rationale & Policy Alignment

These lands are designated as Rural Commuter by the Regional Plan, and are governed by the Beaverbank, Hammonds Plains, Upper Sackville Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-Law. The MPS assigns the Residential Designation and the property is zoned R-1. The following sections summarize key themes throughout the guiding policy documents, and address specific policies, which relate to the proposed R-1 zone and concept plan for Carriagewood Estates. Please see Attachment 7 for a policy matrix for the MPS Residential Designation policies.

Affordability & Market Demand – According to recent CMHC data (Third Quarter, 2020 Report) pent up demand for housing in Halifax Regional Municipality has resulted in a sharp increase in prices, outpacing the economy’s ability to support the increases. The report indicates a significant shortage of affordable, single family, housing throughout the Municipality. The Regional Plan specifically provides direction to support the development of affordable housing by such measures as reducing lot frontage and lot size, and now is a valuable time to utilize this policy tool. The development of lots with narrower frontage allows infrastructure construction costs to be reduced, and these savings are in turn, transferred to the home buyer and improve local affordability.

Efficient Use of Resources – The Regional Plan similarly identifies that the cost of providing road service to lots with extensive road frontage is substantially higher than the cost of providing road service to a more compact form of development. Not only do the benefits of reduced infrastructure requirements result in more affordable home prices, but they also improve the municipality’s ability to efficiently provide service and maintenance. This applies to roadways as well as municipal water and wastewater systems. Where this land is located within the Municipal Service Boundary, and is contiguous with existing residential neighbourhoods, it is a prime parcel to develop to meet the needs of a rapidly growing municipality without the need to further extend services.

The MPS identifies limitations on growth for the plan area, in part due to limited capacity for traffic along the Beaver Bank Road. As such, it should be noted that these 88 acres and approved 270 units, are likely to be some of the last significant development prior to substantial upgrading of the Beaver Bank Road. This development therefore offers a valuable opportunity to meet current demand that may not be met through further approvals in the near future.

Preservation of Local Character – The MPS provides direction to ensure the rural character of the Beaver Bank, Hammond Plains, and Upper Sackville areas are maintained. The Residential Designation which contains all serviced R-1 lands, are intended to have a suburban, single family character. The current proposed amendment to reduce frontage size maintains current land use provisions and is consistent with suburban character. See Figure 4 below which compares a suburban streetscape built out at 60’ frontage compared to 40’ frontages. Further, the revised concept plan for Carriagewood Estates will develop lots consistent with current R-1 frontage requirements adjacent to existing development, to create a seamless transition to this development.



Figure 4—The top image is a streetscape of 40’ wide lots (Morris Lake Estates), while the bottom is a streetscape of 60’ lots on Guptil Court, within the R-1 Zone of the Beaverbank, Hammonds Plains, Upper Sackville plan area.

Pacing Development with Infrastructure Improvements – The MPS aims to guard against overloading existing transportation networks in the area. The current design supports this goal. To ensure that no undue pressure is placed on the network, no additional density is requested above what has been approved, and deemed acceptable through the attached 2014 Traffic Study.

Environmental Preservation – The MPS notes significant challenges to developing in the area due to ground water and soil issues related to on-site servicing. The proposed amendments to the serviced area of the R-1 zone enable development which does not negatively impact the local water resources. Further, it is the intention of the Urban Forest Master Plan, to protect the natural features and existing tree canopy, aiming to increase coverage in this area, over the coming years from 59% to 70%. The condensed lot form has a positive impact on the environment, allowing greater preservation of tree canopy and increased buffer between the developed area and existing wetlands.

Closing

In summary, we are seeking to amend the R-1 zone to permit a reduction in lot frontage from 60' minimum to a 40' minimum. This is intended to facilitate a timely and efficient build out the remainder of Carriagewood Estates subdivision, in order to provide a more attainable housing product. We believe the amendments required to do so are consistent with the intent of the applicable policy. Thank you for your time and review. Please let me know if you require any further information in order to move forward with this application.

Kind Regards,

Original Signed

Stephanie K. Mah, MES Planning, MCIP, LPP
Planner, Urban Designer
Clayton Developments Limited