

May 16, 2023

Planning Applications Program Manager  
Halifax Regional Municipality  
Planning & Development  
Via email: [planning@halifax.ca](mailto:planning@halifax.ca)

**Re: Application for Municipal Planning Strategy Amendment, 1274 Hammonds Plains Road (PID 00422279)**

On behalf of our client, Bowers Construction Inc., Zzap Consulting Inc. (Zzap) is pleased to submit a site-specific Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) amendment application for a commercial office building located within the Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains, and Upper Sackville Plan Area at 1274 Hammonds Plains Road (PIDs: 00422279). To support this application submission, the following materials are included as appendices:

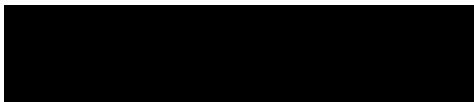
- Completed Planning Application Form
- Appendix A: Plan Amendment Rationale
- Appendix B: Conceptual Building Drawings and Site Plan

We remain open to further revisions and improvements to the development plan as we move forward with a more detailed design in a collaborative manner with you and your colleagues.

We respectfully request that you provide us with an anticipated schedule for the plan amendment and development agreement process.

Please advise if you require any further information at this time in order to prepare the initiation report for this project.

Kind Regards,



Connor Wallace, MCIP, LPP  
Principal  
ZZap Consulting

## Plan Amendment Rationale

### 1.0 Site Description and Location

The subject site (Figure 1) is comprised of one 21,656 ft<sup>2</sup> lot on the corner of Hammonds Plains Road and Crestfield Drive.

The site is designated 'Residential' and lies within the Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains, and Upper Sackville Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) Area and is zoned P-2 Community Facility within the Land Use Bylaw (LUB). This zone allows for a range of institutional, limited residential and recreational uses. A vacant church currently occupies the site.

**Figure 1 Subject Site**



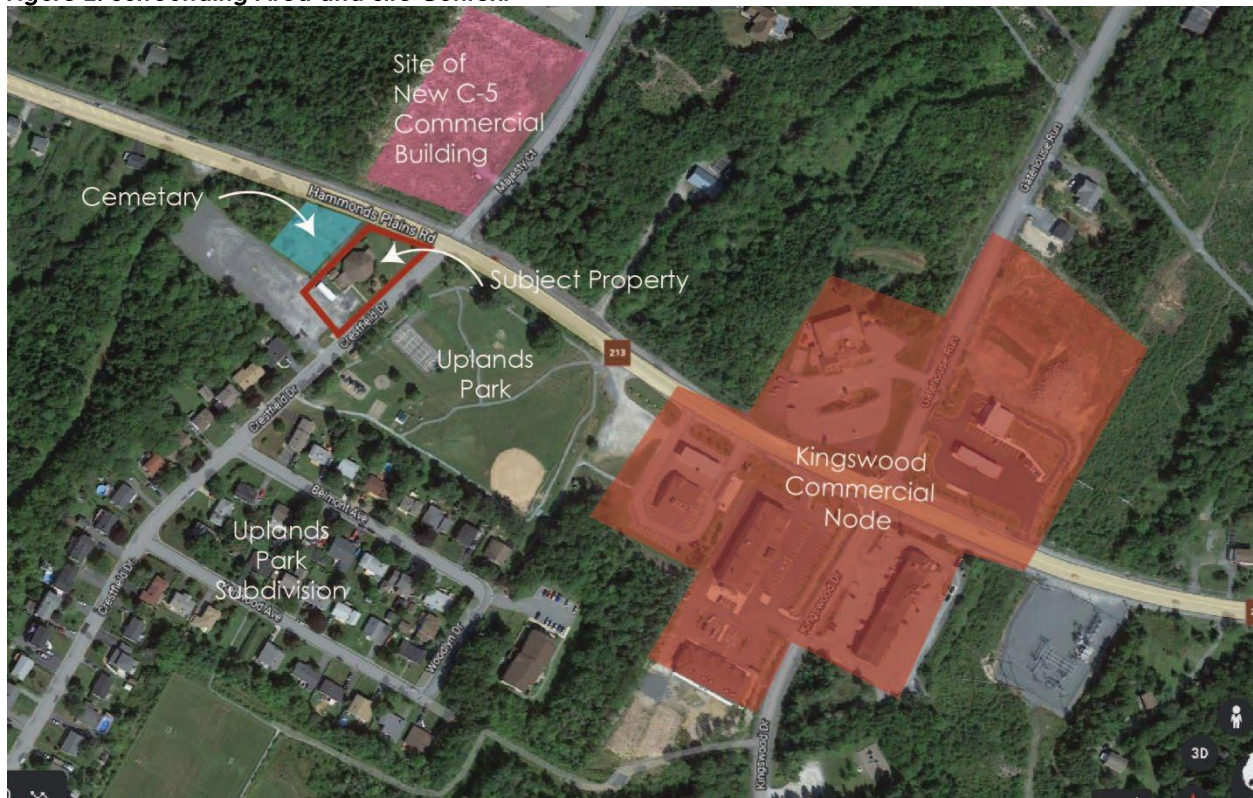
### 1.1 Site Context

The site is located approximately 300 metres west of the Kingswood commercial node at the intersection of Kingswood Drive/Gatehouse Run and Hammonds Plains Road. Adjacent land uses include: Uplands Park to the east, single-unit dwellings to the



south, a cemetery to the west and a lot under development to the north. Crestfield Drive leads to the Uplands Park subdivision and the road terminates within approximately 730 metres of the Hammonds Plains intersection. A range of land uses are found on the either side of Hammonds Plains Road including, residential, commercial, institutional, agricultural, office, and public services. A new one-storey commercial building is being constructed directly across Hammonds Plains Road (20 Majesty Court) under the C-5 Hammonds Plains Commercial zone. The surrounding zoning is a mix of R-1 (Single-Unit Dwelling), C-5 (Hammonds Plains Commercial), and P-2 (Community Facility).

**Figure 2: Surrounding Area and Site Context**



## 2.0 Summary of Development Proposal

Bowers Construction Inc. is seeking to develop a new two-storey 5,915 ft<sup>2</sup> (549.5 m<sup>2</sup>) office building on the lot. The proposed development would include seventeen parking stalls (including one reserved space for mobility disabled) and one loading bay (Appendix B). Access is from Crestfield Drive through a proposed shared driveway with the neighbouring property. The driveway provides access to the subject site as well as a recently approved seniors housing development, as

illustrated on Appendix B. The building would be located in the southeastern portion of the lot with the main entrance from the south elevation (i.e. facing the parking lot). The high level of glazing and high-quality exterior cladding on all street-facing elevations works to increase the transparency and visual interest from the street. The eastern elevation (facing Crestfield Drive) includes an articulated building face with two-storeys of continuous glazing at the northeast corner of the building. The building is designed to comply with the LUB architectural design requirements including (Appendix B):

- A predominant minimum roof slope of 10 degrees,
- Roof design features including parapets or other architectural treatments,
- Wall plane projections and recesses facing all public streets,
- High quality exterior cladding materials including dark tone brick and wood grain composite siding (no vinyl siding),
- A clearly defined entrance on every street-face which include:
  - Canopies
  - Overhangs
  - Recesses/projections
  - Display windows
- Windows with decorative design details
- Rooftop equipment that is clad with similar detailing and materials

Currently, the site is connected to the municipal sanitary system and we have been advised that the proposed light commercial office complex would be permitted to be serviced municipally.

### 3.0 Planning Background

The Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains and Upper Sackville Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) was adopted over twenty years ago at a time when there was limited commercial growth in Hammonds Plains. However, Hammonds Plains was undergoing rapid population growth. Between 1991 and 1996 there was a 72.9% percent increase in the Hammonds Plains population. This population growth was largely a result of redevelopment through residential subdivision. During this same period Beaver Bank's population increased by 3.9%, Upper Sackville's population increased by 8.1% and HRM saw a 3.7% population increase. It is significant to note that during the 1990s the pattern of development within the Hammonds Plains community saw a considerable transition from rural to suburban and this pattern persists today.

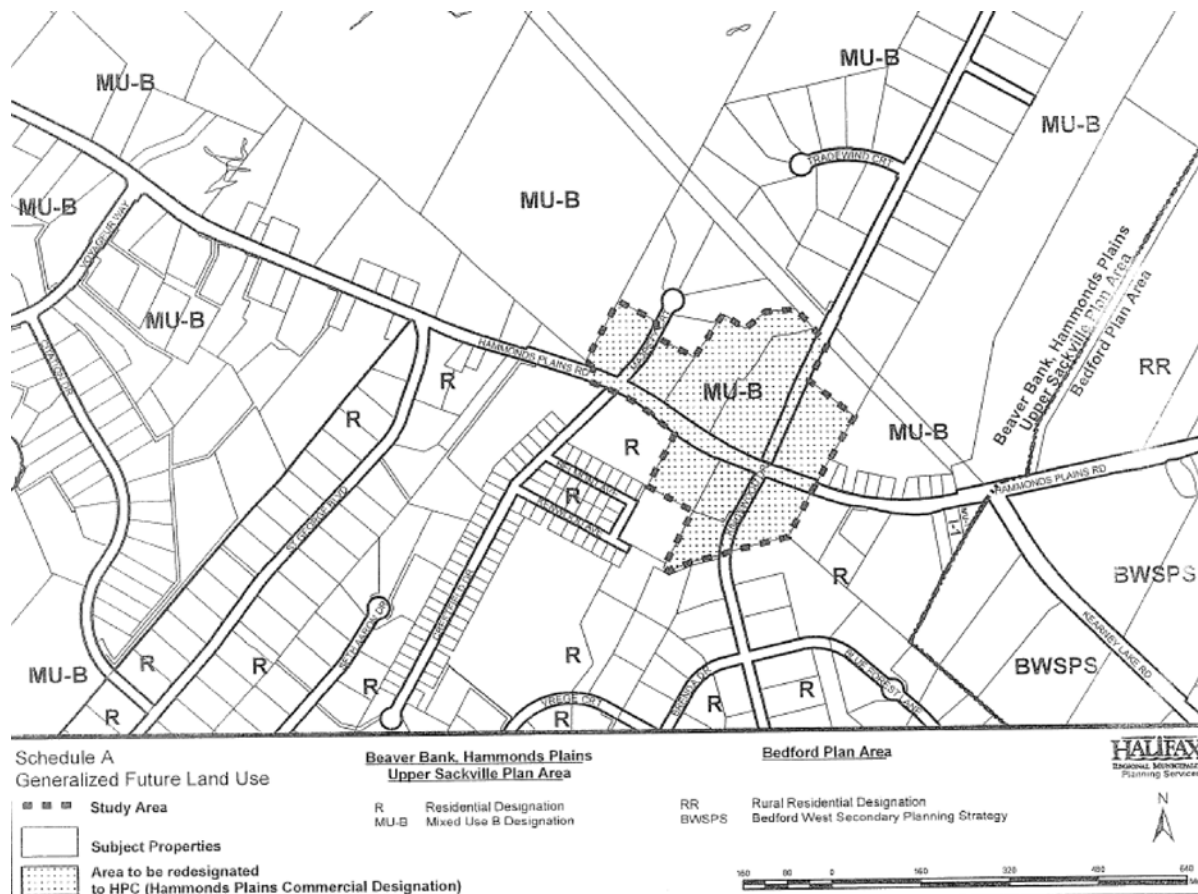
Relevant to this amendment proposal is a 2008 development application (Case 01186) submitted to the municipality to redesignate and rezone two properties at the intersection of Hammonds Plains Road and Kingswood Drive/Gatehouse Run. These

applications prompted a more holistic review of land uses in the area. At that time, HRM staff recognized that the legacy of rapid residential subdivision had left the Hammonds Plains community without a distinct commercial node to serve the growing population. Staff, therefore, recommended that a new land use designation (Hammonds Plains Commercial “HPC”) and zone (C-5 Hammonds Plains Commercial) be applied to several properties surrounding Hammonds Plains Road (Figure 3) to address this shortage of commercial land. The rationale provided to Council that enabled consideration of the amendments centred on a “change in circumstance” or “significantly different situation” than that contemplated in original plan policies. An October 2009 staff report outlined these new circumstances as follows:

1. **New Streets:** Prior to the early 1990s the intersection at Hammonds Plains Road and Kingswood Drive did not exist. As subdivision occurred in the surrounding areas a new four-way intersection was built at Kingswood Drive/Gatehouse Run and Hammonds Plains Road. Further, in conjunction with the Kingswood North subdivision a second four-way intersection was created and aligned with the existing three-way intersection at Hammonds Plains Road and Crestfield Drive.
2. **Residential Growth:** At the time the 2009 Council report was written 1,500 new residential lots had been created through subdivision in the areas surrounding the four-way intersection.
3. **Limited Commercial Growth:** In 2009 there was no clearly defined commercial node despite significant increases in residential growth. Commercial development was occurring intermittently along Hammonds Plains Road.
4. **Upgrades to the Intersection:** changes to the intersection and Hammonds Plains Road and Kingswood Drive/Gatehouse Run were necessary to facilitate traffic flow.



**Figure 3 Properties Included in 2009 Study Areas (Source: Halifax Regional Municipality)**



Staff, in the October 2009 report, also identified a need to apply a more comprehensive planning approach to the lands around the Hammonds Plains/Gatehouse Run intersection as the north and south sides were regulated in the MPS and LUB quite differently. Land north of the intersection was designated as Mixed Use-B which enabled rezonings for residential and commercial uses while lands south of the intersection were designated Residential and therefore did not have a comparable commercial rezoning potential.

Council adopted the amendments to the MPS and LUB in February 2010 and the new Hammonds Plains Commercial (HPC) land use designation and zone (C-5 Hammonds Plains Commercial) were applied to the properties included in the study area. The intent of the new designation and zone was to, “encourage a commercially focussed node that is comprehensive, cohesive, and designed to compliment the community.” (Policy P-47(a)). At the time the MPS and LUB

amendments were adopted the St. James Catholic Church owned and operated a church on the subject property and, it was, therefore, not included in the initial study area. The existing land use designation (Residential) and zoning (P-2) was maintained. The property was recently sold and is now vacant.

Notably, 20 Majesty Court, on the opposite side of Hammonds Plains Road was included in the amendment and is currently being redeveloped under the C-5 Hammonds Plains Commercial Zone.

#### **4.0 Rationale for Application Request**

As discussed in Section 3.0 of this application, HRM staff, in their 2009 report, identified a demand for more commercial land uses in this immediate area. Staff stated that amendments to the MPS and LUB are warranted when a “change in circumstance” or “significantly different situation” arises than those contemplated in existing planning documents. In keeping with this rationale Bower Inc., in consultation with zap, believe that a similar circumstance exists in today’s context. The subject property was excluded from the MPS amendments due to the site’s long-standing institutional use (property records indicate that the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Halifax had owned the property since 1961) and that use no longer exists at the site. The applicant, therefore, contends that this new circumstance justifies a reconsideration of the suitable land uses for this property.

The current P-2 zoning would allow for a range of community facility uses while the Residential land use designation limits the rezoning potential to single-unit dwellings (Policy P-34). This highly visible corner is not well-suited to low density residential (i.e. single-unit) development. Current planning approaches to land use at intersections favour commercial or multi-unit residential land uses as they are more compatible with higher traffic locations. In this case, the applicant seeks to develop a commercial office space.

A commercial/office use at this location is appropriate for the following reasons:

- Compatibility with existing land uses: the site is surrounded by recreational, residential and commercial land uses. An office use will not conflict with these surrounding uses in terms of traffic, parking or operating hours.
- It can be accommodated on the undersized lot due to its ability to hook into central services.
- Part 4, Section 4.5 of the Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains, and Upper Sackville LUB enable development on lots that do not meet the minimum lot frontage

or area requirements of the zone (Existing Undersized Lots).

- The property at 20 Majesty Court is currently being developed under the C-5 zone. An adjacent commercial use on the subject site is congruent with this.
- A commercial use would compliment the "node" as it is consistent with the land use pattern established at the Hammonds Plains/Kingswood Drive intersection where commercial uses on the corner properties create a concentrated retail node.

## **5.0 Impact on local community and broader region**

Not only will the amendments have a minimal impact on the local community, but we believe that the development will enhance the community through both a high level of attention to building design and the economic benefit of employment land uses being added to the area. Bowers Inc. intends to utilize the buildings for their company headquarters and therefore, is committed to a long-term investment in the area.

### *5.1 Why this consideration cannot wait until the next HRM initiated MPS review*

The applicant recognizes that HRM staff are mid-way through a Regional Municipal Planning Strategy Review process and development of a Suburban Plan and changes to future land use designations and zoning may be proposed for this area. However, given the uncertain timeline of the completion of the next phase of Municipal Plan review and specifically the adoption of the Suburban Plan, Bowers Construction Inc. requests that Regional Council consider changes to the Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains, and Upper Sackville MPS to allow the development of the property under the C-5 Hammonds Plains Commercial zone.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

Based on the change in circumstance on this and the commercial node concept developed in close proximity to this site, the amendments requested for this property are in keeping with Plan policy. Approving the proposed amendments would assist in expanding the commercial and employment generating lands in Hammonds Plains.