

Bringing Back Main Street

Councillor Andrew Younger

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Main streets have a strong place in popular culture. Main streets throughout North America are often the heart of communities, places where neighbours gather at thriving local businesses. So it is that I have a similar vision for Dartmouth's Main Street.

In the late 1700s, much of what would become Main Street and Prince Albert Road was called the Old Preston Road. The population of Dartmouth grew over time and new businesses and homes were established. Woodlawn developed after land was donated by Loyalist Ebenezer Allen in 1786 to create Woodlawn cemetery. Westphal was named after two brothers who went on to become British Admirals.

Over the years the city continued to grow and Main Street and surrounding streets developed as a strong, and important, business area within Dartmouth. Unfortunately, with growth ultimately came a need to resolve traffic issues and Main Street was widened.

The widening project between Woodlawn Road and what would become the Parclo, caused trouble for business and pedestrians alike. Trouble which still exists today. Pedestrians don't frequent the business district as much anymore, some businesses report motorists appear less willing to make stop at businesses on Main Street for fear of not getting easily back out onto the street, and the diversity of neighbourhood oriented businesses has changed as the years have moved on.

The very first motion I brought forth to Harbour East Community Council after being elected was to create a climate that would allow the entire Main Street business district (including adjacent streets such as Tacoma Drive) to flourish as a pedestrian friendly neighbourhood business district. This would of course have to include the need to continue to offer effective vehicle movement, while addressing concerns for speed and crosswalk safety in the area.

The primary focus for the Main Street project is the area between Woodlawn Road and the Parclo, but will also make recommendations for the transition of uses and needs beyond Woodlawn Road through to Montague Road and on to the highway

Regional Council supported this idea, and as I noted in a recent newsletter, funding was provided to begin a street design project for the Main Street area. Council has also indicated its intention to designate the general area around Main Street and Tacoma Drive as a Local Centre in the Regional Plan. This recognizes the community's desire for a mix of neighbourhood business and residential in the area with strong transit links.

The process is now moving ahead quickly. A consultant was recently hired to lead the public consultation process and two citizens were appointed to the Main Street Steering Committee to assist with the process. I am pleased to welcome Mr. Jim Cormier and Mr. Murray Wylie to the

committee. Both these individuals bring a wealth of talent and experience that will no doubt prove useful in both the public and committee discussions.

Over the next few months public consultations with business and the public will take place. Watch for them to be advertised in local media, on my website (www.andrewyounger.ca), and through my monthly e-mail newsletter. At the consultations you will have the chance to ensure your voice is heard on the future plans for our Main Street. I look forward to seeing you there.

As always you can reach me at 490-7035 or by e-mail at youngea@halifax.ca