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Item No. 15.1.7
Halifax Regional Council
December 12, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 27, 2023

SUBJECT: Cogswell District Land Use Policies

ORIGIN

- June 5, 2018, Regional Council Item 3 motion put and passed:

THAT Halifax Regional Council Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

Initiate the process to consider amendments to the Downtown Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law to incorporate necessary changes to address building design requirements within the Cogswell District and follow the public participation program adopted by Council on February 25, 1997 (Attachment F) including additional public engagement to incorporate a collaborative process lead by HRM staff involving key stakeholders, the community, and potentially external design experts, that will result in recommendations for Council respecting the final district public realm design and detailed land use policy.

- February 26, 2019, Regional Council Item 15.1.6 motion put and passed:

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to make public a timeline and public engagement process to complete the creation and adoption of amendments for the Cogswell District in the Municipal Planning Strategy, Land Use By-law and Design Manual by March 31, 2019.

- October 26, 2021, Regional Council Item 12.2, motion put and passed approving the Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, which included the Cogswell District lands, and policies to carry out a comprehensive planning process in the future.

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter), Part VIII, Planning & Development

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Initiate a process to amend the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and the Regional Centre Land Use By-law to develop land use policies and regulations for the Cogswell District Lands and surrounding lands, consistent with the review items outlined in the Discussion section of this report;
2. Develop a strategy to support long-term affordable housing in the Cogswell District Lands, consistent with the review items outlined in the Discussion section of this report; and
3. Follow the public participation program as set out in the Community Engagement section of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cogswell District is a transformational city-building initiative, which aims to convert the underutilized Cogswell Interchange, an incomplete portion of urban renewal era highway, into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood that will reconnect Downtown Halifax to the North End. The project generally consists of two major components:

- 1) infrastructure and public spaces; and
- 2) land use planning and urban design policies.

On February 26, 2019, Regional Council approved a 90% construction design plan for the infrastructure and public space component. Construction of the Cogswell District infrastructure is currently underway and is approximately half complete.

The purpose of this report is to initiate the planning process needed to amend the Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy and the Regional Centre Land Use By-law to adopt Cogswell District planning policies and regulations that will shape development in the District. The report also discusses key assumptions, affordable housing, and the approach to planning policies for surrounding lands.

BACKGROUND

The Cogswell District Project is a Municipal led city-building initiative intended to transform the Cogswell Interchange from an area of underutilized road infrastructure into a vibrant, urban neighbourhood in Downtown Halifax. First identified in 2009, the redevelopment of the Cogswell District presents a significant transformational opportunity that requires detailed comprehensive planning for lands generally located between Barrington Street and Upper Water Street, and from the northern terminus of the Granville Mall to Nora Bernard Street. Community engagement and consultation began in 2013, with each phase of consultation shaping key components of the site design, including transportation, infrastructure, parks and open spaces, urban design, social benefits, and commemoration. Several key Council directions included the following:

- June 5, 2018: Regional Council directed staff to prepare a report to initiate a process to amend the Downtown Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and the Downtown Halifax Land Use

By-law to incorporate necessary changes to address building design requirements within the Cogswell District.

- February 26, 2019: Regional Council approved a 90% construction design plan for roads, infrastructure, and open spaces, as detailed in the [Council report](#) dated February 8, 2019, following a public engagement process completed in 2018, which was focused on public spaces and overall urban design. Council also requested a community engagement timeline for the completion of amendments to planning documents.
- September 14, 2021: Regional Council awarded a construction tender to Dexter Construction Limited for the demolition of the Interchange and the construction of new infrastructure. The September 14, 2021 [Council report](#) also detailed land exchanges and land acquisitions completed as part of the project.
- October 26, 2021: Regional Council adopted the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (SMPS) and the Regional Centre Land Use By-law (LUB), commonly known as Centre Plan, which incorporated the Cogswell District.

Given the change in planning documents governing the lands and more detailed designs now available, a new Council initiation of the amendment process is required. The purpose of this report is to clarify the scope of the planning process, including the issues to be reviewed through community engagement, amendments to the Regional Centre SMPS and the Regional Centre LUB, and potential affordable housing actions.

Cogswell District Context

As set out in the Regional Centre SMPS, the key intent of the Cogswell District project is to transform “the area into a mixed-use Precinct that will reconnect Downtown Halifax with Halifax’s North End”. The vision for Cogswell that Council approved in 2014 is illustrated in Figure 1 below. The project will convert 6.5 hectares of road infrastructure into a mixed-use neighborhood, extending the entrance of Downtown Halifax northwards and reconnecting communities separated by the interchange lands.

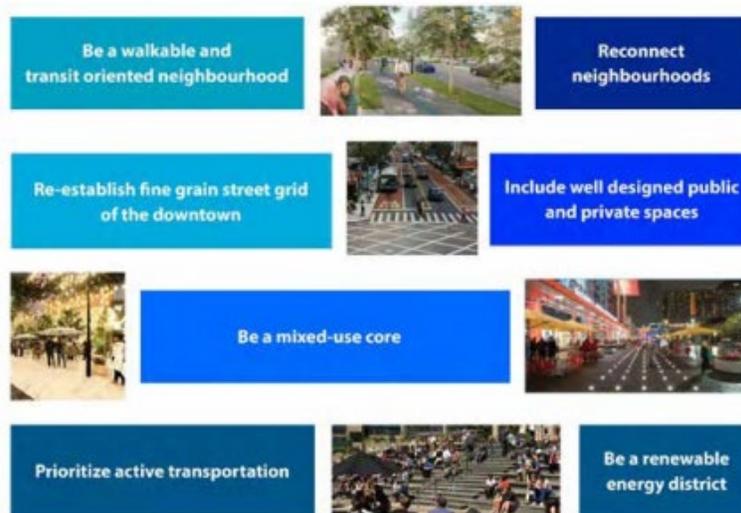


Fig. 1. Cogswell 2014 Vision (Source: FBM, 2018).

The subject area, shown on Map 1 of this report, is identified as the Cogswell Lands (CL) Precinct under the Downtown Designation of the Regional Centre SMPS. The interchange, which is owned by the Municipality, was constructed in the late 1960s. It was designed to prioritize the flow of vehicular traffic into Downtown Halifax while advancing “urban renewal” in neighbourhoods considered at the time to be

undesirable. Its construction forcibly displaced thousands of residents, many of whom were from marginalized communities, including low-income residents and African Nova Scotians. It also created physical and psychological barriers between Downtown Halifax, the Halifax Waterfront, and Halifax’s North End. The following table summarizes the planning policy context for the Cogswell District.

Table 1: Summary of existing planning policies and regulations

Subject Area	PID 41459769
Location	Downtown Halifax includes the current Cogswell Interchange and lands between Barrington Street and Upper Water Street, from the northern terminus of the Granville Mall to Nora Bernard Street. Surrounding lands will be reviewed as part of the MPS and LUB planning process.
Regional Plan Designation	Urban Settlement (RMPS Map 1)
Community Plan Designation (Map 1)	The Interchange is identified as Right-Of-Way (ROW) and falls under the Downtown Designation of the Regional Centre SMPS (see Map 1).
Precincts and Special Areas	The subject lands are designated as Cogswell Lands Precinct (CL) (Map 2 of the Regional Centre SMPS) and are subject to the Halifax Citadel View Planes and Rampart Sight Lines (Maps 6 & 7 of the Regional Centre SMPS).
Zoning (Map 2)	As a ROW, the Interchange is currently not zoned but it is bounded by the DH Zone. Regional Centre SMPS policies D-21 to D-23 identify that upon the closure of the Cogswell Interchange, and completion of the road network and subdivision process, the DH Zone will be applied.
Maximum Height	Rampart Sight Line maximum heights are currently applied to the lands on Map 4 of Regional Centre SMPS & Schedule 15 of the Regional Centre LUB. Maximum building height under the Rampart Sight Lines is approximately 96 metres.
Transportation Reserve	Policy M-6 of the Regional Centre SMPS establishes a Transportation Reserve (TR) along Proctor Street in the Cogswell Lands Precinct, as identified on Map 5 of the Plan. This TR supports investments in a new street and improved alignments that will enhance pedestrian connections to the Halifax Waterfront and to Halifax’s North End neighbourhoods.
Size	6.47 hectares
Current Land Use(s)	Municipal ROW and interchange
Surrounding Use(s) and Features	Mixed-use residential and commercial uses, waterfront uses, Harbour designated lands, DND employment uses, heritage properties, and proposed Capital District Heritage Conservation District.

Regional Plan Context

The Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS) designates this area as Urban Settlement, with Chapter 6 of the document providing a vision, guiding principles, and core concepts that are to be used to guide the development of planning policies for the area. The RMPS also highlights the need to consider several functional plans in the development of planning policies, as well as the need to consider affordable housing and diverse housing options when developing and amending municipal planning strategies.

Priority Plan Context

In accordance with Policy G-14A of the RMPS, the proposed planning process was assessed against the objectives, policies, and actions of the Priority Plans, including the *Integrated Mobility Plan*, the *Halifax*

Green Network Plan, HalifACT, and the Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027. The following policies and actions were identified to be most relevant to the Cogswell planning process that will be used to guide the planning process:

- Designating areas for higher density residential development where there is an existing or proposed high level of transit service, such as a proposed Transit Priority Corridor to support the development of walkable, affordable, and transit-oriented communities (Action 17 *Integrated Mobility Plan*);
- Integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation into land use planning policies and process by reducing sprawl and efficiently using transportation systems (Action 23 *HalifACT*);
- Increasing housing stock to accommodate the growing population in Halifax (Strategic Objective 1.6 *Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027*); and
- Considering and, where possible, incorporating community benefits as part of the development approval process in HRM communities (Action 59, *Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027*).

Regional Centre Context

The Regional Centre SMPS implements policies of the RMPS and Priority Plans, including policies concerning strategic growth, heritage resources and protected views, inclusive housing and mobility options, food and energy security, parks, and open spaces among others.

Regional Centre SMPS policies D-21 to D-23 speak to the implementation of the infrastructure master planning process for the Cogswell District prior to initiating a land use planning process. With the infrastructure master planning phase completed and the infrastructure currently under construction, the Municipality can now move ahead with the planning and engagement process within the framework of existing policies.

Infrastructure Design Plan

The approved Infrastructure Design Plan will reinstate the urban street grid and will be capable of supporting approximately 3,400 residential units. Dedicated cycling lanes, multi-use trails, four new parks, a central square, other open spaces, and a re-designed transit hub will support a livable pedestrian friendly area for people to live, work, and play. A district energy system, based on ambient heat recovery from the Halifax Wastewater Treatment Plant, will provide a low-emissions and resilient heating and cooling source for buildings constructed within the Cogswell District. Specific design elements to enhance overall accessibility have been incorporated within the Cogswell District, which strives to meet gold level certification under the Rick Hansen Certification program.

The approved Infrastructure Design Plan is available on the [Cogswell Project webpage](#). The overall Plan also includes a social benefits program and a commemorative public art program. The Plan aligns with many of Council's previously approved policy directives, including the *Halifax Economic Growth Plan 2016-2021*, the *Integrated Mobility Plan*, *Moving Forward Together Plan*, and the Regional Centre SMPS.

The implementation of the Infrastructure Design Plan is expected to cost approximately \$122.6 million. The potential sale or lease of land, utility cost sharing, and the subsequent property taxes that will be collected on the resulting development blocks will help off-set the front-end investment and generate long-term, recurring revenues for the Municipality. Along with proposed amendments to planning documents, Council will be asked to officially close the Public Street Right-of-Ways necessary to create the new lots and declare and categorize the lots surplus for disposal, pursuant to Administrative Order 50 Respecting Surplus Real Property. The land disposal is a separate activity that will be prepared in close coordination with the planning process discussed in this report and it is expected that these recommendations will come forward to Council in a comprehensive manner.

Previous Community Engagement

Encouraging thoughtful community feedback has been a cornerstone of the Cogswell District Project. Early engagements (e.g., HRMbyDesign, Cogswell Shakeup) focused on the overall vision and the transportation

and open space plan. As part of the 60% design process, the Municipality performed extensive outreach regarding the proposed redevelopment. Given the regional importance of the project, community engagement and consultation took place across the Municipality.

In Fall 2018, a substantial public engagement program was undertaken to gather ideas and input on design details for the public realm components of the District. This engagement period and the feedback received is summarized in the [Shaping the Cogswell Experience Engagement Report](#) (FBM, 2018). The input received, greatly influenced the 90% construction design approved by Regional Council in September 2019. More recent engagement sessions have been conducted with the Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities regarding Art and Commemoration opportunities in the Cogswell District as well as Social Benefits.

The Infrastructure Design Plan does not include design details of the buildings that will be constructed on the new development blocks. However, the Infrastructure Design Plan acknowledges that the siting and design of the buildings, as well as the land uses adjacent to the public realm (i.e., sidewalks), are critical factors in the development of the Cogswell District as a people-oriented space. Many suggestions regarding building design have been provided through the numerous community engagement exercises completed during the project design phase. The comments and recommendations cover topics ranging from height and density, land use, accessibility, the inclusion of units for families, parking, retail uses, active street facades, building setbacks, quality architecture, local retail opportunities, affordable housing, and privately owned public space (POPS).

Social Benefits

The redevelopment program includes meaningful diversity and inclusion efforts throughout the lifecycle of the project and are being advanced separately, outside the Plan amendment process. Key social benefit initiatives include:

- a social benefits component that was built into the tender requirements, with contract provisions that sets a target of 10% of all subcontracts for goods and services going to businesses owned, managed, and controlled by persons from equity seeking groups;
- workforce development in the tender documents that sets a target of 20% of skilled, general, and professional labour force in the project to be provided by persons from equity-seeking groups, and of this, at least 5% must be provided by African Nova Scotians and 5% by Mi'kmaq.
- the appointment of a Community Liaison lead;
- the establishment of an Advisory Committee made up of members from the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities, and other equity deserving groups; and
- a commemorative public art program representing African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities.

Art and Commemorative Features

Public engagement has indicated a strong desire for public art and commemorative features to celebrate the history of the neighbourhood and its residents. Details regarding the specific features continue to be developed and confirmed. The Cogswell project team continues to work with the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities in particular to finalize the details of these features in the Cogswell District.

Housing Crisis

The types of housing units that will be provided in the Cogswell District, including any potential affordable housing, is a topic that has received considerable attention throughout the project. This interest has only increased with the worsening housing crisis in Nova Scotia. The housing crisis extends across both the rental and ownership markets and is having widespread impacts across society, including impacts to municipal lands, expenditures, and services.

As of August 2023, more than 1,000 people are experiencing homelessness in the HRM¹. Recently, the

¹ [AHANS | HRM Homelessness Statistics](#)

Municipality has undertaken various efforts to support those experiencing homelessness, including allocating funds through the Rapid Housing Initiative for 137 units of new deeply affordable housing, constructing modular housing units, and directly assisting those sheltering outside. In February 2023, Regional Council adopted *A Framework to Address Homelessness in HRM*, which, amongst other things, identifies the Municipality's role in addressing homelessness as "facilitating the construction and maintenance of affordable and deeply affordable housing". This framework was subsequently updated in October 2023.

In addition, recommendation 11 contained in the *Report of the Task Force on the Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History* is specific to the Cogswell District. The recommendation indicates "that a rigorous requirement be applied for affordable housing in all the related developments, and that the relevant criteria be developed with the full participation of the Mi'kmaw community in the area".

Many households are in core housing need, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Rental costs are expected to continue to increase when the provincial rent cap is raised from 2% to 5% in 2024. It is expected that the housing crisis will continue, which requires action from all orders of government to build more housing across the housing spectrum. While the Province of Nova Scotia is primarily responsible for affordable housing, the Municipality's role is to facilitate and encourage housing development through land use planning and to provide the infrastructure necessary to support housing. The Municipality has the unique opportunity to leverage its land holdings in the Cogswell District to facilitate affordable housing.

DISCUSSION

The Regional Centre SMPS is a strategic policy document that sets out the goals and objectives for long term growth and development in the Regional Centre. It specifically requires a master planning and plan amendment process for the Cogswell District to establish planning policies and regulations for the area prior to enabling new development. The following sections outline the key assumptions and review items that are proposed to guide the community engagement and plan amendment process.

Key Assumptions

The key assumptions that will inform the scope of the planning process include the following:

- **Infrastructure designs:** The infrastructure designs, including roads, active transportation connections, multi-use paths, a greenway, and park locations, are finalized as part of Council's approval of the 90% Infrastructure Design Plan and are not open to change or review through the Plan amendment process. The tender for construction has been issued and construction is underway. The infrastructure can support approximately 3,400 residential units and the district energy system requires a minimum amount of development to be viable. Infrastructure costs and requirements are an important consideration in planning for density.
- **Maximum heights:** The previous Downtown Halifax Plan and the recently adopted Regional Centre SMPS indicate that the Cogswell District will generally be developed up to the maximum Halifax Citadel Rampart Sight Line heights. Under the current Regional Centre LUB regulations, this is estimated to range between 80 metres and 96 metres depending on the development block. While the planning process can consider transitions and specific built form regulations, the key assumption is that the area will primarily consist of high-rise, mixed-use buildings.
- **Cost Recovery:** Previous Council reports indicated that the Project had the potential to recover 90-93% of the cost to install the infrastructure through the sale of land. An updated land value assessment is required to update this estimate and will be brought to Council at a later date. The assumption on cost recovery will help inform planning policies, development options, additional public benefits, and the extent to which height transitions to residential areas or heritage properties

can be accommodated. However, the ability to generate revenue from land sales may be impacted depending on the approach used to achieve affordable housing and other community benefits in the District.

- **Environmental Design:** The Regional Centre SMPS and LUB include several environmental policies and regulations as described in the Environmental Implications section of this report. The project is an opportunity to showcase innovative environmental design considerations that support Municipal climate change goals such as the mandated district energy system, stormwater management, energy efficient and net-zero emission buildings, as well as buildings with built-in electric charging conduits to support the Municipal EV Strategy. Although the Municipality has limited legislative tools to enforce net-zero building practices, there may be an opportunity to include additional considerations in the purchase and sale agreements as part of the disposition of property. Changes to the *Nova Scotia Building Code* that can support these goals are also anticipated.
- **Crombie Lands:** In 2021, the Municipality entered into a land exchange agreement with Crombie REIT (Crombie) to facilitate the development of Granville Park, a new Transit HUB, and the planned Proctor Street as part of the Cogswell District project. The agreement includes the municipal acquisition of a large parcel of Crombie-owned land, at the end of Granville Street (between Barrington and Hollis Streets), and three small parcels of land in exchange for a newly created parcel of municipally owned land where the Cogswell Interchange now stands. The land exchange allows the Municipality to complete several signature design pieces at the south end of the Cogswell District, anchored by the planned Granville Park. For Crombie, it provides them with a comparable development opportunity aligned with historic development rights. The scale of development and built form agreed to in the HRM-Crombie land exchange agreement will be incorporated into the new policies and regulations for the Cogswell District.

Review Items

The Regional Centre SMPS includes an overall vision, core concepts, and urban design goals. Policy D-23 of the Plan states the intention to consider amendments to the Plan and Land Use By-law “to determine appropriate future land uses, built form framework, urban design requirements, pedway connections, and any other provisions unique to the Cogswell Lands (CL) Precinct”. Given this policy context and above key assumptions, the following items have been identified for further analysis and public feedback through the Plan amendment process.

Precincts within the Plan Area

The Cogswell District, shown on Map 1, is envisioned to reflect specific relationships and transitions to the surrounding areas, including heritage buildings and streetscapes, Downtown Halifax, the Halifax Waterfront, and the North End. The 2018 FBM Community Engagement Report suggested the following three precincts, which will be further explored as part of the planning process:

- **Granville:** area adjacent to the Granville Street should reflect the historic nature of Downtown Halifax and the surrounding heritage buildings, while also providing a focal point for the Granville Mall terminus. Active street facades, allowing for movement to the Transit Hub, and community or civic uses are envisioned for this prominent location.
- **Central:** The central area was envisioned to focus on a variety of tower heights with active building facades.
- **North:** To the north of Proctor Street, smaller scale development may be an appropriate transition to the North End Halifax context.

Surrounding Lands

While the key purpose of this planning process will be to confirm desired land uses and built form of the

Cogswell District, the planning process will also consider lands surrounding the District to support transitions to existing neighbourhoods. Previous public feedback suggested that the planning process consider how the District can support larger city-building initiatives and increase human experience in the surrounding area. Surrounding lands under consideration may include lands designated as Downtown Halifax, Centre, and Higher-Order Residential in the general vicinity of the Cogswell District. The planning process may therefore consider potential adjustments to surrounding policies and zones to support integration and the new development blocks may draw design context from the surrounding lands.

Mixed Land Use

The Cogswell District is currently designated as Downtown Halifax under the Regional Centre SMPS. The planning process will consider to what extent the new neighbourhood should be an extension of the downtown and the waterfront and if there are areas that should be more residential in nature. The planning process will also consider the addition of Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets, or any other special land use considerations. In particular, attention will be given to connecting the commercial district on Gottingen Street via Cogswell Street and Barrington Street to downtown, mending the gap left by the interchange and creating continuous streets with pedestrian-oriented retail.

Building and Urban Design

The Regional Centre SMPS Urban Design Goals include Contextual Design, Civic Design, and Human-Scale Design. Urban design is a critical element of ensuring that the Cogswell District is developed as a complete and vibrant neighbourhood, and a civic centre of activity that “encourages openness, equity and diversity”. Previous public consultation highlighted challenges related to large urban blocks, inactive urban edges, and ensuring that culture and heritage are visible. As discussed above, the Regional Centre SMPS recognizes that the District can be developed up to the maximum Rampart Sight Lines, subject to view planes and any desired transitions to surrounding areas.

Policies and regulations related to built form and urban design will consider how buildings relate to streets and parks, how they support street level commercial activity, pedestrian movement, human comfort, enjoyment, and accessibility. This includes relationships to important views, streets, public spaces, heritage resources, and ultimately the levels of permitted density, which are shaped by policies and regulations related to maximum building dimensions, specific setbacks, streetwall heights, stepbacks, tower dimensions, and the use of pedways.

This may include options to develop under the general Downtown Halifax Zone, the Centre 2 Zone, or more nuanced provisions to achieve certain objectives, such as supporting unique character, the framing of important public spaces, or transition to surrounding properties and precincts. This review process will also consider the built form needed to enable a total build-out of the District that the infrastructure system is capable of supporting, while respecting the core concepts and policies of the Regional Centre SMPS.

More detailed reviews will also consider:

- building articulation and materials;
- specific design guidelines for Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets, including provisions for entrances and grade-oriented premises;
- block-specific design requirements to encourage variation at the block level;
- acceptability and guidelines for privately owned public spaces (POPS);
- location of any new view corridors and view terminus sites;
- provisions for holding design competitions for key blocks within the District and associated flexibility in built form or urban design;
- transit-oriented design and servicing; and
- landscaping, parking, and related issues.

Development Approval Process

The Regional Centre SMPS enables most development through the as-of-right development permit process, while the site plan approval tool is reserved for projects seeking variations to certain detailed regulations. Discretionary approvals are supported for heritage development agreements or lands under

“special area” provisions. The appropriate use of these planning tools will be considered as part of the planning process.

Affordable Housing

The planning process will consider ways the Municipality can facilitate affordable housing in the Cogswell District.

Public benefits must be provided in developments over 2,000 square metres in floor area, in accordance with the incentive or bonus zoning requirements of the Regional Centre LUB. The Land Use By-law requires a minimum of 60% of the required public benefit be paid to HRM as money-in-lieu for affordable housing, which the Municipality uses to support grants to non-profit housing providers. A different approach to affordable housing is appropriate in the Cogswell District given the significant investments made in public infrastructure, the current housing crisis, and the project’s goal of making more connected, inclusive neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, as the landowner of the Cogswell District, the Municipality has additional tools available to facilitate affordable housing through purchase and sale agreements. This allows for different approaches beyond the use of planning tools enabled in the *HRM Charter*. This planning process will therefore explore a variety of approaches for supporting affordable housing, including an evaluation of options and tools such as:

- alternative requirements within the existing incentive or bonus zoning framework;
- inclusionary zoning;
- conditions within purchase and sale agreements;
- long-term leases;
- condominium ownership models;
- coordination and partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada;
- coordination with community groups;
- community land trusts; and
- other partnerships, funding, or development models that the Municipality can facilitate to create affordable housing.

These options, along with their financial implications with respect to the land disposal plan and overall cost recovery, will be presented as part of the overall recommendations for Plan and LUB amendments for the Cogswell District.

Other Community Benefits

The planning process will also consider additional community benefits in the Cogswell District. This may include affordable community or cultural space (ex: non-profit organizations, community groups, local entrepreneurial group); further opportunities for on-site food production (e.g. rooftop food production); or public services.

Conclusion

The key intent of the Cogswell District Project is to create a new neighbourhood designed to connect Downtown Halifax with North End Halifax and the Halifax Waterfront, creating a stronger, more inclusive network of communities. The development of the Cogswell District is a significant opportunity for transformation with regional impacts that can support new housing, businesses, and public amenities for current and future residents. Building on the previous community engagement and infrastructure design, the proposed planning process will consider detailed planning and urban design policies and regulations for the Cogswell Lands and surrounding area. The scope of the planning process will be informed by the key assumptions, review items, additional analysis, and community engagement as outlined in this report. Coordinated with planning tools, the review will also develop a strategy to support long-term affordable

housing. Therefore, staff recommend that Council initiate the secondary plan amendment process to develop planning policies and regulations to guide future development of the area.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Should Regional Council choose to initiate the SMPS amendment process for the Cogswell District, the *HRM Charter* requires that Regional Council approve a public participation program. In 2023, Council adopted Administrative Order 2023-002-ADM (the AO) that outlines certain requirements to be met when conducting a public participation program for planning documents, certain planning applications, and when engaging with abutting municipalities. In this case, staff recommend that Regional Council adopt a public participation program that is different from the standard approach set out by the AO given the unique characteristics of the proposed project work, and significant public interest implications of the Cogswell project.

In addition to the minimum requirements of the AO, staff propose the following take place for engagement activities:

- two in-person meetings/open houses for the general public held at different times of the day;
- rightsholder group meetings;
- an online survey;
- public feedback and Q & A on social media; and
- one or more walking tours.

Staff propose that the requirement for signage be waived since the Cogswell District is comprised of many individual sites and much of the land is presently inaccessible due to ongoing construction. Staff also propose the need for mailout notifications be waived given the broader public interest in the project. In lieu of these requirements, enhanced advertising on social media will be used to reach a wide audience for public engagement opportunities.

Key rightsholders include community and business organizations, Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities and organizations, other equity-deserving groups, abutting property owners, and other rightsholders that staff may identify. Based on the Municipality's Diversity and Inclusion Framework and collaboration with the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the public engagement program will be designed to build trust and seek meaningful input from various communities.

In addition to these efforts, the *HRM Charter* requires a public hearing to be held before Regional Council can consider approval of any plan amendments.

In order to create the new district, the former Cogswell Interchange and related street right-of-ways will need to be officially closed. Subject to potential timing constraints, staff recommend that the future public hearing for the plan amendments be coordinated with the public hearing to satisfy the requirements of the *HRM Charter* respecting the closure of the former street right-of-ways.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs associated with undertaking the plan amendment process for the Cogswell District project can be accommodated within the approved 2023-24 operating budget for Planning and Development.

The total Cogswell Interchange Redevelopment capital project budget is \$122.6M, of which \$47.9M has been spent as of September 30, 2023. The project is to be debt funded, with the funding strategy that subsequent redeveloped land parcel sales would contribute to the debt repayments and therefore minimizing the impact to taxpayers. The construction project is estimated to be completed in late 2025.

The approach to affordable housing, and the built form and height regulations for the District may impact cost recovery. A reduction in the amount of land available for sale, requirements placed through purchase and sale agreements, and built form requirements, which lower the buildable area of buildings may lower revenues from planned land sales. The potential costs and benefits of these decisions will be outlined in a future Council report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risks have been identified beyond those discussed in this report. Secondary plan amendments are at the discretion of Regional Council and are not subject to appeal to the N.S. Utility and Review Board.

The overall risk considerations for the infrastructure project are detailed in the [Cogswell Redevelopment Program- 90% Construction Design staff report dated February 26, 2019](#), and the [Cogswell District Project Staff Report dated September 6, 2021](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The Regional Centre LUB implements policies of the RMPS and the Regional Centre SMPS related to strategic growth, efficient use of land, food and energy security, parks and open spaces, low-impact development practices, watercourse setbacks, and climate change impacts. The intent for the Cogswell District is to invest in sustainable transportation options to make walking/rolling, cycling, and transit the primary methods for commuting by promoting a compact and intensified downtown that aims to foster a healthy pedestrian environment.

In addition, the overall environmental implications relating to geotechnical and environmental site investigation, and flood mitigation measures are detailed in the [Cogswell Redevelopment Program- 90% Construction Design staff report dated February 26, 2019](#). Other environmental implications relating to soil removal and remediation, and HalifACT2050/District Energy are detailed in the [Cogswell District Project Staff Report dated September 6, 2021](#).

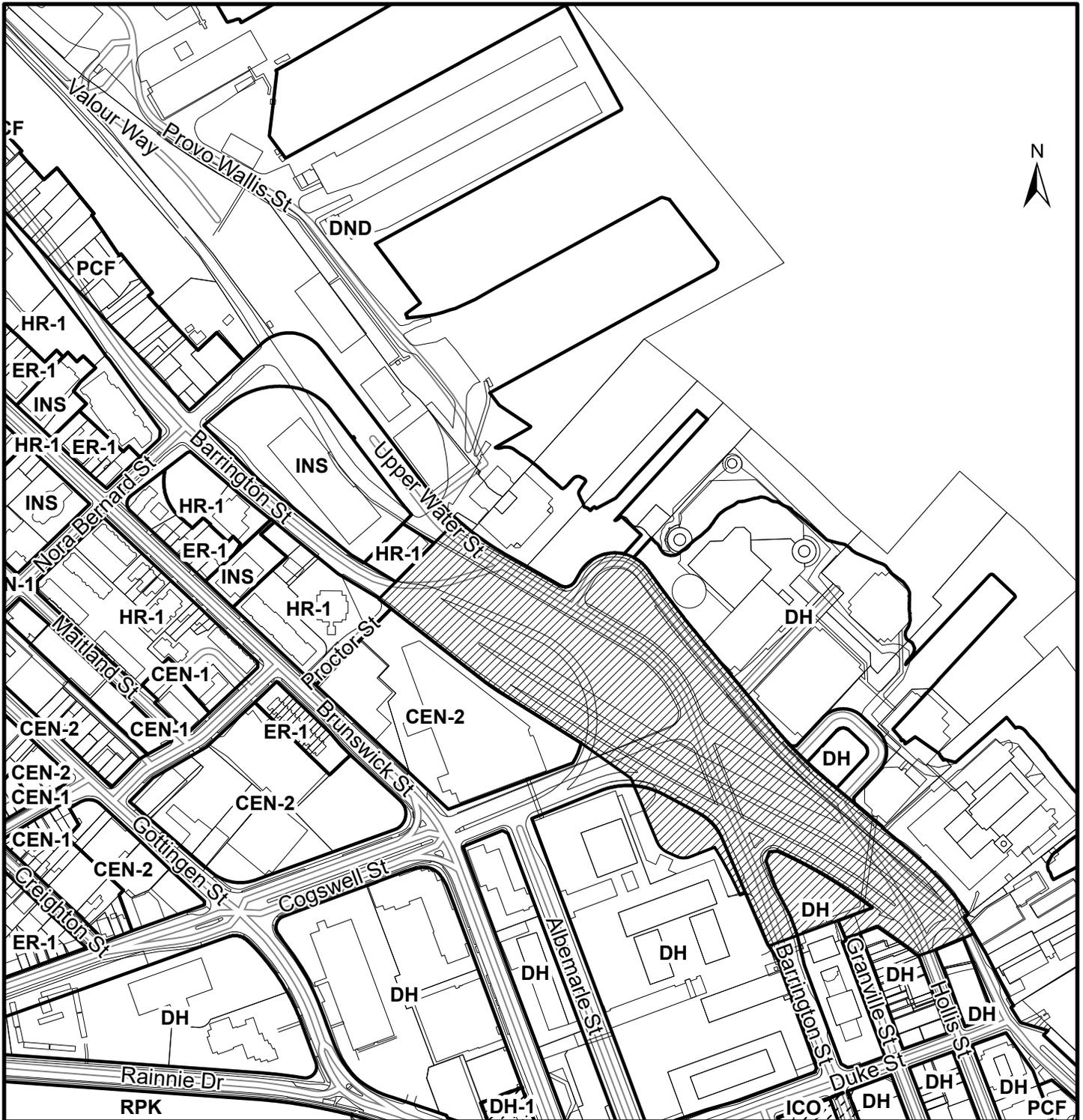
ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council may choose to initiate the consideration of potential policies that would differ from those outlined in this report. This may require a supplementary staff report.
2. Regional Council may choose to not initiate the plan amendment process for the Cogswell District. A decision of Council not to initiate a process to consider amending the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy is not appealable to the N.S. Utility and Review Board, as per Section 262 of the *HRM Charter*. A decision of Council to not initiate the planning process is inconsistent with previous Council direction and could pose significant risk or delay to the overall Cogswell project, including financial risks for the Municipality, and unrealized potential for new housing and economic development.

ATTACHMENTS

Map 1: Urban Structure
Map 2: Zoning and Location

Report Prepared by: Ross Grant, Planner III, Strategic Projects, Planned Growth 902-717-5524



Map 2 - Zoning and Location

Cogswell Lands,
Halifax



Cogswell Lands Precinct



Downtown Halifax By-law Area

Regional Centre and Downtown Halifax
Land Use By-Law Area

Regional Centre Zones

- DH Downtown Halifax
- CEN-2 Centre 1
- HR-1 High-Order Residential 1
- ER-1 Established Residential 1
- INS Institutional
- DND Department of National Defense
- PCF Park and Community Facility
- RPK Regional Parks

Downtown Halifax Zones

- DH-1 Downtown Halifax
- ICO Institutional, Cultural & Open Space

HALIFAX



This map is an unofficial reproduction of a portion of the Zoning Map for the plan area indicated.

The accuracy of any representation on this plan is not guaranteed.