

PROJECT BRIEF



BAYERS & YOUNG | MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

West Armdale, Halifax | Nova Scotia

Purpose of submission

WMFares Architects is pleased to make an application for a Site Specific Plan Amendment to the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law to enable a development agreement for two buildings fronting Bayers Road and Young Street. We are seeking to undertake the required amendments and development agreement processes concurrently and have enclosed the following information for review as part of the application process:

1. A full set of building drawings including site plan, floor plans, elevations
2. 3D views / Renderings
3. Development Data
4. Traffic Impact Statement
5. Site Servicing Schematic

Context, Zoning & Existing Planning Designations

The subject property is comprised of 5 lots zoned C-2A (fronting Bayers Road) and 9 lots zoned R2 (fronting Young Street) under the current Land Use By-law. Under the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy, the site is primarily designated RES with two COM designations for PIDs 00084822 and 40447393 fronting Bayers Road. There are 14 existing buildings on the subject site with a combined total of 20 apartment units, 9 rented single family dwellings, and approximately 4,700 square feet of commercial retail space.

The surrounding context can be described as medium to low density residential bound by localized retail along main transit arteries (Bayers Road and Oxford Street). The subject through-lot site is located at the neighbourhood edge between R2 and C2-A zoning designations with pre-existing retail and multiunit use. Despite the large commercial storage facility within the residential block, Young Street is characterized by a mixed housing typology of war bungalows, and two to three storey 1950's shingle-clad homes.

The character of Bayers Road on the other hand reflects a miss-match of building typology due to a clear divide of current zoning designations that has resulted in unbalanced urban form on a major street that can arguably be identified as the 'front door' to the Halifax peninsula. The North-West side of Bayers Road exhibits single storey bungalows, whereby the South-East side exhibits a mix of multi-unit apartment buildings bungalows, commercial retail, as well as institutional uses (Catholic Church) all at varied heights, mass and setbacks.

Historically, the neighbourhood block between Bayers, Young, and Oxford Street has undergone growth and shifts in urban form. Pre 1918, the west-end's residential grid terminated at Liverpool Street. In addition, Young and Cork street did not fully extend West to Connaught. Instead, Young and Cork Streets terminated at Oxford, leaving a large parcel of land bound by Bayers, Connaught, and Oxford Street. Subsequently, the subject block was subdivided into smaller residential lots after the West extension of both Young and Cork Street to Connaught Avenue was instated. With two recently approved four to five storey mixed-use developments (Case 19857 and 17829) at the corner of Bayers and Oxford Street, the urban block is yet again undergoing improved neighbourhood growth and development.

The site's location may be considered under-serviced in terms of walkable neighbourhood commercial amenities, yet subject to change upon the development of new mixed-use projects mentioned above. The site is serviced by three Metro Transit routes and is in close proximity to Mumford Road Transit Terminal. Furthermore, the closest park amenity (Ardmore Park) is a few blocks South at the corner of Almond and Oxford Street.

Project Description + Design Strategies

The proposed development includes two separate buildings that respond to pre-existing land uses and existing urban form. Building A has been identified as the proposal's mixed-use component with at-grade retail fronting Bayers Road and an overall stepped building height of 4 to 5-storeys that is in keeping with approved neighbouring developments. The building design displays varied vertical volumes associated with retail store fronts to promote localized neighbourhood retail and built order to what we have dubbed as the peninsula's 'front door'.

Building B, which exhibits a 332-foot building frontage along Young is identified as the development's low-scale residential component capped at 3-storeys in height. In order to break up a rather large building frontage, the proposed mass has been deliberately broken up into smaller townhouse style volumes with varied roof and architectural forms which take proportional cues from neighbouring single family residences to retain a consistent rhythmic streetscape. In addition, ground floor units have direct access to the street with defined garden beds and vegetation to further articulate a lively residential character. Furthermore, Building B has two pedestrian entries and lobbies off Young Street that are characterized by full-height screened gateways. Below-grade parking is accessed by two separate vehicular ramps at opposite corners of the subject site (East and West).

At the heart of proposed design is an internal courtyard between building A and B. This fully landscaped podium will serve as an active outdoor amenity space for tenants with allocated zones for playground, terraced produce gardens, seating and more. In addition, indoor amenity space on level 100 of Building B has direct access to the exterior courtyard for spill-out activity. Building A's siting and terraced stepping at the South-West corner allows for maximum sun exposure into the courtyard and units facing the courtyard. The façade of Building B facing the courtyard takes on similar massing and rooflines of those facing Young Street. Building A's

courtyard façade displays a series of projecting and undulating cube forms, resulting in a playful green space defined by varied volumes, heights, and materiality.

Change of Circumstance and Neighbourhood Compatibility

Amendments to the MPS are not considered unless a change of circumstance is evident, and the existing land-use is no longer appropriate. We offer the following rationale for why new development would be appropriate for this specific site in conjunction with how existing policies no longer apply under current economic, social and cultural climates:

- A primary goal of the Regional Plan is to densify the peninsula and encourage active, walkable streetscapes. The current by-laws restrict feasible high-quality architectural developments that would enrich and enhance neighbourhoods.
- Considering current economic and market trends, the current by-laws limit the densification of larger-sized units as set out by the Regional Plan to promote families moving and living in the urban core.
- The location of the site is in close proximity to existing civic amenities including public transit (Mumford Transit Terminal), parks (Ardmore Park) and community centres (The Forum, Church Hall).
- Existing properties no longer serve their original single family-use, and have been subdivided into walk-up apartment units largely due to the site's centralized location with accessibility to a wide range of civic and commercial amenities.
- Existing multi-unit buildings can be identified within the West-End residential blocks between Young and Chebucto Road.
- The subject site presents a unique condition with a clear division in representation of architectural form as the proposed buildings meet and confront two parallel streets with separate civic identities. As such, the proposed design consciously recognizes these urban conditions to retain specific street character in terms of height, mass, setbacks and materiality. Specifically, the Young Street façade takes on a simple, modern language with massing that reflects existing volumetric rhythm and form.
- The proposed design and programing is compatible with current and neighbouring uses, with primary commercial fabric evident along Oxford and Bayers Road. Incorporating commercial use along Bayers Road enhances public activity and walkability within the pedestrian realm.
- Policies that allow for development agreements can regulate and promote proper urban and architectural design principals to ensure that new developments are built to the highest quality to promote walkability and livability. This approach secures *design* as tool for better living as opposed to an as-of-right process limited by height with no specific controls for good design in all aspects of urbanism, architecture, and landscaping.

Conclusion:

Thank you for considering our application. We are strong believers that design excellence as a problem solving tool in both the public and private realms can serve as a catalyst for urban revitalization, walkability, and livability on the Halifax Peninsula. We look forward to working together with staff in pursuing these unique opportunities.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL
SIGNED**

Jacob JeBailey, Architect
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