

May 10, 2018

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RE: Design rationale addressing five Planning Principles for Case#20218 Spring Garden West (SGW) DA Application

Proposed Mixed-used Residential, retail and commercial located on Spring Garden Road between Robie and Carlton Street

In January of 2016 Dixel embarked on an unprecedented approach to design a private development to shape Spring Garden West. Dixel independently undertook a public engagement for a private development and reached out to the community for advice on how to live well on Spring Garden West (www.livewellonsgw.com).

The proposed SGW development spans the south frontage of Spring Garden Road from the corner of Robie Street to the corner of Carlton Street. It includes the restoration of 3 registered heritage buildings on Carlton Street, built in between 1870 and 1880, as proposed in the substantial alteration application submitted to Heritage Principal Planner on March 2018.

Given the significance of the site, Dixel felt the project required public input to help shape it to the community's needs and contribute positively to the district.

Having had 3 shareholder meetings and 3 public engagement events leading to the proposal submitted to HRM for approval, Dixel has discovered that public comments and concerns lead to solutions we would not have otherwise considered, making for a better development for the Spring Garden Road district. Due to the significant contribution to the design process and the specialized partnership formed to address the concerns brought forward, Dixel considers the public as a partner in directing this proposal into a successful contribution to Spring Garden Road district and the city urban fabric.

The result is a design of not just a building, but also a street, a park and an accessible public space that ties into the historic context, is affordable, sustainable and inclusive.

In the summer of 2017, Halifax Regional Council have directed Planning Staff to evaluate requests for site-specific secondary municipal planning strategy amendments utilizing the goals and objectives of the Centre Plan's (the purple document) five key planning principles as the main criteria.

The proposed design is in keeping with the Centre Plan's guiding principles by featuring well designed streetwall massing, appropriate tower setbacks, activated streetscapes with no blank

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walls, high quality design and materials, proper considerations for sidewalk solar access, wind considerations and appropriate scaled neighbourhood context.

To help aid in planning staff's appraisal of the proposed plan amendment for Spring Garden West project, we are providing the following design rationale as to how the overall building design responds to the following five key planning principles:

1. Transition
2. Pedestrian Oriented
3. Human- scale
4. Building Design
5. Context-sensitive

Site Context- the location; the development

SGW development is an a strategically pivotal location for Halifax Peninsula with its role as a gateway to the South End and Downtown and it's unique location at the interface of Dalhousie University, major health and research institutions, one block from the Public Gardens, and mature neighbourhoods surrounding.

SGW finds itself between tall buildings and low rise buildings, between new and old. This makes it incredibly important that the development is appropriate for its surroundings and is well integrated into the community.

SGW will be home to over 250 residential apartments including affordable housing complete with amenity-level roof terraces and gardens as well as over 60,000 square feet of professional and medical office and affordable offices for NGOs distributed over three floors. It will also provide 21,000 square feet of commercial space at street level with 361 underground public parking spaces.

The project will use the best building practices available, including: LEED certified sustainability, and an interactive 500 feet of streetscape, 22 feet wide, designed for pedestrian comfort and livability. The neighbourhood's heritage assets will be restored and preserved.

We aspire for SGW to be the best new addition to the city's urban environment and to become the driving force for the revitalization of the Spring Garden Road district and an important contribution to the city's urban fabric.

Planning Principle 1: Transition

The proposed building design recognizes surrounding development, especially adjacent low-scale residential buildings, through built form and landscape transitions.

The inspiration and approach to massing for the proposed development is to act as a transitional element between the low rise and high-rise surrounding and offers the following distinct features:

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1. The transition from high rise developments like the existing 21-storey Summer Gardens to the East and this proposed high-rise use (4 story podium and 30 & 16 storey towers) will be done partially through transition of height, and partially through transition of uses from commercial to mixed to residential.
2. The transition between low- density residential on Carlton Street to high-rise tower will be solidified through preserving and restoring the buildings on Carlton Street to provide a base for the tower and stepping down the height of proposed buildings as they approach low-rise buildings. The majority of the building’s height will be located at the centre of the block while the Robie Street corner will step down to 16-storeys with a 4 storey podium.
3. A four storey podium, which maintains and respects the existing neighbourhood street wall height at street level, integrates the pedestrian-scaled, low-rise components of the adjacent properties on the street before the building step-backs to higher floors. Above the podium, another 4 stories forms a base for the towers which step back further and have architectural breaks within the mass that give them a distinct character.
4. Landscaping will be used as a buffer between properties and to soften building elements.
5. Setting proposes appropriate buildings setbacks from property lines.
 A 50’ Setback was introduced between the tower and the registered Heritage properties on Carlton Street. This setback was increased a further 20’ following the Heritage impact study for a total of at least 70’ setback.

Planning Principle 2: Pedestrian Oriented

The proposed building and site design prioritize the needs and comfort of pedestrians. The intent is to create safe, comfortable, and more enjoyable environments for people of all ages and abilities. The development provides the following distinct features:

1. Accessible design with no blank walls or dead spaces at ground level. Introduction of uses that can spill out and animate the sidewalk and create “sticky street” conditions where people want to linger and spend time.
2. Frequent and prominent entrances and transparent windows provide direct connection with the street for social interaction. Pedestrian weather protection using porticos, awnings and recesses to protect from inclement weather and give greater definition and significance to primary entrances.
3. Mitigation of the impact of required street parking and parking accesses and utility features: to mitigate against problems arising from street parking, four levels of underground parking are provided with approximately 380 parking spaces. This will help keep cars off the street and so enhances the pedestrian experience.

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4. A proposed reduction of street parking to one side of the street only and addition of dedicated bike lanes to increase active transportation and urban biking.
5. Seating, planters, windbreaks and other amenities make the sidewalk a more pedestrian friendly place to walk and be. The sidewalk is thought of as a linear park and not just as a utilitarian slabs of concrete which provides an active transportation greenway and relates with the Public Gardens with its generous canopy trees and plantings.
6. Tree planting design with proposed beautiful green canopy of trees provides shade to the sidewalk and creates a comfortable pedestrian atmosphere. It offers separation from the road and provides a unique green streetscape experience for the city.
7. Safe and inviting pedestrian connections through and around the site, well-lit for liveliness, safety and activities in the evening.
8. Utilities undergrounding to help beautify the streetscape.
9. A service courtyard screened from neighbouring backyards with an enclosed bays will remove moving trucks, retail delivery and garbage pick-up from the street front.

Planning Principle 3: Human Scale

Human scale street presence and an active engaging streetscape were the driving guidelines for the architectural and landscape design of the project. The development provides the following distinct features:

1. Design elements include smaller scale volumes that are oriented to the street this activates the street and provides a human scale massing. Human scale architectural detailing and materials like brick, window frames balconies and prominent entries responds to the rhythm and variety of walking speed.
2. The massing and articulation of the streetscape is divided into individual storefronts and fined grained street retail to further capture this human scale presence
3. Proposed wide in-ground heated sidewalks that are properly scaled for the amount of pedestrian traffic planned for.
4. Lower scale podiums and strategic step-backs of the high rise portion of the development to reduce the perception of building height from street level and articulation of the various roof lines that form transition points where appropriate.

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5. Massing and scale of project relates to many institutional and commercial uses and number of older high rise multi-unit residential building to the North and East of the site which set the precedence for residential density along this strip of Spring Garden.
6. The protruding street front forms inspired by the bay windows found along Carlton Street heritage building proposed for restoration connect to the street and creates an articulated massing. The form along the street bays relates to the human scale and provides an engaging and comfortable streetscape experience.
Theses bays allow for views East and West creating a greater connection the public gardens.

Planning Principle 4: Building Design

The building design addresses the unique opportunity presented by a large scale development site this close to the urban core.

The ground level will be occupied by the residential and commercial lobbies, a public atrium giving access to the professional offices above, and ground floor retail along Spring Garden Road. This ground floor retail combined with planned streetscape improvements will enliven the neighborhood, provide greater activity to the streetscape, greatly improved accessibility, and help reinforce Spring Garden Road retail. With the commercial office space and residential units above, this retail will be supported with the new inhabitants of the site and the mixed use characteristics will provide more consistent activity across the site.

The spirit and intent of the downtown Halifax By-laws as it relates to building massing, form, setbacks, street related uses, mixed use and tower dimensions have been followed.

The development provides the following distinct features:

1. The overall massing of the building is divided into three different heights to breakdown the massing and reduce the visual height when viewed along the bounding street.
The building's façade is articulated vertically and horizontally using a combination of windows, changes to materials and material treatments and other architectural façade elements
2. Setbacks are introduced at the 4th story and tower widths are reduced to smaller footprints than what is allowable under zoning by-law.
3. The rhythm of ravelin (inspired by the foot print of the Halifax Citadel) creates spaces that both reveal and protect. Used in public spaces, the shapes create engaging views, and gathering spaces. Used in the towers, the ravelin creates opportunities for views and sun exposure while providing a dynamic articulation of the façades.

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4. The mid and high rise portion introduced with the ravelin form allow the streetwall setback to be increased ever further in the wedge form. These angled recessed elements provide an interesting articulated façade and allow views up and down Spring Garden Road.
5. The high rise portion presents a massing that makes best use of height is properly set back and has a generous void space between the towers to allow sunlight to penetrate Spring Garden Road.
6. Increased tower articulation and reduction of tower footprint reduce projected wind conditions, the increased setbacks and large entry canopies also prevent down-washing and lessen wind-tunnel affects at sidewalk level.
7. The proposed building with its coordinated building elements (like lighting and signage) and site elements (like landscaping) contributes to the overall quality of the design and provides visual interest from all vantage points, especially from the street.
8. The Carlton Street properties will be preserved and restored as part of the plan and they along with the existing tree canopy will form the base of the tower on the North East side of the proposed development. Continue to screen the views of tower from the Carlton Street sidewalk.
9. Building design includes substantive restoration of three registered heritage buildings on Carlton Street that are part of heritage streetscape and have lost much of their original grandeur over the years.
10. The new tower building is set back approximately 70' from the existing heritage buildings to respect the heritage streetscape. This setback effectively will allow the heritage buildings to screen the towers from the street level views.
11. The inclusion of green spaces at street level, green roof terraces, and a multi-storey green public atrium, “vertical garden”, creates a 4 season free public space that speaks to the history and culture of the district as public commons and creates a living room for the district.

Planning Principle 5: Context Sensitive

We believe the location and building design of the development is appropriate for the context of the area and will help to reinforce a walkable, densified, transit oriented community that will benefit the residents, nearby students as well as the commercial and institutional organizations in the vicinity. The development provides the following distinct features:

1. Improvement to the overall community through public realm improvements. These improvements will focus on streetscape improvements abutting the proposed

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development, improvements to Balcom Park located at the Robie Street and Spring Garden Road intersection, and the restoration of heritage properties along Carlton Street.

2. Development builds on the abundance of amenities in the neighborhood. In addition to multiple small scale commercial and restaurants in the immediate block, this site is extremely well connected to the commercial and office amenities located at the East end of Spring Garden, Downtown Waterfront and on Quinpool Road and will retain the feel of the pedestrian retail shopfronts of Spring Garden Road by providing small- scale affordable retail spaces facing the street, each directly accessible from the sidewalk.
3. Development supports current Halifax transit initiatives and encourages a lifestyle surrounding more sustainable transportation options, discouraging regular car use. Free enclosed and secure public bicycle parking will be provided to promote active transportation.
4. The site is exceptionally connected to some of the most prominent employers and destinations in the area. Aligning with the high density of medical land uses in the area, the building will be developed as a healthy building, utilizing best practice design for encouraging a healthy lifestyle. This will include rooftop gardens, prioritizing office space for medical use, and offering a percentage (6%) of affordable residential units and affordable office spaces for NGO medical organizations.
5. The scale, form, and materials used respond to the architectural character of the neighbourhood. The proposed building complements and enhances the heritage features.

Sincerely,
Original Signed

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August 10, 2018

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RE: ADDENDUM to Design rationale addressing five Planning Principles for Case#20218 Spring Garden West (SGW) DA Application Dated May 10, 2018

Proposed Mixed-used Residential, retail and commercial located on Spring Garden Road between Robie and Carlton Street

This addendum is intended to clarify that we have considered our proposal in relation to:

- 1) Centre Plan 5 planning core principles of transition, pedestrian-orientation, human-scale, building design and context sensitive which were provided as part of Council's direction.
- 2) Centre Plan Concepts of Urban Structure and Height which were provided as part of Council's direction.
- 3) The proposed development- Case 20761-that is being considered next to our subject site

- 1) As per May 10, 2018 letter we have considered our proposal in relation to Regional Council's direction provided on August 1, 2017, regarding general alignment with the June 2017 Centre Plan, specifically the 5 Planning Principles: Transition, Pedestrian-orientation, Human-scale, Building design and Context sensitive

- 2) We have also considered our proposal in relation to Regional Council's direction provided on August 1, 2017, regarding general alignment with the June 2017 Centre Plan, specifically regarding a) Urban Structure and b) Height

a) Urban Structure:

SGW development general build form character is consistent with the Urban Structure objectives as it:

- Encourages mixed-use main streets that demonstrate high quality building and streetscaping standards, and prioritize pedestrian comfort.
- Accommodates new residents and jobs through moderate height and tall buildings that transition appropriately to adjacent lower building forms and public spaces.
- Accommodates residential, commercial in a mixed-use development.
- Creates a safe and comfortable public realm for people of all ages and abilities.

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- Located in an intensive employment area and can support businesses and local economic activity.
- Is a unique site that is sensitive to the local context and reinforces the best qualities and characteristics of its unique neighborhood and district.

b) Urban Structure:

- SGW falls into Spring Garden Road Centre profile and generally aligns with proposed height of 16-20 stories.

3) Dexel acknowledges the adjacent development “Promenade on Robie South” fronting Robie, College and Carlton Street. (Case 20761)

Dexel is aware that the above mentioned proposal includes the demolition of the existing residential structures, relocation and restoration of the existing heritage building, renewal of two existing Carlton Street houses and construction of a new mixed-use structure fronting on College and Robie Streets.


Dexel is also aware that the proposal includes a low rise stepped streetwall structure incorporating up to 32,000 sf of ground floor commercial space with approximately 400 residential suites above in two 22 and 17 stories residential towers, Robie Tower and College Tower respectively.

The structure would be constructed on top of a four level underground parking structure which accommodates enclosed parking for approximately 384 cars.

I trust that this addendum satisfies your request and completes required documentation for the August 20th PAC meeting

Sincerely,

Original Signed

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Project Architect

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