



PAUL SAMPSON, MCIP LPP
PLANNER II – URBAN ENABLED APPLICATIONS
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT | CURRENT PLANNING
40 ALDERNEY DR., 2ND FLOOR (ALDERNEY GATE)

HALIFAX
PO BOX 1749
HALIFAX NS B3J 3A5
T. 902.490.6259
halifax.ca

sent via email

Paul

Thanks to you and Steve Higgins for taking the time to meet with myself and David Graham on January 5th to discuss the MPS amendment proposed for the Long Lake Village project. I would like to provide this letter as a formal request and clarification/rationale for the MPS amendments detailing the following two key issues that we discussed previously which are required to facilitate the change of Lot N3A from a small commercial building to a vibrant mixed use residential/commercial complex.

Request # 1 – Deletion of the 15% maximum land area used for “apartment uses” in RDD zone

In the Halifax Mainland South Municipal Planning Strategy, Schedule I **GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**, paragraph 5 of the “Site Development Guidelines” states :

“ no more than 15% of any area covered by a development agreement may be developed for apartment uses including the building(s), ancillary parking, open space, and landscaping”

As you know, there is a difference of opinion regarding the semantics of the MPS pertaining to the mathematics of how the 15% ratio is to be calculated in the Mainland South RDD zone. Our view is that the wording of the MPS is clear in that it does not to use the entire lot area, but rather looks to the specific use of portions of the lots that are specifically listed in the above sentence to be included in calculations. To further confuse things further, the multi-unit buildings at Long Lake Village are all proposed to have some amount of commercial space, including some ancillary surface parking for the commercial space. This compounds the dynamics of the interpretation of how to perform the calculation. Our version of the mathematics yields a number of approximately 12% of the overall land use as being for “apartment uses”, while HRM’s math using “total lot areas” calculates between 17% and 18%, slightly exceeding the 15% limit, but not by a material amount – but an exceedance, nonetheless. Rather than ongoing discussions and debates about interpretation methods, we are looking to modify or delete altogether this requirement in order to facilitate the change of Lot N3 from a “commercial only” to a “mixed use” building.

It goes without saying that everyone would agree that the conversion of Lot N3A to a mixed use building is a far superior planning approach to the existing development agreement terms. A mixed use building on Lot N3A will provide a more feasible way to allow the market to respond to the growing community’s requirements for a commercial space than the current approvals which provide for a “commercial only” structure. Unfortunately, Halifax Planning’s inclusion of the entire land area of Lot N3A as an “apartment use” is throwing the 15% ratio offside compared to the total lot area of the overall development.

There are at least two other large RDD zoned properties that have been developed in the Mainland South Planning area where there have been previous MPS amendments to remove or modify the 15% maximum for “apartment uses”. To clarify, “apartment uses” in the MPS speaks to the nature of the land use in terms of structure type and does not reference ownership, nature of tenure of the structures or property, nor legal status [e.g. freehold versus condominium units].

Policy 1.5.3, Melville Ridge development [runs between Herring Cove Road and Purcell’s Cove Road] (page 153) – allowed for both a higher percentage of land to be used for “apartment uses”, with the lands being developed for seniors housing and apartment uses, but it does include some commercial and health care offices as well.

Policies 1.5.4 and 1.5.5, Regatta Point - allowed for a higher percentage of land (up to 34%) devoted to apartment uses. Refer to 1.5.5.1 through 1.5.5.3.

Request # 2 – Clarification regarding a “mixture of residential uses”

We would request clarification that the requirement for a “mixture of residential uses” and “an emphasis on a mix of dwelling unit types” is to be applied on the overall RDD parcel, and is not to be applied within the individual building structures. Alternatively, the requirement could be deleted altogether based on Halifax Planning’s current knowledge of the final overall subdivision plan and development concept.

The Halifax Mainland South Land Use Bylaw, paragraph 28CI provides as follows :

“an apartment house which is located in the “Mainland South Area” shall be required to provide one two-bedroom unit for very three bachelor and/or one bedroom units”

As you know, the existing development agreement for the Long Lake Village project specifically exempts the multi-unit residential buildings from the normal Mainland South Land Use Bylaw requirement [above] that one in four suites be designed as two bedroom suites. This was done in the 2010 development agreement amendment which stated as follows :

“the unit mix requirements of Section 28CI of the Land Use Bylaw shall not apply”.

This exemption was created previously to permit the developer flexibility to increase the proportion of suites which are smaller with a lower deemed population density in the Long Lake Village project.

The rationale for this request is very simple :

We want to build less expensive, smaller housing units to provide a more affordable housing option to the marketplace.

There is a huge need in the market for more affordable housing stock, as Halifax Planning and Council knows well. The typical “suburban Halifax” [e.g. Larry Uteck Boulevard, Bedford South and Bedford West] multi-unit residential building is being designed and constructed with massive suites that typically range from 1200 square feet to 2000+ square feet. Our emphasis is on building smaller, more affordable suites for the market – both “condo for sale” and “apartment for rent” housing suites. There is a vast supply of larger family style suites available in the market place that offer larger, multi-bedroom options for households. Smaller suites designed for singles and couples – whether young singles/couples, empty nesters, or widows or widowers – are in very short supply. We need the clarification that it is permissible to construct multiple buildings in the Long Lake Village project with 100% of the suites being these smaller suites, which are categorized as “bachelor apartments” under the Land Use Bylaw.

A request for a single type of land use is not unique in the Mainland South area, as seen in Policy 1.5.7, which dealt with the former BC Silver School site (on page 157). This policy provided that there would only be one land use and unit type, instead of the normally prescribed a mix of household types. Policy 1.5.3, provided flexibility to the Melville Ridge development (at page 153) – while allowing for both a higher percentage of land for “apartment uses” also removed the requirement for a variety of housing unit types and sizes. Refer to policies 1.5.3.1 through 1.5.3.5; for details on these flexibilities provided at the Melville Ridge development.

We look forward to working with Halifax Planning to move this exciting project forward in the very near future.

Please contact me if questions, or if I can assist in any other ways.

Regards,

Peter

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY PETER POLLEY



Peter Polley

Office : (902) 431-9917

Cell : (902) 431-9919

Fax : (902)431-9915

E-mail ppolley@polycorp.ca

web : www.polycorp.ca

Mailing Address : PO Box 31369, Halifax NS B3K 5Z1

Courier Address : 181 Herring Cove Road, Halifax NS B3P 1K9