

Survey Write-Up for Case 22267: Potential Rezoning on Dartmouth Road and Wardour Street

This survey was the first engagement activity for this project. In early October, HRM mailed 267 survey packages to residents near Dartmouth Road and Wardour Streets. The packages included a cover letter, fact sheet and the survey. The survey package and a map of the notification area are attached to this write up.

Over the following months, 110 surveys were returned, a response rate of 42%. This response rate is much higher than surveys for other projects.

This write-up is a high-level summary. It is an overview of common themes and attempts to capture the general tone of the surveys. It also provides a tally of specific concerns, such as traffic, community character, safety and privacy.

Survey Questions:

- 1) What concerns do you have about allowing apartment buildings and townhouses near Dartmouth Road?
- 2) What benefits do you think allowing apartment buildings and townhouses could bring to the area?
- 3) Please tell us what buildings might fit best in your neighbourhood?
- 4) Is there anything else we should know about your neighbourhood?
- 5) Would you be interested in attending a virtual (online or by phone) public meeting about this project?

Common Themes and Messages

This section attempts to describe and capture the broad, common themes which ran through many surveys. Staff attempted to paraphrase the voices of many respondents into a short summary. We included some short quotes (*in italics*) that we believe represent many respondents. We feel the quotes help show the tone and emotion present in the survey. The themes and quotes are pulled from across questions and from many surveys. We have used the term 'respondents', as the survey results come from those residents who answered the survey.

Most respondents strongly oppose new zoning, especially for apartment buildings

The overall response is strong opposition. Three quarters of respondents said there were no benefits to rezoning; the same proportion said single-unit homes were most appropriate (e.g. no zoning changes). 93% of residents had concerns with traffic.

"I strongly object to apartment building on Wardour Street and Stone Terrace ..."

"I am against this project ... "

Many respondents see this as being larger than just these sites on Dartmouth Road and Wardour Street. Many feel the character of old Bedford is at stake, especially the Fort Sackville neighbourhood. They fear that development will keep coming, pushing further into low density residential neighbourhoods. There

is a clear fear that apartment buildings could ruin Bedford's character. Many respondents fear that any rezoning will encourage or justify future rezonings.

"Ruin the community. This is a quiet, established residential area/community where everyone knows each other and respects each other. Bringing in this absurd amount of new residence will diminish the feeling of community that we who live in the Fort Sackville/Dartmouth road are so lucky to have."

"This is the thin edge of the wedge. If this rezoning happens the newly rezoned area would create precedent for other developers to create multi-unit on Dartmouth Road and South to Shore Drive."

"This would be the first nail in the coffin for the town of Bedford".

Many respondents feel threatened

The word invade was often used. People described the Fort Sackville neighbourhood as a charming, quiet enclave. Respondents felt this character was under threat. Respondents feel their privacy and their safety is threatened.

Many respondents feel that single-unit zoning is a long-term expectation

Many respondents moved to the area for the single-unit housing. Many respondents also felt that zoning represented the long-term goal for the area. There is a clear sense that zoning is an expectation for HRM to uphold.

"Single family homes. That is what we all bought into".

"... quiet residential neighbourhood with residents who purchased their houses for this purpose."

"Changes in land use planning are neither warranted nor requested."

"Families in this neighbourhood have purchased homes with the expectation that the zoning will remain single family units."

Most residents do not see benefits for them or for their neighbourhood

"None" was the most common response to 'what benefits do you think allowing apartment buildings and townhouses could bring to the area?' A small number of respondents mentioned that more housing availability would be a benefit, but many said this benefit would only happen with modest rental prices.

"None to me. The benefits would all be to new residents, not current ones."

"I can't see any benefits of any type of apartment building."

Some respondents felt planning projects were inappropriate, since people cannot meet in person

"I cannot understand how these big things could be decided when people can't even meet. I have been to meetings in Bedford in the past, though we relied on each other's company. Computer meetings and phone meetings would not have been enough."

“... given the current situation I find it ridiculous that HRM Council wouldn’t figure out a way to do something in person.”

“I would prefer the meeting be delayed until an in person meeting can take place.”

Specific Concerns and Responses

Traffic: According to the survey respondents, the largest concern with this proposal is overwhelmingly traffic. 93% of respondents mentioning traffic issues in their responses. Many respondents consider the traffic in the area to already be too heavy and fear that this development will exacerbate that problem. Traffic issues that were repeatedly mentioned were:

- Congestion at the intersection of Wardour Street and Dartmouth Rd making it difficult and dangerous, and time-consuming to make a left-hand turn during peak hours.
- Traffic-related safety concerns relating to the nearby elementary school.
- Drivers using Wardour, Perth and Camden Streets, plus Fort Sackville Road as a shortcut to avoid traffic on the Bedford Highway near Sunnyside Mall.
- Drivers using the Eaglewood subdivision as a shortcut to avoid the traffic at the Bedford Highway, creating higher traffic volume in this area.
- Lack of infrastructure to support higher volume of vehicles.

“It’s already very difficult to exit Left off North street and Wardour. I can’t imagine adding more congestion to an already very busy area.”

“Increased traffic will increase safety issues for the already significant number of joggers, children, residents walking dogs, etc.”

“The traffic on the Dartmouth Road and Bedford Highway is horrible with the situation we already have.”

“Yes, of course there will be more traffic on our already traffic-calmed streets.”

Neighbourhood Character: After traffic, the next most common concern was potential loss of neighbourhood character. 42% of respondents mentioned character. Common responses were:

- That the neighbourhood is quiet and has a small-community feeling.
- That the area is walkable.
- The area is historic and unique.
- That the homeowners currently living there purchased their homes to escape the bustle of Halifax.
- That the area is popular with retirees.
- 13% made reference to the neighborhood as a historic area that should be preserved.

“These projects do not belong here.”

“Large apartment buildings completely change the character of my neighborhood.”

“It was always designed as a single family dwelling area with 2 graveyards, 2 schools, library, Scott Manor House, etc.”

“Approving these buildings would be an eye sore for the area.”

“Our neighbourhood is one of the oldest and most historic areas of Bedford.”

Increasing Population: Related but distinct from traffic were other concerns regarding an increase in population and its impacts (garbage, noise, privacy, etc.). 27% of respondents voiced concerns about population that weren't relating to traffic. 26% of respondents included concerns about safety in their responses.

Other Concerns: Other concerns that were mentioned repeatedly were impacts on property values (27%), current lack of sidewalks (11%), and fear that this development will create a dangerous precedent (5%).

Potential Benefits: Regarding potential benefits the development may bring, the majority responded with “none” (76%). Benefits that were mentioned repeatedly were a positive impact on vacancy rates (8%), good for local businesses (5%), and that it would be an efficient use of land (2%). 4% of respondents said they could see benefits only if new development were single-family homes like the other buildings in the area. The overwhelming majority of respondents were opposed to the development, including those who mentioned any of the potential benefits above.

Preferred Development: When asked what new developments they would like to see in the area, the most common response was single-family homes (73%), followed by townhouses (20%), and duplexes (16%). Please note that respondents were free to write more than one kind of development, townhouses and duplexes often being mentioned together. 4% of respondents said they would welcome small or mid-rise apartments, and 2 respondents said they would like to see public use such as a school park, or library.

“The best fit is the existing: single family residential”.

“Same as current: single family housing.”

“Low density housing only.”

“Townhouses? Duplexes? There must be zoning somewhere between single unit – multis ...”

Meeting Interest: When asked if they would attend a live meeting on the subject, 75 responded “yes”, 9 responded “no”, and 26 gave no response.