

Community Engagement Summary

Case 22927: 2032-2050 Robie Street, Halifax

On December 7, 2020 HRM Staff formally invited the public to provide feedback on Case 22927. The application's webpage on halifax.ca was updated to include a presentation about the proposal and planning application process, as well as with information about how the public could submit feedback to the Planner assigned to the application. Letters were mailed to 305 property owners and tenants in the area surrounding the subject site. The letter provided the recipient an overview of the proposal, asked them to share their thoughts on the application, and directed them to where they could find more information and who to contact with feedback and/or questions. The formal public engagement period was open until January 12, 2021. Between December 7, 2020 and February 9, 2021, 147 emails and 8 phone calls were received. This summary provides a preliminary overview of what we heard. Because of the volume of feedback we received, we are still working on a more detailed analysis of the feedback, however this summary provides a synopsis of the themes and ideas heard to date.

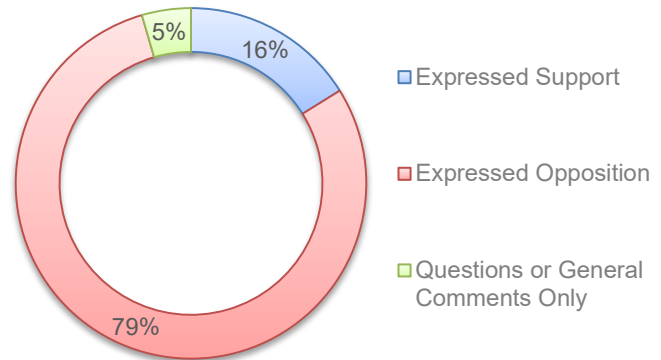
Overview of the Proposal

WSP Canada Inc., on behalf of the property owner, is requesting to enter into a development agreement for a 23-storey mixed-use development at 2032-2050 Robie Street, Halifax. The building will a maximum 85 metres tall and be designed as tower atop a two-storey podium. The tower will contain up to 102 residential units, of which there will be 58 one-bedroom units and 44 two-bedroom units. The ground floor fronting on Robie Street will be primarily commercial space. Residents will have access to interior and exterior amenity space, including a rooftop terrace on the third floor. Two levels of underground parking will accommodate approximately 84 vehicular parking spaces. Class A and Class B bicycle parking will also be provided.

What we heard

Of the 155 people we heard from, 123 expressed opposition to the proposal. Twenty-five (25) of the total number of respondents voiced their support for the proposal, and seven (7) either only asked questions or provided constructive feedback but did not out-right say whether they were explicitly for or against the proposal. See Figure 1. We have started sorting the comments and a summary of the themes we have seen emerging follows.

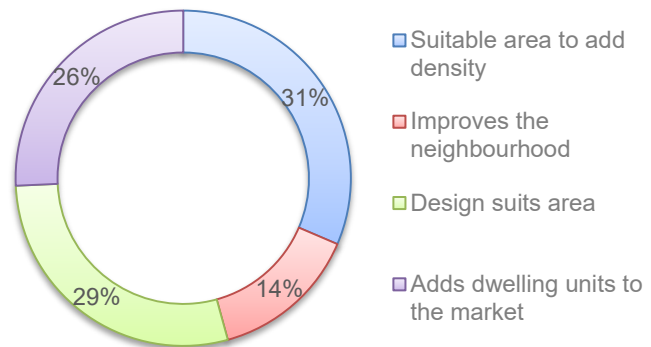
Figure 1: Type of Comments



What was liked?

Twenty-five (25) of the respondents were in full support of the proposal. Nineteen cited specific reasons for their support. The majority of the reasons could be categorized into four categories: (1) it is a suitable area to add density; (2) the development will improve the neighbourhood; (3) the design suits the area / is a good design; and (4) the development will add dwelling units to the market. The breakdown can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Positive Feedback Themes



What are the concerns?

We received 123 calls and emails from people who are opposed the proposal in its entirety or aspects of the proposal. Their concerns varied, and while many of them had the same concerns, there was a larger variety of concerns compared to what is liked about the development. The table below lists what people had concerns about or do not like about the proposal.

Table 1: List of Concerns / Dislikes about the Proposal

Shadows / block sunlight to Common and general area	Adversely affect the Common
Make the area windier	Does not fit in with the neighbourhood / will adversely affect the feel of the area / City
Too tall / big	Increase traffic / affect circulation
There are already too many high-rises	Overdeveloping area / adding too much density
Abuse of the planning process / does not align with regulations	Create parking problems
Does not provide affordable housing	Create noise
Uninspired design	Add to the pollution
Greenhouse gas emissions associated with demolition, construction, and operation	Will affect property values and housing affordability
Affect privacy of existing residents	Concentration of rental market to the exclusion of smaller developers
Mismatch between population density and provision of services (water, waste water, etc.)	No rear access / frontage only on one street
Tower needs to be setback further	

Of all the concerns identified, the items in **bold** were the concerns most commonly identified. Due to the volume of feedback received, a more detailed summary of the concerns will be provided at a later date.

SUGGESTIONS

Some respondents provided suggestions for how the proposed development could be improved. The most common request was for the building to be less tall (the suggested height ranged from 6 storeys to 20 storeys). It is important to note the policies for this site are written specifically for this site and are very prescriptive. Policy 10.29 of the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy defines such things as height, massing, and siting for the development. This means there are limited aspects of the design that can be changed. Some of the suggestions we received to date are listed below, however please note we are still reviewing the feedback, and this may not be an exhaustive list.

- Have at least one parking space per dwelling unit, i.e., 102 parking spaces for 102 units.
- Set the tower further back from the street line so it is not as visible to pedestrians walking by.

- Ensure the mechanical equipment – particularly that on the roof – doesn't create noise.
- Incorporate elements into the façade that give the building more architectural interest and consider how the building will complement the neighbouring buildings.
- Provide more vegetation.
- Consider adding bird habitat to the design to allow predator species to nest on appropriate roof sections to fight their habitat loss and contribute to natural pest control in the urban core.
- Include some 3-bedroom units to accommodate families with children.
- Consider how pedestrians can safely walk on the sidewalk where vehicles access the parking garage.
- Incorporate pedestrian scaled elements and vegetation along Robie Street that help make it a bright, safe, enjoyable, and green space to walk.
- Give attention to how the design contributes to the life of the street in this area. The area in front of the podium should have public amenities (e.g., seating). Consider using the forecourt for garden space, a cafe, outdoor display, etc.
- Consider making the rooftop terrace accessible from the street (e.g., via the southern staircase and/or an externally accessible elevator), with a restaurant and/or retail at the terrace level. Guests could look over the Commons while they visit.
- Consider moving the storage room for Class A bicycle parking to the front of the building for easier access and less conflict for users of the elevators.
- Provide a space between the building and Robie Street for grass, trees, and benches;
- Provide each unit with a balcony so residents have an attractive place to live and access to fresh air.
- The building should include solar power collectors to power some of its electrical needs.
- Including a charging station for electric vehicles in the parking area.

Summary

Between December 2020 and January 2021, we invited the public to provide feedback on a proposal for a 23-storey mixed-use development at 2032-2050 Robie Street, Halifax. We are still working on a detailed review of the feedback we received, but we can provide some insight into what we have heard. We heard from 155 people, and the majority voiced reached out to voice their opposition for the proposal. Many who oppose the proposal cited concerns about how it would affect the neighbourhood and Common, including the shadow it would cast and the wind tunnel it would create. The positive feedback we received – which was from about 16

percent of the respondents – can generally be categorized into four themes: the development suits the area, the area is a good place for density, it will improve the neighbourhood, and it will provide needed housing. We received some feedback about things people would like to see changed, including more consideration about the design of the building along Robie Street.