



910 BEDFORD HIGHWAY

Planning Application for a Mixed-use
Building by Development Agreement

at

910 Bedford Highway
Bedford, Nova Scotia

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April 12, 2016

United Gulf
Developments Limited

**910 Bedford Highway
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1. Introduction

On behalf of our client, United Gulf Developments Limited, I am pleased to submit an application for a development agreement at 910 Bedford Highway (PID 0042877) to allow the construction of a mixed use building.

In 2006 the North West Community Council approved a development agreement for 910 Bedford Highway. The approved design reflected the natural topography of the site with a unique, terraced architecture and garden decks overlooking the Bedford Basin.

While United Gulf is proud of the approved design, they recognize that prominent locations, such as 910 Bedford Highway, deserve buildings with the highest standard of contemporary design. United Gulf believes this updated proposal, designed by award-winning architect Susan Fitzgerald of Fowler Bauld & Mitchell, builds on the core elements of the approved design and integrates exquisitely into the surrounding context. United Gulf believes this proposal will make 910 Bedford Highway an economically-viable development while helping contribute to a vibrant, attractive, safe, and walkable area of Bedford.

In support of our application I enclose the following information:

- Outline of planning rationale (1)
- TIS (4)

The following information was previously submitted to Shayne Vipond in July of 2015:

- Detailed site plan (10)
- Survey plan (1)
- Servicing schematic (6)
- Building drawings (4)
- Legal description (1)
- DVD containing digital versions of the above (1)

We are excited to work with North West Community Council, the community, and staff on this important development proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ian Watson, Planner

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2. Background

2.1 Location

The subject site is located at 910 Bedford Highway in Bedford, Nova Scotia. The aerial image below shows the site in relation to its surroundings. The red border shows the approximate location of the property lines for the subject site.



2.2 Site Characteristics

The subject site is 43,953 square feet (~1 acre) in area. The site has 167.39 feet of frontage along the Bedford Highway. Like much of the land along the Bedford Highway, the subject site contains varied and sloping topography. Elevations above sea level range from approximately 16 feet in the north corner of the site, rising up to 60 feet at the south corner.

At the time of the above aerial photo the site was home to two small buildings, which at one time held a spa. However, the buildings have since been removed and the site is currently vacant.

2.3 Surrounding Uses

The subject site is directly across the street from Moirs Pond. To the southeast is a municipal open space dedication. Beyond that is the Bedford Presbyterian Church and the Peruz Court townhouse development. To the southwest are a single-detached dwelling and a townhouse condominium. To the northwest—across Moirs Mill Road—is the Moirs Ltd. Powerhouse and its associated park.

The immediate area provides a well-connected pedestrian network. A complete sidewalk system provides short walking distances (less than five minutes) to a major grocery store, multiple coffee shops and restaurants, and other commercial amenities. The subject site is also a 15 minute walk away from DeWolf Park and the major recreational amenity provided by the Bedford waterfront boardwalk.

Two bus routes—the 80 and the 82—stop immediately in front of the subject site.

3. Development Proposal

United Gulf Developments Limited proposes to build 910 Bedford Highway into a high-quality, mixed use development.

The “Building Drawings” included as part of this application package illustrate one possible layout of the internal floor area. It consists of approximately 18,000 square feet of public commercial space, communal amenities, internal commercial space, eight bachelor units, two 1-bedroom units, and fifty 1-bedroom + den units. While this mix is subject to change with market demand as the construction date draws nearer, the number of bedrooms will not exceed 60. Commercial uses will be suited to a neighbourhood context, such as professional offices, small retail, banks, and restaurants.



The overall footprint of the proposed development is very similar to the footprint of the currently approved design. However, the currently approved design treats different wings of the building as if they were distinctly separate buildings. For example, the rear portion of the building is serviced by a separate elevator than the front portion and requires users to either drive into the parking garage or walk around to the rear of the building to gain access. With today’s increased focus on pedestrian accessibility this approach is no longer considered good practice. The proposed design solves this challenge by modestly increasing the height and reconfiguring building volumes to stitch the site into one cohesive whole.



Parking appropriate to the site’s outer urban location and easy access to public transit is supplied through 94 automobile parking spaces, the large majority of them being located underground.

Please refer to the “Building Drawings” and “Site Plan” included in the application package for more details on the proposal and larger renderings.

4. Planning Rationale

The Bedford Municipal Planning Strategy contains policy that enables Council to consider a mixed commercial/residential development on the subject site by development agreement. Specifically, Policy C-4(a) reads:

“It shall be the intention of Council to enable mixed use commercial/residential development at the south corner of the Bedford Highway and Moirs Mill Road as a means of promoting more intense development on what currently are underutilized lands with a municipal services in close proximity to commercial nodes and future transit oriented. Within the Commercial Designation, a mixed use development shall only be considered by a development agreement in accordance to the provision of the Municipal Government Act. [...]”

Policy C-4(a) then goes on to list the criteria for Council to consider as it evaluates any proposal. We have listed these criteria in a table below, along with commentary on how we believe our proposal meets these criteria.

Criteria	Commentary
<p><i>a) commercial shall be integrated into a building provided the commercial be located on the first floor fronting the Bedford Highway as a minimum provided commercial and residential uses smoothly co-exist within architecturally attractive buildings accessible by automobiles and pedestrians. The commercial uses be limited to those sympathetic to mixed use development;</i></p>	<p>Commercial uses are integrated into the building on the first floor fronting the Bedford Highway.</p> <p>The commercial space fronting the Bedford Highway is visually distinguished from the residential portion of the building by increased floor-to-floor heights and additional glazing aimed at providing a pleasing pedestrian experience.</p> <p>Commercial uses are limited to those sympathetic to mixed use development, such as restaurants, business and professional offices, food stores, and smaller-scale retail.</p>
<p><i>b) the residential density shall not exceed 30 units per acre (based on a two-bedroom equivalent per unit);</i></p>	<p>The site is just over one acre in size. The residential density will be limited to 30, two-bedroom equivalents (<i>i.e.</i> 60 bedrooms).</p>

**910 Bedford Highway
Development Agreement Application**

Criteria	Commentary
<p>c) <i>all principal structures are designed to be seen from three vantage points: from the Bedford Highway motorist's point of view, from the pedestrians up-close viewpoint, and in relationship with adjacent and nearby buildings.</i></p>	<p>All sides of the building are designed with high-quality materials and given equal attention to detail; no building elevation is treated as “lesser” or “unimportant”.</p> <p>The building elevation along the Bedford Highway connects with passing motorists through large-scale blocks of contrasting materials that provide visual interest when travelling at speed.</p> <p>Drivers and pedestrians who approach the building are rewarded with a finer and more intimate level of visual interest through textured wall coverings and wide areas of glazing, which provide transparency and dissolve the line boundary between outside and in.</p> <p>The building height steps down towards Moirs Mill Road so as to not overshadow the Moirs Ltd. Power House—a provincially recognized heritage building—or its associated park.</p> <p>The south-west side of the building is adjacent to lower-density residential buildings. As such, much of the building is pulled away from the south-west property line. This results in the narrowest profile of the building when viewed from this angle. The portion of the building remaining closer to the south-west property line contains a reduced proportion of glazing to enhance privacy for adjacent residential uses.</p>

**910 Bedford Highway
Development Agreement Application**

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<p><i>d) controls are set on the bulk, scale, and massing of any proposed development to ensure it does not significantly alter the character of this area and ensure such development contribute to a vibrant, attractive, safe, walkable area of Bedford.;</i></p>	<p>The Development Agreement will control the bulk, scale, and massing of the proposed building by requiring development to be in keeping with the building drawings.</p> <p>The proposed building height ranges from four storeys to nine storeys. This is consistent with the range of heights seen in other buildings along the Bedford waterfront, such as 210 Waterfront Drive (four storeys) and Convoy Quay Gardens (nine storeys).</p> <p>The appearance of a “bulky” building is avoided through the elegant use of step-downs in building height. The design further contributes to a comfortable street presence by breaking the building into separate volumes surrounding a central courtyard; this ensures the building provides varied visual scenes when viewed from different angles, and does not overwhelm the street with a single imposing volume.</p> <p>Mixed use developments—by their very nature—contribute to vibrancy and walkability by bringing compatible commercial uses close to the people who use them.</p>
<p><i>e) adequate buffers and screening should be provided for any proposed building or parking area from adjacent single unit dwellings, and attractive fencing and landscaping to enhance privacy should be provided where appropriate;</i></p>	<p>Parking is located underground and in front of the building, away from areas adjacent to single unit dwellings.</p> <p>The proposed building is set back a minimum of 35 feet from the property line shared with the only adjacent single unit dwelling. With the position of that dwelling on its lot this equates to a minimum 50 foot buffer between the two buildings.</p> <p>As per the existing landscaping plan, attractive vegetative screening will be provided to enhance privacy where appropriate and necessary.</p>

**910 Bedford Highway
Development Agreement Application**

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<p><i>f) landscaping complements the proposed buildings, reinforces circulation paths, highlights entrances, provides shade, adds seasonal interest, and outlines a maintenance plan. Landscaping shall be designed for appreciation by pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. Adequate landscaping and/or streets trees should be provided around the perimeter and throughout the site of the development to enhance the aesthetics of the site;</i></p>	<p>Landscaping design will be finalized prior to construction permitting and will be in accordance with the principles outlined in this criterion.</p>
<p><i>g) areas should be characterized by open space, green space, pedestrian connections and sidewalks that create a pedestrian-friendly area adequate recreation;</i></p>	<p>The proposal includes roof gardens and a central courtyard that provide programmed open space for outdoor passive recreation and social gatherings.</p> <p>The subject site is well connected to an extensive network of public recreation amenities in the area, such as the Bedford waterfront boardwalk and the Moirs Mill park.</p> <p>Much of the subject site remains open space, with a lot coverage of only approximately 35 percent.</p>
<p><i>h) parking areas should be located so as to not dominate the site. The visual appearance of parking areas should be minimized through use of landscaping treatments, rear yards or enclosed parking, reduced parking standards or other appropriate means;</i></p>	<p>Parking’s impact on the site is minimized by placing approximately 90 percent of parking underground, by aligning the number of parking spots with the <i>Regional Parking Strategy Functional Plan</i> (see “Parking Analysis”, on page 10), and by utilizing landscaping treatments to visually enhance the 10 percent of spaces that remain surface parking.</p>
<p><i>i) traffic circulation and access to and from the site should be designed to minimize adverse impacts on the adjacent residential uses, local road and the Bedford Highway;</i></p>	<p>Traffic access is directly to the Bedford Highway—a major artery—so that it does not impact adjacent residential uses or local roads.</p> <p>As outlined in the included TIS, “site generated trips are not expected to have a significant impact to levels of performance on adjacent streets and intersections or to the regional road network.”</p>

**910 Bedford Highway
Development Agreement Application**

Criteria	Commentary
<p><i>j) adequate provisions should be made for safe and convenient pedestrian circulation on the site and to nearby amenities;</i></p>	<p>The site contains an internal courtyard and connecting pathways to provide convenient and attractive pedestrian circulation between different wings of the building.</p> <p>The building is located adjacent to the public sidewalk network which provides easy access to the numerous amenities (<i>e.g.</i> parks, boardwalk, and groceries) in the area.</p>
<p><i>k) lighting shall be designed to provide security, safety, and visual appeal for both pedestrians and vehicles while ensuring minimal impact on adjacent residential properties.</i></p>	<p>Lighting design will be finalized prior to construction permitting and will be in accordance with the principle of providing security, safety, and visual appeal while minimizing impact on adjacent properties.</p>
<p><i>l) measures should be proposed to mitigate impact on adjacent properties;</i></p>	<p>The Public Information Meeting minutes from the original development agreement process indicate neighbourhood concern about impacts from cars accessing the site from Moirs Mill Road, such as noise and headlights from that traffic traveling through a right-of-way adjacent to homes. As a result, the access was moved to Bedford Highway. This access has been maintained in the current proposal, and the situation has been further improved in this iteration by moving the residential parking garage door access farther to the north, <i>i.e.</i> farther away from adjacent residential uses.</p> <p>As indicated in criterion (a), commercial uses are restricted to those that are complementary to residential uses.</p> <p>As indicated in criteria (c), (e), and (m), the setbacks and design of the building (<i>e.g.</i> stepping down of the building) are intended to reduce impacts on adjacent properties.</p>

910 Bedford Highway
 Development Agreement Application

Criteria	Commentary
<p><i>m) significant natural and cultural features on the site should be identified and protected where appropriate;</i></p>	<p>The site is adjacent to the Moirs Ltd. Power House—a provincially recognized heritage building—and its associated park. The building steps down in the direction of this significant cultural and natural feature to avoid overshadowing it.</p> <p>The site features varied natural topography, with a large increase in elevation to the south-east. The proposed building works with the elevation change by “walking up the hill” rather than requiring the removal of this significant natural feature.</p>
<p><i>n) the provisions of Policy Z-3 be met.</i></p>	<p>Policy Z-3 outlines general criteria for the evaluation of all development agreements. Some of these criteria are a repeat of above (<i>e.g.</i> evaluation of bulk and scale or traffic impacts), others require staff contact with other departments/public bodies (<i>e.g.</i> adequacy of school facilities in the area), while others are not relevant to this site (<i>e.g.</i> impact on public access to water bodies).</p>

5. Parking Analysis

The proposal includes 84 indoor parking spaces and 10 outdoor parking spaces for a total of 94 automobile parking spaces. This falls within the range suggested by the *Regional Parking Strategy Functional Plan* of 70 to 101, calculated as follows:

Use	Area / Number of Units	Parking Range Suggested for Outer Urban Areas	Total
1 bedroom residential	60	0.6 to 0.9 per unit	36 to 54
Retail	~400 m ²	2.5 to 3.5 per 100 m ²	10 to 14
Office	~1,300 m ²	1.8 to 2.5 per 100 m ²	24 to 33
		Total	70 to 101

If some of the 60 permitted bedrooms are dedicated to 2-bedroom units (0.9 to 1.2 spaces per unit) then the overall recommended number of parking spaces would be even lower. The subject site is also immediately adjacent to a Halifax Transit bus stop serving two routes, which provide better than 15 minute peak service. The office parking has been reduced 10 percent as suggested by the *Regional Parking Strategy Functional Plan* due to high-frequency transit access. The site will also be well-situated to utilize future commuter rail transit.