

151-01163

AGRICOLA 2710 – PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

BYLAW AMENDMENT & DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT APPLICATION



APRIL 2016

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April 13, 2016

Mr. Mitch Dickey MCIP LPP
Major Projects Planner
Development Approvals
PO BOX 1749
Halifax NS B3J 3A5

Subject: Planning Application – Bylaw Amendment & Development Agreement, Proposed Mixed Use Development (Residential/Commercial) – 2710 Agricola Street, Halifax, (PIDs 00161497, 40346314, 40346322, 40346330, 40346348, 40346355, and 40346363)

Dear Mr. Dickey,

On behalf of our client, Persimmon Properties, WSP is pleased to make an application for a map amendment to the Halifax Peninsula Land Use Bylaw to enable a development agreement of a new multiple-unit residential building. The project is located at 2710 Agricola Street, Halifax, NS (PID 00161497, 40346314, 40346322, 40346330, 40346348, 40346355, 40346363).

It is our understanding that the proposed development project requires an amendment to Map ZM-2 of the Halifax Peninsula Land Use Bylaw to apply a Schedule Q to the subject lands. Schedule Q allows Council to consider areas that would benefit from comprehensive site planning through a development agreement process. WSP is seeking to undertake the required bylaw amendment and development agreement processes concurrently.

To assist with the application, the following supporting materials are enclosed:

- Completed Planning Application Form
- \$2,600 Application Fee
- Site Plan
- Building Drawings including Building Elevations and Floor Plans
- Servicing Schematic/Municipal Services Analysis
- Traffic Impact Statement

A summary of the proposed development, site characteristics, and LUB and MPS requirements are provided below for your reference.

We look forward to your comments and moving ahead through the public planning process on this application.

Yours truly,

WSP Canada Inc.

Original Signed

Kourosh Rad, MCIP, LPP
Urban Planner

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APPENDICES

A	Site Plan
B	Building Drawings
C	Preliminary Servicing Schematic
D	Traffic Impact Statement
E	Legal Property Descriptions

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The proposed development is a multi-unit mixed use building that respects the changing nature of the community. In recent years, residential/commercial projects have been proposed to redevelop some of the area's major commercial properties. To help understand this ongoing transition, and to collect public feedback at early stages of the design process, we held a Developer's Open House on June 09, 2015. Preliminary drawings of the building were presented at this meeting for public feedback. We invited local residents and businesses to participate in a discussion focused on understanding the community. Their comments were a valuable factor in designing the building. Key findings included:

- Reflect the character of the neighbourhood in the building's design
- Pursue the "Passive House" concept for the project
- Improve the sidewalks with trees and additional planting areas
- Build residential units that offer an opportunity for additional children to live in the area and support the local schools
- Build residential units that offer opportunities for retirees and seniors
- Considering affordability in the project
- Concerns with regards to the building height and its sensitivity to the neighbourhood character
- Concerns with flow of traffic and availability of parking

In response to our dialogue with community members, we developed the following goals for the building:

- Generate a distinctive design that incorporates aspects of the residential character of the neighbourhood.
- Enhance the streetscape with trees, vegetation and a design element that alludes to the corner commercials
- Be sensitive in designing the building massing and concentrate architectural detail on the lower levels.
- Design for all, including families and seniors
- Be sensitive to environmental sustainability standards
- Provide high quality urban living with generous and well-designed open spaces

We are pleased to introduce 2710 Agricola, a well-designed and unique environmentally sensitive building that meets the project goals. This was possible through the property owners' enthusiasm for a high quality development and the participation from the residents.

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PASSIVE HOUSE CONCEPT

One of the major goals of this project is to create a Passive House building. According to Canadian Passive House Institute (CanPHI), Passive House is an “approach to building design and construction that allows for energy savings of 80 – 90%, compared to conventional Canadian construction. This revolutionary energy performance demands a rigorous and scientific approach to design and construction and results in a highly efficient and sustainable development.” (CanPHI),

The proposed development is intended for a Passive House concept that will have the following benefits over regular National Building Code construction:

- Better indoor air quality
- Increased thermal comfort
- Superior sound insulation
- Energy efficiency up to 80-90% better than standard construction
- More durable
- Minimal mechanical maintenance
- Resilient
- Sustainable
- Versatile (location and building type)

This will be one of the first mixed use developments in the country that are designed with Passive House standards. This is particularly appropriate for the Agricola neighbourhood given the environmental awareness in the community and the adjacency of the project to Ecology Action Centre.

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SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Location

The site is at the intersection of Agricola and May Street with frontage along Fern Lane. The surrounding properties are a mixture of predominately commercial, residential and mixed-use land uses.

Physical Characteristics

The property is approximately 17,481 square feet in size (subject to survey), with approximately 150 feet of frontage on Agricola Street, 100 feet of frontage on May Street, and 35 feet on Fern Lane. The lot was formally used as a car rental location that was recently repurposed for use by two tenants: a not for profit group, and a specialty lounge. There is also an office currently rented by U-Haul.

Property Access

Existing access to the site is from Agricola Street and May Street.

Existing Land Uses

The subject site currently consists of a single building with a thrift shop commercial use. The site was previously used for a car rental facility.

Existing Planning Designations & Zoning

The subject properties are designated Regional Centre (Urban Core) under the HRM Regional Plan, and Major Commercial under the Peninsula North Planning Area (Area 5) of the Halifax Peninsula Planning Strategy. High density residential and commercial uses are permitted and encouraged in the Major Commercial designation as-of-right under the current General Business (C-2) Zone. In order for Council to consider promoting investment in commercial and residential redevelopment at greater densities, these properties require a Schedule Q designation which enables a development agreement.

Subject Properties

The following subject properties will be consolidated once the development agreement is granted.

PID	Area (sf)
00161497	2500
40346314	2500
40346322	2500
40346330	2500
40346348	2500
40346355	2500

The following subject property on Fern street will remain a separate parcel.

PID	Area (sf)
40346363	2300

Please see Appendix E for the all legal property descriptions

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DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

We understand that the Schedule Q was established to address challenges with introducing new residential uses into existing commercial and industrial areas on a site by site basis. The existing area around Agricola and May did not generate the commercial-type development at the level the planning strategy had originally envisioned. The surrounding land uses are mostly residential and, in our opinion, the proposed development will create an appealing and desirable living environment for future residents with proximity to commercial uses/amenities.

The proposed development consists of two separate buildings that combine to have a total of 68 residential units. The proposed building at the corner of Agricola Street and May Street reaches a height of seven storeys (77') and consists of 65 residential units and approximately 7,895 sq. ft. of commercial space. The second proposed building that fronts on Fern Lane reaches height of three storeys (33') and consists of three residential units. The existing buildings and structures on the site are to be demolished and replaced with the proposed development.

The breakdown of the proposed development is as follows:

Unit Composition

	Unit Count	Average Unit Size (ft ² approximate)
One bedroom	42	626
Two & Three Bedroom	26	800
Total Residential	68	695
Total Commercial		7,895

Parking

The proposed building has a total of 26 underground parking spaces.

Bicycle Parking

Provision for Class A bicycle parking spaces is provided in the proposed development. There are also facilities for bicycle repair and storage in the underground parking.

Amenity Space

Amenity space is provided with balconies, terraces, and a rooftop patio.

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POLICY

In order to address Policies 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 of the MPS, we note the following:

2.3.1 *In order to promote investment in commercial and residential redevelopment and to prevent conflict between new and existing uses the city may, through the land use by-law, identify areas that provide an opportunity for and will benefit from comprehensive site planning.*

This property consists of several PIDs that are all part of 1 property with an old one storey building previously used for a car rental business. This property is one of the few large parcels of land available for redevelopment along Agricola Street that does not require tear down of multiple existing houses or buildings with character. Further, the current rental market in the area demonstrates a shortage of options in the neighbourhood. This lot offers an opportunity to provide housing and commercial options without disturbing the stable residential areas. This is achieved through providing a mid-rise mixed-use building. The goal of the project is to provide a development that respects the fabric of the community while making this area more residential in nature with services being oriented to Agricola. This site is a great opportunity for comprehensive site planning.

2.3.2 *In those areas identified in the land use by-law pursuant to Policy 2.3.1 all residential and mixed residential-commercial development over four units shall be by agreement.*

The proposed development will provide via Schedule Q and a development agreement and is consistent with this policy.

2.3.3 *In considering agreements pursuant to Policy 2.3.2, Council shall consider the following:*

(i) the relationship of new development to adjacent properties and uses; and, the mitigation of impacts on the amenity, convenience and development potential of adjacent properties through effective urban design and landscape treatment;

In addition to the lower level and streetscape design considerations outlined under Policy 2.3.2 section (iv), the following setbacks and stepbacks make the design sensitive to adjacent properties:

- A setback of 2 feet along Agricola Street will provide a wider sidewalk and better pedestrian experience
- Large setbacks from adjacent property lines are provided to mitigate the use on the property
- Stepbacks of 18 ft and 5 ft at the fourth floor also assists in mitigating potential wind impacts.
- A second stepback at the seventh floor to reduces the visual impact of this floor.
- Use of colours that are represented in the community
- Commercial uses along the ground floor

- Providing residential access through Agricola Street while parking access is from May Street

(ii) the appropriate integration of the development into the traditional grid street system of the Peninsula.

The proposed development respects the existing grid system of the Peninsula.

(iii) the design and layout of the development should encourage vehicular traffic to use Principal Streets and discourage traffic from infiltrating through existing neighbourhoods;

The attached Traffic Impact Statement highlights that the low numbers of additional vehicle trips generated by the project are not expected to have any significant impact to adjacent streets of the regional street network. The Statement considers the trips being generated by the existing land uses, including employee arrival/departures.

As noted above, all new parking will be internal to the building. We also recognize the high level of transit, cycling and walkability in the area and anticipate some residents will prefer the convenience of other modes over owning a vehicle.

(iv) the creation of high quality design detail at street level through attention to such matters as landscaping, signs, building entrances, and vehicle layby areas;

As both the building elevations and site plan indicates, strong architectural detailing on the first two storeys, combined with new landscaping, will significantly improve the existing streetscape and public realm. Proposed details include:

- Contemporary glazing on the first floor that highlights the commercial uses and creates an inviting street interface
- A setback of two (2) feet along Agricola enables planters in front of the commercial spaces
- A deep corner building entrance that visually diminishes the impact of the building at the corner and improves the streetscape. This design aspect also brings appropriate emphasis to the main entrance
- A corner commercial space with a large patio space improves the pedestrian experience

This proposed detailed residential and commercial frontage should increase the visual interest on the street and bring more “eyes on the street” during all hours of the day. Signage will be sensitively handled and respect the detailing shown in the elevations. The parking entrance will consider visibility and encourage safety for users and pedestrians.

(v) the provision of high quality open space and leisure areas of a size and type adequate for the resident population;

The proposed development will provide additional landscaped spaces on Agricola with the corner entrance and a two (2) foot setback with planters. In addition, a backyard space of 1350 SF, 450 SF of common space on the top floor, and approximately 1,500 SF of rooftop patio will be available to all residents of the building. This will be comprised of an internal amenity space for use by residents and an outdoor terrace with seating and a play area for children.

Also, 29 of the 68 units will have a balcony suitable for chairs and outdoor enjoyment. All other units will have French style balconies. Units on the fourth and seventh floors will enjoy larger outdoor terraces. In addition, there are many local parks spaces available to residents such as Fort Needham Park, children's playground at the corner of Ontario and Fuller Terrace, Africville Park, Halifax Commons and nearby pocket parks on Bilby Street and Fowler Road.

(vi) residential and commercial densities consistent with municipal services;

Based on our experience with other projects in the area, WSP undertook a Downstream Sanitary Capacity Analysis of the proposed development. Based on the enclosed analysis and servicing schematic, we understand that the existing trunk wastewater sewer downstream of the proposed development has sufficient capacity. Please refer to the enclosed servicing schematic.

(vii) encouraging high quality exterior construction materials such as masonry;

Although the final materials by Architecture49 and our client have not yet been chosen, the façade detailing is proposed to be constructed of high quality glazing on the main floor. The upper floors will also incorporate components of quality glazing with fibre cement material with multiple textures and patterns.

(viii) other relevant land use considerations which are based on the policy guidance of this Section.

Our proposal is sensitive to the transformation taking place in the North End. The community surrounding the proposed development is unique and we intend to offer a residential building that can become part of this dynamic and vibrant area. Technically, our Traffic Impact Statement and Municipal Servicing Analysis consider other proposed projects for the area.

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CONCLUSION

We are excited to introduce the Agricola 2710 development proposal that incorporates a high quality of environmental urban design, and architectural standards. These standards are based on and will build upon the existing strong neighbourhood character of the Agricola area.

This development is aiming to achieve Passive House certification, which is one of the most advanced environmentally sensitive building design practices in the world. The building's shape, orientation, and materials have been carefully considered to fully benefit from the existing conditions of the site. The energy efficiency of this building is expected to be far superior to typical buildings of the same size and scale.

While Passive House standards are of great importance, the quality of architecture was equally important to the Design Team. The Team spent time to understand the architectural context of the neighbourhood and focused on identifying qualities that make Agricola a special place in Halifax. The building design is therefore influenced by colours, textures, and architecture styles already present in the neighbourhood.

Agricola is a great street that demonstrates high quality urban design practices such as appropriate human scale, pedestrian experience, and coexistence of vehicles and bicycles. It is important for this project to build upon these existing urban design characteristics. As such, the development offers setbacks along the sidewalk on Agricola Street to provide room for street furniture and a wider sidewalk. The building provides appropriate stepbacks at the fourth and seventh floors to actively address human scale. Furthermore, the building along Fern Lane elevates to only three floors to respect the neighbouring properties. A prominent commercial entrance with a patio is placed at the corner of May Street and Agricola Street. The residential entrance is also placed directly onto Agricola Street with underground parking access on May Street.

Recognizing the accessibility of pedestrian, cycling, transit and car sharing network in the neighbourhood, the project proposes a total of 26 underground parking stalls. The project is designed to attract people with less dependency on private vehicle. The building will also provide facilities for bike repair and wash as well as adequate storage areas. These features are consistent with the goal of creating an environmentally friendly building.

This project focuses on providing a living space that is accessible to different age and income levels and helps with the rental market needs in the neighbourhood. The project considers affordability through introduction of small units that are ideal for young professionals. At the same time, introduction of large three bedroom units allows families to live here. Empty nesters and seniors would also find comfort in the variety of unit sizes available. Additionally, quality private open spaces and shared amenity areas make this project a unique and attractive location to live. All in all, this project provides for a diverse group of residents that are a reflection of the existing demographics in the Agricola community.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to the community members for attending the Developer's Open House. The comments received during and after this meeting were important in better understanding the site context and to fine-tune the details that matter the most in a development project.

We look forward to Halifax's comments as we move ahead with the public planning process. Should you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours truly,

WSP Canada Inc.

Original Signed

Kourosh Rad, MCIP, LPP
Urban Planner, Sustainable Development Consultant