Re: Item 14.1.1

HALIFAX

PLANAPP-2025-02245

Community Services Use

First Reading

November 26, 2025

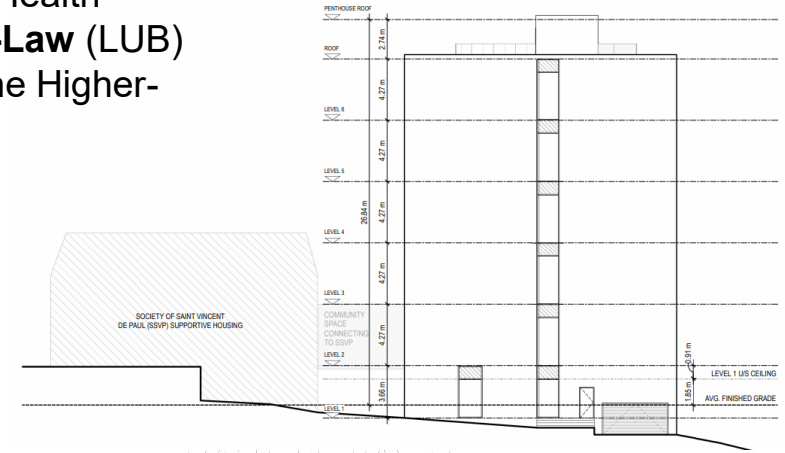
Regional Centre Community Council

Background

FBM Architecture Ltd, on behalf of the North End Community Health Centre (NECHC), has requested to **amend the Land Use By-Law** (LUB) to enable greater flexibility for Community Health Centres in the Higher-Order Residential (HR) zones by:

1. Creating a new community health centre use; and
2. Not applying parking requirements to this new use.

This request stems from regulatory challenges encountered by the NECHC during the permitting process for a six-storey addition to the St. Vincent De Paul supportive housing facility at 2445 Brunswick Street.



Attachment E: 2445 Brunswick St proposed building elevation - East

Background

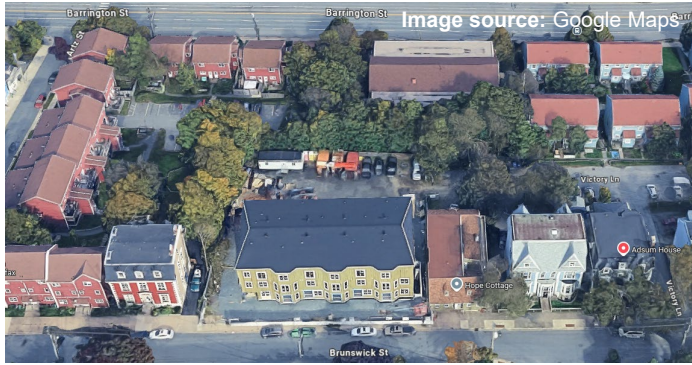
Current NECHC headquarters
Image source: Google Street View

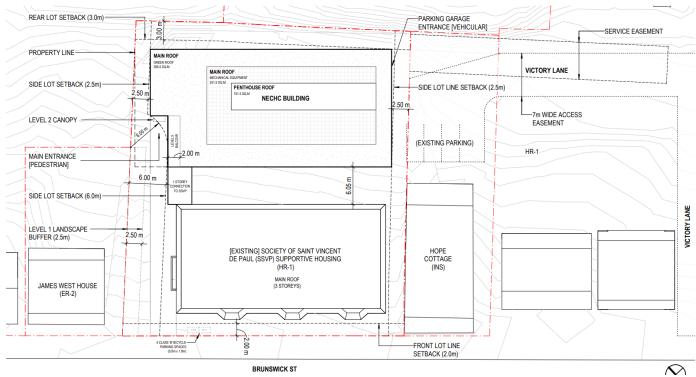
Community Health Centres (CHCs) are not-for-profit organizations that provide a broad range of on-site and outreach services, including primary health care, health promotion, community programming and social services

- Tend to focus on addressing social determinants of health to prevent illness and promote wellbeing
- Often community governed and address local needs, including support for marginalized and traditionally underserved populations

Site Context

Subject Site	2445 Brunswick Street
Location	Brunswick Street between Artz Street and Gerrish Street
Land Use By-Law Zone	HR-1
Land Use By-Law	Regional Centre
Regional Plan Designation	US
Current Use	Supportive housing
Proposed Use(s)	Supportive housing, medical clinic, community programming, social services, offices
Surrounding Uses(s)	• Saint Vincent De Paul supportive housing (same PID) • Hope Cottage (INS) • Multi-unit affordable dwellings (HR-1) • Adsum House (ER-2) • George Dixon Park (PCF) • Cemetery (PCF)
Additional Information	• Located in Brunswick Street proposed Heritage Conservation District (HCD) • Situated between Gottingen Street and Barrington Street transit corridors





Attachment E: 2445 Brunswick St proposed site plan

HALIFAX

Applicant Request

#1: Create a new community health centre use.

Applicant Rationale

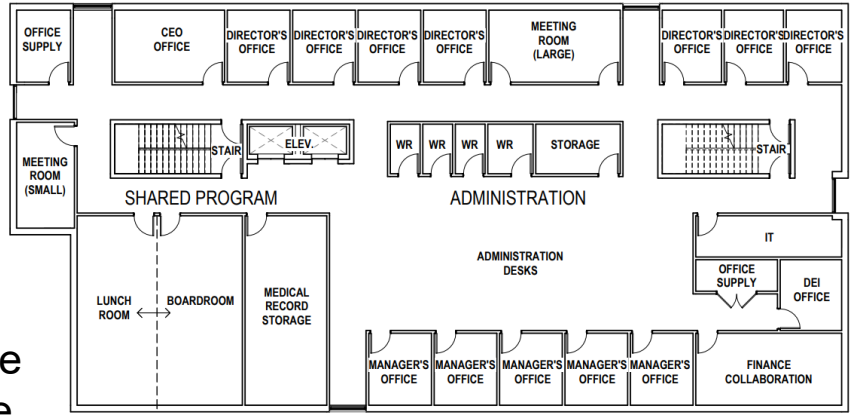
- CHCs are generally classified as a '**medical clinic use**' under the LUB, however, the definition does not include non-medical services
- There is currently no use in the LUB that addresses not-for-profit social services or community organizations like CHCs
- Relying on the medical clinic use may present unforeseen barriers to the comprehensive delivery of services by CHCs

Applicant Request

#1: Create a new community health centre use.

Proposal Context

- The NECHC proposes office space at 2445 Brunswick Street to support the operation of the organization and to co-locate with other service providers
- Offices are not permitted as a main use in the HR-1 zone, so the proposal cannot be readily approved as there is no use that these non-medical support services can be considered under



Attachment E: 2445 Brunswick St proposed floor plan – Level 4

Applicant Request

#2: Do not apply minimum parking requirements to the new use

Applicant Rationale

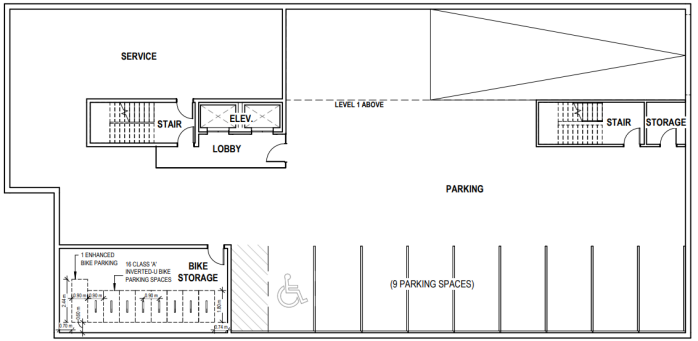
- The applicant notes that many CHC clients access services via active transportation or public transit, rather than personal vehicles
- Surface parking may be challenging to provide due to limited space on small infill lots
- Underground parking may be too costly for not-for-profits to develop

Applicant Request

#2: Do not apply minimum parking requirements to the new use

Proposal Context

- The medical clinic use requires 1 parking space per 300 sq. m of floor area
- The subject site requires 13 parking spaces (proposal reduces to 9 spaces with enhanced bike parking under sec. 433(3))
- Underground parking is proposed due to tight lot dimensions



Attachment E: 2445 Brunswick St proposed floor plan – Parking Level

Policy Direction

The **Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy** (SMPS) provides the following direction:

- **Section 1.4.2:** Promote pedestrian supportive, mixed-use developments that allow safe and convenient access to the services needed in daily lives that are located within walking distance
- **Policy ED-4:** Office uses to be concentrated in higher intensity commercial areas (Downtown, Centre and Corridor designations)
- **Section 2.10:** Improve access to small-scale institutions that support complete communities and facilitate the use of active transportation and public transit by employees and clients
- **Section 7.1:** Balance parking demand with the needs of other transportation modes by reducing minimum parking space requirements

Staff also considered the objectives of relevant priorities plans, including the **Integrated Mobility Plan**, **HalifACT**, **Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy** and the **Public Safety Strategy**, to inform this recommendation to Council.

Policy Direction

The **Higher-Order Residential Designation** is primarily intended to maintain the residential character of an area. **Policies HO-1** and **HO-2** enable compatible commercial and institutional uses to support complete communities.

- Permitted commercial uses restricted to max 25% floor area of mixed-use residential buildings
- HR-2 zone slightly more permissive; HR-1 allows fewer commercial and institutional uses
- HR-1 and HR-2 zones both permit several institutional uses with no max floor area restriction

Image source: Google Streetview

LUB Context

What types of uses are already permitted in the HR zones?

Image source: Google Streetview

Commercial uses: (25% floor area max)

- Local commercial*
- Makerspace, studios
- Personal services*
- Pet daycare, vet facility
- Restaurants*, catering

Additional HR-2 commercial uses:

- Grocery stores
- Financial institutions*
- Fitness centres
- Retail
- Local drinking establishments*
- Offices*
- Micro-breweries/distilleries
- Self-storage facilities

Institutional uses:

- Cultural use
- Daycares*
- Emergency services*
- Libraries*
- Medical clinics
- Religious institutions
- Schools
- Shelters*

Additional HR-2 institutional uses:

- University/college*
- Minor spectator venue

* No minimum parking spaces required for this use, as per Table 15.

Other Considerations

- Similar challenges for other not-for-profits proposing uses not neatly classified under an existing LUB category
- Lack of clear, inclusive definition creates administrative barriers, can slow down approval processes for not-for-profit projects beyond the HR zones
- Affordable/supportive housing operators may also encounter challenges related to on-site wraparound supports or office space to support operations

St. Vincent De Paul Supportive Housing
Image source: Google Streetview

Other Considerations

The following uses are frequently proposed in conjunction with other uses by not-for-profits providing community services:

Permitted broadly within mixed-use zones

Residential & Institutional uses

Diamond Bailey House

Shared housing and shelters

Commercial uses

Offices

Personal services

Permitted within mixed-use zones, but limited in HR and INS zones

Staff recommend these supporting uses be included in the new use definition to reduce the complexity of applications and provide greater certainty for not-for-profit organizations.

Community Services Use: Proposed Changes

1. **Add the following definition to the LUB:**

> **Community Services Use** means premises owned or operated by a not-for-profit organization where health care services, social services, and/or housing are provided and may include a shared housing use, shelter use or accessory uses related to the services provided, such as an office use or personal service use.

Community Services Use: Proposed Changes

2. **Permit the community services use in the following zones:**

   - Downtown Dartmouth (**DD**) zone
   - Downtown Halifax (**DH**) zone
   - Centre (**CEN-1**, **CEN-2**) zones
   - Corridor (**COR**) zone
   - Higher-Order Residential (**HR-1**, **HR-2**)* zones
   - Institutional (**INS**) zone**

* Accessory office and personal service uses limited to 25% of the total building floor area

** Enable through internal conversion on designated Landmark Building Sites, and otherwise permitted as-of-right

Community Services Use: Proposed Changes

3. **Add the community services use, and institutional uses generally, to:**
   - the list of permitted ground floor uses on Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets (section 38); and
   - the list of permitted ground floor uses in multi-unit dwellings in mixed-use zones (section 69).

4. **Staff recommend exempting the community services use from minimum parking requirements.**
   - Recognizes active transportation and transit opportunities
   - Allows organizations to determine parking needs based on the communities they serve

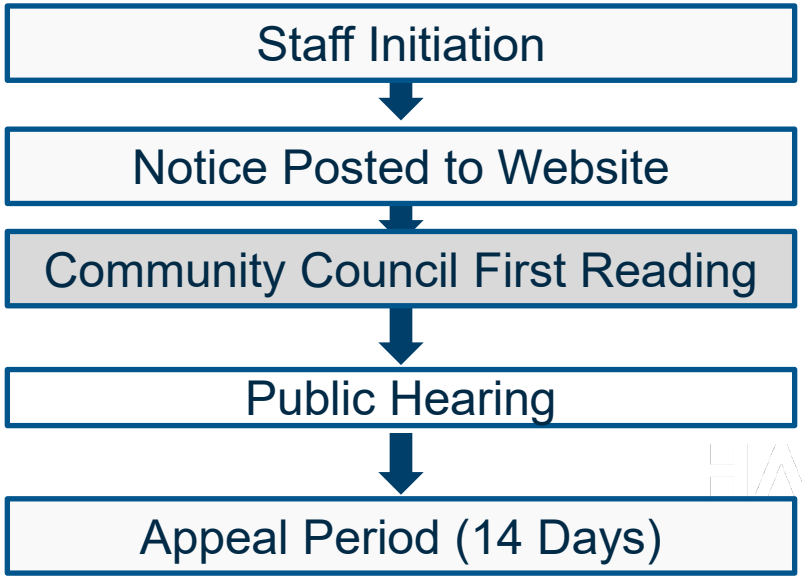
Staff Review

Staff have reviewed the proposed changes in relation to all relevant policy criteria and advise that the proposal is reasonably consistent with the intent of the SMPS.

The proposed changes support several policy objectives, including:

- Enhancing access to community-based resources that support resident well-being and safety;
- Reducing barriers to affordable housing with wrap-around services;
- Simplifying permit approval processes by streamlining regulation;
- Promoting pedestrian-oriented mixed-use communities; and
- Encouraging sustainable, active modes of transportation.

Next Steps


Staff Initiation
Notice Posted to Website
Community Council First Reading
Public Hearing
Appeal Period (14 Days)

Public Engagement

- Level of engagement completed was consultation, achieved through providing information and seeking comments through the HRM website
  - No comments were received via email or phone
  - Webpage views: 36 [average engagement time: 1.5 minutes]
- This process is consistent with a website requirement as described in Clause 6(a) of the Public Participation Administrative Order
- The HRM website will be updated to indicate notice of the public hearing should Council wish to further consider these amendments

Recommendation

It is recommended that Regional Centre Community Council:

Give First Reading to consider the proposed amendments to the Regional Centre Land Use By-law, as set out in Attachment A, and schedule a public hearing; and

Adopt the amendments to the Regional Centre Land Use By-law, as set out in Attachment A.

Thank You

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