

## **Downtown Dartmouth View Planes**

### **Proposed Amendments to the Regional MPS, Dartmouth MPS, and Downtown Dartmouth MPS and LUB**

#### **General Information**

- May 17, 2013 report to the Mayor and Members of Halifax Regional Council is before Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council on June 6, 2013.  
(<http://www.halifax.ca/Commcoun/east/documents/HEMDCCpro01367DDViewP130606good.pdf>)
- Staff recommendation is to amend the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy, and the Downtown Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law in order to revise protected view planes and waterfront view corridors.
- 5 new view planes are recommended for implementation. As well, public consultation to set height limits outside of the view planes is suggested, but no timeline is given.

#### **Background**

- View plane study completed in 2010 (CBCL) and presented to the public in July 2010. Revised view planes presented to public, showing potential impact of buildout of revised view planes shown, including 8-12 stories on Alderney North sites (HRM-owned lands), and 5-7 storeys near the CNN lands (see attachment).
- A public open house was held in April 2011 where 8 views were presented to the public. A series of display panels presented the 8 views and possible approaches to protecting views were presented.
- On July 7 2011, Staff recommended that Harbour East Community Council direct staff to conduct detailed modeling on Views B, C, D, and E from the Dartmouth Common (see attachment). The staff report states that the modeling exercise "will also evaluate the impact of such views on development within each view plane." Motion was passed.

#### **Issues**

- The May 17, 2013 report states that the modeling process was to establish "the detailed geometry for five new view planes from four viewing positions." Rather than identifying the preferred views, and presenting amendments to protect the views chosen by the public, the report seems to suggest that modeling was used to determine the views. This is concerning as the modeling completed by CBCL was almost exclusively for HRM-owned lands (see attachment). Even areas directly in the view planes – CN lands – aren't modeled in the report to Council, even though they directly impact the views as presented in the report. See attachment – a rough "filling-in" of the CN lands gives a better idea of the views with max buildout. This modeling ignores the critical foreground view and the impact on the overall view plane.
- Throughout the process, staff has advised Council that changes to the Brightwood view plane would result in increased development pressure in Downtown Dartmouth and if the amendments are approved, staff "intend to undertake a community engagement process in the short term as an interim measure of the overall Regional Centre Plan project." Unfortunately, there is no timeline or requirements attached to this process. What is the interim approach while we wait for an interim process? Meanwhile, the view planes are lifted from HRM-owned properties, while private landholders wait for more changes or the implementation of the overdue Centre Plan.
- The proposed amendments in their present form don't seem to offer any clarity to the view plane issue as intended; rather, they seem to present more ambiguity. Staff's future intention of holding public engagement sessions to set building heights will only continue the ongoing delays – as experienced with the Centre Plan – and leave developable lands – that can be used to meet the settlement objectives of the Regional Plan – in application limbo.
- The report presents HRM-owned lands as capable of accommodating significant density while, at the same time, cautioning Council about development pressures in Downtown Dartmouth. With numerous project proposals stuck in limbo for years over these drawn out amendments, RP+5 and Centre Plan process, HRM has modeled their lands in a manner that would make many of these private development projects difficult due to market absorption and servicing (road and sewer).
- These amendments as presented, provide more questions than answers and are likely to further delaying private development and investment in Downtown Dartmouth. By removing view planes and suggesting that additional height controls are required, but failing to bring them forward at the same time, will only bring more uncertainty to the development process.
- Not showing the max. buildout of the CN lands/foreground distorts the view that may exist in the long-term.