

Hospital space trumps green space in Common decision

Lindsay Jones, Metro Halifax

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Regional council approved giving up the rest of the Queen Elizabeth High School land to become part of a hospital expansion yesterday.

The city is exchanging the former Halifax Common land, as well as several other parcels, with the province to help pay for land at the corner of Queen Street and Spring Garden Road. That's the site where the city wants to build a new Central Library.

The Capital District Health Authority hasn't decided the size or type of healthcare building that will go where the decrepit school stands now at the corner of Bell Road and Robie Street. But Peter Bigelow, HRM's manager of Real Property Planning, said it will be set back from the street by a strip of green space and have pedestrian access.

Bigelow said the project necessitates widening Bell Road from three to four lanes.

"There is a need that emergency vehicles can actually get through, so that they're not held up by one lane of traffic," he said.

Bigelow said the widening will also ease the traffic flow of cars, buses and cyclists to the south-end.

Not everyone was for the plan. Friends of the Halifax Common community group wanted the land turned back into green space, according to the city's Halifax Common Plan.

The land exchange also includes turning a strip of the Victoria General parking lot on South Park Street back into green space. The site was also formerly Halifax Common land.

Lower Sackville Coun. Bob Harvey said he hoped the whole block would be made back into city park land.

"I want that sent as marching orders —School that (Capital Health has) to rework this thing," he said. "We want that whole green thing extended the whole width to South Street or I want to see a good reason why it can't be done."



Ryan Taplin/Metro Halifax

The Queen Elizabeth High School property is part of a land swap between the city and the province.