



"for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Halifax as Common forever" (1763-2013)

January 20, 2018

Quinpool Main Street Business District Association

This letter on behalf of the FHC executive is to express our dismay at the Association's support for the proposed APL project. As you would be aware from the first public meeting on this project, members of the public, largely residents of the neighbourhoods, were unanimously opposed to increased height at this corner. At that time, your Association's letter of support was the only one.

Last week I spoke to several Quinpool Road business owners who were concerned that APL's project would harm the street and who felt that in-fill or mid-rise developments would be a better way to add density to the area. They also mentioned concern about the effect the building would have on the Halifax Common, with increased wind, shadow and more traffic at an already congested intersection complicated by its proximity to Capital Health's emergency service.

One woman who worked at a locally owned business but did not live in the area said she felt strongly about protecting the Halifax Common even though she was from Bedford. Her statement "Its our city," seems to have been reflected by the hundred or more people that came to the public hearing to oppose this project. I wonder if these citizens feel your Association's voice is representing their interests? Or if they were consulted before you endorsed the project?

Perhaps you Association should consider the experience of several business owners such as the Wooden Monkey and Biscuit near the convention centre who joined to undertake a lawsuit because of the negative impact the construction had on that area. This seems a clear signal that tearing down buildings and living with construction at the Willow Tree won't be attracting many to your district in the near future. And be forewarned this will be just the start of the Centre Plan's density dump of 15-storey high-rises all the way to Monastery Lane. As with Spring Garden Road, once the dust settles it won't be local retail operators that form the majority of the businesses. Perhaps you could speak with the owner-operator of Project 9, Plovers or Attica to learn why they've left the downtown.

You may have heard from APL's paid lobbyists that there is a small vocal minority of people that oppose everything. This manner of polarizing the discourse is the well-rehearsed practise of a bully. Friends of Halifax Common are pro-development but we are interested in a vision that represents the common good and we advocate for a predictable process rather than something that pops up and demands too much.

We believe the sensible way forward would involve a planning process that creates guidelines and regulations to benefit the majority based on what exists and what is needed. Two such processes are being undertaken at this time- the Centre Plan and the Halifax Common Master Plan. There are two elements which working together will aid the development of business activity in the area. One is a proper level of increased residential density, the other is a streetscape that enhances pedestrian activity. Both are essential to the success of a commercial street.

The retail area of Spring Garden Road is an example of this type of streetscape. For several decades planning regulations including angle controls have maintained the access of sun and sky to the street, an important component encouraging pedestrian use. For these and other significant reasons, including traffic calming and access, the street remains vibrant.

Recent development on Quinpool Road, such as the new mixed-use building at Quinpool & Vernon, the proposed APL project, and aspects of the proposed Centre Plan do not acknowledge the necessity of a vital, well-designed and comfortable streetscape on Quinpool for commercial success. They are interested primarily in numbers, which may help, but alone will not fully enhance prospects for the street.

The Quinpool Business Commission would do much better to strongly encourage from both the development community and HRM a type of development which will support pedestrian activity on the street, not be detrimental to it, and go beyond strictly focusing on numbers. For example, densification through mid-rise development along Quinpool Road could add ~3,000 residents in 4-6 storey buildings. This would be complementary to the existing Main Street and would happen at a pace that would not negatively impact the district and its residents.

FHC is especially concerned that any new development not negatively impact the Halifax Common. As you may be aware the North Common is less than 30 acres, 12% of its original grant and only 1/30th of the size of Central Park. We wonder why you would endorse a tower that would harm the experience of afternoon skaters on the Oval with wind and shadow or would reduce the year-round attractiveness of public open space on Canada's oldest Common. The Common keeps many people coming to Quinpool Road and should be respected as a feature that brings support for business owners in your district.

For an intelligent essay on 7 reasons why high-rises kill liveability we recommend you read a recent post by a successful Quinpool based business owner, John Wesley Chisholm.

<https://www.facebook.com/johnwesley.chisholm/posts/10155651523073500>

We encourage you to reconsider the position of your business association. We hope you are willing to work with residents to formulate a better plan for Quinpool. We assure you that loyalty to businesses on Quinpool Road is a two-way street and that many residents will note your support of APL as a betrayal.

Your truly,

Peggy Cameron for Friends of Halifax Common Executive
Cc: Friends of Halifax Common