

Friends of the Halifax Common

6032 Charles Street
Halifax NS B3K 1L1
March 15, 2012

Mayor and Council, c/o Municipal Clerk's Office
Box 1749, Halifax, NS, B3J 3A5

RE: CBC/YMCA proposal Sackville St & South Park St.

Dear Mayor and HRM Council:

We write on behalf of Friends of the Halifax Common to present reasons why the proposed CBC/YMCA high-rise(s) should not be approved. The reasons for objection to the application are based on regulations and policies under HRMbyDesign, approved in June 2009, and policies under the Halifax Common Plan adopted by Halifax City Council in 1994 and as upheld in the recent decision by the Design Review Committee to reject this proposal.

Both HRMbyDesign and the Halifax Common Plan are the result of extensive public consultation. Despite the good faith and good ideas of all residents who participated in the process, HRM staff seems willing to readily ignore these Plans to appease the interests of a developer and recommend a completely unsuitable project. Mayor and Council must respect the decision of the Design Review Committee and the formal planning processes of HRM by Design and the Halifax Common Plan, both of which have struck a balance in setting the regulatory framework for development in HRM.

In the staff report, objections raised by the Citadel (Parks Canada), residents of the Martello, and members of the general public are trivialized when in fact the application breaks most of the rules and should not be permitted. Please see the attached list for selected contraventions of the spirit and the intent of the aforementioned Plans.

We hope as Mayor and members of Council you can ensure that the public values represented in both the 2009 HRM by Design and the 1994 Halifax Common Plan are upheld.

Yours truly
(by email)

Peggy Cameron & Beverly Miller
Co-Chairs, Friends of Halifax Common

Objections under HRMbyDesign (not exhaustive)

1. Under HRMbyDesign a highrise at this location would be a maximum of 23m. The architect's rendering has 2 building of 49m, over twice the allowable height.
2. The provision under HRMbyDesign that for every 2' up above 17m there be a step back of 3' is not fulfilled. This is at least in part to protect the Public Garden from shadow.
3. The destruction of the CBC building does not conform to HRMbyDesign's recommendation that it becomes a heritage building as shown on an HRMbyDesign map.
4. Regulations to protect the environs of the Citadel Hill in place since 1985 and continued forward under HRMbyDesign such as Band A are extant so as to prevent just such a highrise being built.
5. The proposal does not conform to HRMbyDesign land use by-laws governing high-rise buildings (p. 27-see 9 & 10 below) either with respect to itself and the distance between the towers or with respect to the distance from the Martello. This distance requirement is due to **fire and public safety requirements** and should be adhered to.

(9) Any portion of a high-rise building above a height of 33.5 metres shall be a minimum of 23 metres between the high-rise portion of other buildings or the same building on the same lot, where both of the high-rise buildings are used for residential purposes.

(10) Any portion of a building above a height of 33.5 metres shall be a maximum width of 38 metres and a maximum depth of 38 metres.

Objections under The Halifax Common Plan (not exhaustive)

The Halifax Common extends from Cunard Street to South Street, bordered on the east by North Park, Bell Road, South Park Streets and on the west by Robie Street is a major Halifax landmark. Directions laid out in the Halifax Common Plan generally recognize important public values such as the need for public open space or views to open space and public open green space. The Halifax Common Plan is clear in its intent to influence the nature of private development in proximity of the Common so as to compliment the open space.

- 1) "An objective of the Halifax Common Plan is to strengthen the Halifax Common as a place of special character, history and beauty. (p.5)
Integral to this is retaining open green space of which the city parks such

as the Public Gardens, and “the western slopes of the Citadel including the Garrison Grounds, while not part of the Halifax Common, contribute significantly to a sense of open space.” (p.5)

- 2) Under **Views and Landmarks**, the Halifax Common Plan in map 7 (see attached) has 4 arrows from the Citadel denoting views, 1 of which points directly at the corner of Sackville and South Park. Another arrow points from South Street towards the Citadel. The text describes *“Enjoyment of views is an important part of the Halifax Common experience....Important views should be identified and steps taken to protect and enhance these views where possible. One example is the view looking north along South Park Street from South Street. South Park Street is wide and well treed and because it slopes down, the entire length of the street and the Citadel can be seen (p. 6).”* Here the intent is obvious that the view would not be just from the Citadel but of the Citadel as well.
- 3) The Plan makes frequent mention of the historic character of the houses and places of historic importance and the Halifax Common was designated as a historic site under the City charter in 1971. (Presumably, as there was no notion of a high-rise going in across the street from the Public Gardens at the time of the plan, there isn't mention that this wouldn't be a good idea, the existing height restrictions would have kept it out of anyone's thinking.) *“The historic residence at the corner of Sackville Street and Bell Road, the Public Gardens...”* is specifically mentioned several times.
- 4) Several segments of the Plan emphasize efficient and safe circulation for vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. In the case of pedestrians, that pedestrian linkages and pedestrian safety are to be considered. (p.11-13) **Street Block Form and Sidewalks (p7)** *“.....Wide sidewalks, which occur predominantly in the South Precinct around the Public Gardens and Victoria park, are another important element. One of the pleasures is strolling along the wide sidewalks, separated from traffic by a wide tree-lined grassed area between the curb and sidewalk.”*

Adding traffic associated with highrises, 300 parking spaces, multiple storeys of up to 400 apartment or condo dwellers and expanded YMCA users of up to 20,000 or more along South Park Street does not obviously seem to improve pedestrian or cycling safety or the long-term view of the Common.

Map 7: Halifax Common - Views and Landmarks

