

June 1, 2018

Dear Mayor Mike Savage and HRM Councillors:

The Cogswell Interchange, for decades, has stood as a testament to ill-advised planning decisions made in the city of Halifax, during a time when large, car-focused urban renewal projects were in vogue across North America. Thankfully, spurred by the actions of passionate citizens, municipal, provincial and federal politicians stopped the “Harbour Drive” portion of the project, and we all now enjoy the waterfront today. The Cogswell Interchange remained in place until such time that a compelling vision would emerge, and we would replace it with something far greater.

In 2014, Regional Council showed leadership, based on the Cogswell Lands Plan (done with consultant, Ekistics), and authorized a final design to proceed, and set the following goals:

- Walkable and transit-oriented neighbourhood
- Re-establish fine grain street grid of the downtown
- Reconnect neighbourhoods
- Be a mixed-use core
- Prioritize active transportation
- Include well-designed public and private spaces
- Be a renewable energy district

In 2016, the Urban Development Institute (UDI) engaged world-renowned urbanist Ken Greenberg to review the project. He cited a number of concerns with the plan, including priority of placemaking; realistic absorption of development, given the current and predicted future market within the city; the constraints that a self-financing requirement would place on the aspirations; and a lack of assessment of unintended consequences the development could have on neighbouring districts. This report was received by HRM Council. The concerns were acknowledged, and it was emphasized that final decisions had not been made on some of the main concerns, such as self-financing and density. UDI was invited to further participate during the public input phase. In May, 30 stakeholders, all from groups dedicated to making the urban core a more livable and vibrant community, hosted a facilitated session with HRM staff, to express their collective concerns about the current design’s ability to adequately achieve these seven goals, and the community’s aspirations for a great project. It was noted that some of the concerns expressed in the Greenberg paper still existed in the 60% design. Overall, it was a productive session, and there was broad agreement for additional collaboration and an acknowledgement that we share a number of the same goals.

We congratulate the hard work of HRM’s Cogswell District team and WSP to date. HRM staff has explained that the focus of this phase has been largely on the transportation components of the project. While we believe that it is best to advance the project components in concert, it is our understanding that the upcoming phase is the time to detail the other goals of the Cogswell project through design and plan policy.

We believe this will require a robust process for public and stakeholder input and collaboration. This will require hard work and a real commitment by all involved. Our group stands ready to contribute to making this project a catalyst for our city. This can be done with no significant impact to the project's overall timeline.

We, the undersigned, are requesting that Council endorse the following requests:

- a) That Council establish a direction to staff that the project need not necessarily be self-financing through the sale of land, as this will unduly constrain design improvements, and that the final balance and allocation of costs and revenues be determined following design completion.
- b) That Council acknowledge the 60% design, as pertaining to the general road network and preliminary street design. However, both as the final design seeks to achieve the seven district goals, and the future of transportation will be subject to change, also allow that some changes to the road system would need to be contemplated.
- c) That Council direct staff to work collaboratively with the community stakeholders to immediately create a robust public design process, which would result in a final district public realm design and detailed land use policy. This process would be funded both privately and publicly, reflect the downtown plan and the seven district goals as a foundation, and would be a collaborative work between HRM staff and their consultants, and the community, and potentially other external design experts, such as Gehl<sup>1</sup>. This expanded design process should not delay the project schedule or demolition timeline for the Cogswell redevelopment.

We know you share our desire to make the transformation from the Cogswell Interchange to the Cogswell District one that is done with the best expertise possible, and with a maximum of community support. Ultimately, we all need to work together to create the kind of place we know Cogswell can be. We believe these steps will achieve that.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Founded by Danish architect, Jan Gehl, this multidisciplinary firm has designed great neighbourhoods in cities around the world by designing for people through consideration for scale, senses, movements, interests, behaviour, and engagement in their surroundings. Gehl has studios in Copenhagen, New York, and San Francisco. Through the work of Dalhousie University, The Carmichael Lecture, Art of City Building Conference, and HRM's Urban Design Awards a familiarity and relationship between our city and Gehl has already been forged.*  
[www.gehlpeople.com](http://www.gehlpeople.com)

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations,

Atlantic Developments

Breakhouse Inc.

Cantwell and Company

Cities and Environment Unit

Compass Commercial Realty

Cushman and Wakefield Atlantic

Dalhousie University School of Planning

Downtown Halifax Business Commission

Ecology Action Centre

Ekistics

Halifax Chamber of Commerce

Halifax Cycling Coalition

Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia

Investment Property Owners Association of Nova Scotia

It's More Than Buses

North End Business Association

Our HRM Alliance

Planning and Design Centre

Spring Garden Area Business Association

TEAL Architects and Planners

Turner Drake and Partners Ltd.

Urban Development Institute

Waterfront Development