

2024-06-24

Council
Municipality of East Hants
230-15 Commerce Court
Elmsdale, NS B2S 3K5

Re: Request for Development Agreement Amendment approval for PID 45428802,
45428810 and 45416831

Dear Council Members,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to respectfully request a reconsideration of the recent decision made by the Planning Advisory Committee to recommend refusal of our application to amend the existing Development Agreement (DA) for our project. This decision poses significant challenges to our project's viability and its potential to positively impact the Elmsdale community. As the developer of this project, I believe there are compelling reasons to revisit this recommendation and offer additional insights for your review.

Key points for your reconsideration include:

Market Demand and Vacancy: Despite intensive marketing efforts over the past year, our one-storey commercial building remains vacant, highlighting the lack of market demand for isolated and unanchored commercial space in Elmsdale. The current and projected demand for commercial space is for established spaces anchored by national tenants, which prove more attractive to potential lessees. Typically, unanchored and isolated commercial space is owner-occupied.

Development Strategy and Future Planning: We are currently in the process of constructing a four-storey building and initially requested to relocate the commercial component to a proposed six-storey building. This strategic adjustment was intended to align with market realities and our desire to optimize land use effectively. However, our primary focus remains on residential development. The inclusion of commercial elements in the six-storey building was a temporary measure due to the area's lack of commercial demand. Amending the DA to allow for 12 additional units in a project already under construction provides an opportunity to quickly increase the supply of housing. For council, this is an opportunity to signal to the local community a sense of urgency and adaptability in addressing the current housing crisis.

Flexibility in Commercial Use Definition: We have advocated for a more adaptable definition of commercial use to align with current market dynamics and community needs. This proposal aims to ensure the sustainability of our project amidst shifting economic and demographic conditions. Recognizing the evolving landscape of our community, updating existing policies to better facilitate our development objectives is crucial. Additionally, this DA amendment will assist in making the surrounding area more viable for future commercial use. Once there is enough residential in the immediate vicinity, commercial development will become sustainable.

Policy and Planning Considerations: Beyond the immediate DA amendment, there is a critical need to revisit the current Regional commercial policy. The existing framework may not adequately address the current housing crisis, demographic shifts, and market realities in Elmsdale. Other municipalities in the province have begun revisions to allow residential uses within commercial zones, signaling a growing trend towards greater flexibility. Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has implemented special planning areas aimed at tackling housing challenges. Updating the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) with adaptable provisions would empower us and fellow developers to effectively address community needs while promoting local economic growth.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the Council to reconsider the Planning Advisory Committee's recommendation and support the amendment to our DA. By doing so, we can adapt to the evolving needs of our community, address the pressing housing shortage, and ensure the sustainable development of our project.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to provide further information or address any questions you may have regarding our proposal.

Sincerely,



John Ghosh
Riverstone 214 Ltd

CC: Rachel Gilbert, Kelly Ash