



# Urban Development Institute of Nova Scotia

October 25, 2016

Mr. John Spinelli  
Director Cogswell Interchange Redevelopment Program  
Halifax  
PO Box 1749  
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear John,

## **Re: Cogswell Interchange Redevelopment Initiative**

Thanks for meeting with myself, David Graham and Richard Butts on September 21<sup>st</sup>, and for your subsequent letter dated September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

While I would agree the three main points highlighted in your letter address some of the high level categorical issues that we raised and discussed at the meeting, we feel it is important for you, WSP Canada and other HRM business units to further explore the points and questions we had in our September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 letter to the Mayor (copy attached). We did touch on many of them at our meeting in some depth, but feel it is appropriate that WSP and HRM staff, including engineering, planning, real estate and other relevant departments, study these points in detail.

Once you and others have had a chance to do this, we would like to meet again to review the findings and discuss the outcomes from their work with the individuals involved. We appreciate the invitation to the public outreach event at the Casino and will certainly attend, but feel that UDI and its composition of industry people are invested a little more than the general public, especially as our Association has spent considerable time and resources engaging with this exciting undertaking.

In your letter you refer to ... " *the project to be essentially self-funding over the long term* " ... As you know the perception of the project being self-funding is a concern of ours and was discussed at the meeting. Reading this again in your letter makes us believe that the intent is to have a cost-neutral project, resulting from the sale of real estate offsetting the construction costs. We were under the assumption at the meeting that this is not the case, and that the project was for the "Public Good"



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and not necessarily to be “essentially self-funding”. We do understand that real estate sales will offset the construction cost, but to essentially self-fund would mean nearly 65 million dollars in real estate sales from roughly 6 acres, based on current projections.

Again, we support the Cogswell Redevelopment and believe in the work you and your group are doing. We feel that this project, being the gateway to the city, is so very important that we don't want to leave any stone un-turned, hence the reason our group wishes to further explore our points raised in the September 7<sup>th</sup> letter.

Thank you in advance for your time in this matter.

Sincerely,

*Sent electronically*

Andrew Giles  
President  
Urban Development Institute of Nova Scotia



# Urban Development Institute of Nova Scotia

September 7, 2016

Mayor Michael Savage  
Halifax  
PO Box 1749  
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Mayor Savage,

**Re: Cogswell Interchange Initiative:**

As you may be aware, UDI has been following the Cogswell Interchange project since the 'Cogswell Transformed' report was prepared by Ekistics Planning & Design and presented to Council in March 2014. The project is of particular interest to UDI as it will be the gateway to the City of Halifax, and as a result we would like to see the project be a success for all those involved both privately and publicly. To date we have taken the time to meet with Mr. John Spinelli, Project Director for the Cogswell Redevelopment Program, and other HRM representatives involved with the project to show our support, along with expressing our thoughts and concerns on the project.

Due to our particular interest in the Cogswell Lands Redevelopment UDI engaged Canadian Urban Planning Consultant Mr. Ken Greenberg to prepare a high-level peer review of the Ekistics' Report. As part of the project he was asked to identify particular items that he feels are important to such a key project for Halifax. UDI also engaged Turner Drake & Partners to prepare a review of the real estate market to provide absorption statistics for both commercial and residential aspects of the project.

We have included Mr. Greenberg's review for consideration by staff and council as they move through the process. While neither report is intended to be an in-depth study of any one component of the project, they are independent assessments, by highly regarded firms, of some of the key pieces of the Cogswell Redevelopment, which we feel should be taken into consideration as the project moves forward.



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Along with the ideas, thoughts and concerns of both Mr. Greenberg and Turner Drake, UDI has also made some observations and has some questions that we would like to put forward for discussion and consideration. They are as follows:

- We observe that the design as presented in the Ekistics report resembles a city within a city and does not meet the objective of connecting neighbourhoods;
- There is not a strong market analysis in the Ekistics report to conclude that this development will, at 2,500,000 square feet, be absorbed in a “reasonable” timeframe, as opposed to being a 20-year construction site;
- It is important to compare buildout timeline scenarios while being mindful of interrelated considerations such as; size of density allocation per lot, tenure of realistic density on each lot, civic goals for ownership versus rental, and other related absorption considerations;
- The backbone of financial support for sales generated by density on the site is based on residential density. There is no consideration for tenure of the residential sales, be it ownership or rental, and no stated objective by the report for a preference of whether the city should want a mix of ownership or rental, nor a stated understanding of the pros and cons of one versus the other, and in what size of built form a mix would be possible;
- It has been observed that Halifax is a city with many interesting places that are not connected or joined together. This does not look like a good design for a people-friendly walking neighbourhood as discussed in the Ekistics report, and the report does not demonstrate how it will connect to Halifax’s iconic and neighbouring Citadel Hill and the Halifax Waterfront, let alone connecting the downtown core to the ‘North End’.
- The visual illustration in Ekistics Option 2, if accurate, does not suggest anything that plays into Halifax’s historic aesthetic as described in their report. The development form is, for Halifax, extraordinarily high density and would seem to shut off all but the front row of buildings from the waterfront.
- While supportive of the initiative, there is no analysis on the impact that 2,500,000 square feet will have on the holistic development of the rest of Halifax, particularly neighbourhoods on the Peninsula.
- The financial analysis is singular in its assessment of viability. That is, it equates density sales with infrastructure funding, and does not assess the long-term financial and aesthetic benefits of place-making.

Going forward we would ask that HRM provide the following additional information to UDI and other stakeholders:



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- A list of iconic city neighbourhoods/developments/re-developments that you would most like to emulate;
- A financial assessment, in cooperation with other iconic city neighbourhoods, of the estimated financial spin-off resulting from creating a visitor/tourist place-making destination;
- An explanation/study of how this development may or may not affect other developments (private or public) in the city, and whether the municipality considers this relevant to the development of the Cogswell Interchange;
- An explanation of the tenure of multi-residential use you expect or hope to have in this development;
- A stated objective for the percentage of condominium versus rental buildings/units you would like to end up with;
- The average size of buildings (# of units) for both condominium and rental buildings on the Peninsula in the last 10 years;
- Estimated absorption and build-out timeline scenarios for buildings based on allowable density;
- Information on absorption and buildout timeline considerations that have been provided by varying the size/density of the individual buildings;
- Information on financial scenarios which consider long term net fiscal benefits from revenues generated by place-making.

Please accept this review in the spirit with which it is intended. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the Cogswell Interchange and trust that you view our comments as being constructive for the good of our community.

Sincerely yours,

*Sent electronically*

Andrew Giles  
President, Urban Development Institute of Nova Scotia