

To: Mayor Savage and HRM Councillors
From: Willow Tree Group (willowtreehalifax@gmail.com; willowtreehalifax.wordpress.com)
Date: 11 January 2018
Re: **APL proposal at Quinpool-Robie-Parker (Case 18966)**

On Tuesday, January 16, we'll participate in a public hearing at City Hall about APL's proposed development at Quinpool-Robie-Parker, next to the Halifax Common. Unfortunately, recent City Hall debate about this development has diminished to one issue: the number of storeys: 20, 25, or 29.

The discussion on Tuesday should acknowledge all of the by-law regulations that APL wants City Hall to waive so that its development can proceed:

- population density: 588 persons/acre (4.7 times what is permitted on this 0.92-acre site)
- on-site landscaped open space (13% of what is required)
- on-site parking spaces (fewer than required for the 209 units)
- height (2 to 4 times what is permitted)
- ground-level setbacks from adjacent properties (less than required)
- upper-storey setbacks from the street (much less than required)
- context (incompatible with the adjacent residential neighbourhood)



*The north side of APL's proposed tower, viewed from the Parker-Welsford neighbourhood.
APL's images never show this side. (montage by the Willow Tree Group)*

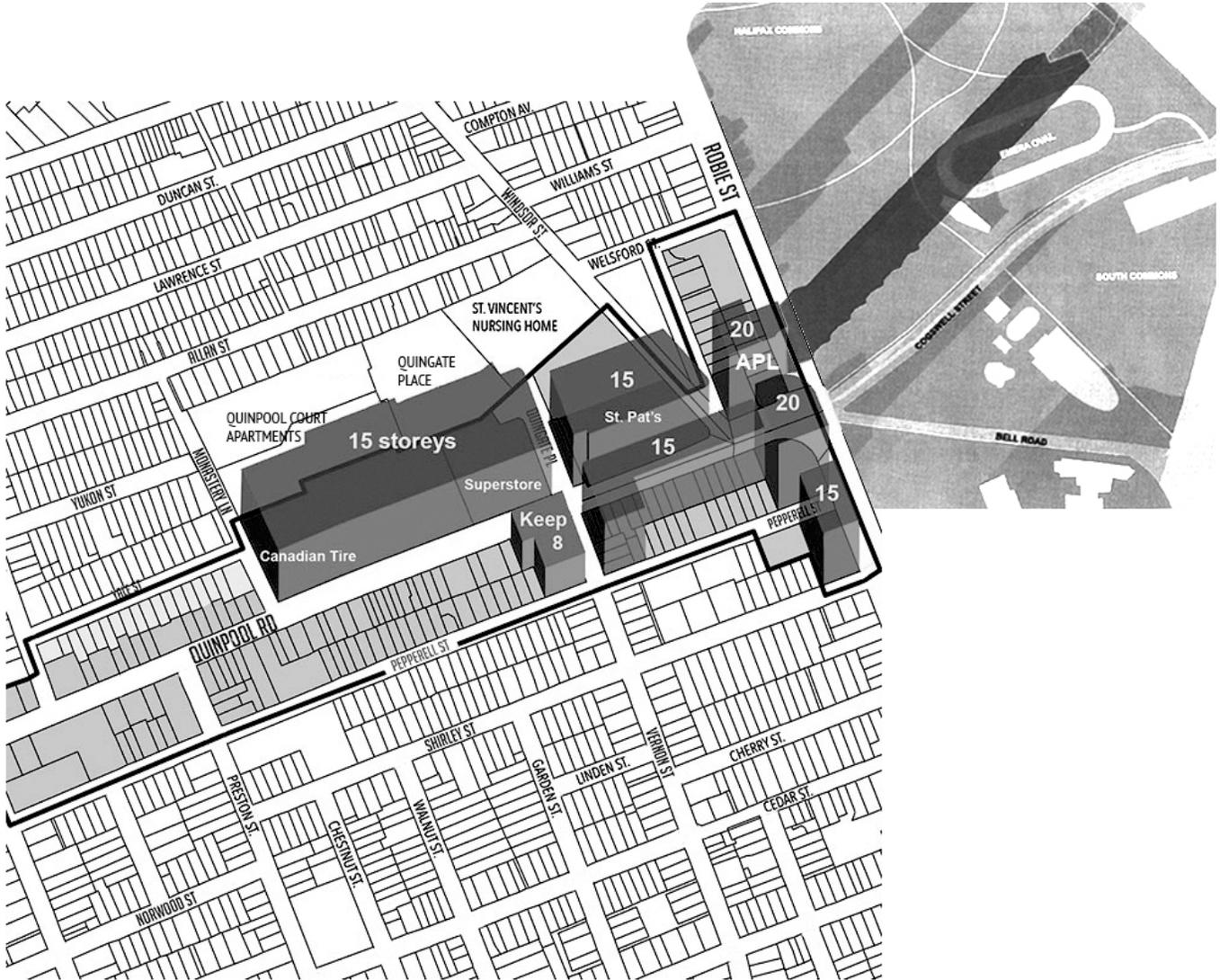
The discussion on Tuesday also should acknowledge its environmental impacts:

- gusty wind for pedestrians at Robie-Quinpool and on the Common
- shade across the Oval for skaters on winter afternoons
- increased traffic at an already busy intersection

It should also note that the contents of APL's building - 209 units along internal double-loaded corridors - would do nothing to advance Halifax's ambitions for family housing, affordable housing, or community facilities.

Quinpool's Future

But APL would be only the beginning. The draft Centre Plan calls for APL's tower to be followed by 15-storey buildings along Quinpool. These high-rises would extend west to Monastery Lane (replacing Canadian Tire), north to the Quingate Place condos and Quinpool Court Apartments, and south to Pepperell Street. (For comparison: The Keep, still under construction, is eight storeys.)



Left: a map from the April 2017 draft Centre Plan, with height limits added.

Right: Sunlight analysis by APL, showing the shadow across the Halifax Oval on winter afternoons.

(montage by the Willow Tree Group)

The draft Centre Plan regards the east end of Quinpool as a high-rise "density dump" for population. Its ambitions for our district are quite low:

- no research on what to protect in our neighbourhoods or what they need to become more complete
- no attention to developing Quinpool as a continuous, vibrant, walkable, mid-rise main street for the neighbourhoods
- no attention to family housing, affordable housing, or community facilities

The east end of Quinpool would become a high-rise canyon, like Brunswick Street between Duke and Cogswell. With big developers targeting the taller and more profitable parts first, finite demand would leave the rest of Quinpool undeveloped. This is hardly a way to make a public street.

An Alternate Vision for a Local Main Street

When the next draft of the Centre Plan is released - reportedly, in February - we want to be able to discuss an alternate vision and implementation strategy for Quinpool. Rather than simply prescribing height and massing in "centres" and "corridors," then letting developers make the rest of the decisions, the Centre Plan authors should recognize the enormous vacuum in the middle of their document. The high ambitions in the first half of the draft Centre Plan are disregarded in the second half. To back up, fill that gap, and move forward more intelligently, much more attention to local circumstances and ambitions is needed. Assuming that development is needed, we should be determining where it can do the most good. In the Quinpool area, for example:

1. Do proper research on the neighbourhoods north and south of Quinpool:

- current strengths to protect
- current weaknesses to repair
- future opportunities to pursue
- future threats to resist

2. Develop a vision for Quinpool as a local main street, a destination for those neighbourhoods:

- implement ambitions for public life that are described in the first half of the draft Centre Plan
- abandon the "centres and corridors" approach in the second half of the draft Centre Plan
- design the street first, as a public space for people on foot
- keep public life on the street, not in malls, courts, or parking lots
- add substantial population density along Quinpool through incremental growth:
 - first, fill the gaps along both sides
 - second, replace buildings that are under-used or in poor condition

3. Develop criteria for buildings to support this main street vision:

- limit property widths to maximize activity and variety along the street
- establish a continuous, collegial five-storey height limit from Robie to Oxford
- place commercial on the ground floor, office space on the second floor, and residential above
- establish a three-storey height limit along residential streets off Quinpool
- minimize the impact of parking and servicing on neighbouring streets (e.g., Yale and Pepperell)
- prescribe different unit mixes, tenures, and costs to promote family and affordable housing

After the Public Hearing

If HRM Council approves APL's development - at 20, 25, or 29 storeys - this would set an unfortunate precedent and a direction for the rest of Quinpool. It would implicitly accept the high-rise "density dump" vision in the second half of the draft Centre Plan.

Those of us who live north and south of Quinpool have higher ambitions for our neighbourhoods and for Quinpool as a local main street. Your decision on APL's proposal will show us the level of your ambition.

Regards,

Steve Parcell
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Duncan Street resident and member of the Willow Tree Group