

A Response to Change in St. Margaret's Bay:
Defining Core Community Values

April 28th, 2008

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I. Objective

The residents of St. Margaret's Bay (SMB) wish to establish their position on future development in the former Halifax County Planning Districts 1 and 3. The Planning Districts, since their amalgamation with the City of Halifax in 1996 and the formation of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), are still governed by the county's old "as of right" Land Use By-laws and Municipal Planning Strategy.

Things have changed dramatically over the last twelve years. New population densities and shifting demographics centering around Exit 5 on the newly twinned Highway 103 have altered the quality of life in SMB and adversely affected its natural environment. Existing by-laws and regulatory mechanisms at the municipal, provincial and federal level, in both their coordination and application, are not adequate to balance competing interests nor do they reflect core community values.

To assist government regulators and developers, the residents of St. Margaret's Bay wish to define and assert these core community values; they also seek inclusion as an active partner in shaping the outcomes of the development process.

II. Background

The unannounced appearance of "Tantallon Square" at the Tantallon Crossroads was a wake-up call for Bay residents. This 22 acre commercial development at the gateway to the Peggy's Cove tourist area, where Route 333 meets the old St. Margaret's Bay Road, proposing a strip mall, box-style retail stores, parking lots, and increased traffic, threatens the "village" quality associated with the Crossroads; it is also a harbinger of more commercial development to come.

To many, "Tantallon Square" is an infringement on the coastal corridor anchored at one end by Peggy's Cove and continuing around the Bay past the Aspotogan Peninsula to Chester, Mahone Bay and Lunenburg. "Tantallon Square" is a serious erosion of St. Margaret's Bay as a major tourism asset.

On February 14th, 2008, HRM held a public information sessions in Tantallon to discuss an amendment to the Districts 1 and 3 signage by-law. The change proposed by “Tantallon Square’s” anchor store, Canadian Tire, sought to increase the size of exterior signage on commercial buildings throughout the two Districts. Approximately 100 residents attended the hearing and voiced strong opposition to the amendment. The attempt to alter the signage by-law shocked Bay residents into action.

III. March 28th-29th Community Forum

The St. Margaret’s Bay Stewardship Association (SMBSA), with widespread support from local organizations including the Bay’s Chamber of Commerce and its Tourism Association, convened a public forum March 28th-29th at St. Luke’s Church Hall in Tantallon. Entitled “The Changing Face of St. Margaret’s Bay,” the Forum was designed to inform residents on the scope and scale of the changes in the Bay and to assess whether these changes were in keeping with core community values.

Outcomes

Friday evening March 28th featured a lively discussion with a panel of experts. Dalhousie’s Dr. Robert Fournier, renowned educator and broadcaster, spoke on the Digby Neck quarry decision and the lessons to be learned from that precedent. Jen Graham of the Ecology Action Centre put planning issues in a province-wide perspective by highlighting other communities’ response to change. Leon Kentridge, retired architect and urban planner, detailed the current zoning regime in St. Margaret’s Bay and provided background information for the Saturday morning workshop. Approximately 100 residents participated in the panel discussion. Most returned the next morning for the hands-on workshops.

In the first Saturday morning workshop, residents “vented and visioned.” The SMBSA captured their diverse opinions and noted their common views.

In the second workshop, participants responded to a series of prepared statements on change as a means of assessing “core community values.” Their responses and the surrounding discussion would be developed into a community position paper on change as the first stage in an ongoing

consultation process. This document would then be circulated to all those involved in SMB development - developers, HRM councillors and planners, provincial and federal politicians, and regulators within relevant departments such as Environment and Tourism.

IV. Interpretation of Forum Results: The Coastal Corridor

In interpreting the forum survey and its discussions, and in ensuing discussions, a key factor emerged: the coastal corridor which hugs St. Margaret's Bay and links its villages from Peggy's Cove to Tantallon along Route 333, down to Hubbards along the old St. Margaret's Bay Road, and out Route 329 to the tip of the Aspotogan Peninsula, has a unique set of community core values that set it apart from other areas in HRM.

The coastal corridor is a scenic ocean route characterized by the presence of coastal rock formations, islands, spruce forests, historic but still active fishing villages, a small fishing industry and its artifacts, a lively tourism industry with its accommodations, restaurants and shops, as well as marinas and docks, cottages, and coastal residences.

The many coastal villages within the corridor are a mix of modern and historical development, with commercial establishments befitting a village scale, with the odd exception, such as the small Nautel plant at Hackett's Cove. While commerce and industry are active within the corridor, they are not the prevailing feature and have often situated themselves "organically" as "home" businesses in keeping with the coastline traditions.

Beginning with Peggy's Cove, this coastal corridor atmosphere provides tourists with a scenic touring route that leads to Chester, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg and beyond. St. Margaret's Bay is gateway to this world-class tourism destination, a vital part of the province's economy.

Coastal ambiance is what tourists associate with Nova Scotia. Living close to the coast, with its relaxed family and recreational atmosphere, is also the motivation for many new residents who move to St. Margaret's Bay or the surrounding area. This influx has resulted in a changing demographic with values that favor natural environment, family, recreation and reflection, retirement, tourism and cottage industries.

Exit Sprawl

The large residential population growth at Exit 5, most of it stretching along Hammonds Plains Road away from the Bay and reaching as far as Bedford, has attracted commercial developers. They see the advantage in locating businesses near population densities. While the Highway 103 corridor with its exits and population hubs are suited to commercial development, this growth is now infringing on the coastal corridor and threatening its very identity.

At present, the zoning related to St. Margaret's Bay does not limit commercial development; in fact it extends from water's edge to Exit 5 as shown on the regional map (see attached). The great majority of this area is currently zoned MU-1 and MU-2 or "Multiple Use." This zoning (with minor exceptions) allows anything from box stores to industrial developments to occur anywhere within this area. The 22 acre "Tantallon Square" is a case in point.

V. Community Core Values within the Coastal Corridor

The following sequence of community values is an interpretation by Forum organizers. It is based on the March 28th-29th Community Forum, the 2007 Nova Scotia Strategy for Sustainable Tourism, the 2003-4 Asset Mapping Project carried out by the SMBSA, and the experience of the SMBSA as a focal point for community concerns in the Bay. The sample on which this sequence is based is the first step in a broad, ongoing sampling and interpretation process to follow.

The residents of St. Margaret's Bay value a quality of life with the following characteristics:

Personal scale: Residents know or recognize their neighbors and the owners of the small businesses they frequent. Local business, travel, leisure, school-related, and recreational activities are opportunities for personal exchange.

Coastal Character: Residents appreciate the proximity of the ocean, its natural beauty, and the atmosphere of relaxation that it inspires. They

endorse the residential/rural/recreational/tourism/fishing/small business mix that involves ocean and green spaces.

A Community with Sub-Communities: Residents interact through a multiplicity of smaller communities that include numerous vibrant church groups, the Shambhala meditation centre, art groups such as Artscape, Unicorn Theatre, and the Tuesday Group, tourism, business and stewardship associations, a community newspaper, a strong environmental movement (Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust [FBWHT] and the Wooden's River Watershed Environmental Organization [WRWEO]), the vast extended Bay-based group spearheaded by the SMBSA which bought Micou's Island and are working hard to save other islands and heritage architecture around the Bay, childrens and school groups such as hockey and soccer leagues, a worldclass sailing club site of the 2009 World Laser Championships, fitness enthusiasts, a nascent Co-op movement, and many others.

Recreational Options: Residents value sailing, boating, kayaking, gardening, and hiking (Bluff Trail, Peggy's Cove Barrens, etc.).

Natural Environment and Green Space: Residents cherish the natural green open spaces between the Bay's coast and Highway 103 along the coastal corridor. They unanimously endorse strict protection for groundwater resources, stream setbacks, preventing silting and run-off in the Bay, and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources, sewage discharge, and waste materials. This environmental concern is illustrated by groups like WRWEO and FBWHT, associations dedicated to making the interior of the Chebucto Peninsula a provincial protected area.

Small Businesses: Residents like doing business on a personal level; most know their plumber, baker, pharmacist, mechanic, doctor, etc. They appreciate buying their gardening supplies at Boutiliers and their eggs from Clifton Dauphinee, a local farmer. People do support the idea of shopping at a local Canadian Tire (CT), but when apprised of the consequences of the Tantallon Crossroads location, in terms of competition with local business and losing the village identity, almost all would rather drive to town. If CT were to locate at the Crossroads, then the sample preferred at the very least that it integrate/harmonize with the village aesthetic and core community values.

Coastal Village Identity: Most residents would like the “village perception” of the Tantallon Crossroads emphasized, with new development extending and enhancing this aesthetic.

Architecture: Our sample sees a Bay building style growing out of the history of the area, with its building traditions, use of natural materials, and design involving Maritime heritage influences in roofline and siding, preferring limited scale, appropriate densities, landscaping, etc. Compromising this aesthetic with utilitarian box-type stores was strongly discouraged.

VI. Recommendations

1. Amend the MU By-Law designation in Districts 1 and 3 to require a **development agreement** for commercial developments over 10,000 square feet in total and for residential sub-division developments. (This amendment should include a requirement for public notice concerning such proposed developments and public hearings before approvals are granted.)
2. HRM undertake a zoning and design review of designations along the Coastal Corridor.
3. Promote recognition of the SMB “Coastal Corridor” as a Tourism Asset with province-wide significance.
4. Encourage the establishment of **Coastal Development Authority (CDA)** to coordinate St. Margaret’s Bay development decisions and safeguard our cultural, environmental and economic capital. A CDA will consolidate and streamline the complex inter-governmental, inter-departmental approval processes which at present cause delays, confusion and a lack of transparency and accountability.

*Until the establishment of an official government-sanctioned body, local organizations will establish their own **Coastal Development Advisory Board** to act on an interim basis as negotiator, ombudsman, and public voice for community interests with developers and government.*

5. Develop and promote a vision of Tantallon “Crossroads” as a **Coastal Village** within SMB Coastal Corridor as a reference tool for future

development.

6. Circulate this document to HRM, provincial, and federal politicians and regulating and planning departments.

7. Participate in new HRM zoning and planning discussions, particularly those relevant to SMB.

Appendices

A. Survey and Results (to be attached)

B. Sustainable Tourism Industry Values

From the “Nova Scotia Strategy for Sustainable Tourism”

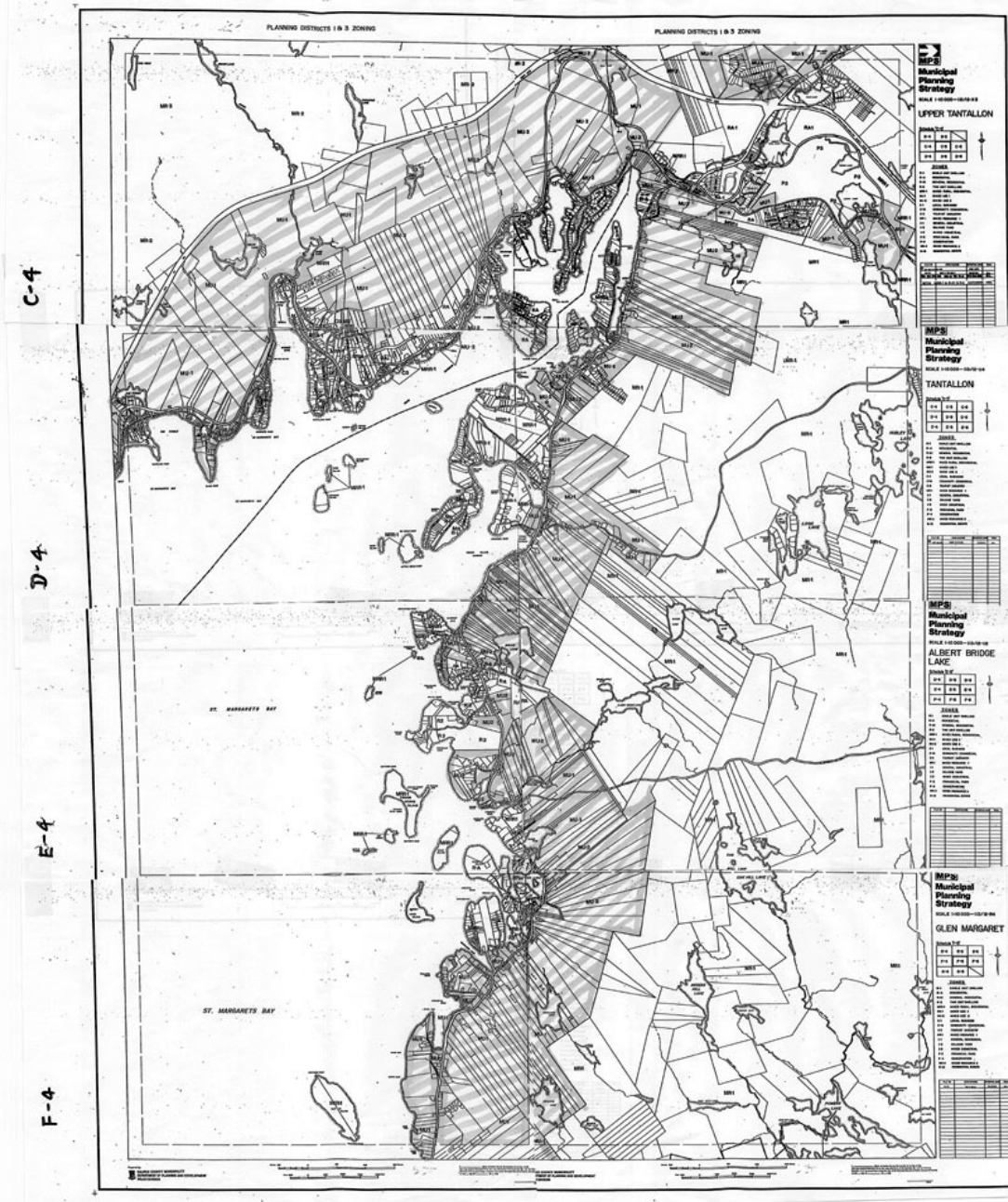
Industry Values:

(Compiled from the September 2, 2004 Coastal Tourism Stakeholder Visioning Workshop at Oceanstone Inn and Sustainable Coastal Strategy Committee follow-up meeting November, 2004)

- Appreciation of the coastline.
- Access and experiencing the coastline.
- Stewardship of the coast for future generations – public and private lands.
- Protection and enhancement of coastal product from an economic point of view: Economic Model. Economic Benefits.
- Providing a legacy and benefit for all Nova Scotians
- Taking a long term view of coastal tourism development.
- A high quality of life.
- Enhancing economy while protecting natural and cultural heritage.
- Community participation and ownership of a sustainable coastal tourism development strategy.
- Vibrant sustainable businesses.

C. SMB Asset Mapping: Relevant Findings (to be attached)

D. Tantallon Crossroads Zoning Map: HRM MU Zoning Definition



Hatched areas indicate MU-1 & MU2, nearly the entire Bay is “as of right.”

LAND USE BY-LAW

FOR PLANNING DISTRICTS 1 AND 3 (ST. MARGARETS BAY)

Note: Virtually all of St. Margaret's Bay is zoned Mixed Use-1 or Mixed Use-2. Below is an excerpt (page 65) from the HRM Land Use By-Law describing 'permitted uses' in the MU-1 Zone. The distinction between MU-1 and MU-2 is that MU-1 permits fish processing plants and MU-2 does not. The entire Land Use By-Law is available at <http://www.halifax.ca/planning/documents/PlanningDistrict1and3_LUB.pdf>

PART 12: MU-1 (MIXED USE 1) ZONE

12.1 MU-1 USES PERMITTED

A development permit may be issued for all uses in any MU-1 (Mixed Use) Zone, except for the following:

Residential Uses Not Permitted

Mobile home parks
Multi-unit dwellings
Senior citizen housing over 20 units

Commercial Uses Not Permitted

Commercial entertainment uses
Campgrounds
Marinas

Resource Uses Not Permitted

Agricultural uses, Intensive
Extractive facilities
Sawmills and industrial mills related to forestry over 3,000 square feet

Industrial Uses Not Permitted

Industrial uses but excepting traditional uses and service industries
Salvage yards

Construction and Demolition Materials Operations Not Permitted

C&D Materials Transfer Stations
C&D Materials Processing Facilities
C&D Materials Disposal Sites (RC - September 10, 2002 / E - November 9, 2002)

E. Tantallon Crossroads: A Village Vision (to be developed)

----- Original Message -----

Subject: 'Managing Change' input
Date: Sat, 22 Mar 2008 00:24:36 -0400
From: gordon.davis@ns.sympatico.ca
<gordon.davis@ns.sympatico.ca>
Reply-To: gordon.davis@ns.sympatico.ca
To: community@heartofthebay.ca

Hello: I'm not sure if this is the right address to be sending the following remarks concerning "Managing Change at the Head of the Bay", but I'm sure you will forward them if it's not. I've read your notice of the meetings on the 28th and 29th, and regret very much not being able to attend. First let me say how impressive the SMBSA website is - well written, informative and easy to navigate. Well done. Now, about our views on how "progress" should be implemented at the Head of the Bay. We have been owner/residents of Allen Heights since 1981, and have no plans to leave. How the 'Crossroads' is developed is important to us. I've spoken to John at Redmond's several times since the launch of the SMB Chamber of Commerce, and to any other proprietor I've had the chance to badger. My hope for our community is to avoid any similarity to New Minas, or Spryfield (for instance). Specifically, my vision is for a relatively small commercial area that is well defined as sort of 'Village at Tantallon Crossroads'. The 'Village' can and should be a destination where the car can be parked and people can migrate among the shops by foot. This means the whole area must be landscaped, and must have sidewalks, crosswalks and perhaps streetlights. The new Canadian Tire and Credit Union developments must be incorporated into the 'Village' vision. On the outskirts of Victoria, where we are right now, is a shopping village called Broadmead Village. It comprises several stores including a Canadian Tire; some stores front the parking lot and others are within a pedestrian mall. The whole shopping centre is a well landscaped, very presentable and up-market development that compliments the Royal Oak and Broadmead subdivisions it serves. Our 'Village' should be no less a compliment to our community. I would add that the draw of any shopping area is the quality of its shops, not highway signage. If Canadian Tire thinks highway traffic is going to be

drawn 2 kms off the 103 on the basis of a gigantic sign, they can't think much of their customers. People traveling down the shore will either shop in town, or shop enroute at the new Tantallon store because they already know it's there, not because of any signage on the highway. The only sign on the 103 should be a normal highway sign at Exit 5 directing people to Tantallon Village. The train tressle just before the crossroads should be painted and used to announce the entry to our 'village'.

In short, my vision is for a 'village' environment that compliments the community and the Bay environment. The hodge-podge we have right now (Redmond's strip, Superstore and the M&M development) gives no thought to landscaping or to pedestrians. Unless the 'village' is developed in a holistic way, our crossroads will become another highway environment of individual and very unpleasant strip malls. It need not be that way, and I for one, would accept a few dollars more on my property taxes to pay for sidewalks that would define the commercial village area and facilitate by-laws that would require any developer to landscape his property to complement the 'Village' concept.

I look forward to becoming more involved in your project later in the year.

Sincerely,
Gordon Davis

F. Supporting Organizations (growing list)