

SHEILAGH HUNT

Published July 23, 2015 - 4:51pm



Architect Alexandre Landry speaks at the opening of a public meeting on Wednesday night in Halifax to discuss development options for the former St. Pat's high school property located on Quinpool Road. (TED PRITCHARD / Staff)

I'd like to add my voice to those who are interested in developing the former St. Patrick's High School lot on Quinpool Road in Halifax. Let me share my vision with you.

Halifax could and should be the home of a state-of-the-art cultural hub that includes space for professional performances, community activities, gallery installations and arts administration, situated in one area that is vibrant with creative activity and artist enterprises.

Imagine a space where one building houses a performance venue for small, intimate performances of music, theatre, and dance in space that could accommodate 125 people. A larger performing venue for 250 people would welcome small touring dance, theatrical, and musical companies and ensembles and could also cater to local dance school events.

Such a building would also be home to studio space for artistic creation (dance, theatre, and music) as well as administrative office for small local ensembles. Take a walk outside, or through an underground corridor to a second building that houses administrative offices of not-for-profit organizations (many of which lost their affordable space in the Roy Building in 2014). By creating a central hub, maintenance costs and other costs and infrastructure will be shared.

Across the green space in the centre of this campus — landscaped to attract residents from the surrounding area to eat, meet and perhaps enjoy an outdoor event — is a building that is home to the Atlantic Film Festival and Carbon Arc Cinema where Haligonians will once again be able to enjoy a repertory cinema theatre.

Also on-site would be musicians' studios with state-of-the-art recording technology, located in proximity to dance and theatre artists thereby facilitating collaborations and interchanges between the exponents of different artistic media.

There would also be studios of varying sizes available for use by students of music, teachers of dance, and community groups looking for affordable, artistic, creative space in Halifax. Living space for visiting artists would be available on-site, facilitating artistic residencies, making it easier and more affordable to bring in guest artists from across the country and the globe.

I believe that it is important that the city step up to the plate and provide a tangible investment in the arts and culture sector — one that has for too many years been underfunded by the municipality. The world-class artistic talent located in Halifax has helped build a dynamic profile for the city as a hotbed of creativity; however, it has done so largely in an investment vacuum.

With a clean slate to work with, we would be able to attain world-class architectural and engineering standards. The entire location would be heated by geothermal green technology, and the buildings would be of the highest LEED Standard (Platinum).

The initial financial input would ensure that the future costs and upkeep of all the facilities would be kept as low as possible. What a

Transform St. Pat's site into Halifax's cultural, artistic hub. The...
wonderful legacy for the city to champion such high architectural and building standards while encouraging a culturally diverse and creative citizenry — and all this as a critical component of a dynamic municipal economy!

Affordable housing within the regulation height restrictions could be included in the plan to provide a revenue stream for the project and help amortize costs.

It is a critical time in terms of developing facilities and venues in the centre of the city; many organizations are looking for new accommodation. These many initiatives could lead to competing cultural infrastructure priorities and donor fatigue. By placing a number of these in a central location with a connected footprint and shared facilities, we can answer the needs of a number of organizations, maximize the creative bang for the investment buck, while at the same time creating an exciting showpiece that can be enjoyed and utilized by the residents of Halifax and visitors alike.

Through partnering with energy-efficiency initiatives, and developing a beautiful and inspiring collection of purpose-built facilities (that are desperately needed in the city) for a number of homeless not-for-profit organizations, council would be defining a vision, a clear statement apparent to visitors, tourists, businesses, developers, innovators, but most importantly to the citizens of the municipality, that they care about culture, that they see into the future, that they believe in the next generation, that they value environmental efficiency, that they are financially prudent, and that they care about the cultural welfare of the citizens of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Sheilagh Hunt was for 17 years artistic director of Kinetic Studio, a former president of Dance Nova Scotia, a director of the Nova Scotia Arts Council, and a member of the city's cultural advisory committee.

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Tina Kaye • 21 days ago

Who's building this? HRM? If so, where are we going to make up the \$10million (?) we could sell this property for? How about property taxes? A private development would bring in 1 or 2 million in taxes per year.

Will this centre net the city a couple million annually?

The technology the author talks about is very expensive. What are the numbers? How much revenues should this arts centre bring in annually and how? How much to build it? What are the annual expenses? Who will run it?

And as for affordable housing. You don't build new affordable housing.

New housing is built and older housing becomes affordable housing. That's how it works.

Can we please stop tossing that phrase around - build affordable housing.

It's not realistic.

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bro tim → Tina Kaye • 20 days ago

That's what happens when the voters elect a useless Liberal MP as mayor.

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nova2011 → Tina Kaye • 20 days ago

OMG, you've outdone yourself Tina. "And as for affordable housing. You don't build new affordable housing. New housing is built and older housing becomes affordable housing. That's how it works." If that were the case, then why are 60 year old homes in the north, west and south end of Halifax so freaking expensive?!? The houses in the neighbourhood where I grew up in the west end of Halifax were built in the late 40's, and now they're going for \$400 K or more depending on size (one property is listed at \$670 K). Tina, it's obvious you care for nothing and nobody but yourself and the almighty dollar....how very sad.

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Tina Kaye → nova2011 • 20 days ago

This info is from real estate developers. Who are your sources? And keep in mind we are talking about today not 60 years ago.

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nova2011 → Tina Kaye • 20 days ago

I'm not talking about 60 years ago either Tina, I'm talking about the real estate market on peninsular Halifax TODAY. My comment was in response to your comment about how affordable housing is 'created'. Namely that new housing does not automatically make older housing in the area more "affordable". I have no idea what you're talking about, Tina, but just for kicks and giggles, may I suggest you try using Viewpoint.ca and checking out prices for housing on the peninsula (and off the peninsula for that matter). In a nutshell; they're expensive!

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Big C conservative • 20 days ago

Great idea, if you tear down Uniacke Square and build it there with private funding.

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hav2b • 20 days ago

Never mind the cultural/artistic hub of Halifax, Mayor Savage wants all of Halifax — with two "A"s — to be his legacy and the cultural hub of Atlantic Canada. He thinks that if he builds a lot of unneeded, poorly planned and unthought-out structures — the Halifax Central Library, a stadium in Shannon Park and now this thing — he will be remembered. Well, at least he won't be easily forgotten.

1 Share



sparky600 → hav2b • 20 days ago

I'm still not opposed to a stadium, as long as the private sector and the universities contribute. Dal

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