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**At the Crossroads: Visioning a Village
Community Forum**

*March 27-28/09
St. Luke's Church
Tantallon, NS*

Community Forum Report

(Draft: May 8/09)

*Prepared by the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship
Association, Chamber of Commerce, and Region
Tourism Development Association*

Overview

On Mar. 27-28, St. Margaret's Bay residents gathered for "At the Crossroads: Visioning our Village," a Community Forum designed to respond to change and development in the Tantallon Village area.

The event consisted of a Friday night "issues" presentation and an expert panel discussion with 135 in attendance, and Saturday morning discussion groups and visioning sessions involving 75 participants.

The gathering was a sequel to the 2008 Forum "Managing Change" which recommended that the community envision the kind of Tantallon Village that would be most consistent with community values.

To make the 2009 Forum representative of St. Margaret's Bay, the organizing committee extended personal invitations to "delegates" from 90 area organizations, with 40 representatives attending. (*See Appendix I*) All delegates were asked to communicate the Forum results to their organization members, distribute Forum questionnaires, and respond to a post-Forum vision statement summarizing the results. The event strengthened an already strong network of communication among Bay organizations and residents.

Results

Most of the Forum attendees were mature (75% over 45 years of age) and drawn from communities around St. Margaret's Bay.

In terms of issues, participants were generally agreed that the existing HRM municipal plan identifying Exit 5 at the #103 and Hammonds Plain as a "population hub" should be refined.

Specifically, an unintended result of the "hub" scenario is that the commercial development following the new population growth into the Tantallon area is spilling over from the Exit 5 parameters, and "compromising" the rural quality of Upper Tantallon Village as a gateway to Peggy's Cove. The predominant zoning of this area, technically known as Planning Districts 1 & 3—"As of Right" MU 1 and MU2—, has encouraged commercial infringement on the coastal corridor. Forum participants sent a strong message that the "coastal village quality" of Tantallon, specifically

that section within the coastal corridor (*Appendix II*), should be protected from uncontrolled commercial development.

(It should be noted that in response to the 2008 Community Forum, HRM Western Region Community Council and Council as a Whole approved MPS Amendment –Planning Districts 1&3 Case 01157, calling for a development agreement on buildings over 7500 sq. ft and that, in approving such a proposal, Council would apply criteria that reflected community values. See Appendix III.)

Eighty-two percent of Forum participants were opposed to the box-store type developments in the designated village area; at the very least, they wanted “controlled” development that respected specific design criteria and community input.

Participants supported development of a more “personal scale,” featuring more small business, services and appropriate local enterprise. Residents also called for the “clustering” of residential expansion with appropriate commerce, education, and recreation facilities in a village setting.

Roadways

Participants were very sensitive to the constraints imposed by existing roadways on new village development or redevelopment. There was a consensus that in an ideal world roads should serve people rather than impose limitations on what kind of development is possible.

Participants suggested two broad responses: (1) some foresaw roadways being diverted to give rise to a village square that favored pedestrian access; others saw “pods of activity” developing at various locations around existing roadways, featuring shopping or access to water, to parks, walkways, and green spaces, etc. There was a strong emphasis on pedestrian/bicycle connectivity, possibly making use of overpasses to bridge roadways where necessary.

Golden Nuggets

Residents were able to voice their personal visions during two Saturday morning discussion group sessions: the first session was a discussion focusing on: (1) *What is most important to you in the development of*

Tantallon Crossroads?(2) *What is currently at the Crossroads that you like?* and (3) *What would you like to see more of?* In the group design session, participants used tools (dry erase markers, maps, GPS printouts, and legos) to design their hypothetical village. (See Appendix IV for instructions.)

There were six groups of 12 participants, each with a group leader. The leader was responsible for recording the suggestions and helping the group reach consensus on three outstanding recommendations or golden nuggets. These may be grouped, with duplications condensed, as follows:

1. Maintain: (a) a “coastal village” character to the size, scale, and design of buildings and (b) a connection to natural coastal environment.
2. Expand the idea of a market or village square for food or craft vendors and community events.
3. Sustain local businesses and services.
4. Encourage green buildings and landscaping around buildings, with more landscaping of large parking lots.
5. Develop a green space for gatherings, such as a public garden or bandstand, a recreation space, or outdoor skating rink.
6. Create a “community square” or “town centre” by re-routing traffic to provide space for a pedestrian hub.
7. Develop several “pods of activity” or “access points” within the village, each with a focus such as water frontage, mixed housing, public trails, etc.
8. Provide connectivity, both within and between activity pods, in the form of pedestrian walkways, bike trails, wheelchair access, with an eventual “plug in” for electric segways or other such “green” vehicles. A Halifax transit link at the Crossroads was encouraged.
9. Encourage more diversified housing, small businesses, and work options – more overall density while diverting traffic around village pedestrian centre.

(For a full summary of participant responses see Appendix V.)

Survey Results

In conjunction with the Forum, a survey was developed to assess Bay residents’ tastes and preferences related to the area. Over 70 surveys were

completed by Forum participants and approximately 50 others on-line. The highlights of the surveys completed to date include:

- Respondents are not, generally, newcomers. About half have been Bay residents over 10 years. Over 50% are in the 50-65 age brackets with over 70% being over 45 years old. This reflects the aging population of the Bay.
- Respondents describe as “important/very important” the rural character, natural world, and access to ocean. Conspicuously “not important/little importance” related to shopping convenience.
- The strongest “disagree” is over more large scale development (82%) followed by residential development and retail development. (However, a strong majority also agree with a need for more small-scale, community-oriented retail.)
- Notably there is the strong support for more community input (91%), landscaping and sprucing up, more sidewalks and bike paths, as well as a link to Rails to Trails. (*See Appendix VI*)

Analysis

In the visioning exercises, Bay residents expressed their short and long-range preferences for Tantallon Village. Participants were in favor of environmentally sensitive development of a personal scale. They wanted a vibrant “coastal village” with more diversity in shopping, services, population, and housing than they now have. They foresaw a “lifestyle” village where people can meet and mingle in a personal way, rather than a commercial, impersonal shopping area, characterized by a “park and shop at the big box store.” They wished to check and control “big-box” development in the designated coastal corridor area and required more “creativity” from the national chains than the “park and shop” paradigm utilizing large barren tar mats.

There was a strong recommendation to redesign the roadways around and through the village to allow for the emergence of a village square or island that faced in on itself and encouraged pedestrian interaction. Participants, however, were realistic in knowing that change had to be incremental, and would follow three stages:

- (1) establishing protection against unwanted growth;
- (2) encouraging controlled development;

- (3) evolving a long term implementation process involving road diversion and more density and diversity.

Recommendations

1. Adoption of this document as a statement of SMB resident position on the future of Tantallon Village. To be affirmed by SMB organization delegates.
2. Support of this document by the HRM Regional Councillors.
3. Submission of the document to HRM Planners calling for a plan of action for rezoning (a) Tantallon Village and (b) other villages in SMB.
4. Establishment of a set of Village Design Standards for developments in the Coastal Corridor of SMB (to include Signage Standards).
5. Establishment of Village Design Standards Group to liaise with HRM on new SMB developments. This group would be nominated by the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship, Chamber, and Tourism Associations and affirmed by Bay organization delegates.