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Nova Scotia

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Local history group wants to keep land in public hands, while council mulls development offer

[Jon Tattrie](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 05, 2022 6:00 AM AT | Last Updated: February 5



The two parcels of land sit next to the Fort Edward Historic Site and have been unused for years. (Robert Guertin/CBC)



People in Windsor, N.S., are deciding what to do with two plots of land that sit next to the Fort Edward National Historic Site.

The land once belonged to Parks Canada, which operates the Fort Edward site, but it transferred the two parcels to the old town of Windsor in 1967, which forwarded them to the West Hants Regional Municipality in a 2020 amalgamation.

Mark Phillips, CAO of West Hants Regional Municipality, said the parcels are west of Fort Edward Street.

They housed a pool for a long time, but that was removed after it sat vacant for more than a decade. The municipal council recently considered whether to sell the land, find a new use for it, or just keep it empty.

"The direction from council was to put it on the market," Phillips said.

Council is considering an offer. He couldn't provide details on that potential deal, as it's under negotiation. Council also opted to do an archeological assessment to see if it finds anything of note on the land.

The results of that study are expected later in February.

"Developing historic properties is doable, but we expect the archeological assessment will tell us how to proceed, how to manage that, how to respect it, how to preserve it," he said.

"These two parcels are separate, entirely separate, from what the community would call Fort Edward. The story of the two properties may have a connection."

'We don't want to lose it'

Shirley Pineo, president of the West Hants Historical Society, said the area has a long history. It once housed an Acadian church before the British fort was built.

Windsor traces its roots to the community that grew around the fort.



The fort sits on Parks Canada land, which invites visitors to explore North America's oldest military blockhouse. None of that property is affected by the potential sale of the land parcels. (Robert Guertin/CBC)

"From 1765 until the 1950s, the oldest agricultural fair in North America was held on these lands," she said.

She said they are interested in the archeological study, but value the land as historically important regardless of what lies beneath.

Her group wants to sit down with the wider community to discuss the future of the two land parcels.

"We feel this is worthwhile keeping and we don't want to lose it," she said. "I would love to see some type of interpretive centre, something that would bring all the cultures together and let them tell their story."

Her group's main objective would be to keep the land in public hands, she said.

Zoned for homes, parks

One parcel allows for the development of housing while the other is zoned for parks. It would have to be rezoned to be developed.

A developer would have to apply for permission to develop anything other than residential. Council will discuss the matter during the March 22 meeting. It will include a public hearing on the rezoning bid.

[Nova Scotia Governor Edward Cornwallis had the fort built in 1750](#) and it played a critical role in Britain's effort to secure what they saw as their colony and to fight off claims from Mi'kmaw people and Acadians who lived in the same place.

In 1755, Fort Edward acted as a prison for the hundreds of deported Acadians.

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