



Construction on four-plex residential buildings on Renfrew Street (Photo: M. Townsend)

More than 400 housing units coming, HRM permits show

By Colin North

Municipal records can confirm what you've seen with your eyes: the Pleasant-Woodside area is experiencing a rise in new construction and renovation, with hundreds of new housing units on the way in the coming years.

According to data obtained from the Halifax Regional Municipality, currently issued permits will add a net total of 414 new units to the South Dartmouth area; these renovations and new construction projects have an estimated value of \$68,169,480. Forty permits have been issued for work on buildings, with 26 of them having been completed as of January 2026.

Permits for the 14 yet-to-be-completed projects consist of a mix of renovations and new construction. Five of those permits are for mixed-use and commercial projects, with

the rest for residential buildings.

Some of the major projects under way are the new buildings at 247 and 171 Pleasant Street, which will add an additional 67 and 140 residential units, respectively. At eight and nine storeys, they are the tallest of the structures on the way.

Some of the permit data reviewed by the *Post* pertains to sizeable buildings just outside of the neighbourhood. For example, there is a new building coming online in the Eisner Cove development at 19 Leonamarié Drive, which will bring another 64 units. The recently completed mixed-use building at 22 Hamlet Lane in Southdale likewise added another 90 residential spots.

The rest of the issued permits will be for renovating existing buildings to add additional suites, as well as the construction of four-plexes, such as the two being built at 284 and 290 Renfrew Street. □



Twenty attend Esson Road Project meeting: The Feb. 18 meeting to discuss beautification of the land at the top of Esson Road saw good attendance from the neighbourhood. HRM Councillor Becky Kent attended the meeting and has helped raise awareness of the project. Read more at southdartmouth.ca/essonfeb18 (Photo: Christian Ensslin)

Neighbourhood looks toward recovery after two major fires

By Matthew Townsend

Two fires left the Pleasant-Woodside area reeling over the past month, but signs of recovery became visible almost as soon as the smoke cleared.

On Feb. 7-8, a fire tore through the former Sobeys property in the 205 Pleasant St. plaza shared by the Pleasant Street Diner, MacKay's, HDR Vapes, Alexandra's Pizza, and Efty Dishes have not yet reopened, but all have posted alternative shopping and delivery methods to their social media channels or websites.

The plaza fire didn't spread to active businesses. However, social media updates from the diner and the pharmacy made clear that cleanup of smoke damage would take weeks rather than days but was under way.

On March 5, nearly a month after the fire, the diner became the first business to reopen its doors. "After several weeks of extensive restoration, we are ready to safely

open our doors again," a March 3 post on the diner's Facebook page noted. "Thank you for your patience. Tommy will miss his afternoons with Momma watching *Young and the Restless*, but is excited to see daylight again." (Tommy Fatouros told the *Post* that his mother was also excited for him to see daylight again.)

As of press time, MacKay's, HDR Vapes, Alexandra's Pizza, and Efty Dishes have not yet reopened, but all have posted alternative shopping and delivery methods to their social media channels or websites.

The Woodside Tavern was never affected by the fire and continues to be open as usual.

Recovery has also begun for the family impacted by the March 2 fire on Renfrew Street. Samantha Francis and her family lost everything in the fire, but a GoFundMe launched by her sister and a clothing drive at the North Woodside Community Centre have helped, according to



Tommy Fatouros in the re-opened Pleasant Street Diner. (Photo: M. Townsend)

the mother of three. "We're still trying to figure out our next steps and where we will live long term, but this support has taken a huge weight off our shoulders," she wrote on the GoFundMe page. "Thank you to everyone who has donated, shared, and reached out. It means more than we can explain."

As of press time, the GoFundMe was open and accepting donations. Visit southdartmouth.ca/francis for a link to the GoFundMe page. □

Post earns \$31k grant to pay freelance journalists

Our community is about to see a lot more local news, thanks to a grant from the Local Journalism Initiative (LJI) to the *South Dartmouth Post* and its publisher, the Pleasant-Woodside Neighbourhood Association (PWNA).

The \$31,400, one-year grant will be used exclusively to fund civic, public-interest journalism. The *Post* will soon publish position descriptions for a "stringer" role and student gigs, and funds will cover other freelance writers as budget allows.

The PWNA is finalizing the

funding agreement with the LJI, distributor of the federal funds, which are restricted and cannot be used for operational costs.

"The *Post* will continue to be an all-volunteer effort, and volunteers will continue to be vital to its mission," said *Post* editor Matthew Townsend, himself an unpaid volunteer.

"These funds mean we'll have paid journalists working in our neighbourhood, telling the stories that matter to us, in the community. This is a real win for Dartmouth South." □

Upcoming Events

From the Pleasant-Woodside Neighbourhood Association

Community Meet & Greet
March 25 at 6 p.m., Woodside Tavern. Kids welcome.

Sunday Socials
All events free, with refreshments. No registration required, children welcome w/ adult. Events at North Woodside Comm. Ctr., 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on dates below.

March 15: Art Studio
Some supplies available or bring your own
March 22: Board Games!
With lots to choose from

North Woodside park plan moves to next stage

By Amy Ward

At its Feb. 24 meeting the Halifax Regional Council voted to adopt the North Woodside Community Centre Park Plan, though it could be some while before the community sees construction begin.

The decision, part of a consent agenda, followed unanimous agreement from the Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council (HEMDCC) on Feb. 9 to recommend that the regional council adopt the plan.

The local community council for Dartmouth and surrounding districts, HEMDCC, voiced support and excitement for the park plan, which could guide future development at the community centre park.

Developments for the park have been discussed for many years in the community. In December 2023, the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, North Woodside Com-

munity Centre and HomeBridge Youth Society gave a joint presentation to HEMDCC about improving the park. This led HEMDCC to formally request a guiding plan for the area. Planning began last March, as reported by the *Post*.

An online survey and public open house discussion hosted over the summer informed the North Woodside Community Centre Park Plan, released November 26, 2025.

The park plan includes the development of a centralized play area and a paved network of paths that will provide connectivity in the park. The plan also suggests a lawn, walking track, and a small water feature at the centre of the park.

The plan addresses accessibility concerns through better access to the waterfront trail, reducing slopes where possible on the paths, and adding seating and lighting. It suggests that the parking lot be extended and a potential second entrance to the lot be added opposite

Chadwick Street onto Pleasant Street. The current entrance could also be realigned with Marvin Street to further enhance safety at the parking lot.

The report is a conceptual plan, meant to provide guidance for future developments. There is no fixed timeline for the plan and implementation of each phase will depend on budget availability. Upgrades are estimated to cost around \$3 million over the course of the plan. Currently there are no capital requests, and it is not likely to be added to the 2025/26 HRM budget.

Staff at the Feb. 9 meeting said that some improvements to the park could start more quickly than other park plans because of existing community interest in stewardship activities, such as invasive species removal. An existing recreation trail grant could also allow sooner development of crusher dust trails through the wooded area of the park. □

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Ethel Franklin Betts, *The Orphan Annie Book*, 1908

FIRST-PERSON REFLECTION

A story about storytelling

By Christian Ensslin

It is not the nature of an adventure to be planned. An adventure, commonly understood, is what has not been planned, but it is also the part you end up writing about afterwards. Which is exactly what this story is.

But I should start at the beginning, even though that puts us on a rather meandering track. It had snowed, and sidewalks were improperly cleared. I tried to use them when I could, because I wanted to reward the kindly neighbours who had cleared their sections. But regularly I was forced to move from plowed sidewalk sections to the street, and back.

I hadn't planned on the meandering, and neither had I planned for what happened once I reached Evergreen House, and the storytelling circle held within. In my mind, beforehand, I had put myself into live theatre mode: observe, chuckle, hopefully not squirm, let other people perform, clap, leave. But like I said, one cannot plan an adventure. The storytelling circle unfolded quite differently, and likewise did I. I chuckled, yes, but never did any of the other things happen I had planned for.

The adventure that is the storytelling circle held at the Evergreen House Museum is much more immersive than theatre. Here, stories were shared, not by actors on a stage, but by regular folk sitting on chairs just like mine. Stories about premonitions, Cabot Trail pastors, drinking anglers, bathing babies

and war-ruined houses... bursting with sincerity, charm and wit. I started to get to know the people who told the stories – not because we small-talked, but because they took the time to indulge the room with tales found in their imagination, or history, or memory. I wasn't just an audience to all this – suddenly I myself became the storyteller, part of the circle, and I found open ears appreciative of my words. This event was, they said, a community campfire, unlike anything you can ever experience in front of a screen, and I agree with that. It was a heartwarming, real adventure I had to write a story about. Which I did, as soon as I was back home, after one more meandering walk on and off half-plowed sidewalks.

◆
The Helen Creighton Folklore Society holds several regular events in our neighbourhood at Evergreen House, 26 Newcastle St.

On the last Monday of each month from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m., visit Evergreen House for "Storytelling Night," an open mic storytelling event with unique themes each month.

"Trad Night" (open mic for traditional ballads or old songs shared a cappella or with instrumental accompaniment) is regularly held the 2nd Friday of each month at Evergreen House from 7 p.m.

"Folk Club" is an open mic event which features local performers, usually held on the second Thursday of a month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

South Dartmouth has a golfing destination

By Matthew Townsend

On a frigid February morning, golfers arrive at the green at the Pleasant-Woodside neighbourhood's only golf course. Today most of them are seniors, and they're ready for the sport: light, comfortable clothing, a few visors, bags of clubs over their shoulders.

If you're wondering how anyone can golf in Dartmouth in February and where South Dartmouth's golf course you've never seen is hiding, the answer to both is Spade Mashie.

Described as "your off-course golf course," Spade Mashie is an indoor golfing facility atop the Value Village on Pleasant Street. Opened by Ken Bateman in 2024, Spade Mashie offers a simulated golfing experience from 8 a.m. to midnight every day. The entrance is on the side of the building that faces McDonalds.

If you're not sure what simulated golfing looks like, picture a driving range meeting Star Trek's Holodeck. Golfers stand in front of floor-to-ceiling screens and swing real clubs at real balls straight into a projected golf course. Before the screen softly catches the ball, a computer tracks its speed and angle, translating that motion to the virtual course. As with a real golf course, you can play alone or with a group. The experience may be virtual, but it is convincing. More than 2,000 courses are available for play, including local courses like Chester and Ashburn. "But if you want to play something in Iceland, we have something in Iceland," Bateman told the *Post*.

Anyone can play at Spade Mashie, which does not operate on a membership model. Golfers can book online or walk in, if bays are available. The 7,000 square-foot, elevator-accessible facility also features a licensed bar offering beer, wine, cider, and coffee. While the liquor license means you can't



A golfer takes a swing into a virtual course at Spade Mashie. (Photo: Spade Mashie)

bring your own bottles, prices are competitive with local bars. Light snacks are available at the bar, and Bateman invites golfers to bring in outside food, if they'd like to eat a meal while they golf. A lounge overlooks the harbour.

Bays can be booked for \$45 per hour, with discounts available for those in emergency services and DND personnel. A private, VIP golfing bay can also be rented. From 8 a.m. to noon on Monday to Wednesday, seniors can book bays at \$25 per hour. Spade Mashie's accessibility makes it a popular choice for seniors; Bateman said a group of people in their 90s frequents the simulators. The facility can also be rented for corporate events and parties.

While some virtual golfing locations operate on a turn-key model – people show up, enter a code, and play, never interacting with any staff – that is not the experience at Spade Mashie. Bateman said he wanted golfers to feel like they were arriving at their local course. Staff are on hand to answer questions or help with technical glitches. In addition, Spade Mashie works with two independent golf pros who can help players improve their game.

"That was our whole part of the business plan, we wanted to employ people locally," Bateman said.

"Our concept here was to be a part of the community. We do a lot of sponsorships with local hockey, with the Whalers, with the Wings."

Bateman started Spade Mashie after retiring from the Toronto Police. Some of his family had relocated to Nova Scotia, and Bateman saw an opportunity to create a family business here based upon a model increasingly popular in Ontario, one that would combine his love of golf and interest in community and hospitality.

This notion of family extends to the golfers who play at Spade Mashie, and is part of why there is no membership program. "We treat everybody like a member in the first place," Bateman explained. "We want people to come in and feel like they're a part of our family. That's our goal."

Clubs can be rented, so you don't need to own equipment to play. The sole requirement is a pair of dry, indoor shoes, to keep salt and slush off the green. A non-virtual putting green and dart boards can be used free of charge.

Rates drop in the summer, when golfers are more likely to hit outdoor courses. Bateman said winter is busy for Spade Mashie, with an uptick in March, as well, as golfers get back into the swing of things for outdoor play. □

Classified Ads

DHS Class of 1995-1997 Reunion! Save the date! Aug 6th at Monté's. Pre-register via 30ReunionDHS@gmail.com

Storks Liberation Cleaning: specialists in Estate Cleaning, Hoarding, Deep Cleaning. Cleaning with Care: a process with respect, discretion, and ease. Contact 902.932.2598

Job Posting: Storks Liberty Child Care and Cleaning Agency: "Trusted Care for Your Home and Family." Seeking professional nannies or caregivers. To apply contact 902.293.9790

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Editor (News): Matthew Townsend (editor@southdartmouth.ca)
 Publisher (Ad Sales/Distribution): Brian Foster (ads@southdartmouth.ca)
 PWNA Contact: pleasantwoodside@gmail.com

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Volunteers needed for annual neighbourhood clean up

This year's clean up will be on **Saturday, April 25, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.** Meet at the community centre. Gloves and bags will be supplied and, in addition to some cleanup tips, we will assign teams of two or three to areas most in need of being tackled. You may even have some in mind. Refreshments provided.

—Pleasant-Woodside Neighbourhood Association

One last goodbye to a long, cold winter

Colouring activity by Brooke Jollimore

