

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

February 7, 2007

PRESENT:

**Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Kevin Riles
Mr. Paul Shakotko
Mr. Kendall Taylor
Ms. Linda Garber
Mr. David Garrett
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Stephen Terauds
Ms. Adriane Abbott
Councillor Sloane
Councillor Smith
Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat, Partner, Office for
Urbanism
Mr. Harold Madi, Partner, Office for Urbanism**

REGRETS:

**Mr. Bill Hyde
Ms. Cathy Carmody
Mr. Paul MacKinnon
Ms. Margot Young
Councillor Wile**

STAFF:

**Ms. Jacqueline Hamilton, Manager, Capital District
Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Capital District
Ms. Chrissy White, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Legislative Assistant**

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m in the Ferry Terminal Board Room, 5077 George Street, Halifax.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - January 10, 2007**

Changes:

- Under the Election of Vice-Chair (p.3), change the seconder from David Garrett to Cathy Carmody.
- Under Reports (p.6), add in stable areas under the second bullet under the Downtown/Halifax Area.
- Under Reports (p.6), include the name of the handout.

MOVED by Mr. David Garrett, seconded by Ms. Adriane Abbott, that the minutes of January 10, 2007 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Move:

6.1 to the end of the meeting

MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the Order of Business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES-NONE**

5. **CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

5.1 **DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS**

Task Force Member, Mr. Kevin Riles, President, Caohmin Consulting presented a discussion on Development Economics. Some highlights were as follows:

Mr. Riles advised of the impact urban design has on development by using a hypothetical example. He informed the Task Force that developers usually do not want to pay more than 20% of the construction price for land to ensure enough funding is conserved for unexpected price increases. If a developer wants to buy a

100 unit condo building on Spring Garden Road in downtown Halifax, he/she could expect to pay approximately two million for the land, that being about \$20,000 per unit. After an appraisal, there is very little room for negotiation, and the zoning will establish the range of the price per unit. Once the price is established, if anything changes the value of each unit (time, cost of materials), then the cost of the project will increase. In order to absorb those increased costs effectively, the developer would have to pass the increased costs off to the consumer by either increasing the price of each unit, or increasing density by applying for more units. This is known as densification of sites, and the developer will have to determine a balance. In order to do this successfully, the developer will look at things like open spaces, restaurants, and rooftop terraces. If the price points do not add up, the developer will not buy or build the property.

Mr. Riles advised that understanding land economics is very important when studying urban design. Urban design is usually based on good quality, interesting design, and nice human scale of the development; but, he added that price recognition and affordability are key for the successful completion of a development.

Following Mr. Riles presentation, a brief discussion ensued. It was noted:

Mr. Riles advised that he likes the idea of planning bonuses, but believes they must be done with density in mind. Negotiation is key in this process, and park land and roads are usually what is negotiated. The municipality has great power to make good projects because of their power over roads and parks.

Councillor Sloane advised that residents would like to see more rest areas and sculptures built in new developments, and suggested discussing this in a future meeting. Mr. Fillmore, Project Manager, Capital District advised that the Regional Plan has planted the seed on acquiring more attractive developments equipped with the above noted amenities, and this aspect of development will be taken into consideration as the Regional Plan enters its implementation phase.

Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat, Partner, Office for Urbanism advised that a large amount of urban design can be done with no cost implications, it all depends on the design and quality of the materials such as putting surface parking behind a new building instead of in front.

Mr. Riles advised that developers have to plan ahead to ensure price points will match up and the building will still be recent once it is built. Eco-density and deciding between LEED gold, silver and platinum plays a big role in the decision making process.

Mr. Kendall Taylor advised that developers will soon see a trend that will change regulations to support environmental sustainability. Mr. Taylor advised that green buildings are necessary for the future of development, and developers will have to

start evaluating the effects their buildings will have on the environment. Decisions will soon be measured on green house gas submissions, not necessarily on pricing. Prices will have to be offset by planting trees and creating green areas.

CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

6.1 Presentation

6.1.1 Sustainability

Due to time constraints, the Task Force agreed to invite members to stay after the meeting to hear a presentation on sustainability. Task Force Members, Mr. Kendall Taylor and Mr. David Garrett will present on the above noted topic

7. PROJECT STRUCTURE

7.1 Review of Project Process and Time- Line

Ms. Dale Godsoe advised of some important questions facing the Urban Design Task Force. They are as follows:

- Why is the Urban Design Task Force so valuable?
- What are the compelling issues facing Halifax that urban design will solve?
- How will the plans created by the UDTF address problems of today and the future?

The above questions were compiled by Mr. Paul Shakotko, and he advised that the final report must reflect the choices of urban design and how they address the problems of today. He also advised that planning for the future is critical.

Mr. David Garrett addressed some areas of urban design that he believes are of importance. They are as follows:

- Suburban retail parks;
- land use issues;
- height control in the downtown core; and
- heritage

Mr. Bernie Smith suggested that the Task Force members do some homework and individually list expectations for outcomes. Mr. Smith suggested e-mailing the lists to staff, and have Mr. Fillmore compile a document that captures the thoughts of the Task Force Members.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the table of contents of the RFP is not written in laymans terms. She thinks it is important to keep UDTF documentation intellectual but

understandable. She asked the Consultants and the UDTF to keep that in mind for when writing future documents.

Mr. Fillmore advised that he has been in discussions with UDTF members and staff about capturing the importance of heritage. He advised that staff are looking at enhancing the work plan to devote more time to heritage protection, and the way that heritage will impact the final product of this project. As the project unfolds, and with the support of the UDTF and Council, more time will be devoted to this deliverable.

Mr. Fillmore advised that a strategy has been proposed to enable more funding to take a look at the downtown area on a block-by-block basis. A comprehensive 3-dimensional computer model will be constructed to help give a visual of deliverables. Mr. Fillmore advised that there is still a considerable amount of work to complete, but once it is resolved it will become adopted into planning policy.

The biggest piece of the design guidelines for downtown is how it will work with building height and heritage. A big part of this proposal is a heritage analysis and framework, and the Office for Urbanism has been working exhaustively on a best practices research piece to support this. It is projected that HRM By Design will be approved by the end of 2007 or early 2008, and these scope enhancements should not impact the mandate or schedule of the Urban Design Task Force. Planning and Development staff will begin adopting project recommendations as soon as Council gives HRM By Design final approval.

MOVED by Mr. David Garrett, seconded by Mr. Bernie Smith that the Urban Design Task Force endorse the efforts of HRM staff to add manpower and expertise to the examination of the relationship between heritage and urban design in the regional centre. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOVED by Mr. Garrett, seconded by Mr. Smith that Regional Council follow the Urban Design Task Force's recommendation to approve the expanded scope of project deliverables surrounding heritage and urban design guidelines, and their associated budget increases. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

At this time the discussion surrounding the project process and time line continued. The following was noted:

Mr. Bernie Smith advised that he thinks it is important to preserve the heritage of the urban core, and advised that this will only be accomplished if there is a strong economic base established. He advised that the further examination of the heritage deliverable will position the plan as self sustainable, and he advised that this is a critical element.

Mr. Kevin Riles advised that environment and affordability are key in the implementation of the Regional Plan. He advised that HRM has completed work on

serviceable boundaries and growth, and in order to attract people back into the growth centres is critical to the success of the plan. Mr. Riles advised that the consultation should be completed before the election in 2008 due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Councillor Sloane advised that the 2008 election should not impact the urban design plan as it is an underlying issue. Councillor Sloane also expressed concern about amending development policies and the side effects that will cause. She advised that some developers may rush to get their buildings built before they have to follow the new guidelines, and in turn, HRM will have a generation of unattractive buildings.

At this point, The Chair raised some questions for the Task Force to consider. They were as follows:

- How can we add value to the committee?
- How can we better do our part in making this process work?

In response to the above noted questions, It was noted:

Members of the Task Force suggested that the Consultants allot more “quality” time to meet with the Task Force the next time they are in town.

Mr. Kevin Riles suggested showing design comparisons in the public forums. These comparisons could show forum participants different suggestions on what possible options are available when developing an opportunity site. These comparisons could address architecture, density, sculptures, etc.

Mr. Harold Madi, Partner, Office for Urbanism expressed concern with Mr. Riles suggestion because he feels it is premature. Mr. Madi advised that Mr. Riles suggestion would be a better fit for later in the process as an implementation tool.

Mr. Riles advised that a site could be chosen outside the study area that way the exercise would not compromise a future opportunity site.

Mr. David Garrett suggested using a site identified through the urban design process as a subject site for a design charette that the Nova Scotia Association of Architects is hosting as part of their 75th Anniversary in May. Mr. Garrett advised that this Charette will consist of multiple sessions and have a broad appeal.

Ms. Keesmaat advised that after the third forum, the possible site for the charette could be absorbed in the outcomes.

The Task Force agreed that the Charette should go forward.

Mr. Smith advised that the following questions must be evaluated and examined regarding any given opportunity site:

- What was in place prior to this process?
- What can be built under the new set of guidelines?
- What have we done wrong and how can we make it right?

Mr. Smith suggested using test cases to ensure that good policies, procedures and decisions are recognized and mistakes are amended.

Mr. Madi advised that this project will come into focus and become more concrete at the next forum. A set of guidelines will be presented on two levels:

- All of the urban design framework and guidelines that support all the elements of the plan.
- The case studies will give direction on how to infill the downtown areas.

Mr. Madi advised that the downtown needs more guidance and examination throughout this process because of its complexity. He advised that the heritage component can not be ignored and asked the Task Force to devote time to this deliverable.

Ms. Godsoe advised that there is a need for concrete deliverables to ensure evidence of the UDTF's accomplishments.

Mr. Madi assured the Committee that the process and deliverables will begin to become more clear in time, and asked for their patience.

At this time, a discussion ensued concerning communications and public awareness. The following points were noted:

Mr. David Garrett expressed concern about the ambitious schedule and the lack of media coverage surrounding the urban design initiatives. He suggested embarking on a large public awareness campaign.

Mr. Fillmore advised that staff have been in contact with HRM's Corporate Communications department and will be utilizing their services in the future.

Councillor Smith suggested issuing press releases and building relationships with government reporters and other media stakeholders.

Councillor Sloane advised that the UDTF needs to provide the media with a simple explanation of the UDTF mandate and process. She suggested "summing-up" and "re-engaging" by providing a simple message that will make the public feel valuable in the discussion process.

Mr. Fillmore advised that two billboards have been rented for the third forum, and Ms. Hamilton also suggested inviting the Corporate Communications staff to the next

meeting to help with media and communications objectives and deliverables.

Councillor Sloane advised that advertising through EastLink (channel 8) would be a tool to research as well.

It was reiterated that writing down the compelling issues that UDTF is trying to accomplish is extremely important. This activity will bring unity to the group, and in turn, it will get the priorities straight around the table so that the deliverables and the communications become clear.

Ms. Keesmaat suggested circulating a PowerPoint presentation that was given to the media for forum #1. It was agreed that this presentation would be a valuable piece of information to have.

After a brief discussion surrounding sub-committees lead by Ms. Godsoe, it was decided that Mr. Garrett, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Terauds and Councillor Sloane will form an informal sub-committee to discuss issues of sustainability. This sub-committee will bring back items to the UDTF for a full group discussion.

Mr. Garrett expressed concern with the time line and the UDTF overall agenda. He advised that an alternate way needs to be identified in order to ensure the issues are dealt with. He advised that some issues are too large to deal with in a seven month time frame.

Ms. Godsoe suggested developing dialogues and roundtables to deal with the above noted issue.

7.2 Anticipated Structure of Final Report

- A document titled "*Request for Proposals: Regional Centre Urban Design Study RFP # 05-073*" was circulated.

Ms. Keesmaat advised that project deliverables outlined in roman numeral # 1 of the above noted document (RFP) outlines the scope of what will be provided in the final report. How the report will be configured and laid out will depend greatly on Council's approval. The RFP outlines four key categories which include:

Urban Design Principles
Implementation Strategy

Urban Design Analysis
Implementation Tools

All of the above noted tools will be included in the final report. Ms. Keesmaat advised that the group should read through the project deliverables and that will give a good sense of what to expect in terms of the scope of the final report.

Ms. Keesmaat advised of some accomplishments thus far. They are as follows:

- The Urban Design Analysis which is contained in the panels give a good idea of what has been achieved thus far and what will be represented in the final report.
- At the time of the last forum, 99% of the material will have been represented in the panels. When the final forum comes, 99% of the material will have been presented in increments on the panels.

Mr. Fillmore advised that the panels are almost complete and he will circulate them to the group as soon as possible.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the plan will need a communications strategy targeting developers, architects, engineers, heritage groups, media and the general public. These groups will have to be engaged in a simple and interesting manner.

Councillor Sloane suggested creating a fact sheet concentrating on what has been accomplished, what has been changed and what is the plan for the future.

7.3 Decision-making process (UDTF and Council)

There has been an incremental process outlined and agreed upon by Regional Council, and that process will be maintained.

7.4 Review of the consultation approach- anything missing?

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

8. REPORTS

8.1 Approval of Vision and Principles (Forum #1) Prior to Submission to Regional Council

- A document dated February 7, 2007 titled “*DRAFT for Urban Design Task Force Review*” was before the committee.

Mr. Madi advised that the four campaigns outlined on page 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the above noted document are supposed to serve as a reference tool to ensure that the entire document makes sense.

Councillor Smith suggested breaking the recommendation in to three parts which will include:

1. Approval of the Guiding Principles;
2. Approval of the Vision Statement; and
3. Approval of the Five Campaigns For Great City

Ms. Godsoe advised that the above noted document in its entirety will go before Council for approval.

Mr. Bernie Smith expressed concern that safety and law enforcement has not been adequately represented in the Vision and Principles document. Mr. Madi responded by advising that there is a bullet under “Connected” that addresses this issue.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the Task Force should consider including another bullet that encompasses safety and safe communities .

Mr. Garrett advised that he would like to see something more specific represented on sustainability . He suggested adding a bullet under the Vision referencing the “triple bottom line” of economic, environmental and cultural/social sustainability. He would also like to see this item included as a campaign.

Ms. Keesmaat agreed that Mr. Garrett’s suggestion and advised the Task Force that adding an additional campaign on sustainability would be a good idea.

Ms. Godsoe suggested that staff make the suggested changes to the document and send the revisions out via e-mail for “objection only” feedback. She advised that the motion could reflect covering off the eventually of the changes.

Mr. Riles suggested that the language on page 2 must be tightened and defined. Ms. Keesmaat assured him that this language will become more clear once the document is finalized.

MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Mr. Garrett that a bullet on safety and safe communities be included in the Vision and Principles, and a campaign on the “triple bottom line” of economic, environmental, cultural/social sustainability be included in the Principles. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Mr. Garrett that the Urban Design Task Force recommend that Regional Council Approve:

- 1. The Guiding Principles**
- 2. The Vision Statement**
- 3. Five Campaigns for a Great City**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the bullets on safety and sustainability will be included in the document before it will go to Council for approval.

8.2 Discussion of Forum #2

- A synopsis titled “*Summary of Infill Case Study Outcomes*” was before the committee.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the above noted document will give the UDTF a sense of what will arise from the case studies. The chart (p.2), outlines the way in which the guidelines flow out of each of the different levels of scale. This is in part a schematic and a description.

The UDTF agreed that this document is valuable.

8.2.1 What Will Arise From The Case Studies?

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

8.2.2 Communications Surrounding The Case Studies and Their Purpose

Ms. Godsoe advised that the Case Studies outline a picture of what may happen in the future, but they are not set in stone.

Councillor Smith questioned the value of the Case Studies and expressed concern that they will only confuse the public who may mistake them for policy.

Mr. Madi advised that it has been made clear at the last forum that this is not a community planning exercise, so the case studies are to be used as a guide, but not to identify visioning. More generic guidelines will be developed so that it can be applied to the entire regional centre.

Councillor Sloane suggested changing the names of the areas from real places in the Regional Centre to fictitious names. This will minimize public confusion.

The Case Studies are generic, but the opportunity sites are not generic.

A brief discussion ensued concerning confusion around the purpose of the Opportunity Sites. The following was noted:

Ms. keesmaat asked the committee to review page 6 of the RFP document. Under section 7.2.4 it states:

“The intention is that once the Urban Design Study has been adopted, the publically and privately owned Opportunity Sites will be ready for build-out, under separate tender, in accordance with the design guidelines and implementation plans.

It is the understanding of the Consultants that they are creating plans for the Opportunity Sites.

Mr. Madi advised that the sites do not currently have design guidelines, and the purpose of the consultation around the Opportunity Sites is to help create those guidelines. This is basically a demonstration of intentions.

Ms. Godsoe advised that By-laws will have to be amended in the future to ensure that these plans can become a reality.

Mr. Fillmore advised that there are no design guidelines in place for the areas being studied, however there are By-Laws and MPS in place. Amendments to these policy pieces are captured in the RFP.

This has to come back for more understanding in the next agenda.

9. MARCH MEETING DATE

The Task Force agreed to move the March meeting from March 7th to March 14th.

10. ADDED ITEMS

11. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE

see item 9.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Chrissy White
Legislative Assistant