

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

July 18, 2007

PRESENT:

Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Paul MacKinnon, Vice-Chair
Mr. David Garrett
Ms. Linda Garber
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Frank Palermo
Ms. Adriane Abbott
Mr. Stephen Terauds
Mr. Bill Hyde
Councillor Wile
Councillor Smith

REGRETS:

Mr. Paul Shakotko
Ms. Cathy Carmody
Mr. Kendall Taylor
Ms. Margo Young
Mr. Kevin Riles
Councillor Sloane

STAFF:

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager
Mr. Austin French, Manager, Regional Plan
Mr. Steven Higgins, Implementation Coordinator
Mr. Bill Plaskett, Heritage Planner
Ms. Chrystiane Mallaley, Communications Officer
Ms. Chrissy White, Legislative Assistant

CONSULTANTS:

Mr. Harold Madi, Office for Urbanism

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m. in Halifax Hall, 2nd floor, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Changes:

- Remove Mr. Terauds and Ms. Abbott from the attendance list of the June 27th, 2007 meeting as they were not present.
- At the June 27th, 2007 meeting Mr. Austin French, Manager, Regional Plan advised that “the Regional Plan has projected a 25,000 population growth over 25 years; however, that number could be changed. He noted that the 25,000 is not meant to be a limitation as the plan is meant to evolve over time. If the population forecast changes, it will be embraced.”

MOVED by Mr. Hyde, seconded by Mr. Terauds, that the minutes from the June 20th, and June 27th, 2007 meetings be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

Addition(s):

7.1 Letter from Heritage Planning

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Mr. MacKinnon, that the order of business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

5. REPORTS

5.1 Open Space/ Harbour Plan presentation

Mr. Austin French, Manager, Regional Plan provided an overview on the above noted with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, advising:

- At the June workshop, the UDTF suggested a further investigation of open space; examining the harbour as an open space system,
- The Harbour Plan and the urban design plan were derived from the Regional Plan,
- Research, studies and public consultation were conducted,
- The Halifax Harbour contributes to the economy, transportation and way of life,
- The Harbour Plan was initiated before the Regional Plan was complete because of the conflict of the playground and industrial lands. There are ecological implications for that area from the harbour,

- A balance will be needed regarding competing interests as this will be integrated with the Regional Plan,
- Preliminary recommendations have been made,
- The economic function of the harbour has been a strong element, and there are potential sites for expansion,
- A recommendation related to transportation infrastructure has been made to provide the highest level of service availability,
- There will be new transportation links related to the harbour,
- New trails and parks will be developed that will be integrated with transit service,
- Trail networks have been identified,
- the Marshalling Yards will be re-zoned as a residential mix,
- There is a plan to connect Alderney Landing to Lyle Street under the bridge,
- There could be potential to create trails on top of new sewer installations. This has been approved for Dartmouth Cove,
- There is a substantial planning exercise for Shannon Park,
- The Master Planning Exercise will occur in the near future,
- The Ocean Breeze Estates will be re-developed,
- The Department of National Defence supports trail development along Magazine Hill,
- There will be potential for off and on road linkages to navigate the harbour,
- The Fairview interchange will create access to Seaview Park.

Mr. Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning continued the presentation by advising:

- HRM owns 1,600 park related properties,
- This work is coming out of the Regional Plan,
- Halifax is one of the top cities in Canada for urban force canopy,
- The plan sets targets and technical guidelines to benefit the overall city regarding the canopy.
- Trees provide engineering solutions to storm water management, pavement management, air quality and micro climate,
- Canopy streets last 30% longer than regular streets,
- The study will take approximately two years,
- 60% of canopy trees are located on private lands,
- There is a large number of natural force land holdings,
- Tree retention will be a part of the exercise,
- Underground wiring will be explored,
- An agreement has been made with Nova Scotia Power regarding pruning standards,

Mr. Bigelow continued his presentation by advising of the Active Transportation Plan, noting:

- The Dartmouth harbour front trail is a great connector trail,
- The Active Transportation Plan is integrated with parts of the Transportation Functional Plan which mandates alternative means of travel,
- The Active Transportation Plan is in the implementation phase,

- The plan will provide connections along the Shubie Canal and Morris Lake,
- A future ferry plan for the North West Arm is a possibility,
- The plan looks at the spine of the Peninsula,
- An Outdoor Recreation Facilities Master Plan has been proposed with wilderness corridors to view the impact on wildlife and natural areas,
- The plan will look inward to take advantage of linear park and future open space opportunities,
- The plan will look outward to provide a natural experience for residents within a 10-15 minute commute by vehicle or transit,
- The plan will ensure people can have a wilderness experience within an urban environment.

Task Force Members provided questions and comments on the above noted presentation, advising:

Mr. Hyde noted that an urban tree replacement plan should be initiated throughout this process. He referenced trees in Winnipeg and noted that HRM should mimic their standards when possible. In response to Mr. Hyde, Mr. Bigelow advised that tools are being used to determine tree health, and from analysis a recommendation will be made to Council regarding maintenance. He noted that HRM has one of the best urban forces in the Country.

Mr. Bigelow responded to questions from Task Force Members by advising:

- Gorsbrook has two schools on HRM land that is not ready for development,
- The Department of Natural Resources have been working with wilderness areas to develop a plan for the publically owned wilderness areas,
- The Western Common is dedicated as a wilderness area, but the bulk is provincially owned,
- The urban forest is a necessity to maintain good air quality,
- More regulation must be instituted around tress; however, some occupants of property are large institutions and there may not provide an opportunity to regulate harbour corridors,
- The open space will deal with the practical implementation,
- The urban design plan and the open space plan must be consistent in their recommendations,
- A primary streets should be accommodated by active transportation,
- The urban design plan should reflect what the active corridors are really like,

Ms. Godsoe thanked Mr. Bigelow and Mr. French for their presentation and applauded their work.

5.2 Staff report to Council- Forum 2 & 3 Outcomes

- A draft Council Report dated July 9, 2007 was before the Task Force.
- A report titled "Regional Centre- Urban Design Framework" was before the Task Force.
- A memorandum dated July 13, 2007 from the Urban Design Steering Committee was before the Task Force.

Ms. Godsoe advised that concentration of this discussion should revolve around making a recommendation to Council from the information provided.

Mr. Fillmore, Project Manager provide an overview, outlining the following:

- Extensive vetting has been conducted on the Forums 2 & 3 outcomes and strategies,
- There is a high level of confidence and approval in the draft Council Report from the Steering Committee,
- The Draft Council report is a condensed version of material that has been previously vetted through the Urban Design Task Force,

A discussion ensued regarding the composition of the Committee Report to Council where it was clarified that the report would include the committees recommendation, and could also include attachments of supporting material.

A discussion ensued regarding report formatting where the following points were made:

- Condense the Regional Centre document in two pieces as it is quite lengthy,
- define the intent of the word “framework,”
- change the order of the objectives and the framework as they do not fit,
- An executive summary would be helpful,
- A page of definitions would be helpful,
- Change the word objectives to overview,

Mr. Madi clarified that the Vision and Principles that Council approved together with the outcomes is the guiding framework. The original frameworks are now being called “strategies” and the plan as a whole is the framework. He noted that the framework is the objectives over the long term, and the strategies are the guides.

The Committee continued to provide suggestions regarding report formatting:

- The overviews outline some of the big ideas in a condensed way,
- The “Regional Centre- Urban Design Framework” report is confusing and should outline eight distinct bullets,
- A synopsis of what the forums accomplished and what is being proposed to Council would be helpful,
- The illustrative maps are to demonstrate approach. The implementation phase will require a more detailed visual presentation,
- The strategies are being approved,
- the bullets outline on page 3 of the draft council report outline the concepts,
- a template for individual neighbourhoods and their distinct characteristics as conformation of boundaries was requested at the last forum,
- pull out the strategies and clearly define what the Urban Design Task Force is asking Councils’ approval of,
- write the strategies in a more explanatory and predictive way so that Council and the public will have a better understanding of what may happen,
- Each individual strategy should have a page number next to make the document

- more user friendly,
- there needs to be a clear distinction and definition between generic and distinct urban areas,
- The Regional Plan is a passive forecast of what might happen outlining a more willful, form giving and directive process,

Mr. Madi provided clarification on various questions raised by the committee, advising:

- Details can be confirmed at a neighbourhood and district level. HRM can not look at the entire Regional Centre on a block- by- block basis, but detailed information will be provided on some areas,
- Page 11 of the Regional Centre document provides an outline regarding the commercial and industrial amenities that could be supported by the neighbourhood project. This section provides further detail outlining the size of the proposed neighbourhoods and the services needed to adequately support them,
- the process has registered growth targets, but they can be expanded if necessary,
- on page 63 of the “Regional Centre” document, in the 1st paragraph 4th line, the word "directs" should be changed to "anticipates" the growth. the Regional Plan anticipates growth and urban design directs growth,
- Policies to encourage residential increases outside the downtown are needed to make the urban design plan economically viable,
- Past negative growth trends predicated the 25,000 population increase outlined in the Regional Plan. If possible, it would be in the interest of good urban design to increase those projections,
- the critical mass must be defined throughout the urban design process by looking at proportion of growth and what growth should be increased,
- the public should be consulted before changes are made to population projections and goals,
- The intent is to populate the entire Regional Centre, not just the downtown,
- There must be a connect between densification and open spaces.

MOVED by Mr. Garrett, seconded by Ms. Garber, that The Urban Design Task Force recommend that Regional Council approve the proposed Urban Design Framework concepts and strategies outlined in the report dated July 9, 2007. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5.2.1 Regional Centre- Urban Design Framework

Addressed under item 5.2.

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS- NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATION

7.1 Letter from Heritage Trust

- A letter from The Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia dated July 18, 2007 was circulated.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the committee will take the suggestions into consideration when editing the draft report.

8. ADDED ITEMS- NONE

8.1 Public Washrooms and Urban Issues

Councillor Smith advised that he recently heard on a radio station that “no urban plan should ever be completed without the supply of public washrooms.” He advised that he agrees with this statement and suggested exploring this through the urban design process.

Mr. Madi advised that re-introduction of public washrooms shows the shift in demographics regarding children and seniors, and noted that it important part of the overall plan.

9. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Urban Design Task Force will be August 1, 2007 from 12:00-2:00 p.m. In Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall.

The Chair reminded the task Force that staff will be bringing the Task Force’s recommendation to Council on Tuesday, July 31st, 2007. She encouraged all Task Force Members to attend.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Chrissy White
Legislative Assistant