

Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
February 7, 2013

TO: Chair and Members of Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Jane Fraser, Director, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: November 29, 2012

SUBJECT: **CentrePlan: Green Building Standards**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

June 7, 2012: Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee

BACKGROUND

Committee requested a staff report on reviewing best practices of implementing green building standards in residential & commercial developments and how this may be implemented in the Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) CentrePlan.

DISCUSSION

During consultations on the CentrePlan, a consistent remark made by residents was with respect to the environmental impact of new buildings. The Toronto Green Building Standard and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification were cited as examples or proposed objectives. The Toronto Green Building Standards can be viewed at: <http://www.toronto.ca/planning/environment/greendevlopment.htm>

In the Downtown Halifax Land Use By-Law, Schedule S-1, Design Manual, Chapter 5, is the Sustainability Guidelines. Section 5.1, Sustainable Design, states the following: *Until HRM acquires the provincial authority to require that the guidelines in this chapter be met for all developments, the bonus zoning program will be used to encourage them in downtown Halifax.* The approved focus on density bonusing for CentrePlan consultations has been affordable housing objectives.

In Nova Scotia, municipalities do not have the authority to regulate the energy and sustainability characteristics of buildings through land use planning. Improvements to building design and performance must be addressed through the Nova Scotia Building Code.

That being the case, the Sustainability Guidelines closely mirrors LEED silver certification, or what the Building Code will look like upon adoption of the Model National Energy Code.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

(From the Canadian Green Building Council website) Since 2002, LEED Canada has been redefining the way we think about the places where we live, work and learn. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a third-party certification program and an internationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. As an internationally recognized mark of excellence, LEED provides building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance. Through certifying hundreds of projects over the past decade, LEED Canada has transformed the way built environments are designed, constructed, and operated --- from individual buildings and homes, to entire neighbourhoods and communities.

The Canadian rating systems are an adaptation of the US Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED Green Building Rating System, tailored specifically for Canadian climates, construction practices and regulations. The rating systems are adapted to the Canadian market through an inclusive process that engages CaGBC members, stakeholders and experts representing the various sectors of the Canadian industry.

LEED promotes a holistic approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health, which include sustainable site development, water efficiency, energy efficiency, materials selection, indoor environmental quality. Credits and Prerequisites are organized into these five categories. LEED Certification is based on the total

point score achieved in these five areas, following an independent review. With four possible levels of certification (certified, silver, gold and platinum), LEED is flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of green building strategies that best fit the constraints and goals of particular projects.

Model National Energy Code/Nova Scotia Building Code

Recently, staff participated in a Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education stakeholder meeting regarding the implementation of the Model National Energy Code (MNEC) into the Nova Scotia Building Code, cohosted by Department of Energy and Efficiency Nova Scotia.

Some key points presented by Provincial staff included:

- The model is a 25% improvement over the existing code; and
- The model is equivalent to LEED silver.

The next steps to bring the model code into law in Nova Scotia are: for the Nova Scotia Building Advisory Council to provide advice to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, and then ministerial prescription into law with effective date for enforcement.

At the stakeholder meeting, the largest barrier to adoption of the code (for all building types) is capacity building amongst the various trades and professionals involved with the building sector.

It should be noted, however, that in 2010, the Nova Scotia Building Code adopted most of the MNEC requirements for dwellings. As such, homes in Nova Scotia are among the most energy efficient in Canada.

Based on current progress with the Building Code in Nova Scotia, and the building sector working with government and educational institutions on capacity building, the community objective of green buildings is being well met.

The objectives of CentrePlan in revitalizing the Regional Centre provide a number of environmental benefits which were articulated in early project development.

Centre Plan Opportunities

The HRMbyDesign's Centre Plan will reinvent development and community design within the Regional Centre, and will be a model for future planning efforts across the entire municipality. The Centre Plan will:

- Create economic development opportunities through new, clear, predictable and expedient approval processes;
- Result in walkable and complete neighbourhoods;
- Focus growth, change, and density on vacant and underutilized land ("opportunity sites") and along major urban corridors;
- Protect the character and scale of existing neighbourhoods;

- Ensure that patterns of land use and transit/active transportation are mutually supportive;
- Reduce HRM's environmental footprint through the reduction in energy and resource consumption associated with dense and walkable communities;
- Improve housing affordability and housing options; and
- Keep the cost of municipal services low (and thereby protect the residential tax rate) by focusing growth in areas with existing infrastructure and services.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no impacts to the 2013/2014 Operating or Project Budgets from this report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This staff report was requested as a result of consistent community input during Phase One of CentrePlan consultations.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:

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