

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

May 23, 2007

PRESENT:

Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Ms. Cathy Carmody
Ms. Linda Garber
Mr. Frank Palermo
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Kendall Taylor
Mr. David Garrett
Ms. Adriane Abbot
Councillor Smith
Councillor Wile
Ms. Margot Young

REGRETS:

Mr. Paul MacKinnon, Vice-Chair
Mr. Paul Shakotko
Mr. Bill Hyde
Mr. Stephen Terauds
Mr. Kevin Riles
Councillor Sloane

STAFF:

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design
Ms. Jacqueline Hamilton, Manager, Capital District
Ms. Danbi Lee, Masters Student
Ms. Chrystiane Mallaley, Communications
Ms. Chrissy White, Legislative Assistant

CONSULTANTS:

Mr. Harold Madi, Office for Urbanism
Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat, Office for Urbanism

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m. in the Halifax Ferry Terminal Board Room with Ms. Linda Garber acting as Chair.

Ms. Godsoe joined the meeting via speaker phone, but waved her role as Chair.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair introduced Ms. Chrystiane Mallaley, Communications Officer for the project.

- A handout titled "Soskoloneassociates" was before the Committee.

Mr. Madi introduced Mr. Ron Soskolne, advising that he is an expert in real estate development and has a background in architecture and planning. Mr. Soskolone worked as the Chief Planner for the Central Waterfront in Toronto, and has worked with New York City regarding the redevelopment of Brooklyn as a mixed use without residential. He is working with the Office for Urbanism providing perspective on land economics to ensure urban design recommendations inspire investment.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Change:

Add Mr. Harold Madi to the attendance list as he was present.

MOVED by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Garrett, that the minutes from May 2, 2007 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Ms. Carmody, that the Order of Business be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**- None

6. REPORTS

6.1 Discussion re: traffic and transit priorities and the urban design process- David Reage/ David McCusker

Mr. David Reage, Metro Transit provided an overview on the above noted. The following points were made:

- The Peninsula transit corridor will dedicate travel lanes in various areas,
- As the Metro Transit Link grows, more area will have to be dedicated,

Committee Members and Staff provided their comments where the following points were noted:

- Mr. Garrett advised that there needs to be integration between transportation planning and the Urban Design Study,
- Mr. Fillmore, Project Manager advised that the Committee would like to “push the envelop” in regards to transit and the urban design study. He elaborated by noting that this is an opportunity to set the tone for transit priorities and lasting change. He further advised that any suggested strategy must be adaptable.
- Ms. Jacqueline Hamilton, Manager, Capital District advised that urban design staff have met with Transit staff to discuss bettering the integration of transportation. She advised that there is an active transportation plan, a parking strategy, transit corridor work, and transportation functional work that is being initiated around road capacity and traffic. She further advised that it is not the intent of the Urban Design Project to create a transportation plan, as that would be outside the scope of the mandate. The ideal would be to integrate the work with HRM by Design by going beyond a street scape framework to create policies that speak to the transportation area.
- Mr. Palermo advised that the Committee should not think of urban design as a streetscape study, but as an integrative process bringing together land use, transportation and environment. He noted that the city and its experience must be considered as a whole, and not in sections. He further advised that we should be aware of the transportation plans to ensure that they are not separate from the goals for the project. Once public transit is supported, the frameworks will be easier to design.
- Ms. Keesmaat advised of the importance of creating an additional framework to speak to the transit corridors and the accommodation of density. She noted that density should be tied to locations where transit priorities occur. She elaborated by advising that the proposed framework and the policy framework relationships should be taken into consideration.
- Ms. Carmody expressed concern regarding the reactive approach regarding “people”. She advised that more discussion needs to be had surrounding who will make up our city in 25 years, and who the urban design project wants to attract. She noted the people will determine transportation, and the

transportation will be dictated by who lives where..

- Mr. Reage advised that Metro Transit is trying to become more proactive by working with senior staff to expand service.

A handout titled "Extracts: Regional Centre Urban Design Study RFP" was circulated to the Committee.

Mr. Harold Madi provided an overview on the above noted. He advised:

- The RFP outlines a Settlement Plan that will be transit oriented,
- Emphasis has been concentrated on a workable, viable and convenient transit system that builds itself and reinforces urban design,
- The Regional Plan identifies centres as transit hubs, and urban design will build on these plans,
- The mandate regarding transit is to create patterns that are useable,
- The Office for Urbanism has recommended increased transit corridors to direct intensification. The framework will help reinforce the transit policies in the Regional Plan,
- Transit is fundamental to the success of reurbanization,
- The consultants committed to becoming more explicit with transit.

Committee Members provided their comments, noting the following:

- Mr. Smith advised that heavy traffic and transit use has a negative affect on single family homes. He noted that apartemts are better equipt to deal with heavy traffic volumes, but in turn may cause property values to decline. He suggested reviewing densities along main traffic routes,
- Councillor Smith expressed confusion around whether transit drives development or development drives transit. He advised that user fees must be a part of the transit formula, as the increased service may increase the price,
- Ms. Margot Young advised that she believes that the focus should be on development and not transit. She noted, if there are beautiful places to live; people will come, and then in turn transit will come. She used the City of Moncton as an example of urban design success.

6.2 Agenda Review for Forum 4

- A handout titled "Forum 4 Downtown Districts" was before the Committee.

Ms. Keesmaat provided and overview on the above noted. The following points were made:

- HRM By Design 101 will be offered as a refresher for participants. This was a successful activity during Forum 3,
- The heritage framework will be introduced in this forum,

- The schedule will be similar to the previous forums,
- District plans will be provided for the Cogswell Interchange, Spring Garden Road, Cornwallice Park and the Downtown Core,
- Consensus and areas that need more discussion will be identified,
- the structure of the forum will be sympathetic to the restraints of the working professional so that they can participate without committing two full days,
- Developers will be invited to participate in forum 4 as the residents need to see the developers engaged in the process,
- The intent is to provide better understanding around land economics.

Mr. Fillmore advised that the venue for forum 4 will be at the old Attica space which is located in the downstairs level of the Roy Building.

Mr. Madi responded to Councillor Smith's concerns regarding plans for Dartmouth by advising that the Regional Centre is the focus, but the guidelines could be applicable to Downtown Dartmouth. At some point, Dartmouth will be considered through recommendations, but Dartmouth is not the focus at the time.

7. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

7.1 Communications Update- Andy Fillmore

Ms. Mallaley advised that she would be reporting to both the Capital District as well as the Corporate Communications Department.

Mr. Fillmore introduced Danbi Lee, Masters Student who will be working on the urban design project for the summer months.

Mr. Fillmore provided an update regarding staff resources for the project. He advised that an additional planner and a technical staff will be employed with the project.

Committee Members provided comments on the above noted.

Mr. Garrett advised that he would like to see increased communications regarding media coverage.

Ms. Godsoe advised that the Committee must be strategic regarding who attends the forums. She suggested having the Task Force personally contact people that they know to invite them to participate.

Ms. Carmody expressed concern with the lack of "people" representation at the forums. She suggested inviting Urban Sociologists to mend the gap.

Ms. Keesmaat advised that the participation at the forums is becoming more diverse.

7.2 Heritage Update- Andy Fillmore

Ms. Keesmaat provided an overview on the above noted.

- A series of assumptions has been created,
- In order to consider the urban design in the downtown, heritage protection must be considered,
- Heritage is much more than old buildings. It is about all of the parts of the urban environment that give us our sense of history. Future heritage will be taken into consideration throughout the strategy,
- Certainty of protection must be considered
- It is important to maintain a contiguous urban environment and expand it. Though the downtown is fragmented, there are areas that are not. This will be a balancing act with tangible outcomes,
- Identifiable landscape must be identified while maintaining heritage,
- Authenticity and quality should not be compromised.
- Broad(er) urban design objectives should determine building scales and heights, recognizing that low, medium and high buildings contribute to the heritage of the city.
- Heritage conservation can not ensure a clearly defined urban design framework,
Creative tools and mechanisms must be created to enhance heritage and urban design.

Ms. Keesmaat provided an overview regarding the recommended strategy for heritage resources:

- The strategies are completely interdependent on one another,
- The strategies use a definition of heritage criteria,
- The strategies assess properties identified through analysis of heritage interests and hope to designate heritage buildings that have not been identified yet,
- The strategies protect designated heritage resources from demolition,
- The strategies embrace Heritage Canada standards and guidelines,
- The plan intends to undertake heritage conservation studies to make designation easier for the owner,
- The intent is to establish guidelines for buffer zones around heritage districts,
- The strategy intends to identify and designate heritage monuments and landmarks, as well as identify and establish buffer zones around designated landmarks and monuments. The buffer zone establishes adjacency.
- The intent is to create methods for designating all identified heritage resources,

- The strategies assume that all identified heritage conservation districts will be identified, and new development will be consistent with height and scale regulations,
- The existing viewplanes By-law will be maintained, and height encroachments will not be permitted,
- The 40 foot as-of-right will be maintained.

Committee Members provided comments on the above noted where the following points were made:

- There needs to be monetary incentives for this strategy to work,
- Government Stakeholders need to be onside,
- This may be complicated material for a public forum,
- HRM has the least heritage protection in Canada. The reason heritage buildings are still standing is because there has been minimal growth. The heritage buildings will be in danger when growth increases
- The project will look at embodied development and environmental impacts, the purpose is to provide clarity surrounding where height should and shouldn't be considered,
- Suggest key issues for testing throughout the forum and in turn the heritage template will be tested to gauge if it can be used,
- By- in can not be accomplished unless the Task Force understands the material,
- There will be a consolidated plan with a specific recommendation for public consumption,
- Do it simply, do it carefully, but do it,
- The buffer zones could be tested in the forums,
- Halifax's heritage is robust and that should be maintained,
- Concern was expressed with the rules surrounding heritage protection,
- The public input gathered at the heritage forum aided in the creation of the heritage assumptions,
- The implications of the heritage assumptions need to be identified and addressed,
- contrary views must be considered. People should be given the opportunity to provide suggestions that are different from the suggested materials,

Ms. Godsoe advised that the heritage introduction should take place at 8:30 a.m.

Mr. Soskolone advised that the device should enable the discussion. The assumptions should not be questioned regarding the desirability of viewplanes, height and heritage; that information should be used to identify areas where there is less anxiety.

7.3 Reurbanization- Harold Madi

Deferred to the next meeting

7.4 People

The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting to address people and social issues. Mr. Fillmore and the Legislative Assistant will e-mail a date and time.

7.5 Sustainability Update- Kendall Taylor/David Garrett

Deferred to the next meeting

8. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

8.1 Discussion re: electronic agenda package

Deferred to the next meeting

9. ADDED ITEMS- None

10. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Urban Design Task Force will be on June 20, 2007 in the Halifax Ferry Terminal Board Room at 12:00- 2:00 p.m. The focus of the meeting will be to approve the forum 2 and 3 outcomes.

The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting on June 27th with a mandate to discuss people and social issues.

10.1 Discussion re: June 27th, 2007 meeting

Addressed under item 10.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Chrissy White
Legislative Assistant