

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

June 27, 2007

PRESENT:

Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Paul MacKinnon, Vice-Chair
Ms. Cathy Carmody
Mr. David Garrett
Ms. Linda Garber
Ms. Margo Young
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Kevin Riles
Mr. Paul Shakotko
Mr. Frank Palermo
Councillor Wile
Councillor Sloane

REGRETS:

Mr. Bill Hyde
Mr. Kendall Taylor
Councillor Smith

STAFF:

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager
Mr. Austin French, Manager, Regional Plan
Ms. Chrystiane Mallaley, Communications
Ms. Chrissy White, Legislative Assistant

CONSULTANTS:

Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat, Office for Urbanism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER	3
2.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES - NONE	3
3.	APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES	3
5.	REPORTS	3
5.1	People and the Urban Design Project- Cathy Carmody	4
6.	CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS	
7.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS	3
7.1	Approval of Future Meeting Schedule	3
8.	ADDED ITEMS	
9.	NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE - July 18, 2007 from 11:30 -2:30	
10.	ADJOURNMENT	

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - NONE

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

Move item 7.1 to the first order of business

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

7.1 **Approval of the 2007 meeting schedule**

- A memorandum titled "2007 meeting schedule" was before the Committee.
- a document titled "Critical Path Flow Chart" was circulated.

Mr. Higgins, Implementation Coordinator provided an overview of the critical path flow chart outlining important dates and work that must be accomplished to maintain the schedule. He advised that the schedule is tight and there is little room for error or delays.

In response to Mr. Garretts concern regarding the communication plan and how it will fit with of the critical path schedule, Ms. Mallaley advised that she will create a document outlining the parallels between the two above noted documents. She will provide this as an agenda item at a future meeting to help provide clarity.

Councillor Sloane entered the meeting at 12:16.

MOVED by Mr. MacKinnon ,Seconded by Mr. Smith, that the 2007 meeting schedule be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

5. **REPORTS**

5.1 **People and the Urban Design Project**

Ms. Godsoe provided an introduction to Ms. Carmody's presentation outlining "people" as a critical aspect of the overall framework.

Ms. Cathy Carmody, Task Force Member presented an overview on the above noted, highlighting::

- re-urbanization is about re-populating,

- How does the urban design plan intend to accomplish the mandates outlined in the vision statement regarding the enrichment of urban living and creating affordable, safe and welcoming places?
- Concrete examples should be created to support the vision statement, and words should be examined to ensure they are realistically implementable,
- The plan should mitigate negative press coverage and enhance the good aspects of the process,
- A plan should be created to outline how the project intends to create designs to enable one to spend their entire life in the Regional Centre, even through retirement,
- New policies and incentives may need to be created to support these plans,
- How do we structure the plan so that one can afford to live in the Peninsula?
- A range of demographics should be represented so that people in different age and income brackets have the ability to live in diverse neighbourhoods.

Committee Members provided their comments on the above presentation, noting the following:

Councillor Sloane advised that some mixed use heritage buildings are being used as apartments. She suggested relaxing codes to create more opportunity. She referenced the U.S State of Michigan noting that they re-zoned an old mill building to house people by giving the tenants creative abilities around design and square footage. She further suggested implementing a regulation that mandates developers to provide an affordable unit for every 10 units built.

Ms. Carmody advised that inconvenience hinders density where there is limited parking resources and amenities. She further added that the Committee must ensure that real estate fundamentals are outlined.

Mr. Riles advised that some developers study what attracts the urban client and how to fill the gap when a family expands. He noted that UDI Canada studies national plans and concentrates on affordability and livability. He advised that the creation of “ghetto’s” can be blamed on secluded affordable development. He noted that affordable living must be blended, as the isolation approach does not work.

Mr. Fillmore, Project Manager advised that he and Mr. French, Manager, Regional Plan met to discuss amendments to the Municipal Government Act and decided that this step may not be necessary.

Mr. French advised that the Committee could suggest enforcing stipulations on Developers regarding height and affordability. He noted that this could be accomplished by using a building-by-building strategy. He advised that when municipally owned land is considered, terms could be demanded once the land is developed. He noted that alternative building codes create a staircase problem where two buildings must work together with one standard feeding off of the other.

Ms. Carmody advised that the social and cultural sustainability issues must be addressed. She advised of the following to support her point:

- She referenced isolation problems faced by senior citizens living in high rise complexes and noted that isolation is a social component that should be addressed in the plan,
- She noted that immigration should be a priority, questioning how the plan intends to attract all races so they can feel comfortable in any part of the city,
- She advised that the public housing element is not working. She suggested eliminating the property but not the subsidy by selling public housing and providing credit for housing of the tenants choice,
- She questioned the steps that will be taken to ensure the vision is supported by reality.

Mr. Shakotko questioned if urban design drives business or if business drives urban design. He noted that the Committee is working around the assumption that “if nice buildings are built, people will come, “ but questioned the validity of this approach.

Councillor Wile expressed concern regarding the idea of trying to attract people to the downtown with the creation of a “5th Avenue” type of city. She noted that Senior Citizens will not be attracted to this lifestyle as the safe element will be lacking due to the high levels of activity. She noted that Clayton park has a high percentage of apartments, but apartments do not usually allow for large open spaces for children to play. She noted that developers should provide green space and play areas to enhance quality of life for tenants. She suggested concentrating on the outlying areas for development and noted that re-zoning abilities could be available. She concluded by advising that communities should be built equipt with strip malls housing cafes, clinics and shopping amenities for seniors.

Mr. French advised that an approach to zoning could be conducted using a set of design criteria, including height. He advised that this would be controversial in the beginning, but could be beneficial. He noted that the process could create a new approach to regulation with a zoning feel.

Mr. Riles advised that density regulations are constantly challenged with demands for amenities. He noted that developers will not build buildings that are not profitable.

Mr. French responded by clarifying that HRM uses a development agreement process that follows the policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) instead of awarding density bonuses.

Ms. Lee, Masters Intern advised that as she is a student, a young professional and a visible minority. She noted that through her work, she has examined other cities in Canada and their strategies around bonusing and incentives. She advised that some cities have created “amenity funds” where the developer puts money aside and the city builds a reserve that they draw on to build green space and amenities. This takes the responsibility away from the developer and gives citizens more choice.

It was noted that The City of Boston has created a backstreet program where businesses are encouraged to hire immigrants. The businesses can then apply for funding for employing “backstreet people.”

Mr. Mackinnon advised that the project will signify a real policy shift for HRM which will be necessary in re-populating the downtown.

It was noted that the urban design process should be looked at as a marketing project where strategies are outlined on how to attract clientele who want to live, work and play in the downtown. It was further noted that the Regional Plan lays the foundation for a shift, but urban design must fill in the “who and why” blanks.

Ms. Keesmaat, Consultant, Office for Urbanism provided comments.

- She advised that creating affordable housing policies is not part of the urban design mandate, and questioned if an Affordable Housing Strategy exists for HRM,
- She noted that after conducting population projections, it is anticipated that 21,000 people will migrate to the Regional Centre over the next 25 years. She questioned if the goal is intensive enough, and advised that Halifax needs more growth to receive growth benefits,
- She noted that economic, social and cultural diversity are the fundamental building blocks for a successful urban core. She suggested bringing seniors and children together at a programmatic level to address issues of amenities and social sustainability,
- She advised that thriving urban environments that house a strong working base will attract tourism because the working class create the needed for the amenities that attract tourists,
- The project should plant the social seeds that will create the interfaces to support the overall campaign,
- Some social issues will interface with the study, but others will have to be addressed at a policy level and will need more study. A raft of policy mechanisms will be presented and this will link to the proposed built form and what the market can bare,
- She advised that in order to attract families to the Regional Centre the best school and amenities must exist in that area.

Mr. French advised that there are affordable housing programs offered through the provincial government, but an Affordable Housing Strategy does not exist within the municipality. He further advised that the Department of Education and Planning has an investment strategy for schooling in the Peninsula. He concluded by advising that the Regional Plan has projected a 25,000 population growth over 25 years, but 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.

Mr. Palermo advised that the forums should be reasonable to ensure a proper quality of life is attainable. He noted that projections provide a rear view mirror method to planning, as they are not quite precise. He advised that public infrastructure is what comes out of the urban design plan, and public investment is needed to sustain the quality of life for a variety of users in one area. He noted that accomplishing an incredible transportation plan through urban design will help either create or maintain quality of life.

Mr. French advised that people can not be forced to live in the downtown by making restrictions. He noted that there is nothing in the Regional Plan that does not allow and encourage vibrant development.

A brief discussion ensued regarding open space where the following comments were made:

Mr. French advised that the Regional Plan team had identified open spaces and they are working on them, as well as the harbour clean-up. He noted that if a building is re-developed, at a guideline level, there will be a recommendation for an amenity of open space design.

Mr. Riles advised that this city can not avoid vertical development due to the pricing of commercial lands on a horizontal basis.

Ms. Godsoe advised that a good governance plan is needed to ensure success at a stakeholder level. She stressed that a major cultural change in HRM would be required to implement HRMbyDesign. As HRMbyDesign can not, by the nature of its mandate, cover all issues, it should recommend new, creative partnerships with partners like the Province of Nova Scotia (affordable housing as an example) and with the Halifax School Board. She noted that the urban design plan will bring significant change on a policy and culture level and all levels of government must be involved.

6. **CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**- None

7. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS**

7.1 **Approval of Future Meeting Schedule**

Addressed under the first item of business. See page 3.

8. **ADDED ITEMS**- None _____

9. **NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE**

The next regular meeting of the urban Design Task Force will be July 18th , 2007 from 11:30 -2:30 p.m. in the Media Room, 1st Floor, City Hall.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m.

Legislative Assistant