

memo

8.1.2

To: Urban Design Task Force Members
From: Office for Urbanism
Date: March 6, 2007
Subject: **Forum 2 Outcomes - UPDATE.**

This memo provides members of the Urban Design Task Force with an update on the status of Forum 2 Outcomes. These outcomes will be in the form of case study descriptions, urban design strategies and principles. At the February 7, 2007 Urban Design Task Force Meeting, it was requested that the outcomes of Forum 2 be presented at the following Urban Design Task Force Meeting to provide enough time to "vet" the materials prior to them being presented to the public in Forum 3.

The materials are still under development, but their purpose is included in this memo as well as a summary of Forum 2 outcomes as an attachment.

1.0 CONTEXT

Forum 2 looked at developing draft urban design strategies and principles for intensification in the HRM Regional Centre by taking 5 case study areas and describing the existing and potential character; developing principles to provide guidance on how infill will be applied in these areas; and, developing urban design strategies that serve to implement key components of the framework in these 5 case study areas.

The 5 Case Study Areas examined were:

1. Downtown Halifax including Cornwallis Park and Spring Garden Road
2. Quinpool Road including the neighbourhoods of Vernon and Jubilee
3. Gottingen
4. Downtown Dartmouth and Dartmouth Cove
5. Wyse Road

2.0 KEY OUTCOMES OF FORUM 2

The Downtown Halifax group identified areas with a clear identity, areas in transition and areas in need of an identity. Areas with a clear identity will see the least amount of change, while those areas in need of an identity will see the most amount of change within Downtown Halifax. Discussions around accommodating height and the criteria for evaluating whether it may be permissible were also established.

Vernon/Jubilee/Quinpool is mostly low-rise commercial with stable residential neighbourhoods surrounding it. It was agreed that more residential should be introduced along Quinpool Rd while respecting the surrounding low-rise neighbourhoods. Quinpool Rd could accommodate intensification in the form of 3-5 stories along the street. New opportunities for open space were

identified as well as where open space enhancements should be made. Finally, a strategy for parking was discussed.

Gottingen was recognized as an ethnic and culturally diverse neighbourhood that has the potential to emerge as an exciting/eclectic place. Some of the ideas discussed were: the linking of Agricola St to Gottingen to improve flow and the built form; the emergence of the area as a mixed-use district; enhancing open spaces and the areas historic significance including the creation of a heritage district along Brunswick St; and, breaking up large blocks with mid-block connections. Downtown Dartmouth/ Dartmouth Cove will maintain its village feel with its small block pattern, compact built form and intimate scale. Grade level retail will be introduced and enhancements to the open space system, and identification of gateway opportunities were some of the strategies discussed.

Wyse Road will be transformed from strip retail to 3 distinct centres along the corridor at 3 different scales: Local; neighbourhood; and, regional. The majority of the intensification will occur at the intersection of Nantucket Ave and Wyse Rd to mark entry to/from Halifax and Dartmouth. Taller buildings will be accommodated and will gradually transition to the low-rise character on the north end of the corridor. Potential open spaces were also identified.

3.0 ACTION

Falling out of the work produced in the context of Forum 2, we are currently in the process of preparing urban design strategies and principles for each of the 5 case study areas looked at in Forum 2. These urban design strategies and principles will provide direction and guidance for intensification in these case study areas by providing demonstrations of infill that will be applied.

We ask that the Urban Design Task Force add an additional meeting on April 4th, 2007 to review the urban design strategies and principles that we are preparing. We anticipate these to be completed in advance of this proposed April 4th meeting to provide Task Force members an opportunity to review them prior to the meeting to allow the discussion to concentrate on edits and amendments. We will then use the feedback from the meeting to refine the urban design strategies and principles and present them at Forum 3 on April 16, 2007.

attachment 1 – summary of forum 2 outcomes

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES – FORUM 2

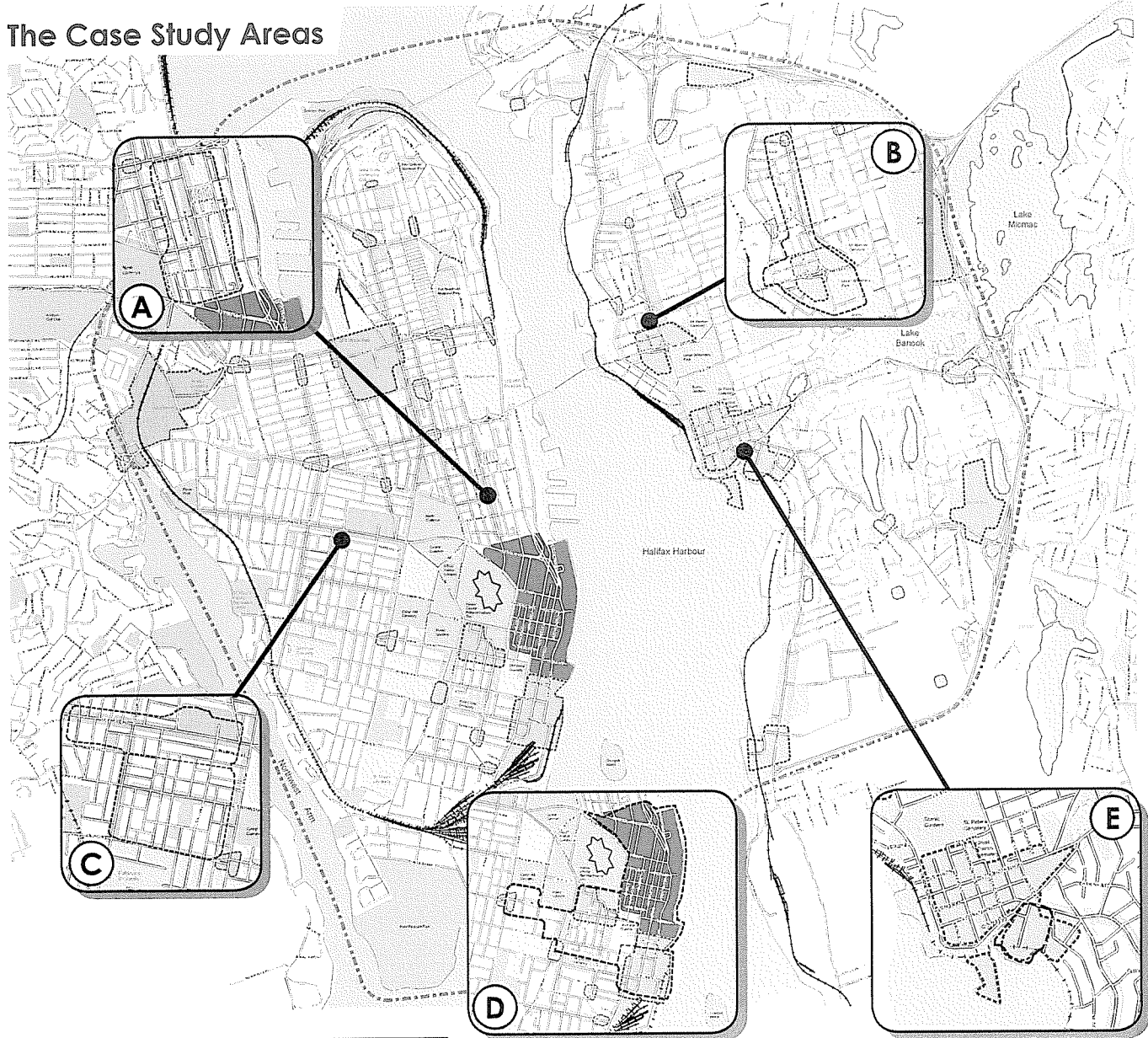
Objective:

Developing draft strategies and guidelines for intensification in the HRM Regional Centre. A variety of neighbourhoods and districts were chosen to assist in identifying the key urban design approaches that will inform model urban design guidelines applicable across the Regional Centre.

The following 5 Neighbourhoods and Districts were chosen as Case Study Areas for the intensification workshops:

- Cornwallis Park/Spring Garden Road
- Vernon/Jubilee/Quinpool Road
- Gottingen
- Downtown Dartmouth/Dartmouth Cove
- Wyse Road

The Case Study Areas



A. Gottingen

The Gottingen Neighbourhood is generally bounded by Brunswick Street to the northeast, North Street to the northwest, Maynard/ North Park Street to the southwest and Cogswell Street to the southeast.

B. Wyse Road

The Wyse Road District is generally bounded by Thistle Street/Scenic Gardens to the south, Windmill Road to the west, Albro Lake Road to the north and Richmond Street to the east.

C. Vernon/Jubilee and Quinpool Road

The Vernon - Jubilee - Quinpool Road Case Study Area is generally bounded by Robie Street to the east, Quinpool Road to the north, Oxford Street to the west and Coburg Road to the south.

D. Downtown Halifax

The Downtown Halifax District generally follows the HRM Capital District boundaries. For the purposes of the intensification workshops, the Cornwallis Park Neighbourhood and the Spring Garden Road District were also included within this Case Study Area. The Cornwallis Park Neighbourhood is generally bounded by Barrington Street to the west, Cornwallis Park to the south, Marginal Road/Lower Water Street to the east and Bishop Street to the north. The Spring Garden Road District is generally bounded by Sackville Street to the north, Robie Street to the west, Harvey Street to the south and Barrington Street to the east.

E. Downtown Dartmouth and Dartmouth Cove

Downtown Dartmouth and the Cove Neighbourhood were examined as one case study in the workshops. The case study area is generally bounded by Park Avenue to the north, Alderney Drive to the west, Albert Street to the south and Portland Street to the east.

OUTCOMES

Downtown Halifax/Cornwallis Park/Spring Garden Road

Character areas were identified throughout the Downtown and were then further separated into 3 categories: Areas in need of an identity; areas in transition; and, areas with a clear identity.

Areas with a clear identity:

- Barrington
- Brown/Bishops
- Brunswick Area
- Downtown
- Green/Kent
- Historic Properties
- Hollis South
- Purdy's Wharf
- Sackville Street
- Schmidville

Areas in Transition:

- Waterfront

Areas in Need of an Identity:

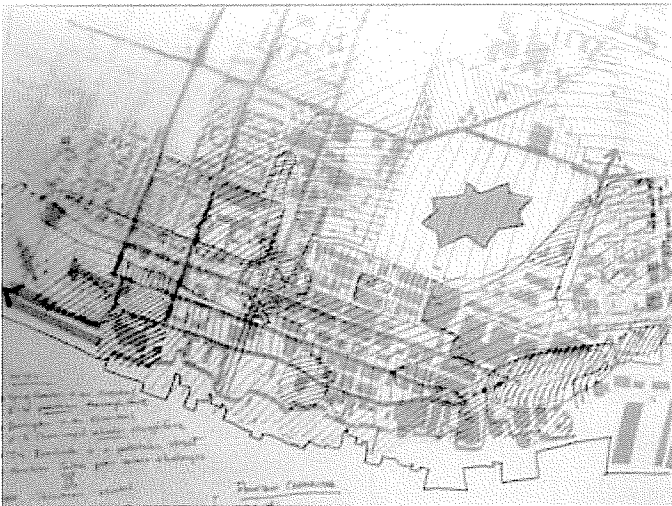
- Cogswell Interchange
- Brunswick/Rainee

There was a discussion on current height controls within Downtown Halifax which included the views to/from the Citadel and the Grand Parade; existing viewplanes by-laws; and the proximity to heritage, with consensus that the term proximity requires more clarity.

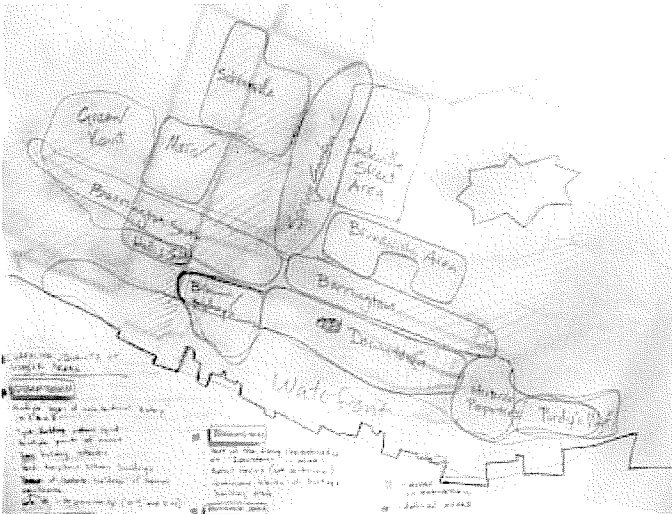
The discussion was followed by proposing criteria for the evaluation of height, including:

- Views of the Skyline, from the water;
- Proximity to Heritage;
- Transition – from low to high density areas;
- Wind and Shadow impacts;
- Skyview – how much of the sky is visible from street level;
- Integration with urban context and form;
- Quality – including both design quality and material quality;
- Whether the building has a positive or negative contribution to the public realm; and
- Street level presence – how the building meets the street.

Lastly, the group generated some ideas on the form of the buildings if height were to be accommodated in certain areas. The group felt that there should be a policy for buildings to scale down towards the waterfront; that in the downtown area, significant density can be achieved through the traditional mid-rise building type built out to the property line side by side; stepbacks are a useful tool to deal with height, but may need to be evaluated on a case by case basis; and, 3D modelling should be used to show the building in its context including showing the as-of-right condition and providing different massing options.



One of the drawings produced for Downtown Halifax during the course of the 2-day workshop



Precinct Plan showing the different areas that make up the Downtown

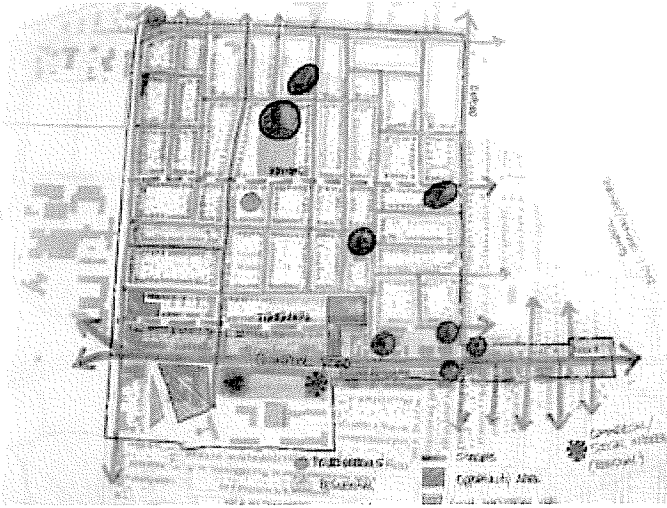
Vernon/Jubilee/Quinpool Road

This case study area is characterized by the low-rise commercial along Quinpool Road with stable residential areas to the South. It was generally agreed by the group that the low-rise commercial along Quinpool Rd. makes the street feel more suburban, despite being within an urban context. There was consensus that more residential uses should be introduced to ensure more people are able to live closer to where they work.

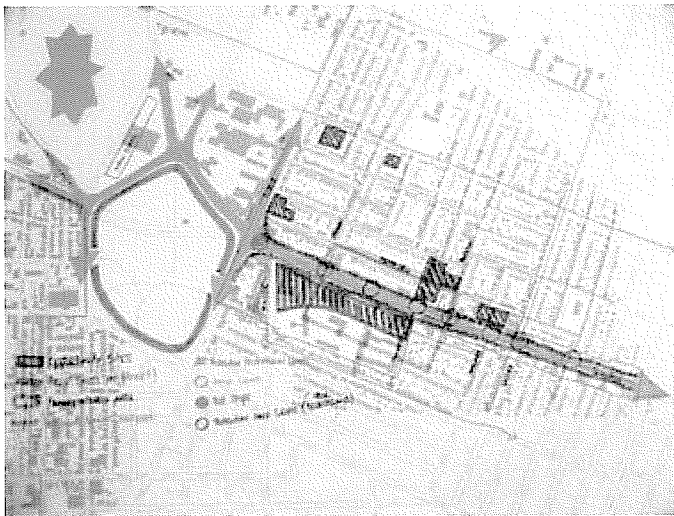
The group tackled a number of issues around built form with consensus reached that drive-thru's should be restricted along Quinpool Rd. It was also agreed that appropriate transitions will need to be accommodated such as the back lanes between Pepperell and Quinpool to ensure minimal impact to the stable residential areas to the south.

Principles for the Vernon/Jubilee/Quinpool Road Area:

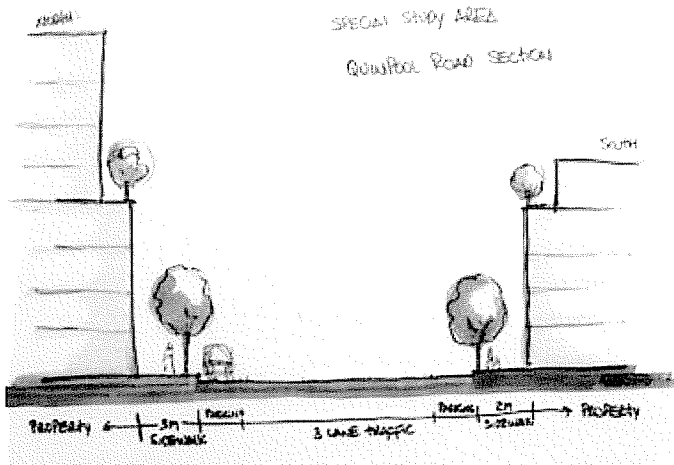
- Intensification may be accommodated as long as low-rise residential neighbourhoods are respected (adjacent).
- Respect for low-rise neighbourhoods includes consideration of:
 - Minimizing traffic impacts
 - Ensuring no/limited wind and shadow impacts
 - Ensuring development on Quinpool does not adversely impact on the quality of side streets (i.e. Pepperell St)
- Drive thru's restricted as incompatible with pedestrian-oriented street.
- In order for Quinpool to become a thriving pedestrian neighbourhood and regional centre, appropriate transitions need to be created (i.e. back lanes).
- Intensification may be defined in a preliminary way, for Quinpool as being 3-5 storeys.
- Quinpool needs to be shaped by a defining feature, or characteristic, that shapes its personality into the future. This must draw from the character of the residential neighbourhoods to the north and south.
- Traffic infiltration into residential neighbourhoods will be restricted.
- Ensure pedestrians can cross Quinpool Road with ease at regular intervals.
- Improvements to the road network must provide high quality pedestrian and bicycle environment and must accommodate increased transit service over the long term.
- Utilities along Quinpool Rd should be placed underground, and the previous locations of utility poles should be planted with trees.
- Explore the possibility of extending the Chebucto lane south of Quinpool Rd.
- New development should ensure a continuous street wall (no set back) as per existing dominant character on Quinpool.
- The St. Patrick school site, and the Quinpool Centre, was identified as a significant redevelopment site that offers the opportunity to accommodate a significant residential population. It was agreed that more height could be accommodated on these sites, particularly given the precedent of height both to the north and south. Any new development should have commercial uses at grade on Quinpool Road, and should provide for a strong pedestrian environment.
- Amenity green/open space must be provided for new developments.
- Parking for Quinpool will be accommodated through municipal lots, shared parking, and on-street parking. In addition there should be no parking fronting on Quinpool (i.e. surface/structured lots). Reducing the parking requirements should be explored.



Concept Plan created during the workshops for the Vernon/Jubilee/Quinpool Road Area



Public and Private Realm Improvement Plan created during the workshops which also identifies potential opportunity sites



Street Cross Section for Quinpool Road showing possible height scenarios

Gottingen

The Gottingen Area is one of Halifax's most ethnic and culturally diverse neighbourhoods, with a significant stock of historic housing but also many opportunities for development. There was consensus amongst the group that this area will not re-emerge as a Main Commercial District but should be a focus area for transformation.

Potential for the Gottingen Area:

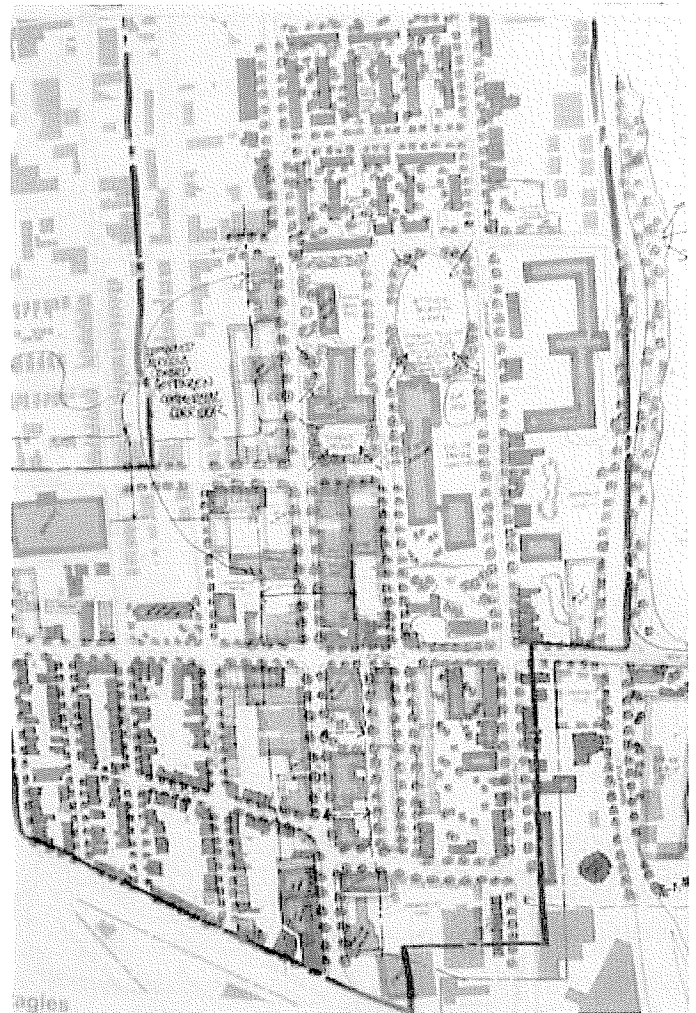
- Potential to be a very exciting/eclectic place.
- Link Agricola Street to Gottingen (by Cunard) through new development to create a more natural flow of uses and built form between Agricola and Gottingen St. This will enhance the commercial uses that currently exist along both streets.
- Gottingen should emerge as a mixed use district due to its proximity to downtown.
- Existing floor plates for ground floor retail are too large, preventing small businesses from locating along Gottingen due to the high rents charged. Future developments should retain retail at grade to ensure a pedestrian oriented environment, but floor plates should be reduced to provide for a greater diversity of services and retail stores.
- Street level greenspaces should be maintained and enhanced while opportunities exist to provide for greenspaces on rooftops for existing and future developments.
- Enhance the historic significance of the area.
- The possibility of creating a new public square on the former Sobey's site exists.
- Some blocks are too long along Gottingen and opportunities exist for mid-block connections.
- Creation of a heritage district along Brunswick Street should be considered.

Character Statement for the Gottingen Area:

- There is significant heritage stock that has potential and is currently underutilized.
- Vacant sites present large intensification opportunities, providing proximity to Downtown Halifax and existing services/amenities that has the potential of changing negative perceptions and provides an opportunity for significant change.
- Uniacke Square can look to new urban design solutions with the strength of the community giving it coherence.
- The area is an important transition between Downtown and the North End and this should be reflected in the built form, with the uses capitalizing on the high traffic in the area.
- One of the possible options for existing vacant sites should be the possibility of including transitional housing.
- Maintain the walkability of the area and the fine grained network of streets and built form.

Principles for the Gottingen Area:

- Balance the need to intensify the area with the need to protect the stable neighbourhoods that exist in the area.
- Create stronger connections with downtown by addressing the barrier caused by the Cogswell Interchange.
- Re-introduce essential amenities to the Gottingen area (banks, grocery stores, greenspaces, etc).
- Increases in density will animate Gottingen.
- Heritage (both Cultural and Built) should be protected.
- Repair the street wall by filling in the "broken teeth" (vacant sites).
- Celebrate the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Gottingen Area.
- Re-connect closed off streets to create a permeable environment for pedestrians.



Draft Concept Plan for the Gottingen Area showing re-opened street connections and enhancements to existing open spaces and potential new open spaces

Urban Design Strategies for the Gottingen Area:

- Zero setbacks will ensure a strong pedestrian environment.
- Restrict drive-thru restaurants in the area.
- Ensure that new residential development is integrated with the larger community, avoiding development that is isolated such as gated communities or developments oriented inwards.
- Additional density needs to be carefully regulated.
- Careful consideration needs to be given to rear lots along Maitland around the school.
- Ensure new development is built with permanence with an emphasis on the design and quality of materials.
- Maintain the shallow setbacks which currently exist along Maynard to ensure development is compatible with its surroundings.
- Complete the street wall around the Common.

Downtown Dartmouth/Dartmouth Cove

Downtown Dartmouth/Dartmouth Cove is an area steeped in history including a significant stock of existing built heritage resources. The visual and physical proximity to Downtown Halifax can be anticipated to be a primary influence on the role, function and growth of the area moving forward. Downtown Dartmouth has a 'village' feel characterized by its small block and street pattern, compact built form, intimate scale, clearly defined edges and numerous churches.

Character Statement

- Protecting and enhancing the area's heritage which is of significance to the entire region
- The mixed-use character including the marine industrial functions are defining characteristics
- The topography, including the shoreline and south facing slope provide exceptional views to the harbour mouth and afford sun penetration
- The area should continue to function as a major centre for surrounding neighbourhoods
- Reinforce the 'village' character while remaining a regional draw

Opportunities for Downtown Dartmouth/Dartmouth Cove:

- Design at-grade levels for adaptive reuse into retail
- Appropriate heights and visually pleasing buildings
- Need to define approach for taller buildings
- Small town character
- Promote entertainment uses
- Portland Street as a cultural and entertainment corridor
- Improve shoreline and create intimate spaces
- Continuation of trail to enhance opportunities for pedestrian connection to downtown
- Create a 'Promenade' along the trail
- Celebrate the canal by ensuring buildings that front onto it
- North park neighbourhood properties have an impressive character
- Marina opportunities at the foot of Ochterloney St and the Dartmouth Cove
- Extending the pier to break wave impacts
- Tourist attractions needed
- Only public uses and parks on the waterfront side of Alderney Drive
- Keep Dartmouth Cove as a 'cove'

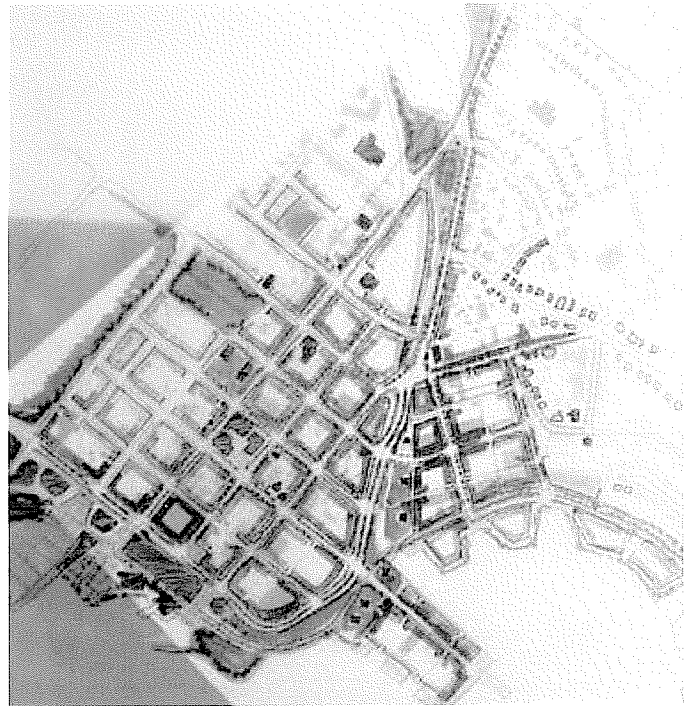
Additions to the Regional Centre Urban Design Framework

- 5 Corners an opportunity for secondary gateway
- The bridgehead a primary gateway
- Civic Landmark Streets: Ochterloney, Queen and Prince Albert (scenic route)
- Views – Ochterloney, King and Portland are key 'window' views to the water; Wyse Rd and Alderney Drive provide panoramic views; and, the 'curve' of Alderney provides a tremendous panoramic view opportunity
- Open Space – several shoreline opportunities
- Trails – missing link between the bridge and Ochterloney

Urban Design Strategies for Downtown Dartmouth/Dartmouth Cove:

General Approach to Built Form

- Landmark buildings to accommodate density
- Taller buildings with slender floor plates
- Reinforcing human-scaled street walls
- Stepped development to the shoreline to secure harbour views
- Strategic sites to be used for institutional and recreational uses
- 'Pavilion' buildings along the waterfront that do not obscure harbour views
- Promote roof gardens overlooking the water
- Higher densities and taller buildings should buffer existing low-rise residential with compatible forms and transitions in scale



Draft Concept Plan for Downtown Dartmouth and Dartmouth Cove showing potential building frontages and open spaces

North Street

- Remain predominantly residential in character

Ochterloney Street

- A variety of setbacks
- Heritage character
- Number of churches

Alderney Drive

- Traffic needs to slow down
- On-street parking should be permitted off peak traffic hours
- Commercial and mixed uses
- Signalized pedestrian crossings

Queen Street

- Institutional and service uses Such as the Alderney centre and post office
- Concentration of residences to the opposite end to the harbour

Portland Street

- Buildings close to the street continuous with animated frontages
- Entertainment uses
- Reinforcing and defining the uses

Cove Area

- Mixed uses
- Marine industrial uses and the rail line to be respected and integrated
- Contemporary style and an eclectic style

Canal

- Day lighting the buried canal
- Create Public space frontage to the canal
- Engage and animate canal frontage

Wyse Road

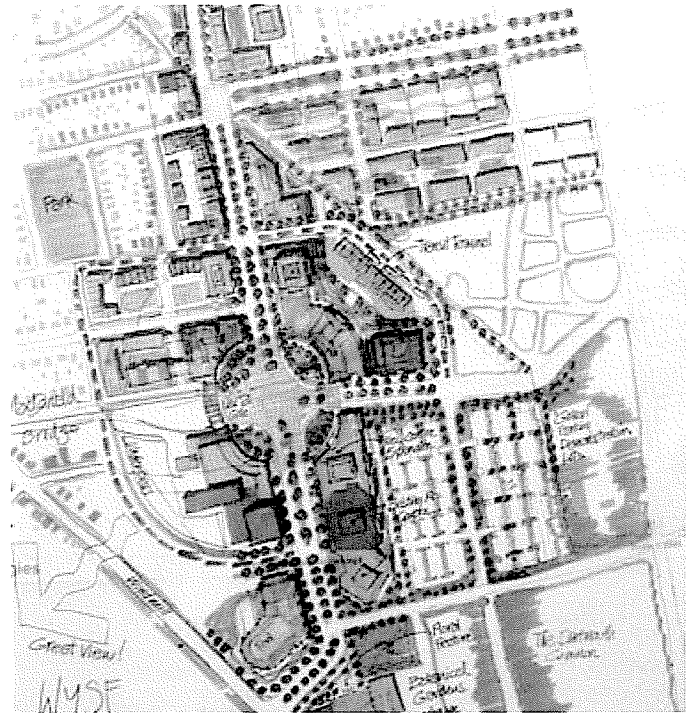
The Wyse Road area will emerge as the primary gateway to/from Halifax/Dartmouth that will provide both regional and neighbourhood amenities and services. The group was only able to identify 1 heritage building (the Old Brick Brewery) which will set the foundation for the character of the commercial area.

Potential for Wyse Road:

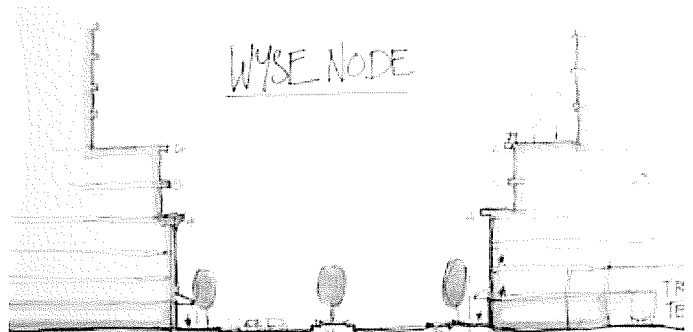
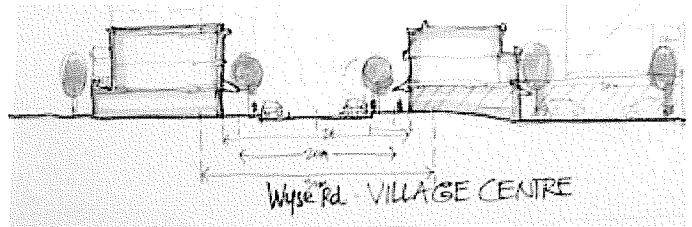
- Potential for the district to become a Regional Hub for transit through the relocation of the Dartmouth Bus Terminal to a more accessible location at the north east corner of Nantucket and Wyse Rd where it will be more easily accessible to riders and reduce the disruption of traffic along Wyse Rd.
- Expanding Boland Road could provide additional capacity to help ease congestion in the area and improve traffic flow.
- Potential for a new road connecting Victoria and Wyse Rd to feed more traffic onto Wyse Rd and off of the residential streets in the area, which will also help support the existing businesses along Wyse Rd by providing greater visibility.
- Creation of a green corridor to connect the various greenspaces and potentially expanding it to the waterfront.

Urban Design Strategies for Wyse Road:

- The Importance of enhancing pedestrian connections at the Wyse Rd and Nantucket Ave intersection to create an environment which is more pedestrian oriented.
- Explore programming options for commuting across bridge such as the creation of a frequent commuter bus that connects to Downtown Halifax, alleviating some of the congestion on the MacDonald Bridge.
- Extension of the street grid which exists in the surrounding neighbourhoods to the large blocks along Wyse Rd.
- The creation of 3 districts within the Wyse Road Area, which are as follows:
 - **District 1** Gateway Node – Potential for Higher buildings and density.
 - **District 2** Mid Wyse – Encourage local retail.
 - **District 3** North Wyse – Predominantly residential character.
- District 1 – Gateway to/from Halifax
 - Creating something monumental at the intersection of Nantucket Ave and Wyse Rd to mark entry to/from Halifax and to/from Dartmouth.
 - More intensification of residential and office uses can be accommodated in this district including taller buildings.
 - This district will also be the transportation hub of Dartmouth and the existing Bus terminal should be relocated to where adequate parking can be integrated into the redevelopment.
 - Enhance the area with more landscaping and streetscaping including the possibility of incorporating a significant sculpture or relocating the one that exists at the southwest corner of Nantucket Ave and Wyse Rd.
- District 2 – Community Retail/Commercial Area
 - This district should be completely redeveloped along Wyse Road with building which are more pedestrian oriented as opposed to the suburban strip mall type forms which currently exist.
 - This district will contain a variety of services and shops to serve a diverse population. Development will include retail at grade with residential units above to increase the population and create a more pedestrian oriented environment.
 - A focus for the community such as a park/plaza should be created to serve the surrounding neighbourhoods.
 - The existing Industrial uses should be removed and or converted to residential uses.



Draft Concept Plan for Wyse Road showing the gateway feature at Nantucket Ave and Wyse Road and the relocation of the transit terminal to the north-east to highlight some of the ideas generated



Street Cross Sections showing potential height scenarios for District 2 (Centre Image) and taller buildings for District 1 (bottom image)

- District 3 – Neighbourhood Convenience
 - This portion of Wyse Road will see little change, ensuring that the stable residential areas that exist are protected.
 - The existing neighbourhood convenience retail in the area should be enhanced, with buildings that are more pedestrian oriented by building out to the street edge with parking located behind.
 - Extensive use of greenery and trees to create a boulevard effect to soften this portion of Wyse Road to reflect the primarily residential oriented character.