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Halifax Regional Council
May 18, 2004
Committee of the Whole

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer



Dan English, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 12, 2004

SUBJECT: Capital District Urban Design Study

ORIGIN

This report originates from:

- the Capital District Vision endorsed by Council on April 16, 2002, and a subsequent Capital District Committee of the Whole Council update on August 20, 2002 where additional information was presented on the proposed scope of work.
- the issuance of Request for Proposal #02-084, titled Urban Design, in July 2002, and the subsequent project award, pursuant to Procurement Policy, to Gordon Ratcliffe Landscape Architects.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council endorse in principle the results of the Capital District Urban Design Study as outlined in this report as a framework to strategically guide future programming and capital investment within the Capital District.

BACKGROUND

In 2001 Council endorsed a community visioning process for the newly-formed Capital District project. The critical importance of good urban design to the long-term health and prosperity of the regional core was identified as a high priority. Several opportunities for moving toward the Capital District vision were identified by the public including beautification, enhanced community and neighbourhood identity, and strategic business planning and capital investment. This vision guides the ongoing work of the Capital District Task Force which is mandated to lead an integrated approach to service delivery in planning, design, maintenance, transportation, and community safety. Urban design addresses all of these things.

In 2002 the Capital District Task Force identified the Urban Design Study as a key deliverable under the Capital District Business Plan. The goal of this work was to develop a framework for implementing better design and more strategic investment in public spaces as well as best practices research from other Cities who require better urban design for the development of buildings and open spaces. This work is built on the fundamental principle that well designed public spaces, streetscapes, and buildings reinforce the distinct character of communities and result in safe, attractive, and comfortable places that all citizens and visitors can enjoy. As a result, public and private investment goes further over the longer-term and communities and regions flourish.

DISCUSSION

Following 15 months of intensive community and stakeholder consultation and interdepartmental collaboration the Capital District Urban Design Study has been completed. The input of the public was gathered through eight public meetings and a project newsletter, HRM's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, and HRM's Heritage Advisory Committee. The study was also tabled with the Capital District Task Force and Capital District Commission Society Board of Directors. A full copy of the report is also available on the Capital District web-site for information.

The report forms the first phase of HRM's urban design program and establishes a solid foundation for raising the calibre of urban design in the Capital District and communities throughout HRM.

The study is designed to address several key objectives to enable:

- a higher calibre of design for public spaces for enhanced pedestrian comfort and safety
- an enhanced image for the Capital District; HRM's regional centre
- strategic capital investment and coordinated streetscape management
- better design of buildings and spaces
- capacity-building among HRM staff and greater public awareness

Several practical planning and implementation tools have been developed through this study that will help to achieve these objectives and guide the work of HRM Staff for years to come.

These tools include:

- Streetscape design guidelines for capital improvements focussing on universal design and pedestrian accessibility
- Detailed Streetscape improvement plans for five main commercial arteries that build on neighbourhood strengths and encourage pedestrian and cycling movement
- A visual identity and marketing plan for enhancing the Capital District image
- A wayfinding signage system for vehicles and pedestrians, and
- Urban Design Best Practices research from other cities for use in the development of HRM's Regional Plan, and
- Urban design recognition and awareness (the first annual urban design awards program held this May, was the first step in a larger awareness program to be developed through Capital District and Regional Planning)

The streetscape plans have helped staff to strategically prioritize short and medium-term capital projects by identifying high profile streetscape improvements throughout the Capital District. These projects include improvements to the Halifax North Memorial Library, Portland Street Renewal, Scotia Square Transit Terminal Redevelopment, and streetscape improvements near the Public Gardens. In addition, investment in several strategic amenity improvements is underway or planned including sidewalk improvements for greater accessibility, street furniture, tree planting, pedestrian lighting, and wayfinding signage.

Capital District is working collaboratively with other HRM business units to coordinate this work including Public Works and Transportation, Planning and Development, and Real Property and Asset Management. The level of interdepartmental cooperation that took place during the study phase of this project has carried through to implementation. There are several efficiencies in HRM's service delivery that will be achieved through this work including a coordinated and consistent approach to capital investment and decision-making, more focussed streetscape management for the Capital District, coordinated marketing through a consistent wayfinding signage system, and more focussed maintenance services for new public infrastructure. An ongoing interdepartmental urban design team will be established to further this collaborative effort and enhance service delivery.

Through this work, several urban design program options have been identified for building on the Capital District urban design initiative for the benefit of communities across HRM. The regional planning process is an opportunity to explore some of these options further including urban design policy review for development, design guidelines for buildings and private property, enhanced public awareness and public consultation, and enhanced urban design capacity among HRM staff.

A Urban Design Report Executive Summary is attached to provide Council with a comprehensive overview of the study. (Attachment 1)

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the urban design study will be coordinated through existing budget and long-term Capital District budget planning and capital project coordination.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

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

ALTERNATIVES

Council could chose not to endorse the study results. This alternative would not be consistent with the results from the public consultation and is not recommended by staff.

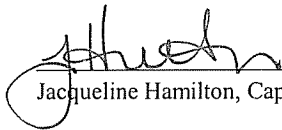
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Capital District Urban Design Project Executive Summary

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

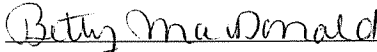
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SUMMARY

The Capital District

The downtown areas of Halifax and Dartmouth are important to all residents of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The busy waterfront and other historic and cultural attractions bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to the region. The economic and political capital of the Province generates 80 million dollars in tax revenue and 600 million in tourism dollars and over 40 percent of the region's jobs are located in the Capital District. Yet the downtown streetscape has been showing wear and tear — cracked and heaved sidewalks, graffiti and litter, damaged or missing street furniture, few trees on the main streets and a declining urban forest.

In 2001 HRM established the Capital District Task Force to enable relevant HRM departments to spearhead an integrated approach to service delivery. Working closely with downtown business commissions and provincial agencies, the Task Force is mandated to establish and maintain a healthy, vibrant urban core.

Urban Design

Urban design is the art and science of making better buildings and better places. Buildings need to be attractive and functional. They must fit the local context, and be easy to build, maintain and operate. Places —streets, squares, parks, and waterfronts — should enhance the distinct character of the city, be safe attractive public spaces that are easy to navigate, and encourage walking. Well-designed buildings and places should also be universally accessible so everyone can comfortably use them. They should adapt to changing times, and promote diversity and choice. Good urban design equals good value — it is not a costly and optional add-on.

The Capital District Urban Design Project

In 2002 the Task Force commissioned a consulting team led by Gordon Ratcliffe Landscape Architects, and including Griffiths Muecke and Semaphor Design, to carry out the Urban Design Project. The project included six components:

- streetscape design guidelines for the public right of way, focusing on pedestrian amenity and safety (Volume 1)
- streetscape improvement plans for the five major business areas in the Capital District — Barrington, Gottingen, Portland and Alderney, Quinpool and Spring Garden (Volume 1)
- a visual identity program for the Capital District and marketing ideas (Volume 2)
- a wayfinding signage system to direct cars and pedestrians to major attractions in the downtown (Volume 2)
- capacity building recommendations (Volume 3)
- a review of the best ideas and approaches used by other cities to improve urban design in their downtowns, focusing on private property (Volume 3).

Consultation

The Urban Design Project involved an interdepartmental Steering Committee and an extensive consultation process including interviews, nine community meetings, a forum to discuss urban design best practices, meetings with business improvement associations, collaboration with HRM’s Heritage Advisory Committee and Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee, a project newsletter, and a final community open house.

In addition, many focus group meetings were held with HRM staff from different departments to look at issues such as transit, trees, sidewalks, and commercialization of the streetscape. Key departments in HRM subsequently endorsed the project recommendations.

Streetscape Design Guidelines

Streets play a vital role in creating a unique community identity, healthy business environment and public space for citizens to use and enjoy. The street is a multi-functional place. It provides circulation for pedestrians and vehicles, access to buildings, a route for utilities, storage space especially for vehicles, and public space for human interaction. A major downtown streetscape design challenge is to balance these functions. Other challenges in HRM include coping with our winter weather and working within the limitations placed by our narrow sidewalks.

The Streetscape Design Guidelines are intended to help HRM staff and other people with an interest in our downtown streets to create attractive, interesting and functional public spaces. The guidelines cover sidewalks, street crossing zones, bus stops and other transit facilities, street trees, lighting, public art and the choice and placement of all the different items

that are collectively called street furnishings. The Design Guidelines are not intended to be rigid rules, recognizing that flexibility will often be needed to solve particular problems.

Some of the key principles that underpin the Guidelines are:

- A successful street will be a *busy street*. A degree of congestion is a good thing if well managed.
- *Pedestrians* should be given priority.
- Design should be used to emphasize the *identities* of different areas, while also making the Capital District a recognizable entity.
- Excellent *maintenance* is critical to the vitality and success of city streetscapes. New capital projects must include adequate resources for maintenance!
- Streetscapes should be accessible to all ages and levels of mobility and follow the principles of *Universal Design*.
- Streets should be made *safer* for pedestrians and vehicle users.
- HRM should invest in *trees* — protecting existing trees and planting new ones wherever possible.

The Streetscape Design Guidelines address the following issues:

Sidewalks

A detailed sidewalk system is proposed for different widths of sidewalk, with separate zones to organize street furnishings and ensure the maintenance of an unobstructed pedestrian thoroughway. Sidewalks over 2.4m (8 feet) wide will also have a separate service and furnishings zone where street furniture and amenities will be placed. On the main business streets and important pedestrian routes, this area of the sidewalk will be paved with concrete pavers that will bring additional colour and texture to the street. At street corners, a new curb cut system that will be safe and convenient for all users, eliminating steep grade changes and including tactile surfaces to guide persons using walking canes.

Transit Facilities

Guidelines are provided for the design of bus stops and bus shelters, with recommendations to cluster street amenities for the safety, convenience and comfort of transit users and other pedestrians.

Street Trees

Street trees provide interest and movement to enliven the street, shade and cool the sidewalk, act as a buffer between pedestrians and the traffic, reduce stormwater run-off, and reduce airborne pollutants. The secret to successful street trees is to select the right species and plant them properly so their roots have space to spread out and receive sufficient moisture.

Guidelines are provided for the selection and placement of trees and the use of tree planters and grates, structural soils and irrigation.

Lighting

Street lighting has typically been provided mainly to ensure illumination of the roadway and vehicle safety. Its ability to illuminate the sidewalk has usually been a secondary concern. Pedestrian level lighting, on the other hand, provides light for pedestrians using the sidewalk, increases safety (and the perception of safety) by lighting dark areas, enhances the ambient experience and illuminate special features such as trees and public art. The Guidelines identify criteria for product selection and placement and recommend maintenance considerations.

Street Furniture

Street furniture (benches, trash containers, bicycle parking, mail and newspaper boxes, drinking fountains, poster kiosks etc) should be selected to be attractive, durable, easy to maintain and resistant to vandalism. Amenities should be clustered wherever possible to reduce clutter on the sidewalks. Detailed guidelines are provided for product selection, placement and installation. The report also addresses sidewalk cafes, advertising on the street right-of-way and on-street parking.

Public Art

Public art is often credited with playing an important role in building better cities and reviving downtown cores. It is seen as an effective means to create a sense of place and identity, enrich environments, promote creative and cultural initiatives, and integrate the arts into everyday life. The need for appropriate public art policies and programs is addressed and guidelines provided for the placement and maintenance of art works.

Five Streetscape Plans

Working with local business associations and residents, the Urban Design Project prepared streetscape enhancement plans for the five main business streets in the Capital District. These plans were intended to build on existing neighbourhood strengths and character, address concerns of key stakeholder groups, facilitate and support public transportation, cycling and pedestrian movement, focus on safety through design and strategically manage long-term capital improvements.

Common themes emerged from the consultation process. Residents, merchants and other stakeholders are concerned about

- adequate levels of streetscape maintenance and management
- greening streets through extensive tree planting and other landscaping

- burying power lines to improve the appearance and functioning of our main streets
- addressing social issues such as graffiti and concentrations of panhandlers
- introduction of a façade improvement program to encourage property owners to invest in the appearance of their buildings
- better regulation of private signage.

Each streetscape plan includes detailed analysis of the existing situation; gives guidance on introducing the Capital District sidewalk system and improving street furnishings, plantings, lighting and other amenities; identifies projects and potential project partners; and provides cost estimates.

Barrington Street

Barrington Street is on the upswing after several decades of deterioration as the shopping focus switched to malls and suburban “big box” stores. Barrington’s narrow sidewalks are frequently crowded with thousands of workers, tourists, students, and people enjoying downtown dining and entertainment. Downtown residential development is also increasing.

Along with the Grand Parade, Barrington’s greatest asset is its historic streetscape. A recent study prepared for HRM and the Downtown Halifax Business Commission has recommending creation of a Municipal Heritage District. Other ideas from community meetings included:

- removing parking from the Grand Parade and carrying out improvements to enhance its status as HRM’s central civic space
- reducing traffic, especially the numbers of buses, so that sidewalks can be widened and pedestrian use encouraged
- better signage controls and guidelines
- streamlining HRM development controls to encourage developers to tackle some of Barrington’s critical ‘gaps’.

Suggested projects in the plan include improvements to Grand Parade and Cornwallis Park, new transit facilities outside Scotia Square, and several new seating areas. It is also recommended that the current downtown transportation study examine the viability of widening sidewalks in the heritage streetscape area.

Gottingen Street

Once a thriving shopping destination, Gottingen was hard hit by the ‘urban renewal’ schemes of the 60s and 70s, with the loss of many retail businesses and an increase in both the number of social agencies and of vacant buildings and lots. But now new shops and cafes are opening, there

has been an influx of artists and students, and the Gottingen Streets Merchants Association has been revived.

Gottingen is not only a commercial street but also home to a lively, multicultural community. Residents and merchants would like to see

- more people encouraged to visit Gottingen Street
- improvement to the space in front of the Halifax North Public Library — already a natural meeting place
- better lighting and more street trees
- street and sidewalk improvements for pedestrian safety
- more for young people to do
- better linkages to the rest of downtown.

One of the key proposed projects is a new ‘civic space’ in front of the Library and Ahern Manor to include an outdoor performance place, benches, community information and a commemoration of Gottingen Street’s history. Other projects include better lighting, and intersection improvement at North and Cogswell Streets. Streetscape improvements need to be coordinated with the current assessment of the viability of burying power lines.

Portland Street/Alderney Drive

The downtown portion of Portland Street was made over in the 1980s under the Mainstreet funding program. Brick sidewalks, raised parking areas and large planters helped to create a new downtown look. Unfortunately, some aspects of the streetscape design never worked well and the street is now in bad repair. The waterfront has received considerable attention, with the development of Alderney Gate and Landing, Ferry Terminal Park and a well-used events plaza. Downtown Dartmouth has also been discovered as a great place to live, with an increase in residential development. The Capital District East Business Commission is promoting the downtown as a family destination.

Dartmouth residents and businesses want to see:

- sidewalk improvement to replace dangerous brick walking surfaces and remove over-sized planters and awkward raised parking spaces
- a reorganization of the Portland Street roadway to reduce congestion caused by vehicles loading or dropping off passengers
- more attention to Dartmouth’s heritage buildings
- better lighting and signage particularly at the Ferry Terminal
- improvements to Alderney Plaza.

Suggested projects include sidewalk and roadway improvements, alleyway improvements, trees and amenities in front of Alderney Gate and the

creation of an Alderney Drive parkway, completion of the Alderney Plaza, and a new pocket park and seating nodes.

Quinpool

Quinpool carries more traffic than any of the other streets, but is still a very successful shopping area. The businesses mainly serve the local neighbourhoods, but diverse dining opportunities bring people in from further afield. The Quinpool Road Mainstreet District Association promotes Quinpool as “Your neighbourhood Mainstreet”, but also wants to see better connections made to the rest of the Capital District. Keeping Quinpool’s unique character is important, but so is bringing design improvements to the street.

Ideas and issues brought forward from the community include:

- greening the street — Quinpool has very few trees and looks bleak
- better and safer ways for pedestrians to cross, especially at the Robie end
- help to improve buildings and façades
- Universal Design improvements to make the street and its businesses more accessible
- pocket parks and seating areas to make Quinpool a place to linger and socialize.

Suggested projects include changes to make the Robie intersection more pedestrian-friendly, tree planting, sidewalk improvements in front of the Quinpool Centre, a pocket park outside the popular Oxford Theatre, and other new seating nodes.

Spring Garden

Spring Garden is the ‘retail heart of Halifax’, a fascinating concentration of interesting shops, restaurants and services in a fairly small area, flanked by major green spaces and tourist attractions. However, the Spring Garden Area Business Association is constantly vigilant about factors that may discourage customers, including litter on the street, panhandlers, and parking difficulties. Many more people are now living in the Spring Garden neighbourhood, with more residential development planned. The local merchants would like to respond by diversifying the retail mix to include ‘the basics’ as well as boutique shopping and dining opportunities.

Ideas from community meetings include:

- getting power poles off the sidewalks to improve the street and create more space
- dealing with congestion through enforcing parking and loading restrictions
- making sure that the Spring Garden library stays in the area

- an improved signage bylaw
- finding ways to plant some trees on the street
- better management of litter and maintenance.

Projects in the streetscape plan include pedestrian level lighting, improvements to the Public Gardens entrance and Promenade, a pocket park at Queen Street, and a new plaza in front of Dalhousie’s Sexton Campus. Because the Spring Garden sidewalks are so crowded it is also recommended that streetscape improvements be coordinated with an examination of the feasibility of changing traffic patterns and widening sidewalks, together with burying power lines.

Other Capital District Amenities

The Urban Design Project also identifies special places within the Capital District that deserve special planning, design and maintenance attention. These include the Halifax and Dartmouth waterfronts, Province House, Grand Parade, George Street, Granville Mall, Victoria Par, Argyle Street, Halifax Commons, the Centennial Pool site, and the Spring Garden library site. Critical linkages have also been designated including on-street pedestrian links, existing and potential multi-use trail routes through downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, and universal access routes.

Recommendations are also made for areas requiring improved pedestrian lighting, tree-planting priorities, improvements to bicycle routes and support facilities, new seating areas, public washrooms, and locations for public art.

Capital District Visual Identity

In order to create a visual identity for the Capital District of HRM, the following questions were addressed. How do we communicate the uniqueness or significance of a special “Capital District”? What visual elements reflect the age, character and cultural heritage of our downtown core?

After seeing the harbour and the peninsular landmass, it is the built character of the downtown that visitors remember. The waterfront, Citadel Hill, architectural heritage, streets and public spaces all define our capital area's character. With repeated visits, these landmarks and streetscapes create a sense of an area's history, character and vitality.

Downtown Halifax and Dartmouth showcase a rich variety of architectural design dating from its settlement in 1749. Government House and the Provincial Legislature buildings are key examples of physical expressions

of the idea of a “capital”. The age of these buildings, their historic and symbolic significance is reflected in the choice of forms and typography used in the Capital District visual identity, and in wayfinding signage.

Decorative wrought iron is a common material and technique used on and around many of the sites surrounding the capital building and in the downtown. The selected Capital District identity uses a scroll form common to ironwork seen here. It also refers to a different kind of capital, that of the “cap” on the architectural columns such as those featured on the face of the Province House.

The colours and typography used are co-ordinated with the parent identity of the Halifax Regional Municipality for a family appearance and greater continuity.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding helps first time visitors to an area to literally “find their way” through an unfamiliar environment. This typically means a series of messages in a recognizable family of signs, including vehicular and pedestrian signs.

Wayfinding signs provide directions using text and arrows to the top destinations and attractions. These are placed at key decision points along a path. This path usually begins at the beginning of one's journey and ends at the arrival at a chosen destination.

A well-planned wayfinding program considers what information is useful to a first-time user or visitor. Once someone is familiar with a path to their destination, they may not need the signs to find their way on subsequent visits. The wayfinding signs will then act as confirmation and reassurance that one is on the right path.

The additional and equally important function of these signs is to establish the identity of the Capital District, and to mark the boundaries of its sub-districts. This identity is also used on marketing materials that may be seen in advance of a visitor travelling to the Capital District.

The proposed Capital District Wayfinding Sign designs include the following components:

- directional information for both vehicles and pedestrians
- orientation, or interpretive information
- district identification
- sub-district identification.

The family of signs in the Capital District includes:

- Capital District approach pageantry (street banners)
- large and small signs identifying the Capital District and the sub-districts
- signs directing vehicles
- signs directing pedestrians
- street signs
- parking signs
- pedestrian orientation and interpretive signs.

The design style is related to the ironwork theme evident in the Capital District visual identity. The sign posts are fabricated to reflect the character of gates and entrances of the oldest decorative ironwork in our area. The colours and typography are in the same family as the main HRM identity.

Each sub-district has a unique colour that will be included on signs, maps and marketing promotion. The sub-districts are

- Halifax Waterfront
- Dartmouth Waterfront
- Downtown Halifax
- Downtown Dartmouth
- Gottingen
- Spring Garden
- Quinpool.

Promoting Better Urban Design — Ideas from Other Cities

The Capital District of Halifax Dartmouth is not alone in trying to respond to changes in the economy and the expectations of its citizens. Many cities in the United States and Canada are confronting the same challenge. They are all discovering that an important part of their response has to be transformation of the downtown into a highly desirable place for people to work, live, visit, shop, attend civic functions, and have fun. Also, they have found it necessary to influence the design decisions of the private sector as the main driving force for new development in the downtown.

The research involved:

- A review of plans, policies and programs in three US cities: Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and Boulder, Colorado;
- Six Canadian cities: Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa; and
- Municipal planning strategies in HRM covering the Capital District.

Overall, the report presents an overview of the state-of-the-art in urban design in these selected locations. Although there are differences in priorities and approach from city to city, some common themes emerge.

Public and Private Development

Where new urban design plans and policies were developed, they almost always applied to both public and private projects. Initially, urban design requirements may apply only to municipal projects in order to show leadership, but shortly thereafter, private developments are expected to follow suit.

Collaborative Approach

The downtown is a multi-functional area where different concerns and interests must be balanced. The most successful downtown planning processes have involved broadly-based, consultative planning processes that have closely involved business, heritage, arts, recreational and community interests.

The Plan

The core of the revitalization process is a plan. It may be a downtown plan with an urban design section, or a separate urban design plan. It may be a stand-alone document developed independently from any broader planning process, or part of a regional plan.

Goals and Objectives

Creation of a vibrant and successful downtown starts from a vision, goals and objectives that are clearly defined and broadly supported. They reflect the history, diversity and personality of the place, the needs of the people who use it, and aspirations for its future.

Urban Design Guidelines and Criteria

Guidelines describe in more detail what the municipality wants to accomplish and provide illustrations and examples of how the policies should be interpreted. They guide rather than dictate style, and are written in a way that encourages innovation and creative solutions. In some cases they may be prescriptive – such as in heritage districts or where there are important landmarks or views to protect – but generally they offer flexibility. Urban design criteria describe what the design must accomplish in order to meet a threshold of acceptability.

Design Review Process

In situations where guidelines are used, the project approval process is revised to incorporate advice from a wide array of design expertise and experience. In most cities, the municipality draws on professional design

expertise in the community through an advisory panel or committee. There also needs to be suitable design expertise available on staff so that innovative proposals can be properly evaluated.

Linked Plans and Programs

The revitalization of the downtown is a multi-faceted process and integrates many plans and programs that are implemented independently, but are defined by the urban design plan and guidelines. For example, plans for interlinked greenspace, pedestrian routes, heritage conservation, public art, and façade renovation – and others.

The Best Practices report presents options for HRM as it considers its own urban design strategy, and a compendium of key urban design plans and programs that illustrate the range of initiatives currently being implemented in the six Canadian cities.

Recommendations for Future Work

While the three project reports incorporate extensive guidance, ideas, and recommendations on urban design in the Capital District, it is recognized that this is still only a beginning. The guidelines and plans need to be treated as living documents to be adjusted and enhanced as necessary on an ongoing basis. In addition, the reports recommend a number of key pieces of future work, including

- creation of an overall urban design plan for the Capital District as part of the current regional planning process
- integration of transportation and streetscape planning to identify potential to expand the pedestrian realm on Spring Garden and Barrington Streets
- a plan to implement HRM’s current policy to eventually bury all overhead wires in the downtown
- policies to address commercialization of the streetscape
- completion and implementation of HRM’s Public Art Policy and the development of funding and maintenance programs
- improving bicycle safety and comfort in the Capital District by implementing the Bicycle Plan
- developing an Urban Forest Plan for HRM
- preparing a Capital Improvements Strategic Plan for the Capital District
- creating a Capital District Maintenance Fund and a dedicated maintenance team for downtown
- develop appropriate right of way management policies and provide adequate resources

- appointment of a Universal Design Coordinator to incorporate accessible design principles into HRM activities
- further consultation on urban design best practices and development of a best practices strategy.