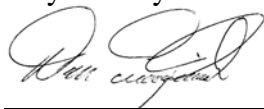


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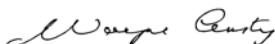
**Halifax Regional Council
February 26, 2008
Committee of the Whole**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: February 3, 2007

SUBJECT: HRMbyDesign: Approval of 'The Downtown Halifax Vision'

ORIGIN

- **March 7, 2006:** Council awarded RFP # 05-073 (Regional Centre Urban Design Study).
- **June 27, 2006:** Council appointed the membership of the Urban Design Task Force.
- **February 27, 2007:** Council approved the findings of Public Forum 1, "Regional Centre Urban Design Vision and Principles."
- **July 31, 2007:** Council approved the findings of Public Forum 2, "The Urban Design Framework," and Forum 3, "The Reurbanization Strategy."
- **November 27, 2007:** Council Information Report on the progress of the Downtown Vision.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Regional Council:

1. Approve *HRMbyDesign's* 'Downtown Halifax Vision' as recommended by the Urban Design Task Force and included in this report as Attachment #1.
2. Request that the Province enact legislative changes to enable a new planning process for downtown development as outlined in Attachment #4.
3. Initiate planning and design work in support of the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HRMbyDesign is the name given the Regional Centre Urban Design Study mandated by the Regional Plan. The project's purpose is to establish a shared vision for the future of the Regional Centre, which is a geographic area that includes the Halifax Peninsula and Dartmouth within the circumferential highway. The project then builds upon that established vision to provide new policy to accomplish a number of goals within its study area, including:

- clear, predictable and expedited development processes
- improved heritage protection
- introduction of design guidelines to ensure architectural excellence
- significantly increased opportunity for working and living in the Regional Centre
- sustainable development practices
- complete, walkable, transit-served neighbourhoods
- more and better public open space
- a vibrant, prosperous and beautiful downtown

Since June 2007 the primary focus of HRMbyDesign has been the development of a Downtown Strategy through a highly proactive public consultation program. The Downtown Strategy will be presented to Council in two consecutive parts for approval. The first part is the "Downtown Vision" that is described in detail in this report. The second part will be the new planning and development policies that will turn the Downtown Vision into reality, and that can be brought to Council for approval later in the Spring after the Downtown Vision has been approved.

The purpose of this report is to advance HRMbyDesign by requesting the following three approvals related to downtown Halifax:

- 1) To secure Council's approval-in-principle of Public Consultation Forum Four's 'Downtown Vision' for Halifax, as the fourth installment in the program of incremental adoption that has been established for HRMbyDesign. (Previously Council has adopted Forum One's statement of 'Vision and Principles,' Forum Two's 'Urban Design Framework,' and Forum Three's 'Reurbanization Strategy'.)
- 2) To secure Council's approval to request of the Province certain amendments to the Municipal Government Act that will result in development approvals occurring with improved predictability and speed, while ensuring new development is of the highest possible design quality.
- 3) To secure Council's approval to initiate planning and design work for the Cogswell Interchange area as a prelude to its ultimate removal and the restoration of the land it occupies to a traditional street grid and municipally-owned developable parcels.

BACKGROUND

HRMbyDesign is a directive of Halifax Regional Council as an outcome of HRM's Regional Plan. This project, which has been underway since July 2006, articulates a design strategy to foster quality development and vibrant public spaces through the creation of new policies and tools such as: design guidelines, improved development approval processes, and incentives for high quality development within the downtown and surrounding Regional Centre. Importantly,

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the project will provide Council with a clarified policy framework within which solid and expedient development decisions can be made.

The project is being managed by HRM staff under the guidance of the fifteen-member volunteer Urban Design Task Force (UDTF), which includes three HRM councillors. The UDTF was established to make recommendations to Council and advise the project team throughout the life of the project. The project has also convened a Project Steering Committee comprised of professional staff from key HRM departments, and includes representation from our funding partners at the provincial and federal levels of government. All recommendations made to Council regarding HRMbyDesign have undergone extensive public consultation, have been reviewed by the Steering Committee, and have been formally deliberated upon and approved by the UDTF.

The primary purpose of this report is to secure Council approval of the "Downtown Halifax Vision" as summarized in this report and further detailed in Attachment #1, and as established through extensive public consultation and deliberation by the Urban Design Task Force.

Regional Centre Deliverables

The project is currently on schedule, having been underway for the past eighteen months. During the first nine months the project was focussed on the entire Regional Centre, which includes the area of Dartmouth located inside the circumferential highway, and the Halifax peninsula. That work, and the public consultation it entailed, yielded the following Council-approved Regional Centre-wide findings:

- Regional Centre Urban Design Vision and Principles
- Regional Centre Urban Design Framework
- Regional Centre Reurbanization Strategy

Taken together these three project components embody a shared vision for the Regional Centre for the next twenty-five years, and provide the basis for new development policies for Halifax and Dartmouth to be delivered in the Final HRMbyDesign report. It is anticipated that implementation of the Regional Centre deliverables will begin in the Fall of 2008 when work on the Downtown Halifax Strategy has been completed.

A Focus on Downtown Halifax

The second nine-month period of the project has been focussed on downtown Halifax, as directed by Council in February of 2007 in recognition of the development pressures felt there, and the lack of clear guidance in existing municipal plan policies. Accordingly, the development of a Downtown Halifax Strategy has been the primary focus of the project since June, 2007. The level of public engagement attained during the downtown Halifax phase of the project has been exceptional, having attracted gatherings of greater than 500 residents at several public meetings. Citizens and other stakeholders participated in our consultations in a variety of ways: attending workshops as part of a week-long public forum in September; attendance at a November, 2007 public meeting; reporting back on the vision; written submissions to the UDTF; one on one interviews and meetings; meetings or presentations held with key stakeholder groups, and; innumerable informal exchanges on an ongoing basis. All of this input was collectively

summarized in a Public Comment Summary document which informed the subsequent deliberations of the Urban Design Task Force. The Urban Design Task Force has deliberated on the vision for downtown Halifax over the past nine months through regular meetings and three day-long workshops with the staff Steering Committee. Council's Regional Plan Advisory Committee (RPAC) has also been consulted and updated regarding the project recommendations. The overwhelming message from the public regarding the downtown Halifax phase has been that the project is on the right track, the Downtown Halifax Vision accurately captures the aspirations of the community, and HRM should proceed with its implementation as quickly as possible.

DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: Approval of 'The Downtown Vision'

The Downtown Vision for which Council approval is being sought is described under the following three headings:

- A. Guiding Principles for Downtown Halifax,
- B. The Big Moves," and
- C. The District Based Approach.

The findings of this phase of the project are summarized below, and are further detailed in Attachment #1 of this report. The Downtown Vision recommendations pertain only to the downtown study area as shown on the attached map (Attachment #2). This boundary was carefully drawn with regard to the areas of varying built form character that exist in the downtown, and in consideration of the existing municipal plan sub-areas. The boundary contains those areas of downtown Halifax that are facing the greatest development pressures and that are governed by policy most in need of updating.

A. Guiding Principles:

The Project establishes six overarching principles which at all times guide the content and direction of the Vision for Downtown Halifax over the next 25 years. They are:

- A Sustainable Downtown
- A Living Downtown
- A Distinct Downtown
- A Beautiful Downtown
- A Connected Downtown
- A Vibrant Downtown

B. The 10 Big Moves for Downtown:

Collectively these ten aspirations for our downtown constitute a shared and widely agreed upon vision of what we want our downtown to look like, and how we want it to function, in the next twenty-five years. Following the downtown public forums, the Urban Design Task Force revised the Big Moves to better reflect public aspirations and feedback related to the importance to the downtown of sustainability and transit, and to incorporate some key principles related to tall

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buildings. Attachment #3 provides additional detail on the 10 Big Moves being recommended by the Urban Design Task Force. In summary they are:

1. Defined and distinct downtown districts,
2. Increased opportunities to live and work in the downtown,
3. A protected and vibrant historic heart,
4. Integrated Cogswell and Cornwallis Park Gateways,
5. A variety of new and improved open space anchors and connections,
6. Great streets that support a culture of walking,
7. Remediation of the interface and quality of existing buildings & structures,
8. Reinforced visual connections & civic pride,
9. New developments designed to be sustainable, well-mannered & pedestrian friendly,
10. A transit-oriented downtown.

C. The District-Based Approach:

Moving forward, the planning and design policies for the downtown study area will build upon the concept of “defined and distinct downtown districts” as described in Big Move #1 above. Attachment #2 shows the boundaries of the nine proposed districts. The Urban Design Task Force and the Project Steering Committee recently held a day-long workshop to finalize this approach. For each of the nine proposed districts their work included establishing boundaries and creating a character statement and a list of objectives. This approach reflects substantial consultation with members of the public and other key stakeholders, such as heritage interest groups, business organizations, the development industry and government partners.

Each District will be governed by policy that addresses the following:

- district character and identity,
- absolute building height, building massing and upper storey setbacks,
- heritage protection considerations,
- detailed urban design guidelines,
- open space recommendations,
- recommended land uses, and
- others guidelines and requirements as deemed appropriate.

The district approach embodies the clarity and predictability for policy in the downtown study area that has been clearly asked of the project, while still retaining the context-specific detail required to direct appropriate treatment of heritage resources and the appropriate form and height of new development while bringing vibrancy and excellence of design to the pedestrian realm.

Height Framework:

Throughout the downtown public forums various approaches to height were presented and discussed and ultimately a preferred vision for heights was recommended. This height framework is being refined by the Urban Design Task Force in the context of the district based approach and will be presented to Council when the proposed policy set is brought forth this

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Spring. The following key principles have been discussed in relation to height and are embodied in the 10 Big Moves:

- Promote infilling of vacant and underutilised lands (filling in the gaps),
- Promote development of a variety of scales, which allows for taller buildings in locations where they can best be supported in terms of existing block pattern and relationship to other buildings of height,
- Establish heights for the base of buildings (the “street wall”) to maintain a human-scaled, pedestrian oriented downtown,
- Taller buildings have greater civic obligations for contributing key public benefits and excellence of design at their base and at the skyline, and
- Height limits relate to the existing and desired character of a district and respect relationships to the Citadel and the waterfront.

Heritage Protection and Enhancement:

Strengthening the protection of heritage resources is fundamental to the Downtown Vision.

Heritage buildings and areas will be protected through:

- Immediate implementation of the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District,
- Identification of two additional districts within the downtown study area for future consideration as Heritage Conservation Districts: South Barrington Street and Historic Properties,
- Detailed design guidelines and incentives for rehabilitation and reuse to apply to heritage buildings that are not located within Heritage Conservation Districts.

Council is being asked to approve in principle the vision and district-based approach to allow the project team and the Urban Design Task Force to move to the next level of detail in the development of district-specific policies and regulation.

Recommendation #2: Request Legislative Changes for Downtown Development:

The key deliverable for Downtown Halifax is a set of policies, bylaw provisions and urban design guidelines which will guide future planning and development. Extensive public consultation has occurred around the vision for downtown development from which the new policies will flow. The preferred development approvals model will see future building heights and massing (the *quantitative* elements of building) predetermined in the Land Use Bylaw and be subject to as-of-right approval. The design characteristics (the *qualitative* elements of building) will be governed by detailed design guidelines and will be subject to discretionary approval. With a clearly established vision, Council is in a position to streamline the development approval process in order to foster a positive development and investment climate in the downtown core. Key public benefits related to heritage protection, sustainability and quality architectural and public space design will be attained through this model.

As a means of achieving this directive, it is proposed that the current development agreement process in Downtown Halifax be replaced with Site Plan Approval, Variances and Incentive Zoning. The Site Plan Approval process is a way of dealing with site related design issues

'The Downtown Halifax Vision'

within the context of a more timely administrative review, which can be achieved within a sixty day period as opposed to six months or more with development agreements. The existing legislation for Site Plan Approval does not enable the scope of qualitative design review that is favoured by the HRMbyDesign Program (i.e., review of the external features, character, and appearance of a building or structure).

Therefore, to implement this new approach, amendments to existing provincial legislation are required to give HRM more authority over the architectural design of development while streamlining the approvals process. It is envisioned that four key changes to the Municipal Government Act are required to implement this approach:

1. Expand provisions of the Municipal Government Act related to Site Plan Approval to include authority to regulate "matters related to exterior design including the external appearance of structures, the character of structures, the design features of structures, and the facade of structures."
2. As part of the site plan review, enable the municipal Development Officer to refer applications to an external design review committee. The design review committee is being modeled after other advisory committees (Heritage, Planning) whereby applications can be referred to committee for expert advice and input.
3. Enable the relaxation of "matters related to exterior design" by variance (sec. 235) under the as-of-right abilities. This will enable a wider range of as-of-right development options with a threshold to be established for Site Plan Approval.
4. Reduce the scope of the appeal process for Site Plan Approval in terms of limiting who has the right of appeal and changing the area in which the appeal provisions apply.

As part of the adoption in principle of the Downtown Vision, Council is being asked to approve a request to the Province for legislative changes to the Municipal Government Act to give HRM the enabling authority to implement a new development approvals process for downtown in conjunction with the HRMbyDesign project. The changes would give Council the ability to consider implementation of this new approach in conjunction with the downtown policy framework currently being developed for approval by Council this Spring. Council approval will enable HRM staff to proceed with a formal request to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for legislative changes to the Municipal Government Act.

Recommendation #3: Initiate Cogswell Interchange Area Planning and Design

Repeatedly throughout project consultations the community has been nearly unanimous in requesting that the Cogswell Interchange be removed and a grid of city blocks and new development parcels be restored, an approach which is consistent with the 10 Big Moves. It is therefore recommended that as part of the Downtown Vision, Council initiate planning and design work related to the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange lands consistent with, and concurrent with, HRMbyDesign. This approach will capitalize on the momentum of the Downtown Vision, and will enable good decision-making on the future use of those lands.

Next Steps

During the next several months staff will be working closely with the Urban Design Task Force and the Project Steering Committee to further refine and craft a new Downtown Planning framework to implement the recommendations of HRMbyDesign. At this time it is the project team's intention to bring a draft downtown Halifax policy set back to Council for a First Reading in May, 2008 and a Public Hearing in June, 2008 in advance of Council's summer recess. To support this timeline, further public consultations are planned during the months of March and April on the proposed Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District and the overall Downtown Strategy. Council approval of the vision, legislative changes and the future planning for Cogswell Interchange will help maintain the public momentum of this project and enable its timely implementation.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Funding of \$104,314 is available in the existing capital budget under capital account CDG00498 Cogswell Design to advance planning and design work for the Cogswell Interchange. Additionally under consideration as part of the 2008/09 budget process, is a request for a further \$100,000 in capital funding for 2008/09 and 2009/10 for planning and design related work as well as a FTE request for a project manager.

Budget Summary

Capital Account CDG00498 - Cogswell Design & Admin

Unspent Capital Budget	\$104,315
Less: Planning & Design	<u>\$104,314</u>
Balance	\$ 1

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

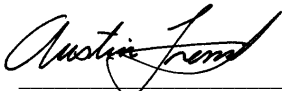
Council could approve the recommendations with changes.

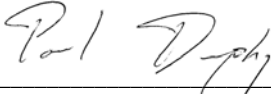
ATTACHMENTS


1. Summary of the Downtown Vision
2. Map showing the Downtown Study Area and proposed Downtown District boundaries
3. Concept Plan for the Downtown Study Area conceptually illustrating the 10 Big Moves
4. Proposed Legislative Amendments

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

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Report Approved by: 
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Attachment One: A Vision for Downtown Halifax

A. Guiding Principles:

There are six overarching principles which embody the vision for Downtown Halifax looking forward 25 years:

- **A Sustainable Downtown:** Develop a sustainable Downtown by leveraging existing cultural, commercial, institutional and infrastructure assets. Combine this with intensification and development of a splendid public realm to ensure social, economic and environmental public benefits for the entire HRM.
- **A Living Downtown:** Create a “living” Downtown through maintenance of existing neighbourhoods while supporting the creation of new residential opportunities including desirable high-density neighbourhoods with a variety of housing choices and that are supported by high quality community, streetscape and open space amenities.
- **A Distinct Downtown:** Maintain a distinctive Downtown by preserving and reinforcing the elements that impart a sense of distinct history, culture and a unique natural setting.
- **A Beautiful Downtown:** Restoring the pursuit of longevity, civic pride, visual appeal, and inspiring qualities to the design, improvement and construction of streets, open spaces and buildings.
- **A Connected Downtown:** Strengthen the visual and physical connections between historical assets, natural assets, and civic and open space destinations in the Downtown. In addition, create similar connections to surrounding districts and neighbourhoods outside the Downtown.
- **A Vibrant Downtown:** Create a vibrant Downtown by developing policies and procedures that encourage an urban environment with a broad mix of land uses, the required infrastructure and the necessary critical mass to support a creative and exciting economic, cultural and social community.

B. The Big Moves for Downtown:

Collectively these ten aspirations for our downtown constitute a shared and widely agreed upon vision of what we want our downtown to look like in the next twenty-five years.

1. Defined and distinct downtown precincts

Downtown Halifax features distinct districts with varying characters, functional identities and building forms. The objective of defining these districts is to help focus and direct land uses, define appropriate development, protect heritage, and direct public investment. There are nine proposed districts which are detailed in the body of this report.

2. Increase live and work opportunities in the downtown

The future vibrancy and economic growth of our downtown depends upon there being many more people living and doing business here. The Regional Plan accommodates an increase of approximately 25,000 new residents in the Regional Centre over the next 25

years. Building upon that figure and supplementing it with extensive research and interviews with local real estate and development professionals, HRM by Design has identified an upper limit need for 3 million sq. ft of office space and up to 5,000 new residents in the downtown over the next 15 years. Importantly, this capacity accommodates a variety of new residential and commercial development in the short and long term. While this amount of growth may not occur within the 25 year study window, it is nonetheless important to identify that there is capacity for it without negative impact on the open space, heritage protection and urban vibrancy goals of the project.

3. *A protected and vibrant historic heart*

Halifax's rich heritage assets are a main attraction for tourists and locals, which increase the economic prosperity of downtown. The protection and preservation of these heritage resources is a key pillar of HRMbyDesign. The Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District will implement stronger methods of heritage protection than currently exist, along with a preservation incentives program. Future study is also recommended in the South Barrington area and Historic Properties to implement similar programs. Design guidelines and incentives will protect heritage resources outside of heritage districts.

4. *Integrate the Cogswell and Cornwallis Park Gateways*

The transformation of the Cogswell Interchange and Cornwallis Park areas will serve as catalysts for revitalization and the attraction of new residents and businesses to downtown. Public support for the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange and rejuvenation of Cornwallis Park is tremendous due to the opportunity to provide more public open space and amenities, and new residential and commercial development.

5. *Provide a variety of new and improved open space anchors and connections*

The amount and quality of public open space and amenities must increase in parallel with the increase in residents and workers downtown. A variety of high quality open space types are proposed to complement adjacent uses, to provide signature destinations downtown, ensure amenities for high-density residential living and to provoke the Downtown revitalization. Visual and physical connections along the east/west streets that terminate in outdoor public open spaces on the waterfront are important in reestablishing the link between the Citadel and the waterfront, and are a key component on the Downtown Vision.

6. *Great streets that support a culture of walking*

Improved streetscapes are intended to enhance the Downtown experience, supplement the open space network, promote a culture of walking, support street level retail, and strengthen district identities. Beautiful, well-designed, pedestrian-friendly streets will inspire more people to explore downtown shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. Great streets connect local neighbourhoods and districts, increasing downtown vibrancy around the clock. A key principle in support of great streets is promoting the infill

of vacant and underutilised lands and at-grade parking lots with high-quality development.

7. *Remediating the interface and quality of existing buildings & structures*

As part of the urban design objectives for downtown, this plan will encourage, assist and enable the improvement and/or transformation of existing buildings and infrastructure. Strategies include the retrofitting of undesirable street level conditions, updating and enhancing existing towers and parking structures through façade improvements, and improved lighting.

8. *Reinforce visual connections & civic pride*

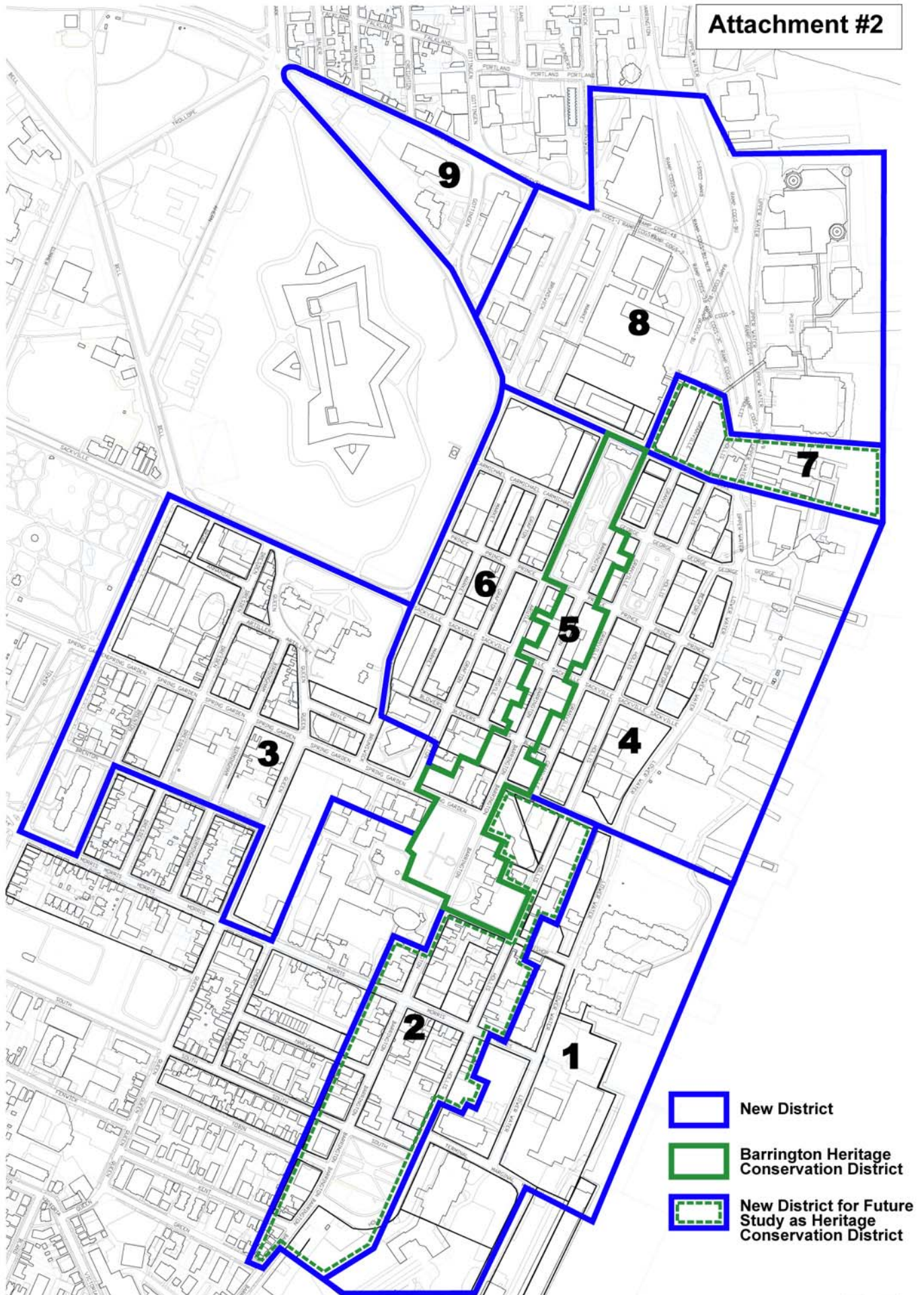
Visually prominent sites provide unique opportunities to define areas, strengthen visual connections, animate open spaces, and to orient and stimulate pedestrian movement. These sites are appropriate for urban design features such as public art, monuments, attractions, landmark architecture, and civic or cultural facilities. Potential opportunity sites include: Granville Mall, the Halifax Ferry Terminal, waterfront open spaces at the foot of east/west streets, the Cogswell/Commons Gateway, and the North & South ends of Barrington and Hollis streets

9. *New developments designed to be well-mannered & pedestrian friendly*

The approach to guiding new development is focused on ensuring a vital, inviting pedestrian environment that will attract residents, enhance retail uses at street level, encourage active transportation choices, and resonate with visitors to the downtown. Proposed strategies to achieve these objectives include: enhancing existing heritage with complementary design, directing height where it is appropriate, ensuring sun penetration on sidewalks and minimizing wind impacts, ensuring a coherent relationship between neighbouring buildings, and ensuring the pedestrian experience is comfortable, safe and visually appealing. This includes the idea that tall buildings have the greatest civic obligations to be appropriately located, and to feature high quality materials, roof treatments, and overall architectural excellence. New towers will aspire to become landmark buildings as part of the renewed downtown Halifax skyline.

10. *Transit oriented Downtown*

Building on the goals of the Regional Plan, HRMbyDesign promotes access to Downtown and the Capital District primarily through investment in public transportation, providing alternatives to dependence on the automobile. Development in turn should be provided at appropriate densities to support continued transit use. Much greater emphasis shall be placed on walkability and cycle use in the Downtown. Public transportation must be progressed into a whole new level of public acceptability and use by making its use vastly more convenient and treating the users as customers with much improved levels of service. Make transit use a universally acceptable and accessible means of transportation.



KEY FEATURES OF THE DEMONSTRATION CONCEPT PLAN

- A** Removal of the Cogswell Interchange and re-integrating Downtown Halifax with the neighbourhoods to the north. Removal of the interchange will re-introduce a more fine-grained grid with developable blocks.
- B** Creation of waterfront plazas at the ends of streets to open up views to the Harbour.
- C** Re-configuration of the Casino and above-ground parking structures into more pedestrian friendly, street-oriented buildings.
- D** Opportunities to introduce new east-west street connections.
- E** Potential for a new plaza that links the Historic Properties with Granville Mall, enhancing the existing heritage buildings while creating visual and physical linkages between the two.
- F** Opportunity to rethink the existing Ferry Terminal and transform it into the new gateway to the downtown from the Harbour.
- G** Opportunities exist to improve the existing conditions along the façade of Scotia Square by introducing a new public plaza on the north end. Improvements can be made to the public realm along Market St to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment with the potential to be closed off for special events.
- H** Improving the quality and interface of existing buildings by potentially introducing new additions to buildings that have a better relationship to the street.
- I** The potential to create a new plaza that serves as a gateway to the downtown from both the north and west ends of the HRM.
- J** New public amenity and open space opportunities at the ends of streets at the Citadel. These potential plaza's can enhance the experience along Brunswick St and the Citadel by providing interpretive signage and potential opportunities for public art that help to draw pedestrians from the harbour to the hill.
- K** Improving the public realm of George St. and Carmichael St. provides a strong visual connection between the harbour and the clock tower and the Citadel. Streetscaping and the way buildings interface with this important east-west street should be enhanced.
- L** Potential to create unique urban plaza that draws people up the slope from the harbour, while providing a place for people to gather.
- M** Opportunities exist to improve the interface of buildings that front onto Cornwallis Park. There is also the potential to introduce new buildings that create a more pedestrian friendly environment that better frames the street edge.
- N** Significant capacity exists along the waterfront to introduce new residential and office uses in buildings that create a more hospitable environment more pedestrians and enhance the overall experience of the waterfront area.
- O** Potential to redevelop the existing law courts building and re-introduce uses at grade, opening up views to the harbour with the creation of a new public plaza, and improving the relationship with the historic properties to the north.
- P** Potential to create a continuous waterfront promenade with a consistent design vocabulary that distinguishes the boardwalk as a unique feature and attraction for the HRM.



The Concept Plan is for illustrative purposes and is intended to describe the big moves, and illustrate a possible outcome for implementing the Downtown Vision.

- Potential Development
- Existing Buildings
- Listed and Potential Heritage Buildings

Attachment #4
Proposed Legislative Amendments

5. Expand provisions of the Municipal Government Act related to Site Plan Approval to include authority to regulate “matters related to exterior design including the external appearance of structures, the character of structures, the design features of structures, and the facade of structures.”
6. As part of the site plan review, enable the municipal Development Officer to refer applications to an external design review committee. The design review committee is being modeled after other advisory committees (Heritage, Planning) whereby applications can be referred to committee for expert advice and input.
7. Enable the relaxation of “matters related to exterior design” by variance (sec. 235) under the as-of-right abilities. This will enable a wider range of as-of-right development options with a threshold to be established for Site Plan Approval.
8. Reduce the scope of the appeal process for Site Plan Approval in terms of limiting who has the right of appeal and changing the area in which the appeal provisions apply.