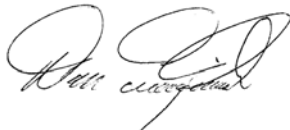


TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council



SUBMITTED BY:

Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: February 22, 2008

SUBJECT: **Consultant's Report - Main Street Dartmouth Planning Vision and Streetscape Concept**

ORIGIN

Main Street Dartmouth - Streetscape Design Project

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 1) Regional Council approve in principle the findings and recommendations of the "Main Street Dartmouth - Planning Vision and Streetscape Concept" dated January 20, 2008;
- 2) Regional Council direct staff to proceed immediately preparing the "terms of reference" implementing a demonstration "Pocket Park" project at the SW corner of Woodlawn and Main Street.
- 3) Regional Council authorize staff to initiate the preparation of a Secondary Planning Strategy for Main Street Dartmouth and vicinity, using the Planning Vision outlined in the consultant report as a framework for developing Plan policy and regulations, and employing the public participation program appended as Attachment 3; and,
- 4) The projects and phasing outlined in the report be used as a basis for planning possible future capital budgets associated with the Regional Streetscape Program.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Planning Strategy calls for an investment in streetscapes throughout HRM to create liveable, attractive centres and corridors for future growth and investment. In addition to a number of streetscape initiatives identified for the Capital District, three communities were identified as priorities: Herring Cove Road in Spryfield, Sackville Drive in Sackville and Main Street in Dartmouth. Streetscape Studies have already been completed for Capital District (2004), Herring Cove Road (2004) and Sackville Drive (2000) and serve as a basis for prioritizing implementation projects in those areas.

The F/Y 2005-2006 and F/Y 2006-2007 Capital Budgets each notionally included \$1 million for the implementation of the Capital District Streetscape Program and another \$1 million in each of those same fiscal years for the Regional Streetscape Program. No additional funding was approved for either of these Streetscape Programs in 2007 - 2008 due to the slow take-up of funds caused by staff shortages over the previous years. It is expected that funds will again be put before Regional Council for approval in the 09/10 capital budget.

DISCUSSION

An Executive Summary of the Main Street Dartmouth Planning Vision and Streetscape Concept is included as Attachment 1 of this report.

The geographic extent of the primary study area is defined as the urban Main Street corridor from the Mic Mac Parclo to the NSCC Campus with a secondary study area encompassing Main Street from NSCC to the Forest Hills Extension. The primary study area is the focus of the design and planning investigation (see Attachment #2), whereas, the secondary study has concentrated on determining a suitable pedestrian and Active Transportation connection from the Forest Hills Extension to the primary area.

The planning process leading to the creation of this strategy began in the summer of 2006 and has been transparent and open to the public. The consultants have undertaken dozens of interviews, a visioning workshop and a design workshop and recently conducted a Public Open House attended by over 120 people (January 2008). Most of the ideas presented in the report have come directly from the community. The report balances vision with practicality: it explores a preferred long-range future for the Main Street area; and, it also presents achievable short-term projects, which can be implemented on public lands in support of the longer-term vision. The public feedback has been extremely positive.

To date, HRM has re-zoned C-3 lands in the Main Street area to C-2 in keeping with the findings of the consultant study. The area Councillor and staff have been meeting with members of the business community in the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID), which will be instrumental in implementing the long-range elements of the planning vision.

Based on the Regional Planning Strategy's designation of Main Street as a Suburban Local Centre and the community visioning that has taken place through this consultant study, HRM staff are now gearing up to prepare a Secondary Planning Strategy (SPS) for the area. Using the findings and conclusions of the consultant's study, the SPS will convert its land use related recommendations into policy statements and land use by-law provisions. A proposed public participation program for this process (Attachment 3) includes a series of open houses / workshops to progressively refine the concepts into policy and regulatory format. In addition to general advertising through media and the HRM web site, the consultation program will directly invite input from those members of the public and business interests who participated throughout the course of the consultant's study. The BIDC will be an integral stakeholder and liaison group throughout the preparation of the SPS.

Implementation of the Pocket Park proposed as a demonstration project for the SW corner of Woodlawn and Main Street is anticipated this coming Spring 2008 utilizing funds currently available in the Regional Streetscapes Program capital account.

Improvements identified in this 30-year plan are projected to cost in the order of \$8 million (2007 dollars). The report assumes that, subject to Regional Council's annual budget approval process, the primary source of funding identified for this work (\$300,000+ per year) will be the Regional Streetscapes Program capital budget. However, it is also worth noting that some project costs are possibly either not HRM (e.g. Parclo changes) or have the potential for attracting external funding (e.g. LED lighting demonstration project). In addition, some projects such as the bike lanes in the secondary study area have already been completed while other project components may be undertaken as part of routine maintenance and renewal. Thus, costs may not be as high as first appears.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial commitments associated with this report. The potential implementation of capital works stemming from the recommendations contained in the consultant's report (for example traffic improvements) will be the subject of further reports to Council, either by separate cover or as advanced through Council's business planning and budget process.

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

None.

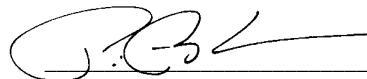
ATTACHMENTS

1. Executive Summary - Main Street Dartmouth Planning Vision and Streetscape Concept
2. Primary Study Area / Vision Plan
3. Proposed Secondary Planning Strategy Public Participation Program

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.

Report Prepared by: Barry Yanchyshyn, Senior Landscape Architect Real Property Planning 490-3967

Report Approved by:



Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning, IAM 490-6047

Financial Approval by:

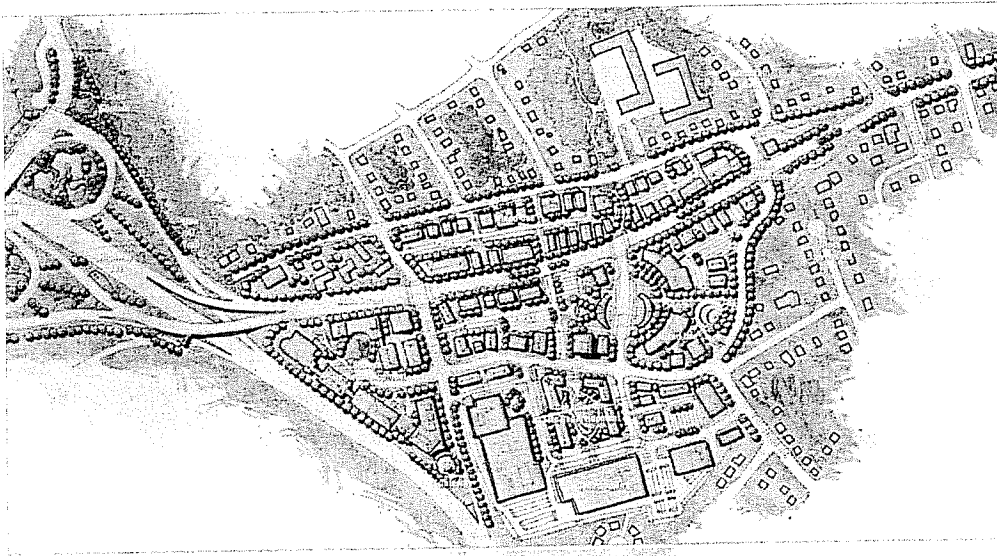


Catherine Sanderson, Senior Manager, Financial Services, 490-1562



Report Approved by:

Cathie O'Toole, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management - 490-4825



Executive Summary

1. The Vision Plan

The Main Street area sits in the centre of The most rapidly expanding and concentrated shopping area in HRM. A large 'slice' of protected watershed lands completes the ring around the Main Street area. This is a physical centre, a pinch point, and could easily become a real 'village centre',

The transportation context is similar. Main Street is the only direct road connecting the CBD with the Preston area. Metro transit recognizes the importance of the area and operates an informal bus depot from the shopping centre parking lot. There are thousands of residents within a fifteen minute walk of this area and hundreds of units are planned, or can be accommodated in the five existing residential areas adjacent to the area.

The study area is missing a link in the completion of the AT network. As a result, Lakecrest Drive has been recommended as the AT route to connect the AT network to everything to the east and west of the area in the HRM AT functional plan that has been approved in principle by HRM.

Suburban style growth, in Montague, Preston, Porters Lake and other areas suggests that these surrounding neighbourhoods may be ready for a village centre as gas prices force alternatives to current transportation, work and shopping patterns.

These assumptions formed the foundation of the long-term vision for Main Street:

The Main Street area will become dense, mixed use village core with great pedestrian spaces, goods and services, and facilities that invite residents to walk or bicycle to obtain daily needs and in so doing informally interact with their neighbours.

The plan to implement this vision for Main Street is elegantly simple and founded upon four 'big ideas' derived from the concepts stemming from two public workshops:

Years 1-9

Main Street becomes a tree lined arterial with improved pedestrian amenities and with entry parks, or gateways, at each end of the area. Trees are placed in the median wherever possible. The street is primarily for through-traffic,

however pedestrian cross walks are improved. Lighting levels are maintained but the pole height is reduced to pedestrian scale and pedestrian and commercial access is improved.

Years 10-30

Lakecrest Drive becomes the AT route through the area. Lakecrest still accommodates two-way auto traffic and new on-road bicycle facilities make it the main bicycle route, however sidewalks are added or improved.

Lakecrest Drive, Tacoma Drive, and Gordon Avenue become a circular road around Main Street making a 'Village Ring' street, which will improve both pedestrian and auto circulation in the area. While regional automobile traffic may still be the primary use of Main Street, the 'Village Ring' is locally oriented.

The three shopping centres (Tacoma Centre, Sobeys, & Smitty's) become a traditional village centre. Redevelopment of these shopping centres as vibrant, mixed-use, street-related, pedestrian-friendly areas will help achieve the vision for the streetscape and improve the ambience as requested by business and residents. Redevelopment could also add several hundred homes to the area.

2. Challenges to Implementation

Main Street is a major urban thoroughfare with approximately 30,000 vehicles per day (VPD) providing high visibility for but poor accessibility to commercial uses. This amount of traffic presents both an opportunity and a challenge for commercial prosperity in the study area. Adjacent commercial prosperity is enhanced by high traffic volumes, however, commercial prosperity starts to decline for businesses fronting directly on the street when there is >30,000 VPD because lack of vehicle accessibility becomes a significant deterrent for drivers. Unless more traffic lights are installed, side-streets and adjacent streets will

continue to become more viable locations for businesses to establish due to ease of access.

There is a distinct mix in architectural styles and building conditions on the street. The building and site quality varies extensively from property to property.

Signage, particularly billboards, reinforce a highway corridor sensibility rather than a core area feel. Tall light standards also reinforce the perception of Main Street as a highway. There are no coordinated signage standards or a Main Street 'brand'.

There is no identified Active Transportation connection between the Forest Hills trail and the Shubenacadie Canal trail through the Main Street area. Main Street is challenging for the participants in active transportation and there is limited space in the right of way for a multi-use trail link. Also, the current transit hub is 1.5 blocks away from Main Street.

Lakecrest Drive and the three shopping centres are not easily accessible from Main Street and vice versa, specifically for pedestrian traffic. Pedestrian street crossings can be difficult in some areas.

3. Costs and Implementation

The implementation strategy illustrates how the recommended public projects may be completed in three phases; phasing has assumed that current funding levels for the Capital District Streetscape Program will remain at current levels over the course of the 30 year vision for project completion.

The total implementation budget for the Main Street Streetscape Study is approximately **\$8.0 million** (2007 dollars). Within five years, the public area along Main Street would be completed. The HRM and project funding partners therefore need to contribute approximately \$300,000 annually

(2007 dollars) in capital or in-kind to the projects identified each year.

The following is a list of the recommended projects over the first 5 years:

1. COMMENCE MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENTS & LED STREET LIGHTING DEMONSTRATION

The first priority for the Main Street is to demonstrate some incremental improvements on a highly visible section of Main Street between Gordon Avenue and Hartlen Street. The projects included in the first year of the five year phased improvement to this section include landscaping the existing medians, street trees along both sides, improved signage, benches, bike racks, waste containers, railing improvements, and a LED street lighting demonstration project. The budget for this project is \$257 000.

2. WOODLAWN POCKET PARK

One of the key entry points into the primary study area is the pocket park on the corner of Woodlawn and Main Street. The park requires landscaping improvements with low maintenance plantings, adequate seating, a wayfinding kiosk and the new configuration will improve visibility to all areas of the park from Main Street. The budget for this project is \$30 000.

3. NEW INTERSECTION TRAFFIC STUDY

A traffic study must be completed for the new intersection on Main Street and Stevens Road. This study will cost about \$30,000 plus HST.

4. COMPLETE MAIN STREET PRIMARY STUDY AREA IMPLEMENTATION

A four year plan is proposed to complete the streetscape recommendations for the Primary Study Area that follow in this study.

4. HRM Next Steps

The following list outlines the next steps to be taken by the HRM to implement the Main Street streetscape improvements.

1. REZONE C3 ZONED LANDS TO C2 AND CREATE A MIXED USE ZONE

An policy priority for the Main Street Streetscape study area has been to rezone all areas currently zoned C-3 to C-2. These two zones are very similar, with the primary difference being the permitted use of warehousing and storage facilities in the C-3 zone. This type of land use is inconsistent with the intent of the current Regional Plan and the long term goal to create a Suburban Local Centre in the Main Street area.

Note: Either as part of a future secondary planning process or as a direct result of this study, HRM could create a mixed-use zone and design guidelines/standards for the Main Street Area.

2. FORM A BID

Merchants in the area are in the process of investigating the formation of a BID for the area. The business community will play a leading role and become the body for organizing and coordinating efforts to implement the vision. A BID will establish the necessary lines of communication with the HRM and coordinate the implementation of projects that contribute to the maintenance, development and promotion of Main Street Dartmouth.

3. NEW SECONDARY PLAN FOR MAIN STREET (DARTMOUTH) WITHIN 5 YEARS

A secondary planning strategy for the Main Street Suburban Local Centre (SLC) would address all issues pertaining to development, permitted uses, transportation, and urban design for the broader area surrounding the streetscape study boundary. The intent of the Main Street Study is to complement this future secondary planning process by articulating a physical planning vision and identifying immediate physical improvements for targeted areas of Main Street that address some of the problems associated with the current development pattern.

4. IMPLEMENT THE AT PLAN

The proposal to use Lakecrest Drive as an AT corridor as the best location for an AT link to the regional AT network will bring residents on side

Executive Summary

with the proposed AT corridor over the next number years. Main Street is simply too busy and Tacoma Drive has a variety of access/egress/road crossing challenges.

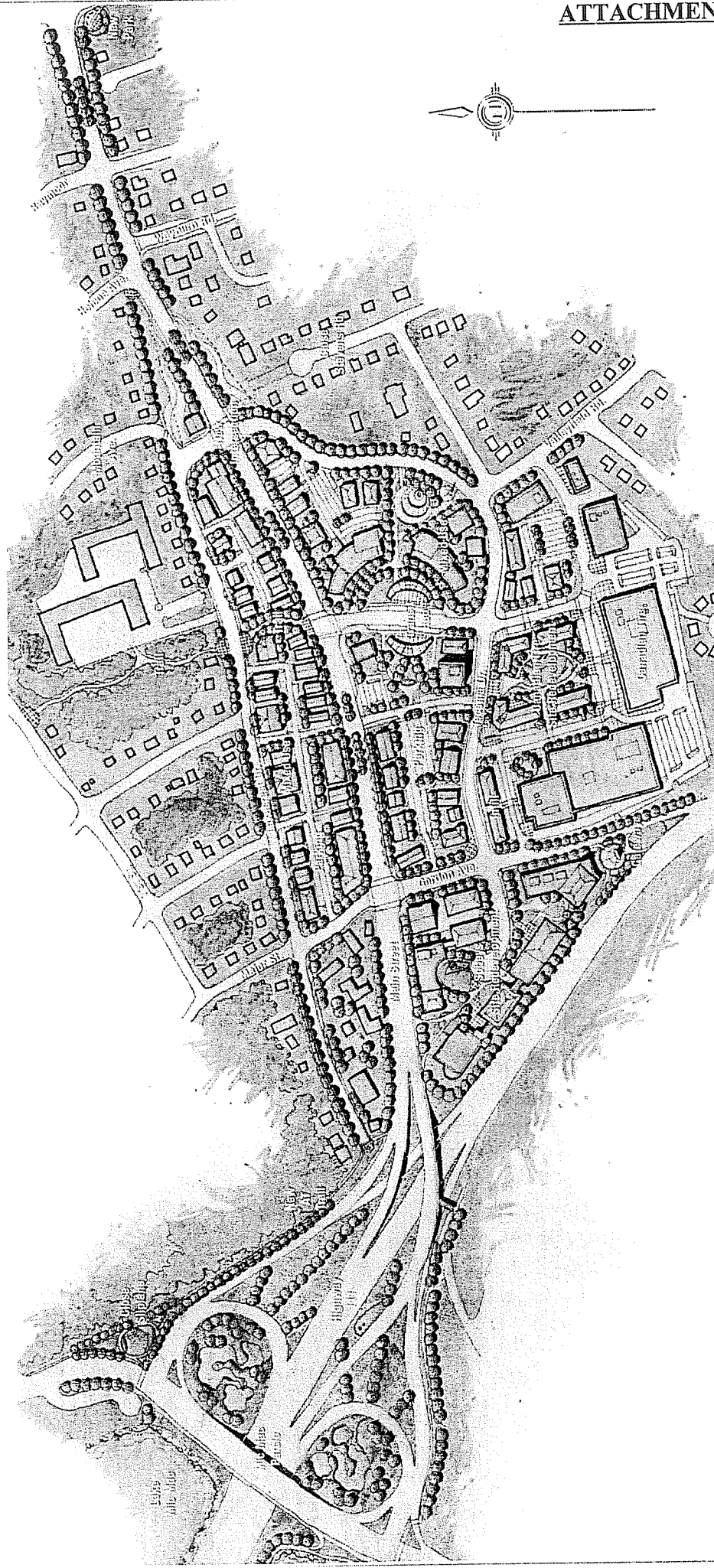


Figure 3.1

Vision Plan

MAIN STREET DARTMOUTH streetscape design project

ATTACHMENT # 3

Proposed Public Participation Program Secondary Planning Strategy (SPS) Preparation, Main Street, Dartmouth

ONGOING:

- Website providing drafts, questionnaires, consultation calendars & outcomes
- On-line forum
- Updates and invitation for comments at BIDC meetings

OPEN HOUSE/WORKSHOP #1 (June 2008):

- Summarize consensus achieved from Streetscape Study consultations
- List questions remaining to be resolved
- Display Alternatives showing how these questions might be resolved
- Invite comments on the Alternatives
- Provide a written questionnaire

OPEN HOUSE/WORKSHOP #2 (Fall 2008):

- Summarize responses to Open House #1, including questionnaire
- Display revised or hybrid Concept
- Display draft diagrams and text for land use by-law provisions
- Invite comments on proposed Concept, draft diagrams and regulatory text

PRESENTATION TO HARBOUR EAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL (Jan, 2009)

- Presentation of findings and recommended SPS Policy/LUB direction
- Seek direction from Council regarding Draft Policy/LUB revisions and determine need for additional public/stakeholder consultation

OPEN HOUSE/PUBLIC MEETING #3 (if necessary) (Feb. 2009):

- Recap process already undertaken
- Display and present proposed SPS and LUB
- Receive final comments

RECOMMENDATION TO HARBOUR EAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Present final proposed SPS to Council for Recommendation
- First Reading at Regional Council
- Public Hearing before Regional Council