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Halifax Regional Council
July 15, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Betty MacDonald
Betty MacDonald, Director of Governance and Strategic Initiatives

DATE: July 8, 2003

SUBJECT: Replacement of Brick Sidewalks in Capital District

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

In October 2001, the Capital District submitted an information report to Council supporting the use of concrete pavers in the Downtown given their successful application in Grand Parade and other civic spaces. Preliminary recommendations have been submitted under the Capital District Urban Design Study requiring further review of the previously approved program.

BACKGROUND

In June 2001, Public Works recommended that exposed aggregate edged with a red clay brick be used to resurface the existing brick sidewalks in Downtown Halifax. The Downtown Halifax Business Commission expressed concern that exposed aggregate would not be reflective of the historic character of the Halifax Waterfront and CBD area and recommended that interlocking concrete pavers be considered. Pavers have since been installed along Bedford Row and along Sackville Street between Bedford Row and Lower Water Street as phase one of the brick replacement program.

Since phase one, the Capital District Urban Design Study has been initiated to develop design guidelines for public space in the Capital District to achieve better designed and more functional public space. Following nine months of focussed staff, public and stakeholder consultation the study recommends that sidewalks in the Capital District should be surfaced with a combination of broom-finished concrete and pavers (as used on Bedford Row and Sackville Street) in order to reinforce the special character of HRM's downtown core, improve accessibility for all users, and reduce long-term maintenance costs. (See detail in Figure No. 1)

DISCUSSION

Concrete pavers have been used successfully in the Downtown core to highlight areas of architectural and civic interest with little maintenance requirements. Staff maintain that interlocking pavers are both a functional and attractive surfacing material for these areas. However, recent research and consultation under the Urban Design Study has led staff to understand that by incorporating a broom-finished concrete travelway into the paver system universal design will be achieved. This enables all pedestrians, including those using walking canes, wheelchairs, and strollers to comfortably travel along the public right-of-way. The pavers would still be maintained, however, their application would be reserved for the sidewalk area between the concrete travelway and the curb and on both sides of the travelway on wider sidewalks. This is illustrated in Figure No. 1. The use of broom-finished concrete with pavers is a refinement of the current use of pavers in the Downtown and will result in a better designed sidewalk.

Capital District has consulted with Public Works staff and the Downtown Halifax Business Commission on this matter and all stakeholders are in agreement that the combined use of concrete and pavers will effectively meet aesthetic and functional needs. The matter was also discussed with the public at a recent community meeting and the majority opinion was that the combined use of concrete and interlocking pavers is the preferred system. Pedestrians using canes in particular have found that the bevelled edge on the paver causes the cane tip to get caught adding further stress to their travel. However, in using a five to seven foot strip of broom-finished concrete the problem is eliminated. The width of the concrete travelway would vary depending on the overall sidewalk width.

Phase two of the brick replacement program is scheduled for September to replace brick along both sides of Lower Water Street and both sides of George Street. Staff have completed preliminary design work and have determined that the use of broom-finished concrete with pavers can be effectively integrated with the existing pavers on Bedford Row and Sackville Street. The same pavers used in these areas would be carried throughout the rest of the streets identified for brick replacement. The replacement of brick at the Alderney Ferry Terminal Park has also been identified as a priority capital project for this year under a separate budget item. Brick replacement along Portland Street will take place through a larger phased streetscape improvement program with phase one scheduled for spring.

The Urban Design Study has also determined that curb cuts in the Downtown core are not user-friendly particularly for those using wheelchairs or canes. The study recommends a universally designed curb cut that will meet all needs. Capital District and Public Works staff is currently reviewing the recommended specifications for curb cuts including emergency vehicle access and long-term maintenance implications. The recommended design will potentially be incorporated into the Lower Water and George Street sidewalks in order to test the application for further use throughout the Downtown. An improved universally designed cross-walk may also be tested in these areas.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Funding for this phased sidewalk renewal program will be provided from the Sidewalk Renewal Account CKU00541.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

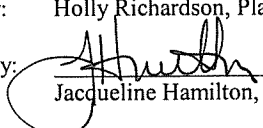
This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

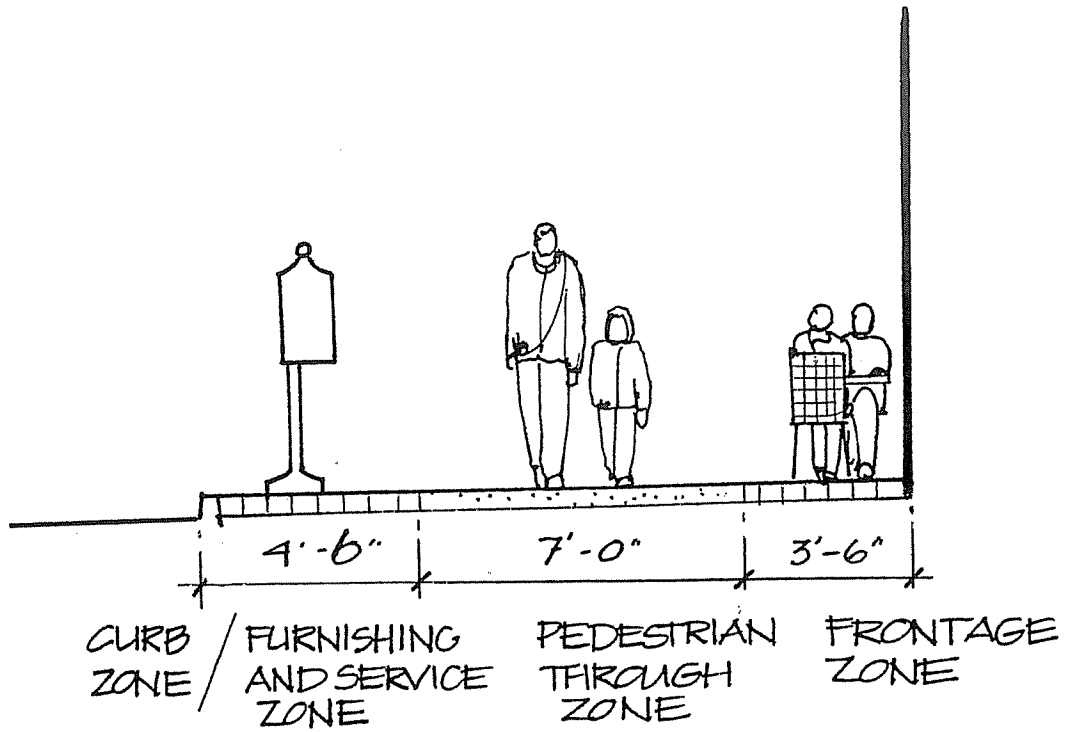
ALTERNATIVES

The brick sidewalk replacement could be done completely in unit pavers. Staff is not recommending this approach.

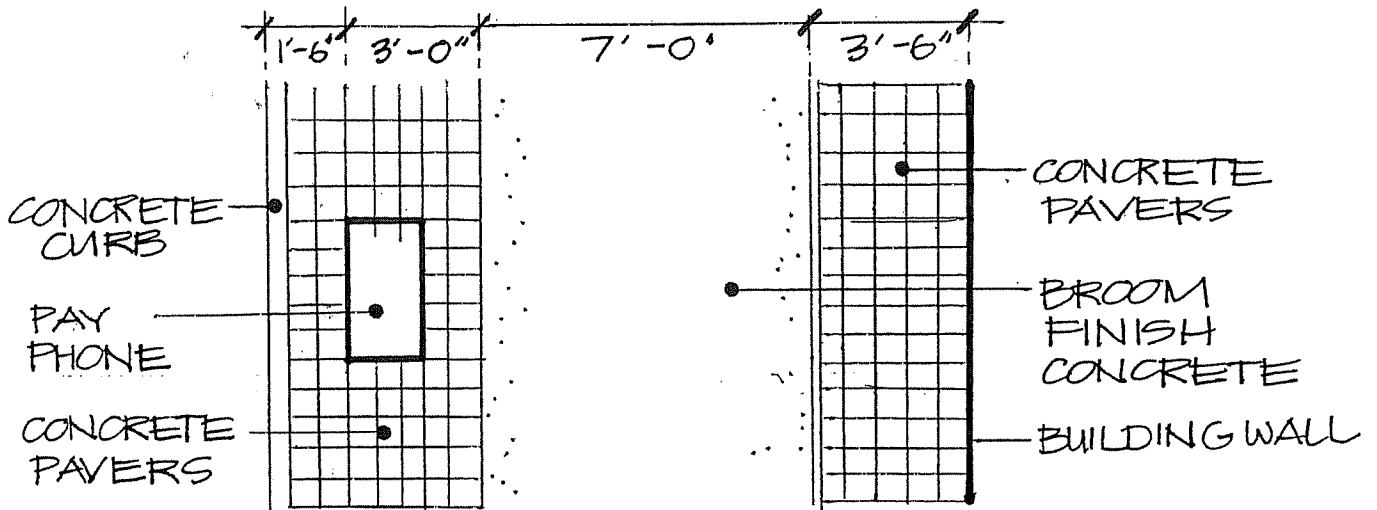
ATTACHMENTS

Figure 1 – Proposed Sidewalk Corridor Treatment.

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| 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. | |
| Report Prepared by: | Holly Richardson, Planner Capital District 490-6495 |
| Report Approved by: |  Jacqueline Hamilton, Project Manager, Capital District |



Section



Plan

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|--|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| Gordon Ratcliffe Landscape Architects 5539B Young Street Halifax, Nova Scotia tel: (902) 857-1500 fax: (902) 857-1108 | project: Capital District Urban Design Project | date: May 2003 | detail: SW - 9 |
| | title: Sidewalk Corridor width: 15' - 0" min. - C | scale: NTS | |
| | drawn by: CW/LG | | |