



**COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
October 28, 2015**

**PRESENT:** Gaynor Watson-Creed, Vice-Chair  
Dale Godsoe  
Councillor Wayne Mason  
Councillor Gloria McCluskey  
Councillor Jennifer Watts  
William Book  
Eric Burchill  
Peter Moorhouse

**REGRETS:** Joanne Macrae  
Councillor Brad Johns  
Fred Morley, Chair

**STAFF:** Jacob Ritchie, Manager, Urban Design  
Kasia Tota, Community Developer  
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk  
Elikem Tsamenyi, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Community Design Advisory Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/CDACAgenda150930.php>

*The meeting was called to order at 11:36 a.m. and the Committee adjourned at 1: 24 p.m.*

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:36 am.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September, 30, 2015**

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Mr.Book

**That the minutes of the Sept 30, 2015 meeting of the Community Design Advisory Committee be approved as distributed.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS - NONE**

MOVED by Councillor McClusky, seconded by Ms. Godsoe

That the agenda be approved as distributed.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

**5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**  
**5.1 Membership Update**

The following was before the Committee:

- A memorandum dated September 24, 2015 from the Deputy Clerk

The Deputy Clerk noted that the Community Design Advisory Committee's (CDAC) recommendation to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee that the terms of the members of CDAC be extended for one additional year, to November 2016 has been approved by council. She further noted that the Clerk's office will be recruiting for the Committee vacancy by November 2015.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS**

**6.1 Correspondence-None**

**6.2 Petitions-None**

**6.3 Presentation-None**

**7. REPORTS**

**7.1 STAFF**

**7.1.1 Halifax Housing Needs Assessment-Report to CDAC**

The following was before the Committee:

- A presentation entitled Centre Plan: Halifax Housing Needs Assessment

Ms. Kasia Tota, Community Developer, presented a report on the housing needs assessment of HRM. The aim for this presentation was to make known the recommendations of the report and how it affects

the Centre Plan going forward. In her presentation, she pointed out that the assessment adopted a continuum of housing approach, but focused on the needs of diverse households in the Municipality. The study itself was identified and commissioned by the Affordable Housing Working Group, and directly aligns with the Halifax Housing and Homelessness Partnership that aims to address these issues through an evidence based approach. SHS Consulting from Ontario undertook this study, in conjunction with a wide number of stakeholders. The study analysed housing demands, its supply and assessed the issue of affordability and existing gaps (for future needs). The areas covered under this study includes Regional Centre, Halifax Urban, Dartmouth Urban, Bedford/Sackville Urban, Commuter West, Commuter North, Commuter East and the Rural Res./Agricultural Areas. The report indicated that there are currently 206 emergency shelters, 446 units of transitional or supportive shelters, 5,651 units of affordable housing 55,358 units of rental units and 103,670 ownership housing within the municipality.

On the issue of affordability, Ms. Tota noted that about 1 in 4 households (41,784) spent about 30% of their total household income on housing; 26,215 (47%) of these were renters & 15,570 (15%) were owner households. Of the 41,784 households spending more than 30% of their income on housing, 19,570 (about 1 in 8) were spending at least 50% of their household income on housing. According to these numbers, these households have core housing needs, as their current housing situation falls below housing adequacy, suitability, and affordability standards. Ms. Tota also noted that the greatest core housing needs are within the Regional Centre.

Additionally, 33,070 households (20% of all households) earning less than \$29,566 were spending 30% or more of their incomes on housing costs and can't afford the average market rent without paying more than 30%. Also, 15,195 households (45% of the 33,070 households) had incomes of less than \$17,065 per year. These groups of households would need non-market housing. Households in need of non-market housing within HRM include a high proportion of; lone parent households, one-person households, recent immigrants, persons with a disability, Aboriginal-led households, youth households, and senior-led households. Thus, there is a need for a sufficient supply of rental and ownership housing options affordable to low and moderate income families (those earning \$29,567-\$52,266 per year), with the Regional Centre facing the greatest affordability challenges.

Ms. Tota went on to note that future trends will see a shift of residential developments towards urban housing, rental housing, decreased demands for ownership housing, an aging population, increasingly smaller households and a continued demand for non-market housing. An increasing challenge to affordable housing as indicated by housing service providers comes down to a lack of adequate funding and increasing cost of housing. Ms Tota concluded by making some suggestions going forward. These include amongst other things, a request for staff report regarding possible municipal response using planning documents to ensure there is no net loss of affordable housing when property is redeveloped and the potential of inclusionary zoning for new developments, with a report sent back to CPED. Secondly, there should be a request that staff work with the Housing Partnership to develop an analysis of the needs assessment that will quantify the number and types of units needed to be built to meet the below market needs in HRM and report back to CPED with an appropriate report.

Councillor McClusky began discussions by pointing out that not much discussion is directed at people/individuals earning less than \$10,000 pa in income. Ms Tota acknowledged that it is definitely an issue that needs to be dealt with. Mr. Book wondered if this group was not more an issue for subsidized housing, rather than an affordability issue, to which Councillor McClusky pointed out that they should fall within the affordability category, as they are people who live in any apartments/units they can find within their communities.

The question of how to go about fixing the affordability problem was raised. This especially appears daunting, seeing the numbers shown in the report which indicates huge affordability challenges within the Municipality. The discussions show that private housing developers are usually profit driven and might not be willing to invest in housing projects that would not be profitable to them. The reality of costs related to buildings (maintenance, etc) makes it challenging to maintain rents at a certain level that promotes affordability. Some of the solutions that can salvage this situation include financial incentives in the form

of grants, Co-ops, etc. Thus, the Housing & Homelessness partnership is adopting an evidence based and broader approach to understanding these issues as it pertains to Halifax so as to come up with the most appropriate solutions. The focus of the partnership has been on homelessness and affordability. The homelessness approach is aimed at moving people living on the streets (without any homes), into shelters. Other forms of support are provided as well to help them from ending up back on the street. The affordability aspect is aimed at studying and reporting on the situation. Thus, a report such as the one being discussed sets the tone for the types of actions to be taken. Another goal is to strategise on how to fix the problem, which may include private sector partnerships, amongst other things. It was agreed that there is no quick fix for this situation, as it had taken several years for the housing situation to get this bad. It would require partnership on all three levels of government, with significant amounts of resources injected into finding adequate and lasting solutions. Other options may include trying to increase the resiliency of communities by expanding/increasing the housing options within the municipality. This is where the Centre Plan becomes important, as it would help create resilient communities within HRM so as to prepare them for whatever policy directions taken on affordability in future.

Further concerns were raised about the issue of affordability and how much the end of social housing agreements is negatively impacting on peoples' lives within the municipality. A number of households are no longer able to afford their homes as a result of the end of the agreements. It was agreed greater effort at addressing these issues must be made. It was also noted that there is the need to support families within the urban core as the existing stock of housing units is reducing. A few suggestions on ways to deal with this issue were put forth, and include inclusionary zoning and more family friendly mortgage support for households. Student housing must also be addressed as a matter of importance. The point was made that HRM is constantly receiving new students from across the country & the world. Hence, there is a need to provide affordable housing for students and the youth in general - an issue very important to the retention of young people within the municipality.

Councillor McClusky noted that the report confirms what we see around us every day. People are living in very deplorable housing units that need to be fixed. She believes that action on these issues cannot be delayed any further and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Concerns were also raised about the usefulness of the Centre Plan in helping address these issues. It became apparent through the discussions that, the affordability problem is a complex social issue, with a multiplicity of root causes. However, the Centre Plan is aimed at complementing other policies/strategies aimed at tackling the problem. It will help address some of these issues through appropriate and adequate legislation and policies.

Councillor Mason weighed in on the discussion suggesting that much of the problem is a result of amalgamation, where housing issues were pushed to the provincial government, (which is a bit disconnected from the local/grass root community level). Thus, community development ends up not necessarily meeting local needs, as the case should be. The cutting of subsidies on a number of social programs has also complicated the situation further. The best way to tackle this problem is therefore through a multi-faceted and holistic approach.

In addition to the above, it was agreed that other issues such as affordable child care and other pertinent social programs should be introduced/intensified with the aim of increasing the basic incomes of households, which could go towards addressing housing needs.

The Vice-Chair noted that that addressing housing issues has a positive ripple effect on other concerns/problems households contend with. It is therefore important to push for advocacy in order to bring these issues to the attention of the Provincial and Federal governments for more action on their part. Policies that might have negative impacts on these issues must be noted and addressed accordingly. Social programs such as child support, school planning, amongst others should significantly be improved upon in order to ensure families feel supported.

**7.1.2 Update - Timeline/Schedule of On-going Work**

Mr. Ritchie noted that there are a number of on-going projects that he would like to bring to the attention of the committee. The next one that is to be released is the Density Bonusing Report, which comes out on November 10, 2015. It is in fact the same day the 'shape your city' portal would be released as well.

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**8. ADDED ITEMS**

**8.1 Committee Schedule – December 2015**

A suggestion was put forward by Mr. Ritchie for an extended meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November or one additional meeting after the last official meeting to fully discuss some of the technical reports. The Committee agreed that a meeting be held on December 16, 2015.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Community Design Advisory Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, November 25, 2015, from 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 pm

Elikem Tsamenyi  
Legislative Support