

**Community Planning & Economic Development**  
**August 8, 2013**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original signed by \_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Church, Government Relations & External Affairs

**DATE:** July 3, 2013

**SUBJECT:** **Update on HRM's Approach to Urban Core Public Realm  
Improvements and Approval of the Draft Decision Making Matrix**

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**ORIGIN**

March 22, 2011, Regional Council Meeting: **MOVED** by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Streach that Halifax Regional Council endorse the 2011-2016 Economic Strategy for Halifax Regional Municipality  
**MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

February 5, 2013 Regional Council Meeting: **MOVED** by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Nicoll to direct staff to produce a report to present to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee April 3, 2013 outlining an action plan, starting in fiscal 2013/14 with the strategic priorities for downtown as outlined in the Greater Halifax Partnership Economic Plan, as endorsed by Council in March of 2011, specifically:

1. To establish the \$50 million intergovernmental capital improvement campaign to repair and enhance the public realm in the urban core.
- ~~2. To establish a "Strategic Urban Reserve" fund for urban core beautification, "pole free area," public art and infrastructure improvements."~~

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

February 14, 2013 Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee Meeting: **MOVED** by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts recommends that a staff report be requested which sets out a plan to establish a 5-year \$50 million intergovernmental capital improvement campaign to repair and enhance the urban core, for approval by Regional Council in the 2014/15 year; request staff to include HRM's share of the 5-year \$50 million campaign beginning in the 2014/15 budget; request staff clarify in the report the "Strategic Urban Reserve" fund for urban core beautification, the pole free area, public art, and infrastructure improvements, in the 2014/15 budget.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

**79 (1)** The Municipality may (a) beautify, improve and maintain property owned or leased by the Municipality;

**88 (1)** The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for (aa) streets, culverts, retaining walls, sidewalks, curbs and gutters; (ac) placing underground the wiring and other parts of a system for the supply or distribution of electricity, gas, steam or other source of energy or a telecommunications system; (ah) playgrounds, trails, including trails developed, operated or maintained pursuant to an agreement made under clause 82(c), bicycle paths, swimming pools, ice arenas and other recreational facilities; (ai) public grounds, squares, halls, museums, parks, tourist information centres and community centres; (as) wharves and public landings.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Council approve the draft decision making matrix that sets out criteria for which urban core public realm improvement projects can be assessed and prioritized between 2014/14 and 2018/19.

### **BACKGROUND**

HRM's Economic Strategy, endorsed by Council in March of 2011, sets goals and objectives for the economic growth of Halifax. These goals and objectives support the broader economic objectives of population, employment and income level growth, as well as growth in the business tax base between 2011 and 2016.

One of the five goals areas of the plan is the Regional Centre. The outcome of that goal is to build a vibrant and attractive regional centre that attracts \$1.5 billion of private investment and attracts 8,000 more residents by 2016. A five year objective is to further the liveability and attractiveness of the urban core. (Attachment A is a map of the regional centre and urban core areas of HRM). The short term actions for the five year objective include:

1. ~~Adopt a comprehensive 5 year, \$50 million intergovernmental capital improvement campaign to repair and enhance the public realm in the urban core; and~~
2. Establish an ongoing dedicated strategic urban reserve fund for urban core beautification, pole free area, public art and infrastructure improvements.

The following is a list of measures within the Economic Strategy which can assist in determining success in achieving the goal of building a vibrant and attractive regional centre:

1. Increased building permits in the regional centre;
2. Regional centre population growth;
3. More private investment in the regional centre; and
4. Public perception of downtown vibrancy.

The Strategic Urban Partnership (SUP) did a presentation to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Council (CPED) on February 14, 2013 updating the Committee on its current activities and their 2013/14 priorities, as well as providing a review of the Economic Strategy, with specific emphasis on the Regional Centre Goal. After some discussion, the Standing Committee members asked for staff to provide a report on two specific Economic Strategy Regional Centre action items: 1) establishment of a 5-year \$50 million intergovernmental capital improvement campaign to repair and enhance the urban core for the 2014/15 year, including the Municipality's share of the 5-year \$50 million campaign beginning in the 2014/15 budget; and 2) establishment of a strategic urban reserve fund for urban core beautification, pole free area, public art and infrastructure improvements. In addition, Council asked that staff report back to the Standing Committee on a regular basis so they could be consulted throughout the process.

This report does not contain the final plan requested by Council. Rather, this interim report is intended to keep the CPED updated on the work that has been completed on the plan to date, and get approval for the draft decision making approach which will be used to assess and prioritize urban core public realm improvement projects to be detailed in a future report before the end of the 2013/14 fiscal year.

## **DISCUSSION**

Although Regional Council endorsed the Economic Strategy back in March of 2011, there is still much work to do in the urban core in an effort to fulfill the Regional Centre Goal. The short term one to two year action to adopt a comprehensive five year, \$50 million intergovernmental capital improvement campaign to repair and enhance the public realm of the Urban Core; and to establish an ongoing dedicated strategic urban reserve was not addressed in the first two years of the strategy. Council has directed staff to provide a detailed report on this section of the Economic Strategy in the 2013/2014 fiscal year, and prepare a list of prioritized projects to be included in 2014/2015 budget.

The urban core acts as the showcase for the Halifax Regional Municipality and is a key factor in making Halifax the hub of the Atlantic Provinces. There are several tools available to the ~~municipality to promote urban core revitalization.~~ These include regulatory tools, fiscal tools and public investment. Fiscal tools include examples like tax abatement and permit fee deductions. Regulatory tools include the Regional Plan, HRM by Design, the Centre Plan and other land use bylaws. However, the focus of this report is the third tool, public sector investment. Public sector investment in the urban core can help to lead and stimulate private sector investment, contribute to the overall attractiveness and utility of the urban core and ultimately increase the fiscal benefit that accrues to the municipality through increase assessments and tax yield. Under the public investment category, staff have drafted the structure of a decision making matrix for CPED to consider, which will assist in making future decisions around HRM investment in streetscaping projects within the urban core.

## **Update on Progress to Date**

The following has taken place since February 15, 2012:

1. A project steering committee has been formed which includes members of HRM staff, representatives from the SUP and the Greater Halifax Partnership;
2. A project charter has been drafted and agreed upon by steering committee members; (Attachment B)
3. An action plan has been developed with short, medium and long term actions identified, as well as key accountabilities; and
4. A final report outline has been developed as a template for the steering committee to work toward.

Staff are currently working on the final report; to be presented to CPED before the end of the 2013/14 fiscal year as requested, which will include the following sections with detailed information:

### **1. Introduction**

- a) Outcomes and objectives to be achieved

### **2. Setting the context**

- b) History and trends in downtown development/revitalization
- c) Baseline scenario – where are we now and what are we looking to improve upon
- d) Why it is important to invest in the urban core
- e) Description of activities being undertaken to make improvements in the urban core and range of available tools

### **3. Best practice research and benchmarking**

### **4. Definition of terms and scoping of project**

- f) Clarification of what should be considered a public realm improvement investment

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### **5. Identification of specific projects and potential partners for the next 5 years**

- g) Development of a decision making matrix which will describe the criteria against which projects will be assessed
- h) Identification of potential funding partners, strategic stakeholders and influencers
- i) A proposed project list – current and anticipated projects, processes and timelines opportunities for partnering from 2014/15 through to 2018/19

### **6. Identification of funding options, incentives and sustainability of the Strategic Urban Reserve**

- j) Internal funding options
- k) External funding opportunities
- l) Sustainability into the future

### **Components of the Decision Making Matrix**

In fulfillment of the CPED motion from February 2013, the components of the decision making matrix that sets out criteria against which projects can be assessed and prioritized for completion between 2014 and 2018 has been drafted. The matrix proposes four strategic categories under which projects would be vetted and prioritized. They include the following:

- 1. Ability to maximize the impact of new investment.** For example:
  - To what degree does the proposal make the urban core relevant and usable to all HRM residents and visitors?
  - To what degree does the proposal improve the attractiveness of the urban core?
  
- 2. Ability to capitalize on existing strengths & assets**
  - a) **Enhancing Previous Strategic Investments.** For example:
    - To what extent does this investment, support a previous articulated and still current municipal strategy?
    - To what extent does this proposal enhance previous strategic investments?
  - b) **Inherited Assets.** For example:
    - To what extent does the proposal improve or build upon HRM's image and brand?
    - To what extent does the proposal enhance the current image/brand of that location?
  
- 3. Public Benefit**
  - a) To what degree does the proposal promote active, healthy lifestyles, improve accessibility and connectivity?
  - b) To what degree does the proposal promote social cohesion and/or improve access to the public realm for diverse groups of users?
  - c) To what degree does the proposal improve economic outcomes? For example:
    - retail or commercial
    - tourism
    - contribution to clustering of economic activity
  - d) **How does the proposal improve environmental outcomes? For example:**
    - net change in emissions
    - improvement to public buildings
    - trees planted
    - noise levels
    - air quality
  - e) To what degree does the proposal make the urban core safer? For example:
    - reduce accidents
    - crime reduction
    - provide for more eyes on the street
    - reduce broken window effect

**4. Alignment with/implementation of existing Council approved policies, initiative and/or plans**

- HRMbyDesign
- Active Transportation Plan
- HRM Cultural Plan
- Capital Ideas Paper

The tactical set of criteria applied at the end will include a review for:

1. **Readiness** – is the project at the idea phase, the design phase, tender phase or shovel ready phase
2. **Partnership Opportunities** – funding support, synergies, public/private investment opportunities

The matrix is intended to be detailed enough to assist Council make informed funding decisions and provides a level of flexibility required to take advantage of opportunities that may arise from time to time.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications identified at this time.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was required at this time.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications related to this report.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. CPED may choose to approve the decision making matrix with amendments
2. CPED may choose not to approve the decision making matrix

**ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment A: Map of the regional centre and urban core areas of HRM as described in HRM's 2011 to 2016 Economic Strategy

Attachment B: Project Charter

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

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Financial Approval by:

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Regional Centre – Blue Line  
Urban Core – Red Line





**5 Year Capital Campaign & Strategic Urban Reserve**

**Revision History**

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Date</b>      | <b>Author</b>                  | <b>Summary of Changes</b>                                     |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1.             | 28 February 2013 | Maggie MacDonald               | Development of Project Charter                                |
| 2.             | 27 March 2013    | Marion Currie/Maggie MacDonald | Edits following the first meeting of the project group review |

**Project Overview**

**1. Origin**

Motion passed by the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee on February 14 2013, requesting a staff report on the strategic priorities as outlined in the Economic Plan as endorsed by Council in March 2011, specifically related to;

1. The establishment of the 5 year \$50 million intergovernmental capital campaign and;
2. The establishment of a strategic urban reserve.

**2. Purpose**

To repair and enhance HRM's urban core (area as outlined in HRM's economic strategy including downtown Halifax and Dartmouth) as identified in HRM's 2011-2016 Economic Strategy by:

1. developing a 5 year plan including a list of urban core public realm improvement projects that:
  - would be started and largely completed within 5 years,
  - among them require at least \$50 million of anticipated government contributions,
  - are improvements above the current level of maintenance and investment.

The plan should include identification of HRM's contributions, options for partnering with other levels of government and the private and not for profit sectors and additional funding sources;

2. identifying options for a "Strategic Urban Reserve" and;
3. presenting the 5 year plan and options for the reserve in time for the 2014/15 budget deliberations.

**3. Scope**

**In scope:**

Identification of origins of the request, describing benefits of capital improvement repair and enhancement, definition of terms, identification and initial discussions with potential partners, development of a project matrix or set of criteria against which projects can be assessed, identification of types of qualifying projects and of potential projects, funding plan, list of proposed projects for the urban core for 2014 to 2018.

**Out of scope:**

Operationalization of the 5 year \$50 million project plan  
Discussion of enhancements outside the urban core

**4. Objectives**

1. complete staff report to respond to CPED's motion from February 14, 2013
2. establish a 5 year \$50 million intergovernmental capital improvement project plan for approval by Regional in time for the 2014/15 budget deliberations
3. identify options for the creation of a "Strategic Urban Reserve" in time for the 2014/15 budget deliberations
4. develop a decision making matrix that sets out criteria against which projects can be assessed and list of projects to be completed between 2014 and 2018
5. develop a decision making matrix that sets out criteria against which projects can be assessed to qualify for funding from the "Strategic Urban Reserve"
6. identify opportunities and liaise with other levels of government, stakeholders and public entities to identify possible projects and funding partnerships
7. involve members of the Community Planning and Economic Development committee in creation of plan by soliciting direction from members via regular committee updates

**5. Key Business Driver(s)**

- HRM's approved 2011-2016 Economic Strategy includes actions that call for the adoption of a 5 year, 50 million dollar intergovernmental capital improvement campaign for the repair and enhancement of the Urban Core and the establishment of a strategic urban reserve.
- The Centre Plan approved by Regional Council, is considered phase 3 of HRMbyDesign, following the establishment of the overall Regional Centre Vision and Principles in phase 1, and the creation of the Downtown Halifax Plan in phase 2. The three phases present a 25-year vision of a dense, livable and prosperous Regional Centre that will create sustained economic and environmental benefits across the entire municipality.

- Economic development is a corporate priority as identified by Regional Council at the beginning of their four year term. The urban core is an important economic driver for the municipality and a well-maintained and attractive urban core will contribute to increased economic activity, increased tax base, and to making the municipality more attractive to residents, visitors and potential residents.

**6. Corporate Outcome Area Planning**

|   |                              |  |                                |
|---|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| x | Healthy Communities          |  | Excellence in Service Delivery |
| x | Economic Development         |  | Financial Stewardship          |
|   | Transportation               |  | Organizational Capacity        |
|   | Governance and Communication |  |                                |

**7. Criteria for Success**

- A practicable plan for an intergovernmental capital improvement campaign is presented to and approved by Regional Council
- Potential projects and funding partners are identified
- A Strategic Urban Reserve is created
- A five year capital improvement project plan is developed by 14/15 with some projects slated for completion in that first year

**8. Stakeholders**

| Name   | Title   | Area of Interest (Work Plan Theme)   |
|--|---|--|
| Chris Bryant<br>Jennifer Church<br>Jane Fraser                                 | Managing Director of GREA<br><br>Director – Infrastructure & Planning | Directors - Project sponsors   |
| Marion Currie<br>Maggie MacDonald  | GREA  | Project Coordination   |
| Peter Bigelow<br>Bruce Fisher<br>Fred Morley<br>Chris Bryant<br>Richard Harvey | HRM Staff Project Team  | Subject matter experts<br>Implementation Leads   |
| Peter Duncan   |   |  |
| Strategic Urban Partnership (SUP)  | Andy Fillmore<br>Joanne McRae<br>Paul MacKinnon                       | Advocacy & coordination of input from external stakeholders<br>Consultation & report input<br>Project Team External Reps |
| Community Planning and Economic Development Committee                          |   | Advice/direction, monitoring   |
| TBD  | Legal Services  | Legal review and advice  |
| Sheilagh Edmonds   | Leg. Assist. - Clerk's Office   | Committee Process  |
| Provincial & federal employees   |   | Advice – partnership opportunities   |

|                       |   |  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Other Municipalities  | Various and TBD   | Best practice / jurisdictional review              |
| Stakeholders/Partners | BIDs, WDCL, GHP, private land holders/developers, funding agencies & foundations, private sector funding partners, etc. | Advice – partnership opportunities, best practices |

**9. Assumptions & Dependencies**

- That executive and senior management are fully supportive of the project and implementation of next steps;
- That resources are / will be available to complete the short-term work required;

**10. Issues/Risks**

- Lack of buy-in or cooperation by key internal and external stakeholders;
- Buy in with respect to the contribution of capital improvements to economic development
- Priority of this project in relation to work load of stakeholders.

**11. Terminology\***

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Economic Plan | A Greater Halifax, Economic Strategy 2011-2016. Halifax's Council-endorsed economic strategy.   |
| Urban Core    | Area shown on page 16 of the Economic Strategy including downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, Dalhousie and Saint Mary's university, and Gottingen Street. |

\*Definitions of terminology will be an important part of the work on this project.

**12. Project Milestone Schedule**

| Seq. No.                  | Activity Milestone   | Start/End | Deliverables   |
|---------------------------|--|-----------|--|
| <b>Project plan</b>       |  |           |  |
|                           | Create project team  |           |  |
|                           | Define project Charter, project scope                              |           | Project Charter and scope completed                                |
|                           | Outline contents of final staff report                             |           | Outline of staff report (feedback and approval received from CPED) |
| <b>Definitions</b>        |  |           |  |
|                           | Develop common understanding of terms                              |           | List of agreed to terms and definitions                            |
| <b>Establish Baseline</b> |  |           |  |
|                           | Understand baseline/current state with respect to current projects |           | List of current projects underway                                  |
|                           | Understand baseline/current state with                             |           | List of current funding of   |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | respect to funding  |  | public realm improvements in urban core   |
|  | Document currently planned projects   |  | List of currently planned public realm improvements   |
|  | Document current state of affairs.  |  | Document outlining current state of affairs in urban core, including, public realm funding levels, assessment levels, number of businesses, pictures, other measures. |
| <b>Assembling Existing Research</b>                          |   |  |   |
|  | Describe project origins  |  | Description of origins  |
|  | Describe the importance of the urban core as an economic driver   |  | Piece outlining importance of urban core as an economic driver  |
|  | Gather existing research with respect to the benefit of public realm improvements and what types of projects are most beneficial  |  | Piece outlining available research on benefit of public realm improvements  |
|  | Best practice research  |  | List of best practices and effectiveness of practices in other jurisdictions  |
| <b>Identification of Possible Projects/Types of Projects</b> |   |  |   |
|  | Identify criteria for desired/eligible projects (e.g. anticipated benefit from different types of project; alignment with HRM priorities, practicability, outside interest, cost and funding opportunities) |  | List of criteria and relative importance of criteria created  |
|  | With internal and external stakeholders, identify types of projects and projects of interest  |  | List of projects/ project types identified  |
|  | Assess identified possible projects against criteria  |  | Assessment of list of projects  |
|  | Propose project list and general implementation plan.   |  | Project list and general implementation plan proposed.  |
|  | Amend project list and plan as directed.  |  | Final project list and general implementation plan.   |

**13. Project Resources & Budget - Effort & Cost Estimates**

No budget required. Staff resources from GREA, FICT, P&I, TPW, others as required. Detailed 5 year, 50 million dollar intergovernmental capital improvement capital plan to be developed as part of the exercise.

***Authorization(s)***

1. Managing Director Government Relations & External Affairs & Director Infrastructure and Planning (Champions)
2. Oversight Team (Directors of FICT, P&I, TPW, Managing Director of GREA, DCAO, CAO)
3. CAO (Approval)