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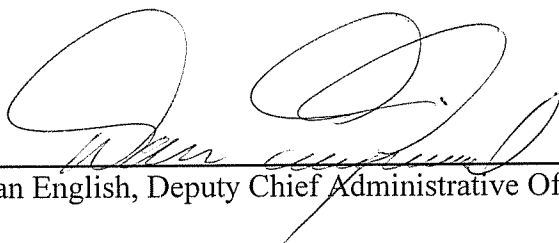


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Halifax Regional Council
May 25, 2004

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 19, 2004

SUBJECT: **Capital District Urban Design Study & Public Facility Needs and Opportunities Study**

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

This report is in response to Council's decision on May 18, 2004 to table rather than endorse in principle the Capital District Urban Design Study, and Councillor Uteck's subsequent notice of motion to have Council reconsider its decision.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that :

1. **Council endorse portions of the Capital District Urban Design Study, namely the Streetscape Design Guidelines and the Wayfinding Signage System as templates to guide future investment and programming within the Capital District.**

BACKGROUND

On May 18, 2004 Council Committee of the Whole session staff presented Council with several recently completed research studies as part of Regional Planning. These include the Regional Planning Economic Potential Study, the Capital District Urban Design Study, and the Capital District Public Facilities Needs and Opportunities Study.

As part of Council's discussion various issues were raised concerning the level of resources dedicated to Capital District. Council was also uncomfortable with the recommended direction from staff to "adopt in principle" the findings of the Urban Design Study, fearing that such a broad motion would commit Council (and subsequent Councils) to all recommendations contained in the report and have far reaching implications in terms of future budget resources. The purpose of this report is to clarify these concerns and provide information to Council on key aspects of the study requiring Council endorsement.

DISCUSSION

Capital District Resources

The Capital District project was formed in 2001 by Halifax Regional Council primarily to focus resources and coordinate service delivery within the downtown areas of Dartmouth and Halifax and adjacent commercial districts of Gottingen Street, Spring Garden Road, and Quinpool Road. This initiative recognized Capital District as a special place for all citizens and its importance as the economic and cultural Capital of Atlantic Canada. The vision for the Capital District was endorsed by Council in 2002.

Key findings highlighted in the Economic Potential Study and other research completed as part of Regional Planning validate the importance of the Capital District:

- Capital District contains the largest concentration of HRM's jobs (40%), and generates annually 600 million dollars in tourism revenue and 80 million dollars in taxes.
- all five of the economic drivers for HRM's economy are centred within the Capital District (Universities, Hospitals, Defence, Public Administration, Tourism, Banking and insurance).
- Future growth is anticipated across these sectors within the Capital District.
- HRM has the opportunity to influence the location of future growth through the Regional Plan. The vision for the Capital District as the regional centre for governance, culture and business is strongly reinforced within the Regional Planning goals and objectives endorsed by Council and serve as a foundation of all three alternative settlement options which are undergoing public consultation. The Regional Plan has a strong focus on town and village centres which provide commercial and employment opportunities throughout the region.
- Continued levels of investment within the Capital District are crucial to maintaining the region's global competitiveness.

Since 2001 Council has allocated resources to the Capital District (both capital and operating) in

large part by pooling together previous budgets from other business units such as Public Works, Real Property and Asset Management, Planning & Development, Recreation, Tourism, Culture, and Heritage to achieve efficiencies in service delivery. The Capital District capital budget represents a fairly small proportion of HRM's overall capital budget (1.2 %). The capital program for 2004/05 which is approximately 1.6 million dollars, is spread throughout the Capital District on select high impact streetscape, sidewalk, and parks projects in Downtown Dartmouth, Halifax, Spring Garden Road, Gottingen Street, and Quinpool Road. Implementation of the capital program for Capital District is funded from the budget through a service agreement with Real Property and Asset Management. Results are achieved through coordination and cooperation with other business units which enables greater impacts with the same level of resources. The multi year financial plan which was submitted for Capital District as part of the 2004/05 budget calls for continuation of the current level of investment in order to:

- Protect and enhance our position and competitive edge as the Capital of Atlantic Canada,
- Implement high impact recommendations from the Urban Design Study,
- Leverage resources from the Business Improvement Districts for joint maintenance and marketing and promotions,
- Leverage resources from other levels of government and the private sector.

Urban Design Study

Staff's recommendation in the May 18, 2004 staff report on the Capital District Urban Design Study to endorse in principle the Study results, was intended to achieve the following:

1. Guide existing operational and capital budget approved by Council and provide a foundation for future budgeting and business planning at current levels of support,
2. Have Council endorse the design guidelines to guide future maintenance, capital works or policy initiatives undertaken by HRM or the private sector.
3. Have Council support the wayfinding and identity system as a template to be applied throughout the Capital District within the scope of existing budgets approved by Council,
4. Provide foundation of research on best practices and urban design tools for development which would be implemented through the Regional Planning program.

The report contains many recommendations most of which would be considered in the context of approved business plans and budgets. As required, Council will be involved in any decision-making affecting future policy for public space or development. In staff's view it would be beneficial for Council to endorse items two and three above which represent a more proactive shift in policy and programming from past practice, and could serve as a template which can be applied in other community centres across the region. With Council's approval of item two, the design guidelines and the new sidewalk system would be formally incorporated as the new standard for the Capital District to be reflected in various policy initiatives which are underway e.g., review of Engineering Red Book specifications, and sidewalk café policy review. Staff also recommend Council endorse item three which is the wayfinding and identity signage system for the Capital District. It a highly visible new program that will improve the accessibility and experience within HRM and require

ongoing efforts to ensure a coherent system that works with existing wayfinding signage. Its implementation will be guided by approved capital budgets.

Public Facilities Study

Staff's intention with respect to the Public Facility Needs and Opportunities Study was to present it as an information item as an outcome of the Capital District vision endorsed by Council in 2002, and as a deliverable framed under the umbrella of the Regional Planning research program.

The report is comprehensive and addresses many items, some large capital items, others are program or policy initiatives which could be acted on within the scope of existing programs. The report is forward-looking addressing not only issues and facilities of HRM's purview, but key provincial and federal initiatives which have bearing on HRM's future. The report will act as a decision making tool for Council and staff in developing priorities coming out of the Regional Plan as part of business planning and budgeting. It will also enable a foundation for collaboration with other levels of government to focus and coordinate planning efforts.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the urban design study will be coordinated through current approved budgets.

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 chose to take no further action on this report. This approach is not recommended by staff.

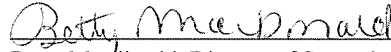
ATTACHMENTS

None.

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.

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Report Approved by:



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