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## Item No. 5

**Halifax Regional Council**  
**November 27, 2007**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Sharon Bond  
Sharon Bond, Acting Director of Community Development

**DATE:** November 15, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Status Update - HRM By Design Urban Design Study

### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

This report originates from staff and is provided to Council as an update of the current status of the project.

#### BACKGROUND

In early September 2007, the HRM By Design project team held Public Forum 4. A significant amount of information was presented to the public including three potential visions for a long term development pattern for the downtown. Substantial public response was collected through e-mail, the "open mic," event comment cards, and workshop portions of the program.

At the conclusion of Forum 4, the UDTF and the project team committed to consider all the public input and refine the vision for the long term development scenario for downtown. The results would then be presented to the community in a subsequent public forum. The end product would be a preferred vision for downtown that would form the basis for new policies and regulations to be developed during the next phase of the project.

That public forum is to be held on November 28, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. at the World Trade and Convention Centre on Argyle Street in Halifax. This report is submitted to Council as a formal invitation to attend the forum and as a summary of the process leading to the session on November 28.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Process Following Forum 4**

Following the conclusion of Forum 4 in September, debriefing sessions were held with the project team and the UDTF. A subcommittee of the UDTF was struck to provide further recommendations on the detailed nature of the preferred development scenario. This subcommittee (the Downtown Working Group) met amongst themselves and informally with local developers and members of the organized Heritage community. In addition, meetings were held with the staff team and the project consultants. These efforts resulted in recommendations to the project team for a vision for downtown development. For reference purposes, that scenario will be referred to as the “DWG Scenario” in this report.

The project staff team found that, while the recommended vision was fundamentally sound, some refinements were required to ensure conformance with Council’s approved vision and principles for the project as well as to ensure it satisfied appropriate professional requirements, and adequately responded to the range of public input received to date. The “DWG Scenario” and the project team’s recommended refinements were presented to the UDTF on November 7, 2007. By unanimous vote, the UDTF accepted the refined vision as having sufficient merit to be presented to the public at Forum 4B on November 28<sup>th</sup>. In accordance with supplementary comments received from the UDTF on November 7<sup>th</sup>, the project team is now continuing to refine the vision in preparation for the forum to be held on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Preferred Scenario**

The refined vision for the long term development scenario (“Preferred Scenario”) evolved from components of all three visions presented at Forum 4 in September. These refinements were focussed on five major elements:

- Conformance with the previously approved project vision and principles;
- Economic viability and development capacity;
- Excellence of heritage protection strategies;
- Integration with the existing built form;
- Conformance with public expectations generated at Forum 4.

The Preferred Scenario includes the creation of four sub-areas of the downtown, each representing different conditions with regard to the distribution of height and density (see map attached as Appendix A):

#### **Area 1**

- Taller buildings would be permitted in the area north of George Street;
- Although the existing Provincial Courthouse site is between viewplanes, the maximum allowable height has been reduced in recognition that it is a waterfront site and should be subject to special treatment to preserve harbour views. The maximum height on this site is

therefore 165', which equates to 16 residential storeys or 12 commercial storeys. The building massing will be subject to strict requirements that preserve views of the harbour and step the building down to a maximum of four storeys at the water's edge;

- This area would primarily serve to satisfy long term development potential for commercial and residential uses;
- All buildings would conform to the current by-law restrictions relative to Viewplanes and views over the Citadel Ramparts.

## **Area 2**

- With some exceptions to respond to short term development potential and existing building form, buildings in this area would be limited to a consistent height maximum of 7 commercial storeys (approx 95 feet) except where this maximum height is reduced by the Viewplane by-law or the Citadel Rampart by-law;
- Recommended exceptions to this height limitation are as follows:
  - a) The site bounded by Hollis, Sackville, Lower Water and Salter would be designated for development permitting 16 commercial storeys or 20 residential storeys (approx. 210 feet);
  - b) The waterfront site that is currently occupied by the Waterfront Warehouse Restaurant would be designated for development permitting 12 commercial storeys or 16 residential storeys (approx. 165 feet). The building massing will be subject to strict requirements that preserve views of the harbour and step the building down to a maximum of four storeys at the water's edge;
- All buildings would conform to the current by-law restrictions relative to Viewplanes and views over the Citadel Ramparts.

## **Area 3**

- With some exceptions, the maximum height in this area is 115 feet, which yields 11 residential storeys or 8 commercial storeys;
- Recommended exceptions to this height limitation are as follows:
  - c) The recently approved "Salter Block" development has been identified for heights up to 140 feet which yields up to 13 residential storeys or 10 commercial storeys;

- b) The southern end of the Keith's Brewery site has been identified for heights of up to 215' which yields up to 21 residential storeys or 16 commercial storeys;
- c) The waterfront site between Bishop's Landing to the north and the Power Plant to the south has been identified for heights of up to (165'), which yields up to 16 residential storeys or 12 commercial storeys. The building massing will be subject to strict requirements that preserve views of the harbour and step the building down to a maximum of four storeys at the water's edge;
- All buildings would conform to the current by-law restrictions relative to Viewplanes and views over the Citadel Ramparts.

#### **Area 4**

Area 4 has remained substantially the same as what was presented to the public at Forum 4 in September. There are however two changes resulting from further analysis:

- The area has been enlarged by shifting the former boundary between Areas 3 and 4 eastward such that it now runs along Hollis Street. This has the effect of shrinking Area 3 and expanding Area 4. This results in greater protection for the existing conditions in the residential neighbourhoods to the west of Hollis Street (i.e. Old South End Neighbourhood);
- The maximum height overlay has been adjusted to avoid the creation of non-conforming structures and reflect the height of existing buildings along South Park Street, and to reinforce the need for strong "edges" of major public parks like the Public Gardens and Victoria Park;
- All buildings would conform to the current by-law restrictions relative to Viewplanes and views over the Citadel Ramparts.

#### **Important Note**

It should be clearly noted and understood that the above referenced recommended distribution of building heights are a reflection of a high level vision for the long term development pattern in the downtown. As such, they should be viewed as an overall maximum which will be further modified through the development of more detailed regulations regarding building form, location and appearance. The development of these additional elements is underway but cannot be completed until the overall vision is endorsed by Council and the community and until a further program of public consultation is completed during the next phase of HRM By Design.

#### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None

#### **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.

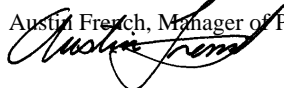
## **ATTACHMENTS**

### Appendix A - Preferred Scenario Height Distribution

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.

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# Appendix A: Preferred Scenario Height Distribution

