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Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
July 8, 2008

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

DATE: June 24, 2007

SUBJECT: HRMbyDesign: Revised Schedule and Public Participation Program

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

- **March 7, 2006:** Council awards RFP # 05-073 (Regional Centre Urban Design Study).
- **June 27, 2006:** Council appoints the membership of the Urban Design Task Force.
- **February 27, 2007:** Council approves findings of Public Forum 1, "Regional Centre Urban Design Vision and Principles."
- **July 31, 2007:** Council approves findings of Public Forum 2, "The Urban Design Framework," and Forum 3, "The Reurbanization Strategy."
- **February 26, 2008:** Council approves: 1) The findings of Public Forum 3, "The Downtown Vision;" 2) The request for changes to the Municipal Government Act to "enable a new planning process for downtown development," and; 3) The "initiation of planning and design work in support of the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange."

BACKGROUND

Regional Centre-wide:

HRMbyDesign is a directive of Halifax Regional Council as an outcome of HRM's Regional Plan. This project, which has been underway since July 2006, articulates a design strategy to foster quality development and vibrant public spaces through the creation of new policies and tools such as: design guidelines, improved development approval processes, and incentives for high quality development within the downtown and surrounding Regional Centre. Importantly, the project will provide Council with a clarified policy framework within which solid and expedient development decisions can be made.

The project is being championed by the seventeen-member citizen volunteer Urban Design Task Force (UDTF), which includes three HRM councillors, which was established to make recommendations to Council on the Regional Centre Urban Design Project now known as HRMbyDesign. The project has also convened a Project Steering Committee comprised of professional staff from key HRM departments, and includes representation from our funding partners at the provincial and federal levels of government.

Downtown Halifax:

In acknowledgment of the regional significance of downtown Halifax as described in the Regional Plan, the focus of the project over the past year has been the preparation and adoption of a new Downtown Halifax Plan. This work has included drafting a new *Downtown Halifax Secondary Planning Strategy*, a new *Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law*, a *Design Guidelines Manual*, and the *Barrington Street Conservation Plan and By-law*. This downtown work has continued the highly consultative approach to the project and has included the following public outreach initiatives:

- Approximately 20 meetings of the Urban Design Task Force attended by members of the public
- Week-long public consultation "Forum 4," September 2007, 500+ attendees
- Public consultation "Forum 4b," November 2007, 500+ attendees
- Public open house on proposed Downtown Plan, April 2008, 400+ attendees
- 17 day public review period of Downtown Plan documents, April 2008, 168 written submissions
- Stakeholder workshop on proposed Land Use By-law, May 2008
- Numerous project presentations at the request of community groups throughout the Municipality

Deferral of Legislative Amendments:

In February 2008 Regional Council directed staff to request changes to the Municipal Government Act to enable a new planning and development process for downtown Halifax. These amendments were introduced at the spring sitting of the Legislature (May 2008) but were deferred until the fall sitting of 2008. Project staff and the UDTF have therefore revised the project work plan, and have expanded the public participation program to create additional opportunities for citizen engagement.

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the revised work plan and expanded public consultation program approved by the Urban Design Task Force.

DISCUSSION

Revised Work Schedule

The deferral of the supporting Provincial legislative amendments for HRMbyDesign will result in a six month delay in the project timeline for the adoption of the Downtown Halifax Plan. This delay is necessary because Council is unable to adopt the new Downtown Plan proposed by the Urban Design Task Force until *after* the enabling legislation for HRMbyDesign is approved by the Province. Under the new schedule, the public hearing is now anticipated in February of 2009. This new schedule will create opportunities for additional public consultation and the advancement of other key priorities. The revised timeline is intended to meet the following objectives:

- Allow for additional public review of the Plan and proposed development approval process by the Urban Design Task Force, Steering Committee, the public and Council.
- Strengthen the technical review of the Plan documents by staff and consultants.
- Increase support amongst MLAs and key stakeholders for the proposed legislative amendments to implement the new downtown planning and approval process.
- Build awareness on the Municipality's ongoing work on sustainability, housing affordability, and transportation/transit issues, as requested by the Urban Design Task Force.
- Allow for the advancement of key implementation priorities for the Downtown Plan including: *A Baseline Economic Study* upon which to base the Plan Monitoring program; a *Cogswell Interchange Area Master plan* study, and; advancing the redevelopment of the Spring Garden/Queen area in accordance with the *Spring Garden/Queen Street Area Public Lands Plan*. The Urban Design Task Force is striking a number of sub-committees to help guide these efforts.
- Develop, through consultation with the Urban Design Task Force, criteria upon which Council can make decisions about prioritizing neighbourhoods within the Regional Centre for detailed planning work after the adoption of the Downtown Halifax Plan, and; to prioritize a list of potential Heritage Conservation Districts throughout the Regional Centre.
- Required first reading and public hearing of the Downtown Halifax Plan in early 2009.

Revised Public Participation Schedule

HRMbyDesign has utilized a highly consultative approach that has engaged thousands of citizens, with public engagement particularly high on the Downtown Halifax Plan portion of the project. This participation program follows established process for planning matters of regional significance, as previously approved by Council at the initiation of this project. The Urban Design Task Force is central to this process as the primary advisor to Council on the adoption of the Downtown Halifax Plan and related Regional Centre work.

Through the course of the spring public review process on the plan, some requests have come forward from the public and the development industry to introduce some additional consultation

prior to seeking Council approval of the Downtown Plan, particularly related to the proposed development approval process. Project staff and the UDTF are in agreement that additional consultation could only improve the process. It is therefore proposed that the following additional consultations be undertaken prior to the public hearing:

- A minimum of five additional UDTF meetings on the proposed Plan and its related implementation strategies (Summer/Fall 2008).
- An implementation workshop with key stakeholders and committees of Council on the proposed development approval process and Land use by-law (Summer 2008).
- An additional four-week public review period on “*Draft 2*” of the Plan documents, to include a series of Fact Sheets summarizing the various plan documents (September/October 2008).
- A workshop with Regional Council on the Downtown Halifax Plan prior to first reading and adoption (Fall 2008).
- Preparation and execution of a Government Relations Plan to ensure solid understanding and support for the proposed legislative amendments in the lead-up to the fall sitting of the Legislature.
- In accordance with Council’s procedures, the Barrington Street Conservation Plan and By-law will be reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Committee, and the proposed amendments to the Regional Plan will be reviewed by the Regional Plan Advisory Committee. The public participation program will build in opportunities for other Committees of Council to provide input to the Urban Design Task Force throughout the remainder of the process.

Please refer to Attachment #1 for a table showing the revised schedule, work plan and public engagement events, as approved by the UDTF.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time. Project funding has already been approved by Council, and includes cost sharing from provincial and federal governments.

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

None.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Table showing revised work plan, schedule and public engagement events as approved by the UDTF.

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.

Report Prepared by: Andy Fillmore, Urban Design Project Manager, 490-6495

Report Approved by:



ATTACHMENT #1

HRMbyDesign Revised Work plan - Downtown Halifax Plan Adoption

updated June 24

Timeframe	Adoption of Downtown Plan	Public Participation Program	Council Milestones	Parallel Work Streams
June-July 2008 <i>Revised work plan & continuation of technical review</i>	Communications Plan - legislative amendments deferral	June 18: - UDTF meeting re workplan - Steering Committee meeting - RPAC meeting	July 8: Council approval of revised schedule, work plan & public outreach and consultation program	Process mapping for design review, site plan approval, heritage
	Government Advocacy Plan for securing legislation launched	Government Advocacy Plan for securing legislation launched		Issue RFP and award contract for Baseline Economic Study
	Continuation of technical review of documents, 3D modelling, testing and legal review	June: Architects review		Write RFP for Cogswell Master plan
	Summary of LUB workshop	Subcommittees of UDTF		Launch of Economic Study, Cosgwell Master Plan, Spring Garden/Queen RFPs

Timeframe	Adoption of Downtown Plan	Public Participation Program	Council Milestones	Parallel Work Streams
				Undertake background data gathering and technical assessments for Spring Garden/Queen redevelopment
	Create Fact Sheets on related issues, and draft Communications & Public Outreach Plan for consultation phase	July: UDTF meeting to review August workshop materials		Consultants finalize report on Regional Centre-wide work

Timeframe	Adoption of Downtown Plan	Public Participation Program	Council Milestones	Parallel Work Streams
<p><i>August-October 2008</i></p> <p><i>Additional Public Review & Consultation</i></p>	<p>Terms of Reference for Design Review Committee & processing mapping for heritage & site plan approval</p>	<p>August: <u>Stakeholder Implementation workshop</u> (UDTF, HAC, PAC, Heritage Trust, UDI, GHP, Chamber, neighbourhood assoc.)</p>		<p>Conclude Baseline Economic Study</p>
	<p>Finalized documents for public review</p>	<p>August: <u>UDTF</u> meeting to refer documents for public review</p>		<p>Issue RFP and award contract for Cogswell Master plan</p>
				<p>Issue RFP and award contract for Spring Garden/Queen real estate and market analysis</p>
	<p>Execution of Government Relations Plan re Legislation</p>	<p>Consultations with provincial stakeholders re legislation</p>		<p>Regional Centre deliverables & implementation strategy, presentations on related initiatives - i.e. sustainability</p>
				<p>Early September: <u>UDTF & Steering Comm. workshop</u> - to determine Regional Centre priorities and recommend the strategy to Council</p>

Timeframe	Adoption of Downtown Plan	Public Participation Program	Council Milestones	Parallel Work Streams
				October: Target for Council approval of Regional Centre strategy
		UDTF consultation on Cogswell Master plan		Stakeholder consultation on Cogswell Master plan
	Revised Downtown Plan documents, consultants report & fact sheets for committee & public review	September -October: Four-week public review period (presentations to HAC, #12 PAC, RPAC)		
	Public summary & response document(s)	November: UDTF review of public summary		

Timeframe	Adoption of Downtown Plan	Public Participation Program	Council Milestones	Parallel Work Streams
<p><i>November-February 2009</i></p> <p><i>Committee & Council Review and Approval</i></p>	<p>Revised Downtown Plan ready for adoption</p>	<p>November (two meetings): <u>UDTF meetings</u> for sign off</p>	<p>November 25: Workshop for new Council</p>	<p>Write RFP for redevelopment of Spring Garden/Queen public lands</p>
		<p>November: Plan recommended to Council by HAC, RPAC</p>	<p>January: Council First Reading</p>	<p>Target phase for public consultation of Cogswell Interchange redevelopment</p>
		<p>January: Advertising and stakeholder promotion of public hearing</p>	<p>February: Council Public Hearing & Final Decision</p>	