

Item No. 3 (ii)
Committee of the Whole
December 3, 2013

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Dale Godsoe, Chair, Community Design Advisory Committee

DATE: November 15, 2013

SUBJECT: RP+5 Draft 3 - Recommendations

ORIGIN

Motion approved by Regional Council October 4, 2011 establishing the Community Design Advisory Committee to provide advice to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Regional Council on the development and implementation of the Regional Plan 5 Year Review, and the Centre Plan project.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Terms of Reference of Community Design Advisory Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

The Community Design Advisory Committee recommends Halifax Regional Council incorporate the recommendations contained in Attachment A to this report into Draft 3 of RP+5.

BACKGROUND

At its October 4, 2011 meeting Regional Council approved the creation of the Community Design Advisory Committee for the purpose of advising the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Regional Council on the development and implementation of two initiatives of regional significance:

1. The Regional Plan 5 Year Review, and;
2. The Centre Plan project, including the creation of a new Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy, and a new Regional Centre Land Use Bylaw.

DISCUSSION

The Community Design Advisory Committee held thirty-seven (37) meetings over a twenty (20) month period to review and provide comment on proposed changes to the Regional Plan. There has been significant effort put forward by members of the Committee and staff during the consultation process. As a result of that process the recommendations put forward by the Community Design Advisory Committee to Regional Council are made from the strong view that:

- There is currently sufficient development capacity already within the urban settlement area to meet the growth requirements of the Region during the life of the plan and beyond, and,
- It has become evident, through the consultation process, that the residents of HRM have a strong recognition of the importance of good design in urban, suburban and rural communities and that the Regional Plan needs to set the policy framework to support those aspirations.

The Committee also wishes to express their appreciation to HRM staff and the members of the public who participated in the RP+5 review process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

While adoption of the RP+5 amendments are intended to have a significant financial impact to HRM no additional financial impacts have been identified for the recommendations contained in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community Design Advisory Committee is a Committee of Council comprised of eight citizen volunteer members and four members of Council. The meetings are open to the public and agendas and minutes are published on HRM's website.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

While adoption of the RP+5 amendments are intended to have a significant environmental impact to HRM no additional environmental implications have been identified for the recommendations contained in this report.

ALTERNATIVES

No alternatives were provided by the Community Design Advisory Committee.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 'A': Recommendations of the Community Design Advisory Committee in regard to proposed amendments to the Draft Regional Plan (RP+5 Draft 3)

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.

APPENDIX A

Recommendations of the Community Design Advisory Committee

General Comments/Recommendations

The Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) was established by Regional Council to advise the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee of Regional Council on the development and implementation of two initiatives of regional significance:

1. The Regional Plan 5 year review (RP+5), and
2. The Centre Plan

Community Design Advisory Committee's Role

In addition to making recommendations to staff, CDAC's Terms of Reference from Regional Council define the Committee as a key communications and working link between Council and the community. The Committee was to advise Council on the delivery of the public participation program, report on the initiatives' overall progress, and review and make recommendations on any proposed amendments or additions to the Regional Plan.

The following recommendations constitute CDAC's comments on the first of the initiatives, RP+5.

There has been significant improvement/progress in the proposed Regional Plan revisions from Draft 1 to the current Draft 3.

The question under consideration by CDAC in preparing the report and recommendations to Regional Council was; to consider what is or is not in the Plan as proposed (Draft 3) that will serve to accomplish the objective of meeting the growth targets as provided for in the Regional Plan and respond to the commentary received during the public consultation process.

Recommendation 1: The Community Design Advisory Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council incorporate the recommendations contained in this Appendix into Draft 3 of RP+5.

Focus on Sustainable Solutions

CDAC worked within the context of the growth targets as directed by Council and provided for in the Regional Plan – 25% urban/50% suburban (within the serviceable boundary)/25% rural with focus within the specified growth centres.

As result of the consultation and review the recommendations put forward by CDAC to Regional Council are made from the strong view that there is currently sufficient development capacity within the urban settlement area to meet the growth requirements of the Regional Plan during the life of the Plan and beyond.

Recommendation 2: The Regional Plan needs to contain a clear policy which states that there is a sufficient supply of land currently within the urban growth settlement area and current service boundary to meet the development requirements of the Region for the next 30-35 years and that consideration of development and planning must occur within that context.

Recommendation 3: In addition to the clear policy statement, as much detail as possible in regard to the nature, type, location of development (as outlined in Table 1.1) should be expanded to provide clear definitions of the defined development areas under the Plan and the boundaries of those areas. (pg. 16 of Plan document)

Recommendation 4: To better represent the policy statement in recommendation 3, CDAC recommends that Table 1.1 be expanded (or an additional table added) to detail how much capacity is projected in each area type, where in HRM (west or east side of the harbour and specifics in the urban, suburban, rural growth areas); along with qualitative analysis/statement as to how long the supply carries development (intensification strategies). (pg. 16 of the Plan document)

In addition, the mapping contained in this section should be expanded to illustrate Table 1.1 with a regional overview and detailed maps outlining the capacity and development projections in enough detail to be illustrative at the community level.

Recommendation 5: The Regional Plan should contain a clear policy statement that the Regional Plan and definitions contained in the Plan (such as urban growth settlement areas etc.) shall take precedence over all other strategic plans, including the Transit Service Boundary and those of Halifax Water, and that all strategic plans must align with the Regional Plan as approved by Council.

CDAC noted that adoption of this policy would require alignment to occur between the RP+5 and some proposed or existing plans.

In addition CDAC recommended that HRM consider combining a number of functional plans (currently 21).

Recommendation 6: In regard to Policy G15 (Governance pg.106) the Regional Plan should include a policy statement that clearly outlines that the service boundary and urban growth area boundary, as outlined in the Plan, are to be considered hard boundaries meant to ensure the growth targets are achieved in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way, and that changes to those boundaries may only be considered under extraordinary circumstances as provided for in the Plan.

Recommendation 7: That Policy G15, in regard to extraordinary circumstances for consideration of expansion of the service boundary (see recommendation 6) should state that expansion would only be considered for “minor lot adjustments or boundary additions provided they do not create a separate lot for residential dwellings” or similar wording as provided for under Ontario’s green belting laws.

Recommendation 8: CDAC recommends that the Regional Plan contain policy controls that substantially minimize growth/settlement on local and trunk roads between designated rural growth centres. (Section 3.4.5 pg. 53)

CDAC noted that this will require substantial reduction from the number of allowable subdivisions currently in the Plan and a new or expanded policy mechanism (beyond current policies of non-acceptance of roads by HRM and prohibition of development in open space/resource designation) to achieve this outcome. The policy direction should not eliminate division of lots for purposes of family residences.

Recommendation 9: That the Plan policy position in regard to riparian buffer should be 30 metres (as compared to the proposed 20 metres) to better align with provincial policy (Department of Environment) and provide enhanced environmental protection (section 2.3.3 pgs. 32-33).

Policy consideration could be given to allowing a waiver to 20 metres when appropriate to consider and does not compromise environmental protection.

A minority position was put forward that stated that the expansion to 30 metres is not required.

Recommendation 10: Policy EC-3 (section 5.3.1 pg. 67) should be worded to make it clear that no stand-alone commercial or any residential (R) uses will be permitted in HRM Business Parks (BI designation) and, if adopted by Council, the policy should override current SMPS and LUBS designations.

Enhancing the Regional Centre

Recommendation 11: The Regional Plan should include a policy statement that specifically states policies related to the Plan objectives of: 1)incenting development in the Regional Centre; 2) streamlining development approvals in the Regional Centre; 3) density bonusing in the Regional Centre - shall be addressed in the policies of the Centre Plan. (Sections 6.4 and 6.5 pg. 76 &77)

Recommendation 12: CDAC recommends that work on the Centre Plan be commenced immediately and that a timeline be established for submission of the Centre Plan to Regional Council.

Recommendation 13: CDAC recommends that policy work in regard to incenting development in the Regional Centre be initiated immediately and in parallel with the Centre Plan and explore the reduction and/or removal of development fees and charges, and that early implementation of incentives be considered.

Improved Suburban and Rural Community Design

Through the public consultation process it has become evident that the residents of HRM have a strong recognition of the importance of good design in urban, suburban and rural communities and that the Regional Plan needs to set the policy framework to support those aspirations. CDAC recognizes that improved suburban and rural community design is important to increase the quality of life for suburban and rural residents.

Recommendation 14: Policy 6.2.2 (RC subsection 5 pg. 75) regarding complete communities should be extended to include ALL communities in HRM, not just urban.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the length of time the community planning process currently takes.

Recommendation 15: Policy 9.2.1 (pg. 103) CDAC recommends that the length of time a community planning process should take from initiation to completion, under the legislative planning process, be set out in policy in the Regional Plan.

Recommendation 16: CDAC recommends that Regional Council establish a target for the completion of community plans (how many - over what time frame - in what priority) and a measurement and reporting framework to measure progress against those targets.

Recommendation 16A: It is recommended that Community Plans be consistent with the Regional Plan.

Recommendation 17: CDAC recommends that, for clarity, a link or appendix outlining the Community Engagement Policy, as approved by Regional Council, be included in the Regional Plan.

Land Use and Transportation as Mutually Supportive

The transportation section of the RP+5 (v.3.0) (pgs. 57-64) provides the Committee with the greatest challenge in regard to supporting the Plan as drafted.

The Committee feels that the Plan, as currently drafted, does not adequately meet the objectives outlined in Transportation Chapter of the Plan. The specific ties between Land Use, as proposed in the Plan, and achieving the objectives in regard to Transit/Active Transportation are not yet clear. The priorities for the Road Network Plan in support of modal shift are not clear. The Road Network Priorities Plan (section 4.2.5 pg. 61) T.4-1 Map 6 has been revised from the 2006 Plan without adequate consultation with the public or Regional Council.

Recommendation18: CDAC recommends that Policy T14 read: Table 4-1 and Map 6 represent the road network projects that may be required to meet future vehicle demands. *No projects shown on this table shall be approved for construction until the Road Network Functional Plan is prepared that has included a public consultation process that provides rationale for the projects as they relate to one another, to growth targets as outlined in this Plan, and to sustainable transportation initiatives and provides projected capital and operating costs for road construction projects.*

Recommendation 19: Move Policy T-3 (Section 4.2.2 pg. 59) “streets shall be designed to support pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit, and to improve public health and safety” to the Objectives section to show the policy is intended to impact all transportation decisions.

Recommendation 20: To assist in understanding, CDAC recommends that, in conjunction with policy T-12 (pg. 61) clear definitions of the areas for modal split targets be provided, perhaps through mapping and accompanying text. Definitions should include: 1) outlining the boundaries/definition of the regional centre/inner suburban/suburban/rural edge 2) the boundaries of those areas 3) where those boundaries are in regard to other boundaries outlined the Plan (such as the service boundary and transit service boundary).

Recommendation 21: Modal Splits. Policy T-12 with accompanying figure (pg. 61). Recognizing that; model split targets in the Plan have shifted from 2026 to 2031 (+5 yrs.); and, that targets should be both realistic and aspirational; and, that target will form the basis of Council’s future budget decisions; and, that aging, work-from-home and other demographic shifts will occur as we move towards 2031; and, that a strong focus on shifting modes in the suburban communities will have the greatest impact on community health indicators; and, acknowledging that “trips” as defined in the Plan are from home to work (wherever that is) not just from home to the regional centre.

The Committee recommends the following adjustments to the modal split targets to 2031 in the Regional Plan *(based on the opinion of the Committee)*:

Regional Centre *(modal shift target to 2031)*

Transit	Active Transportation	Car
28% <i>(change represents only 2006 Regional Plan targets projected to 2031)</i>	37%	35%

Inner Suburban *(modal shift target to 2031)*

Transit	Active Transportation	Car
30%	8%	62%

Suburban Edge/Rural *(modal shift target to 2031)*

Transit	Active Transportation	Car
10%	4%	86% <i>(no change from plan)</i>

Recommendation 22: That, irrespective of the modal shift targets adopted by Council, that Table T-12 (pg. 61) provide information on the baseline splits in all areas from 2006 (approval of the Regional Plan); current 2013; and targets out to 2031 so that measurement against the baseline, current and projected targets can be reviewed.

Recommendation 23: That wording in Policy T-10 (pg. 60) is changed from “shall consider mixed use residential and commercial areas designed to maximize access to public transit (transit oriented development)...”
to “shall require mixed use residential and commercial areas designed to maximize access to public transit (transit oriented development)...”

Measurement and Review

Regular review and measurement against targets is critical to the success of any plan. What gets measured gets achieved.

Recommendation 24: CDAC generally agrees with the measures and indicators as currently outlined in the Plan Appendix A (pg. 108).

Recommendation 24A: CDAC recommends that targets (where appropriate) and baselines for the performance measure in Appendix A be added.

Recommendation 25: CDAC recommends that Regional Council direct an annual progress report on the Regional Plan, in the form of a report to Regional Council outlining achievement against Plan measures and objectives (section 9.3 pg. 104).

General :

Recommendation 26: Section 9.7 Discretionary Approvals. CDAC recommends that an additional reason be added to Policy G.14 a) which would read: “vi) provided the proposal does not contradict targets for growth as outlined in the Regional Plan.”

Recommendation 27: CDAC recommends that a “Strategic Implications” section be added to the template for Council Reports to ensure strategic objectives, as outlined in the Regional Plan, are before Council with all recommendations.

Recommendation 28: CDAC supports the staff recommendation in regard to undergrounding utilities as found in the Plan.

A minority position was presented that undergrounding should be supported and encouraged but not mandated in the Plan until such time as the effect on housing affordability is better determined.

Recommendation 29: For purposes of clarity Policy E12 (pg. 30) should be expanded to read:

HRM shall prepare a *Greenbelting and Public Open Space Priorities Plan* “to protect and preserve connectivity between natural areas and open resource lands, to enable their integration into sustainable community design, to help define communities, to benefit the Municipality’s economy and the physical health of its people, and to reflect and support the overall purposes of this Plan.”