



2005/2006 Year in Review

Since it was established by Halifax Regional Council in 2001, the Capital District Program has enjoyed many successes. Working with many partners, Capital District helps make the downtown areas a better place to live, work, and visit. In fact, a recent study rated HRM as one of a handful of successful healthy downtowns of mid size cities across North America.

Capital District focuses on improving services in the downtown areas of the municipality including the downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, and the business districts of Spring Garden Road, Quinpool Road, and Gottingen Street. We've covered lots of ground over the last five years addressing standards and programs for maintenance and civic pride, streetscape and public amenities, community safety, urban design, as well as plans for publicly owned lands and facilities within the Capital District.

This annual report highlights some of the key markers of success for this year. **Streetscape and public space improvements are visible throughout the Capital District**, with many recent projects featured in this report. The **streetscape program has expanded to other main street areas** throughout the region. **HRM has hired an urban designer** to help grow a regionally significant urban design program across the municipality. The **Regional Plan, Cultural Plan and Economic Strategy all reinforce the importance of a strong Capital District** as the regional centre for economy and culture. **New marketing initiatives** saw area business commissions collaborate on joint promotions of holiday events, tourism ads and training and the production of a help map to promote available community services and amenities for people on the street. **The streets are cleaner** with the purchase of a new sidewalk sweeper, 60 more litter cans and the launch of a graffiti initiative in partnership with area business commissions.

As we continue down this road, we need to be responsive to new opportunities emerging through HRM's Regional Plan, and strategies which address the municipality's role in both cultural and economic development. As part of an administrative restructuring this past year, Capital District now falls under a new department called Community, Culture and Economic Development. This creates new opportunities to better align Capital District programming with other related functions within the Department including culture, heritage, active living, destination marketing and economic development.

The Capital District program is guided by the efforts of many people including staff who work across HRM, Halifax Regional Council, external organizations, and many public and stakeholder groups who work with us on an ongoing basis. Supported by a core team of six staff, the Capital District Task Force representing staff from across the municipality, the five area business associations within the Capital District and the Provincial Waterfront Development Corporation, meet on a monthly basis to troubleshoot and improve service to the downtown areas. A Capital Commission board of directors representing the Mayor, CAO, senior staff and six councillors which represent the various districts within the downtown areas as well as representatives from suburban and rural communities within HRM, help shape strategic directions for the Capital District.

Major Accomplishments:

Communications

Web site, email, & Newsletters

www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict.

This past year, Capital District continues to build awareness through a variety of mechanisms including regular monthly meetings with the Capital District Task Force, quarterly meetings with the Capital Commission Society, and hosting numerous public consultation events. The Capital District newsletter, website and email, also continue to be an effective vehicle for communications for residents and businesses of HRM.

Some highlights of other communications efforts:

- Coordinated with Departmental Communications' Team for Community Culture & Economic Development.
- Worked with HRM Finance and the six business commissions to improve communications related to the impacts of the realignment of the Business Occupancy Tax.
- Assisted the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia with communications and coordination amongst various HRM business units and outside agencies which helped launch a very successful "Lobsters in the City" fundraising campaign in 2005.
- Hosted a series of design charrettes in relation to the Spring Garden Queen and Grand Parade Province House Public Land Plans
- Participated in several media interviews for articles in Progress Halifax magazine, local papers, radio, and TV primarily related to urban design initiatives
- Partnered with various organizations in hosting public lectures related to Urban Design
- Partnered with the urban business commissions and various service providers to produce and distribute a Help Map which will help individuals who are on the streets and in need of assistance, locate the basic services they require. The initiative was supported by the Help Line Society and The Community Action on Homelessness, Phoenix House and the Salvation Army.
- Coordinated info sharing sessions between the business commissions and the Visitor

Information Centre staff in the spring of 2005 to provide information to tourists visiting the Capital District .

- Participated in joint communications and consultations with Regional Planning to reach out and build better awareness throughout the region.

Marketing & Promotions

Cooperative promotions with area Business Commissions

We continue to partner with the four area business commissions (Downtown Dartmouth, Downtown Halifax, Spring Garden Road, & Quinpool Road) to identify common issues and opportunities to share resources. The goal was to identify projects that can be addressed more effectively with a cooperative approach. The Capital District Holiday Brochure, the centre spread in the Metro Visitor's Guide and the Help Map are successful examples of this initiative.

Outreach support for BIDs

Capital District continues to provide assistance to fledgling business commissions based on existing BID best practices with reference to by-laws, levy formulas, staffing and communication. In addition, Capital District staff coordinate all management agreements, budgets, activity plans and audited financial statements on behalf of HRM with the six business improvement districts.

Marketing Levy Committee

Capital District staff support the work of the HRM Marketing Levy Working Committee which is a committee of Council mandated with recommendations on the distribution and use of the additional funds generated by the 0.5% increase in the Marketing Levy. The committee is responsible for establishing goals, principles and process regarding the future use of the additional funds generated by the 0.5% increase in the Marketing Levy; and developing and recommending to HRM Mayor and Council a legally binding service agreement between HRM and Destination Halifax.

Major Events/Hosting

The hosting of national/international events offers HRM the potential to bring direct and significant benefits across a broad range of Regional Council's priorities and can act as a catalyst for the achievement of other levels of government objectives. As the number of events on the hosting calendar continue to increase, so do the costs associated with hosting; the time required to develop bids; and the energy and resources required to stage events. Capital District staff are coordinating a hosting strategy with Events Halifax, Destination Halifax and other stakeholders, to ensure the HRM invests strategically in those events which integrate with the Municipality's plan for economic and cultural growth.

Capital District, in partnership with various HRM staff and external stakeholders, is coordinating the final phases of the **2011 Canada Winter Games Bid** at the provincial level, which includes a written submission and site visit. Should HRM be successful, there will be further requirements identified by the Canada Games Council.

Urban Design

Urban Design Project Manager Position Created

In 2005 HRM reached another major milestone with the recruitment of its first staff urban designer, returning Haligonian Andy Fillmore. With a background in architecture, planning and urban design, Andy will play a key role in the Capital District's ongoing program to institute, integrate, and culturally ingrain the importance of good urban design and architecture in our Municipality. He will lead the Regional Centre Urban Design Study that is mandated in the Regional Plan (see below), as well as other strategic urban design efforts as they arise.

Phase II Regional Centre Urban Design Study Launched

HRM has recognized urban design to be an essential mechanism for not only enabling long term growth and transportation objectives, but also for protecting treasured cultural resources, generating economic development, and for enhancing the quality of life for all residents. HRM, with the help of a highly skilled consultant team led by The Office for Urbanism, has embarked upon an ambitious 18 month long Regional Centre Urban Design Study to achieve an array of goals under the following four themes: Enhancing the physical urban environment and the appeal of the Region; Advancing the planning objectives of the Region as embodied in the new Regional Planning; Preparing effective strategies and tools for the

implementation of the Study's findings and recommendations, and; Raising public awareness and building a culture of public support for urban design. A public launch for the project is planned for July, 2006.

Urban Design Awards Program

In April, 2006 Capital District held its third Urban Design awards ceremony at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. These awards are an opportunity for the Municipality to acknowledge and promote the contribution that property and business owners, architects, landscape architects, artists and other designers make toward the continued improvement of the urban core. This year we were pleased to partner with the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and awardees were eligible for consideration to the National Urban Design Awards in Ottawa. Also new this year was the addition of two important new award categories: Lifetime Achievement, and Student Projects, both of which attracted a great deal of positive attention.

Streetscapes

Downtown Streetscape Improvements

Numerous streetscape and parks improvements are visible throughout the downtown areas. Most notable is the completion of the second phase of the Portland Street from King to Dundas with new universally accessible sidewalks, benches and planters. Pending Capital budget approval, the final phase is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2007. New sidewalks were also installed along Sackville and Duke Street in front of City Hall where the historic granite curbs were retained as a feature of the reconstruction. Other beautification projects included:

- perennial plantings along Prince Street,
- the first phase of the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal Park pathway paving,
- new decorative pavers along the Lower Water adjacent to the Bank of Montreal and the Historic Properties in Halifax
- 15 new bike racks
- a new urban pocket park near the Oxford Theatre with perennial planting, a new bus shelter and poster kiosk. Finishing works will include a bike rack, benches and ornamental tiles.

Construction is pending this summer for the new plaza in front of the Bank of Montreal on Quinpool Road and also for enhancements to George Dixon Centre property on Gottingen Street. Following upon the recommendations of the recently completed Canal Green Study, the TransCanada Trail and the interpretation of the turbine chamber will be completed this fall. Also scheduled for completion this year is the 'greening' of Ben's Bakery site on Quinpool Road, the installation of

lighting on the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal Park pathway and within Victoria Park in Halifax.

Regional Streetscapes

Building on the experiences gained in the downtown areas, Capital District assumed the lead in the roll out of the streetscapes program to other areas throughout the region. A project plan with priorities was created to deliver priority projects to three initial commercial main streets throughout HRM: Sackville Drive, Herring Cove Road in Spryfield, and Main Street, Dartmouth. To date a Streetscape Plan has been launched for Main Street, Dartmouth, and several projects are in the planning and design stages for Sackville and Spryfield. As of April of this year Stewart MacMillan has joined our staff team to lead the regional streetscape program.

Public Art Project

Work is underway to install a new public art sculpture at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library for fall of 2006. The new sculpture will celebrate the unique heritage and cultural identity of the north end community and has been strongly supported by the community through numerous public consultations.

Based on recommendations made in an assessment report by an art conservationist, the existing sculpture by artist Jordi Bonnet was removed and placed in storage. Work is underway to see some elements of the previous sculpture reinterpreted and put on display at the Library.

Maintenance

Enhanced Seasonal Maintenance Plan

During the past year maintenance in the Capital District continues to improve with extension of the seasonal maintenance plan until December and continued coordination of maintenance efforts together with area business commissions.

Additional resources from Council also enabled:

- 60 new pole mounted cans to be installed at various locations along the commercial corridors,
- the purchase of a new sidewalk sweeper and
- the launch of a graffiti initiative in partnership with area business commissions. Capital District has helped to initiate a Graffiti Maintenance Program amongst all four business improvement districts by providing start up grants used towards initial clean-up costs. In turn, the business commissions have agreed to maintain graffiti within their respective districts over the next three year period, with an option to extend the contract at that time.

Other maintenance improvements are:

- The Downtown areas benefitted from an enhanced winter works program this past year. Pedestrian crossings were made easier through shoveling out of street intersections and curb cuts along with better access to parking meters and overall better removal of snow from the downtown areas.
- provision of low cost butt stations to businesses on a cost recovery basis in an effort to reduce the number of cigarette butts on the streets and sidewalks. Maintenance of the butt stations is the responsibility of the individual property owners.
- Support for the HRM Litter Campaign going by coordinating information with the business commissions and promoting the "20 Minute Make-Over" event.
- The Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) located within the HRM Capital District continue to contribute towards an annual maintenance reserve to support long term maintenance of streetscape amenities being funded by HRM. Other sources of funding will be explored to build up this reserve over time.

Public Lands/Facilities Planning

Recognizing that a significant proportion of lands within the urban core are publicly owned, the Capital District Public Facilities Needs and Opportunities Strategy was completed in 2004. A significant recommendation of that report was to undertake, in cooperation with the Province of Nova Scotia, two public lands plans within the urban core. These projects will guide future development, coordinate the objectives of HRM and the Province as the land owners, and will include land use recommendations and concise urban design guidelines. Key to the great success of each project was a robust public participation program which included numerous public meetings and design workshops. The projects, discussed below, are now nearing completion and will be presented to Regional Council for approval in the fall of 2006.

Grand Parade/Province House/Birks Site

Province House, City Hall and the Grand Parade are important historic landmarks that represent the centre of government for the Province and the Region. They play an important role in civic life, providing gathering places for civic events and demonstrations, while projecting the external image of our province and its capital city. This project will guide future development and improvement within the area toward the creation of vibrant legislative

precinct that integrates governmental uses with civic and pedestrian uses.

Spring Garden/Queen Street Public Lands Plans

Spring Garden Road is the retail heart of the Capital District and is the Region's busiest pedestrian thoroughfare as it is a major route connecting the peninsula's residential districts with the downtown core and the waterfront. It is also home to Dalhousie's Sexton Campus, the Provincial Law Courts, the Halifax Memorial Library, the old Infirmary site, and two large surface parking lots on Clyde Street. Because this area is in a state of flux, and because it holds the potential for important new landmark civic buildings as well as innovative mixed-use developments, a concise land use and urban design strategy was required.

Sackville Landing Redesign

The draft of the redesign of the Sackville Landing is complete. Reflecting upon the site's proposed theme commemorating the Royal Canadian Navy's, the Merchant Navy's and varied international contributions to the Battle of the Atlantic, the completion of this project is scheduled to coincide with the Royal Canadian Navy's centenary in 2010.

Other Joint Projects

Capital District staff continue to participate on an ongoing basis in joint service delivery teams, including CANB, and interdepartmental staff team which delivers services that support HRM and the central Halifax community; Special Events Task Force, which provides support and advise to event organizers who use HRM property or require HRM services; and the HRM Staff Grants Review Committee.

Regional Planning

Capital District continues to be an important part of the Regional Plan reinforcing the vision as the economic and cultural heart of HRM and the Province. Over the past year Capital District has been involved in the development of the Regional Plan. The Task Force supports the Regional Plan before Council for consideration and continues play a role in the upcoming year as the Regional Plan moves into the final stage.

Cultural Plan & Economic Strategy

Our team participated in working groups for the development of HRM's Cultural Plan and Economic Strategy which were approved by Council this past year.

CANB

Capital District is participating on an interdepartmental staff team led by RCH, to deliver proactive integrated services that support HRM and central Halifax community. Capital District will support the efforts of the Task Force by implementing various improvement projects within the community.

Barrington Heritage District

Capital District continues to support Planning and Development in the process to create legislation to establish a heritage conservation district on Barrington Street. Capital District is coordinating streetscape improvements along Barrington Street to accompany the proposed heritage legislation.

Ongoing

Capacity Building

Building and improving capacity of staff to respond to specialized needs and services of the Capital District will continue to be a priority. We will also be exploring opportunities to transition to more of a regional approach extending programming started in the Capital District to other communities in the region.

Canadian Capital Cities Network

Capital District continues to be a member of the Canadian Capital Cities Organization which link together all 14 capitals across the country. Jacqueline Hamilton represents HRM on the Executive and Board of the organization and is active in promoting networking and program opportunities.

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