



## Halifax's Capital District Planning for Success



Historical character, pedestrian friendly environment, a strong employment base, and the presence of culture, universities and government are behind Capital District's success. That's according to the recent study *The Successful Few Healthy*

*Downtowns of Small Metropolitan Regions*, which names HRM as one of a handful of mid-size cities across North America with a successful downtown.

"In contrast to many downtowns across North America that have experienced decline because of the growth of the suburbs, HRM has retained a strong employment base within its central core equating to 40% of HRM's workforce," says Jacqueline Hamilton, Capital District Project Manager for HRM. "We've also experienced growth in the residential population of the Capital District over the last several years."

Regional Planning research indicates most of the drivers of the region's economy are centered within the Capital District and that is expected to continue to grow. Halifax Regional Council took proactive steps in 2001 to focus resources on the Capital District with the launch of the Capital District Task Force, a group which coordinates service delivery amongst the various agencies and departments within HRM's core.

Through the task force, HRM staff worked together with the area business commissions to purchase a new sidewalk sweeper and focus more resources on cleaning up litter and graffiti, particularly during the high tourist season between May and October. In addition, Regional Council approved supplemental funds to put toward enhanced maintenance items, including the extension of the regular maintenance season into December, initiation of the first phase of HRM's four stream recycling program in Capital District key

outdoor spaces and the production of educational materials which encourage people to become champions of their environment.

As a result of these efforts, a recent poll conducted by Halifax Metro Quarterly, indicates that the majority of respondents are satisfied with the municipality's efforts to keep the Capital District clean of graffiti and litter. Seventy nine percent of respondents indicated HRM's efforts are acceptable or better than acceptable.

Clearly, there is more work to be done in HRM's Capital District. With success comes some challenges. Panhandling and homelessness for example, are social issues facing HRM and all major cities, and reflect a lack of affordable housing and employment opportunities. With the launch of the Capital District and Regional Planning projects, Regional Council has laid the foundation for change. These initiatives will explore tools that address these issues as well as mechanisms to ensure a continued strong Capital District, recognizing that the health of the downtown affects the health of the entire region.



Portland Street Construction

## Contacts HRM Capital District

**Capital District Manager**  
Jacqueline Hamilton - 490-5685  
[www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict](http://www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict)

**Downtown Halifax Business Commission**  
Paul MacKinnon - 423-3841  
[www.downtownhalifax.ns.ca](http://www.downtownhalifax.ns.ca)

**Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission**  
Tim Olive - 466-2997  
[www.downtowndartmouth.ca](http://www.downtowndartmouth.ca)

**Quinpool Road Mainstreet District Association**  
Claudia Whitehead - 209-2210  
[www.quinpoolroad.ca](http://www.quinpoolroad.ca)

**Spring Garden Area Business Association**  
Bernard Smith - 423-3751  
[www.springgardenroad.com](http://www.springgardenroad.com)

**Waterfront Development Corporation Limited**  
Bill Campbell - 422-6591  
[www.wdcl.ca](http://www.wdcl.ca)



## Streetscape Improvement Update

This spring Capital District played a key role in coordinating and managing the restoration of the Halifax Public Gardens. In addition to this the implementation of the recommendations within the Urban Design Project have continued to move forward. The reconstruction of Portland Street from Alderney to King Street in Dartmouth, a project shared with Public Works and Transportation, is nearing completion. This project includes the installation of new seating, planters and the installation of safer Universal access at the intersections and crosswalks.

Another important project, the reconstruction of the front of the North Halifax Memorial Public Library on Gottingen has also begun. The old concrete entrance has been removed and is being replaced with a wide plaza, complete with a space for a new sculpture base, new seating and extensive plantings that are to be installed in the spring of 2005. With respect to the sculpture base, look for a Capital District initiative to create a dynamic piece of three dimensional artwork to fill this space next year!

Other projects that are slated to be complete by the year end is the Oxford Theatre Parkette, the installation of bike racks and the installation of waste separation containers throughout the Capital District. This last project is also a shared initiative with RPAM and PWT. The reconstruction of the space in front of the Bank of Montreal on Quinpool is also planned for a spring of 2005 completion date.

Plans for the new Scotia Square Bus Rapid Transit Terminal are complete. In anticipation of the Bus Rapid Transit service and in conjunction with Transit, the reconstruction of the new terminal including new shelters and pedestrian amenities, will begin in the spring of 2005.

## Regional Planning Update

The Regional Planning process is currently in a critical phase - evaluating the alternatives for the future growth of HRM and choosing a preferred alternative. This will ultimately lead to the completion of a Regional Plan, expected in the Spring of 2005.

The alternatives are all based on the same foundation strategy, which addresses the Regional Planning goals and objectives. It focusses on encouraging mixed-use communities; preserving as much rural resource land and open space as possible; supporting the Capital District as the economic centre; and concentrating on public transit to get people around.

To evaluate the alternatives, Regional Planning staff are looking at how the alternatives differ from one



Public Gardens reopens July 1, 2004



another - primarily in the location and size of the residential centres, the transportation routes that link them and the costs associated with each.

Watch the Regional Planning website and local media for updates. The recommended alternative is expected to go before Regional Council in December.

If you are interested in further information, or belong to a group that would like a staff presentation, please contact the Regional Planning project office.

Phone: (902) 490-5857

Fax: (902) 490-5730

Email: [regplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regplan@halifax.ca)

Website: [www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning](http://www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning)

## Realignment of the Business Occupancy Tax Update

HRM supports the elimination of the Business Occupancy Tax and has suggested that the legislation proceed in the Fall session of the House.

In a letter to the Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia, the CAO, George McLellan, suggested that the elimination of the BOT provides an opportunity to create a more efficient, economically-strategic commercial tax system. HRM also supports an extended transition period (three years has been suggested) and wants to explore the establishment of multiple commercial property tax classes with their own tax rates. Examples might include commercial and industrial enterprises, vacant commercial lands (brownfield and greenfield) and non-profits.

Further, HRM Council has directed staff to begin a review of the commercial tax burden (Federal, Provincial and Municipal) within HRM. Under the HRM Corporate Scorecard, the intent is to ensure the tax burden is balanced and competitive.

## Celebrate the Holidays in the Capital District

The downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, Quinpool Road and Spring Garden Road Business Commissions are partnering once again with HRM Capital District to design and distribute the "Celebrate the Holidays in the Capital District" event brochure. The business commissions strongly believe the holiday season presents a unique opportunity to continue to promote the wonderful shopping opportunities and the many services and products which are available during the fall and winter season. Watch for your copy which will be delivered the first week of November. If you would like more flyers for general distribution, call your business commission and they would be pleased to provide you with additional copies. For a more comprehensive list of events happening across the municipality, go to [www.halifaxinfo.com](http://www.halifaxinfo.com) and click on Festival & Events.

## Capital District Joint Marketing Opportunity

The Capital District Business Commissions, in partnership with HRM Capital District, participated in a cooperative advertising project for the first time, in the 2004 Greater Halifax Visitor's Guide. The section highlighted the four distinct business improvement districts and some of the many services, products, amenities and events which take place in each. The Greater Halifax Visitor Guide is a trusted tool for leisure, corporate, association and incentive travellers. Research shows that visitors rely on the guide both to plan their visits and to help them navigate all the city has to offer while they are here.

Businesses located in the Capital District who would like to be part of the 2005 Metro Visitor's Guide cooperative advertising project, are encouraged to contact Karen Cook at 420-9943. With a distribution of 246,000, this is a great opportunity to promote your business at a reasonable price.

## Quotable Quotes

"You've got one of the most interesting and historic downtowns... You are one of the great jewels in Canada."

*Glen Murray - Former Mayor of Winnipeg, DHBC's Carmichael Lecture. March 2004*

"...Halifax now boasts forward thinking industries, offshore energy, IT and biotechnology - more PH.D.'s per capita than anywhere else in Canada and for the first time since the second world War, a boom town economy."

*John Demont - McLean's Magazine, January 2004*



## Around the Capital District ...

### Downtown Halifax

Downtown Halifax is a wonderful place to be at this time of year as Downtown decorates and prepares to welcome families from all over the HRM to enjoy the magic of the holiday season at the Chronicle Herald Holiday Parade of Lights. On Saturday, November 20th the parade will begin at 6pm from the DND Dockyard and head up to Barrington Street. The light parade will then turn up Spring Garden Road, then over (on South St.) to University Avenue where it will end at Robie Street.



On Thursday, November 18th, Downtown Businesses are also pleased to welcome holiday shoppers to a special event, The Holiday Hop, where shoppers will enjoy fantastic savings, prizes and the hospitality of the season.

Do some shopping, grab some dinner, take in one of the wonderful seasonal performances and enjoy the magical atmosphere of the season in the heart of the city.



### Downtown Dartmouth

Downtown Dartmouth is experiencing a residential and commercial boom triggered by construction of the new Community College and the anticipation surrounding the future of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Streetscape improvements, planning for a Façade Improvement program and a renewed sense of pride within the business sector is returning Dartmouth to its pedestrian friendly shopping environment of years gone by. On Dec 4th Dartmouthians will gather for the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting at Sullivan's Pond as the citizens come together to celebrate the holiday season.

The Dartmouth Harbour Front Trail, the Peace Pavillion, the Children's Waterfront Play Park, Sullivan's Pond Park Tree Lighting, Shubenacadie Canal, Alderney Landing Theatre and Market, and the Trans Canada Trail are only a few of the cultural and recreational facilities supporting our community growth. Over the past year we have seen eight major construction projects completed or currently near completion valued in the millions of dollars. The DDBC looks forward to the future and welcomes enquiries regarding potential investment opportunities in our downtown.



### Quinpool Road

The Quinpool Road Mainstreet District Association is looking forward to seeing the installation of a second pocket park and poster kiosk beside the Oxford Theatre in late fall. We are also gearing up for a number of events leading up to the holiday season. Go to [www.quinpoolroad.ca](http://www.quinpoolroad.ca) for more details.



### Capital District Urban Design Project, Phase II

Many of the streetscape improvements currently underway are recommendations made in the Capital District Urban Design Study which was endorsed by Regional Council in May of 2004. Phase II of the study will build on the foundation of research and stakeholder consultation to create an urban design strategy to foster creative and better design development within the Capital District. Public and stakeholder consultation will once again be a key component of developing the second phase of the strategy. Stay tuned for further updates on this project.

## Looking for your ideas:

The HRM Capital District is in the process of creating the 2005/06 business plan and capital project priority list. If you have any input around improvements to the capital district or program ideas, please feel free to contact staff with your ideas.

Capital District  
2nd Floor, Halifax Ferry Terminal  
PO Box 1749  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 3A5

Telephone: 490-5330  
Fax: 490-5730  
[capdistrict@halifax.ca](mailto:capdistrict@halifax.ca)  
[www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict](http://www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict)

*Prepared and distributed by*

