

November 2007 Update on Preferred Downtown Scenario

What is HRM by Design?

HRM by Design was initiated as an outcome of Council's adoption of the Regional Plan and will provide an urban design strategy for the Regional Centre, including the Halifax Peninsula, the area of Dartmouth enclosed by the Circumferential Highway, and the Capital District, including downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, and the Spring Garden Road, Quinpool Road, and Gottingen Street districts. The overall goals of the project include fostering a positive development climate downtown, making a beautiful public realm, improving heritage protection, investing in public spaces, promoting high quality architecture, and well designed streetscapes. These objectives are taken into consideration and balanced among each other at all times in the planning process. The project will:

- Improve heritage protection and heritage assistance
- Create clarity and predictability in the development approval process so that quality development can occur more efficiently and with fewer appeals
- Acknowledge that it is people (residents and workers) that make a lively, vibrant downtown and to achieve that we need design standards to improve the beauty of downtown's architecture and public spaces
- Bring more people to live and work in the Regional Centre, by directing a mix of quality residential and commercial development to areas that can both accommodate it and will benefit from it.

Project Process & Timeline

HRM by Design is directed by the Urban Design Task Force (UDTF), project management staff, consultants, and HRM's Regional Council. The UDTF consists of volunteer residents, business members, councillors and other interested citizens of HRM. Since the beginning of the project nearly two years ago, the UDTF and project staff have involved thousands of residents and stakeholders in a step-by-step community visioning process. This approach has involved one-on-one meetings with, and presentations to, interested stakeholders and organizations; public forums and open houses; targeted stakeholder workshops; and, the inclusion in project recommendations of a vast volume of public feedback. Following three public forums devoted to the entire regional centre, Council has adopted the vision, principles and framework that have resulted from those public consultations.

In September 2007, the fourth round of public consultations was held to gather input on 3 possible development scenarios for downtown Halifax. This phase of the project focused specifically on the development of a plan for downtown Halifax, in response to the need for clarity and predictability in the development process and the protection of heritage resources that are unique to the area. Since Forum 4, the UDTF and project staff have reviewed the public input and refined a Preferred Downtown Scenario for public consideration on November 28. In the new year, the UDTF and project staff will present the final recommendations on the preferred downtown scenario to Regional Council. The recommended scenario for downtown Halifax will be part of the final project report, slated for completion in March 2008, which will also provide policy direction on urban design guidelines for the entire Regional Centre.