

### i FORUM 1 OVERVIEW



Various groups hard at work over the course of the Forum 1 workshops

During the second week of September, the first of four public consultation Forums was held as part of the HRM by Design Regional Centre Urban Design Study. Forum 1 was held from September 11 to 14, 2006 and was attended by over 300 people over the course of the 4 days.

Forum 1 was all about dreaming and coming up with an overall vision of how HRM residents want their Regional Centre to look and feel. First, urban design objectives were set and principles were defined. This led to the development of an overall Guiding Framework.

Forum 1 kicked off on the evening of September 11th with an Urban Design Symposium and a public workshop held at the Marriott Halifax Harbourfront Hotel. Focussed workshops kicked off on September 13 at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia where urban design objectives, principles and a guiding framework were generated. The first day's events culminated with a second Urban Design Symposium held at Alderney Theatre in Dartmouth. On the final day, neighbourhoods, corridors and districts were identified, and future character statements were generated that described the future potential and desired built character of the areas identified. Forum 1 concluded with a closing presentation held at the Rowe Management Building Auditorium at Dalhousie University to present the "Best in Forum 1" outcomes and to outline the next steps.

In addition, at lunch during both days of the focussed workshops, the doors were opened to invite the public to see the work that was produced thus far, to provide comments and feedback, and to listen to the findings from each of the smaller working groups.

### Day 1: Urban Design Symposium and Public Forum (Area 1)



The Urban Design Symposium and Public Open House held at the Marriott Halifax Harbourfront Hotel, began with a series of urban design presentations, each addressing a specific outcome of this study. Participants were given an overview of HRM by Design and introduced to the study team, followed by an honest 'Fresh Eyes' look at this city from an outside perspective. The presentations culminated with the introduction of "Jack's World" to participants, which was a presentation focused on different urban design elements and a toolkit for creating a livable urban environment.

Following the presentations, a series of interactive panels were used to engage participants that sought answers to specific questions. The first panel asked where people lived, worked, played and shopped. The second focused on neighbourhoods and asked participants to identify which ones were treasured, which could use improvement and which neighbourhoods were favoured for walking. The third panel asked participants about streets and open spaces. Vision was the focus of the fourth panel, asking participants to write down their thoughts, comments and ideas on their vision for the HRM Regional Centre. Finally, participants were asked to answer questions about different aspects of 12 World Cities to get a sense of what qualities people enjoyed about other cities.

## Day 2: Workshop



The principles from each group were placed on index cards

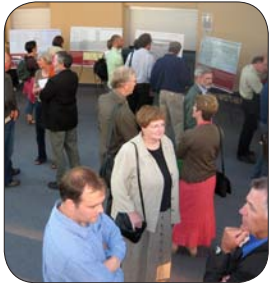
The first workshop focused on envisioning and shaping place. In the morning workshop, participants were divided into 4 smaller working groups. By first identifying the Regional Centre's assets, challenges and urban design objectives, each group was able to generate 10 guiding urban design principles and helped shape an overall urban design vision statement.

In the afternoon, participants were divided into 3 working groups, each addressing a different element of place shaping. The 3 groups/ topic areas were:

- Heritage and Civic Infrastructure
- Street Character and Open Spaces
- Views and Prominent Sites/ Areas



A report back session was held during lunch in the auditorium at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.



A symposium + public forum was held at Alderney Theatre on the evening of Day 2 and was well attended.

The heritage and civic infrastructure group was charged with identifying potential areas, streetscapes and individual buildings and structures that should be protected if they were not already. Group 2 was asked to identify the desired physical character of the Regional Centre's important streets and to identify which open spaces need to be modified, improved or areas that lacked any open spaces. Finally, the views and prominent sites/ areas group identified key views and prominent sites that should be protected and or enhanced.

Day 2 finished with an urban design symposium and public forum held at Alderney Theatre in Dartmouth. The program was the same as the program held on Day 1 to ensure that as many members of the public as possible were able to participate.



A group hard at work identifying neighbourhoods, districts and corridors during the day 3 workshops.



Some of the work produced in the morning on Day 3.



Participants from each group presented the work produced during a lunch viewing session held on Day 3.

# Vision Statement

The Regional Centre is the symbolic, historic and functional heart of the Halifax Regional Municipality. It is distinguished by its rich past as is evident in: its historic architecture, traditional neighbourhoods and national landmarks; its natural features as shaped by its grand parks, harbour, lakes, waterways and rolling hills; and its regional importance as an economic hub, capital district, educational centre, health focus and cultural heart.

The Regional Centre will build on its distinctions and assets to nurture an urban context that enhances quality of life, enriches urban living and becomes a global destination.

The Regional Centre will assert and affirm a legible and ordered urban structure that will reinforce the best qualities and characteristics of its unique neighbourhoods and districts.

The Regional Centre's cultural vitality is rooted in its diverse population and accordingly it will strive to be an open, safe, affordable, accessible and welcoming place to people of all walks of life.

The Regional Centre's vibrancy, animation and economic health will be strengthened through the cultivation of a compact, civic inspired and human-scaled urban fabric of streets, blocks and buildings.

# Urban Design Principles

## 1. Sustainable

- Design, plan and build with respect for economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability.
- Create resilient communities that adapt to evolving opportunities and needs.

## 2. High Quality

- New development should be of high quality and compatible with other high quality developments.
- Promote high quality architecture and urban design that respects great heritage resources, including neighbourhoods.

## 3. Heritage + Culture

- Heritage resources, including heritage districts, buildings, landscapes and cultural heritage, should be recognized, used, protected and enhanced.
- Ensure lasting legacies (buildings, open spaces and streets) are maintained, and new ones are created.
- Views should be recognized, protected and enhanced.
- Enhance connections within the Regional Centre including to and from the waterfront, open space and neighbourhoods.

## 4. Movement

- Integrate land use planning with transportation planning in such a way that alternatives to driving become an easy choice. Transportation options should be efficient, pleasant and readily available.
- All streets should present a pleasing pedestrian environment.
- The Regional Centre, in all ways, should be conducive to, and supportive of, pedestrian movement. It should encourage people to become pedestrians.

## 5. Complete Neighbourhoods

- Support mixed-use and diverse neighbourhoods, including:
  - Affordable housing and a variety of tenures;
  - Residential, commercial, employment uses; and
  - Amenity space, including schools and parks, within walking distance.
- Ensure necessary public services and amenities to support quality of life, cohesive communities and creative places.

## 6. Growth + Change

- Ensure that new developments respond to the natural, cultural, historical, and urban character of their context.
- Direct change and intensification to areas that will benefit from growth.
- Every new building should add to the public realm.
- Design should support accessibility, active transportation and transit (i.e. streets, land uses, neighbourhoods, open spaces, circulation systems).

## 7. Process

- Foster a culture of support for the building/construction of quality urban design.
- Recognize and reward design excellence.
- Involve neighbourhood communities in local planning matters.
- Maintain opportunities for public participation in the implementation of HRM by Design.
- Foster predictable outcomes that have been tested to be achievable and fair.

## 8. Connected

- Views should be recognized, protected and enhanced.
- Enhance connections within the Regional Centre including to and from the waterfront, open spaces and neighbourhoods.

# iv

## Day 3: Workshop

The final day of Forum 1 workshops focused on the identification of existing and potential neighbourhoods, corridors and districts. The study area was divided into 5 focus areas, and the smaller working groups were asked to identify and describe the primary uses, street and block character, building types, built form character, defining features and the quality of the urban environment. The neighbourhoods, corridors and districts were identified based on those areas with a cohesive or strong identity associated with them. In the afternoon, the 5 smaller working groups went back and refined the work produced in the morning and were asked to provide a future character statement for what they would like to see the area become. By the end of the final day of workshops, the groups had each prepared a neighbourhood, corridors + districts plan for their focus area.

## Next Steps

- October 24 Presentation by the project team and the Urban Design Task Force to the Council Committee of the Whole.
- December 4-7 Forum 2 will be held from December 4 - 7, 2006.

Please check [www.hrmbdesign.ca](http://www.hrmbdesign.ca) regularly for the most current information on the upcoming Forum 2 or to learn more about this study.

# v

## Day 3: Forum 1 Closing Presentation

A presentation of the "Best of Forum 1" outcomes was held at the Rowe Management Building at Dalhousie University. A consolidated version of the urban design principles produced on Day 2 and the Neighbourhoods, Corridors and Districts Plan generated on Day 3 were presented to the public. A draft urban design vision for the Regional Centre was presented. The closing presentation provided the public with an opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the work that was produced during Forum 1.



Some attendees at the closing presentation reading through some of the comments on the interactive panels.



The consultant team, HRM Capital District Staff and members of the Urban Design Task Force were on hand to answer questions during the Closing Presentations at Dalhousie University.

## Feedback and Contact Information

Your comments and feedback on the Regional Urban Design Study are important to the success of this study.

For further information on the study or if you have additional comments, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Jennifer Keesmaat, Partner  
Office for Urbanism at [jk@officeforurbanism.com](mailto:jk@officeforurbanism.com)  
Or
- Andy Fillmore, Capital District Urban Design Project Manager  
at [fillmoa@halifax.ca](mailto:fillmoa@halifax.ca)

For further information please visit [www.hrmbdesign.ca](http://www.hrmbdesign.ca)