



# Update

April 2008

## Final Draft – Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan

Since HRMbyDesign began in 2006 the project has been focussed on developing an urban design strategy for the entire Regional Centre, which includes Dartmouth inside the Circumferential Highway and Halifax peninsula. Several significant, large-scale public meetings, forums, and workshops have been held during the course of the project to establish the shared vision for the study area. These consultations, in addition to numerous citizen and stakeholder workshops and interviews, yielded the Urban Design Vision and Principles, the Urban Design Framework and the Reurbanization Strategy for the Regional Centre.

In June 2007, the project turned its attention toward the special challenges and opportunities that exist in downtown Halifax. Increased clarity and predictability in the downtown Halifax **development approvals** will result from the introduction of a new form-based approach to development, in which the maximum height and building mass are predetermined in the Land Use By-law. Since appropriate height and building form varies throughout different areas downtown, a **district-based approach** is being used.

Balancing new development and contemporary architecture with the **rich heritage assets** in downtown Halifax is another key pillar of the Downtown Halifax Plan. The establishment of the **Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District (HCD)**, HRM's first ever HCD, is the result of an enormous amount of work completed by the Barrington Street Historic District Steering Committee over the past few years. The HCD will help protect and conserve the heritage resources on the street through improved demolition and rehabilitation guidelines and a tax incentive and grants program designed to stimulate the revitalization of this historic streetscape.

Two large-scale public forums were held in September and November 2007, the focus of which was downtown Halifax. Since that time, the Urban Design Task Force, project consultants and staff have been working on developing implementation tools and strategies that will see HRMbyDesign's vision come to life. Further support for the direction of the project came with an approval in principle by Regional Council, of the vision for downtown Halifax, the 10 Big Moves for downtown Halifax, and the guiding principles for a successful downtown.

The result is a new **Downtown Halifax Secondary Planning Strategy** and **Land Use By-law**. These documents translate the widely shared vision and urban design principles into municipal legislation and guiding policy. A **Design Manual** has also been created as part of the Land Use By-law, to ensure that all new development and rehabilitation efforts are sustainable, beautiful and embody architectural and public space design excellence.

*vibrant streetscapes...beautiful architecture...beloved heritage...splendid public spaces...*

## **NEXT STEPS**

HRMbyDesign is entering its fifth phase of public consultation. This will be the final opportunity for public feedback on the draft Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan and accompanying policies in advance of a presentation of the final report to Regional Council in May 2008. Following the Council presentation in May, a public hearing will be scheduled to help gauge public opinion on the project.

Prior to Council's deliberation on the project, there will be a public review period of the **policy documents\*** that form the Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan, from **April 7 - 23**. During the public review, an open house event will be held on **April 16** to promote discussion with the Urban Design Task Force and project staff on the final plan. If you want to see downtown Halifax revitalized by implementing HRMbyDesign's urban design plan, express your support by attending one of the two sessions at the public open house (details below). Submission of written comments is encouraged and should be received by April 23.

\*The policy documents include five volumes:

**Volume 1** – Downtown Halifax Secondary Planning Strategy

**Volume 2** – Design Manual

**Volume 3** – Land Use By-law Fact Sheet

**Volume 4** – Barrington Street Conservation District Plan

**Volume 5** – Regional Plan Amendments.

### **Public Open House & Presentation**

**April 16**  
**World Trade & Convention Centre**  
**Room 200 B**

***First Session:***

6:00 pm – Presentation

6:30 pm – Open House

***Second Session: (repeat)***

7:30 pm – Presentation

8:00 pm – Open House

Once Council has approved the urban design plan for downtown Halifax, HRMbyDesign will refocus on developing policy to address the Regional Centre urban design issues identified in previous forums, through functional plans and neighbourhood studies in areas like downtown Dartmouth, Woodside, Quinpool Road and the north end of Halifax.

**For more information on HRMbyDesign, or to obtain the Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan documents, contact:**

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