

PUBLIC COMMENTS

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

*A summary of feedback from HRM by Design Forum 4B
November 28, 2007*

Table of Contents

Suggestions/Concerns/Comments by Category.....	3
Preferred Scenario Comments.....	9
Questions.....	9
Appendices: Feedback via letters and emails.....	12

SUGGESTIONS/CONCERNS/COMMENTS

Streets:

- Investment is needed in streetscapes, public art, and public spaces.
- Make the street level pedestrian friendly and well landscaped.
- As downtown is on an east-facing slope, I am concerned that the streetscapes remain open and sunny.
- At the street level, there should be retail, topped by commercial or residential with a step back.

Session Comments:

- Complete disrespect for the public input. HRM by Design hijacked the Q&A portion. You don't have to respond to every comment; this is our chance to speak.
- Community building has to happen where people are included from all walks of life – so far only academics, the idle rich, retired politicians, etc. have been seen at these events. Emailing doesn't reach everybody, still waiting to see where the reports are available at the public libraries.
- Why wasn't the Mayor present at the presentation?
- "Open House" could have been ½ hour, leaving enough time for comments and still ending at 9:00 p.m. Thanks for supplying hot and cold drinks. Next time, consider having the HRM water bottles.
- Jack's life in the city relied on his access to money. Jack did not experience any of the city's social problems.
- Panelists in the Q&A portion should always appear interested to hear all comments and concerns from the public.

Height:

- Don't put another tall building near the Aliant building because it was a mistake.
- Height vis-à-vis the Citadel is what makes us unique, you can see the water.
- Height is fine in the right spot.
- Shift the high-rise development to the north of the district, not Morris Street or along the harbour.
- Keep tall buildings away from City Hall, Government House and Province House.
- Ugly short buildings may be bad, but ugly tall overpowering buildings are even worse. Relative to other major cities, Kempt Road, Quinpool Road, and Gottingen Street are very close to the downtown core.
- No tall buildings on the waterfront in the Central or Southern District.
- Nobody is likely to complain about high-rises in Bayer's Lake, Burnside or Dartmouth Crossing, where they would be closer to many commuters that now have to go a long way into downtown Halifax.
- Perhaps the new high-rise financial district should be centered in one of the Industrial Parks or along Kempt Road.
- No buildings over 70 ft. in the Central District.
- Move the northern boundary of the Central District from George Street to Duke Street to provide future protection for City Hall and Province House from being overwhelmed, even though this means CIBC & TD will be non-conforming.
- Reduce the projected heights of future buildings.

- Need to review height precincts but generally very favourable.
- The Scotia Square, Fenwick and Aliant buildings are all examples of how buildings can ruin the downtown experience. It is possible to infill with low-rise buildings to fulfill the vision of increasing the population by 10,000.
- Constructing tall buildings beside existing mistakes doesn't alleviate them. Wind tunnel effect!
- Height and density may create barriers to harbour access/public views (except for occupants) aside from a few E-W gaps.
- I like what I have seen tonight but I would like to see more height in the Cogswell area. I am also concerned about the height restriction in a lot of the downtown area.

Views:

- Views from the Citadel should be expanded beyond the viewplanes so that there will be a panoramic view from the Citadel at least over the Central District.
- A certain amount of height is okay since there is more to see in and around Citadel Hill than from the hill.
- New high-rise development should respect significant existing views.

Heritage:

- Halifax has the most historic square kilometre in Canada, preserve it.
- The Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District needs to move forward right away.
- Immediate legislation for heritage protection is essential.
- It is interesting that most of the popular, vibrant and active nightspots and restaurants are in old or heritage buildings, not in modern ones.
- Concerned about tradeoffs between potential Heritage Conservation Districts (not getting designated) and big-block development – suggests a potential “staking rush” for potential high-rise sites in what might eventually become HCDs.
- Need incentives to restore heritage properties, there are too many in disrepair.

Architecture:

- Wind is a concern with tall buildings.
- Good design is needed, not necessarily height. Clarity is needed.
- Sunlight penetration between the buildings is a concern.
- Green roofs!
- Good design is critical! There is a fear in giving developers a blank cheque.
- Save Privateers Wharf and take that style of development throughout the downtown.
- Focus on design quality, both public and private.
- Design guidelines must be reflected in policies that will ensure predictable desirable outcomes.
- Design quality is more important than height.

Sustainability:

- The City needs to grow, be more “green friendly” and a place where people are comfortable and safe living in it.

- There needs to be better certainty in the development guidelines, better green requirements such as LEED certification.
- Solar power, water management, green buildings etc., should be integrated in this plan.
- Have you taken into account the current sea-level rise projections? Need to build climate change adaptation measures into municipal planning.
- All buildings must be self-sustainable “green” buildings.
- I am concerned that new buildings will not be required to meet exemplary energy efficient standards.

Affordability:

- Affordable housing is extremely important.
- Council must be mindful of affordable housing downtown for people with children. Therefore, no more school closures.
- Where is the new affordable detached housing? Some young families want to live where they can let their young children out to play in the backyard and not have to go out with them, down the elevator and along the street to a playground.
- Perhaps do more to show the public it will be affordable with the density you are showing.
- The plan needs to address the lack of affordable housing, few indoor public spaces etc. There was not enough emphasis on how all people live in HRM.
- I am concerned that downtown housing will be too expensive.
- Affordability can be implemented through: bonus zoning, density bonus mixed uses, retail/residential mix, supported housing options for targeted groups.

Cogswell:

- Don't lose this opportunity, don't take everything to Cogswell for development or the companies may not follow.
- Tear down the Cogswell Interchange tomorrow.
- Tear down the Cogswell Interchange and build the office towers there.

Implementation:

- This plan is not financially realistic.
- Need very clear guidelines with teeth if any of the vision is to be achieved.

Process:

- Don't rush this plan just to get it through Council before the election.
- Too much development input into the process, not enough public input.
- Where is the interrelationship with economic plan and the regional plan? This should be a more overarching plan that incorporates the entire city.

Density:

- Density and investment are important, there are businesses that want to locate downtown but they want to be near existing central business district.

- Densify the downtown; transit only works properly in high-density areas.
- This is the downtown, there are going to be tall buildings and it needs to be revitalized, as it is the capital of Atlantic Canada, not just the city you live in.
- Densification of the downtown was not clear or well presented.
- Current downtown residents live in the downtown because they like the low density in the south end.
- Density and intensity are critical to making this happen or downtown will continue to lose vibrancy to the periphery. The concern is that this won't happen because it will be cheaper to building housing and offices in places like Dartmouth Crossing, Bedford South and the rural areas.
- Encouraged by densification.
- Upping density reduces costs and allows markets to dictate what the price and demand will be.

Site-Specific:

- Likes the proposal for the Superstore parking lot at the end of Hollis.
- Open up the visual connection between City Hall and Province House.
- The part that caught my eye is the Superstore parking lot development. If that is to occur, you are going to change that whole neighbourhood in a chain reaction. It is the most concrete idea and realistic area that will work.
- You should move City Hall to the Cogswell Interchange.
- New Metro Centre in Shannon Park
- Remove the public law courts, rebuild the Kissing Bridge.
- Love the terminal idea near Scotia Square and the ferry terminal.
- Great to have civic buildings as design leaders – set the example for others to follow.
- Love the design for the space beside Province House, as well as the promenade ideas.
- The plan is good as you present it. Build a beautiful third bridge at the base of Morris Street but keep the low buildings in the neighbourhood. Bridge is not to bring more commuters in by car but to get the trucks from the container pier out of downtown and to encourage more public transportation from the Dartmouth side.

Traffic/Transit/Parking:

- Alternate transportation and parking should be addressed.
- Transportation issues need to be addressed and included in the plan, like how to get people on and off the peninsula.
- Transportation and energy use needs to be examined.
- More focus is needed on alternate transportation possibilities. At present the HRM Traffic Authority is given too much flexibility in Council decisions.
- Integrate with effective transportation planning, i.e. bike paths.
- Consider the use of railway cut for truck traffic.
- The downtown will not become a vibrant centre for walking if it is not well connected to the outside, by rail, ferries, and generous public transit. I don't see Council showing any political leadership in support of this.
- The goal of the proposal to get people walking, cycling and using public transit to get to work is excellent. To achieve this, restrictions on cars will need to be put in place (parking made more expensive, fewer multi lane streets, etc). I don't see any willingness of Council to do this.

- Commuter rail transit – reinstall rails to the old North Street station, through the DND parking lot to a new terminal at Cogswell, which will be close to the financial district, government offices, the ferry terminal and the bus terminal.
- Start with removing the parking lots.
- New multi-use trails.
- Parking and transit need to be addressed. There are already serious traffic hassles involved in getting downtown and onto the peninsula.
- New bus/ferry routes, integrated transit stops. We need good sustainable transportation methods downtown.
- Disappointed that there was no mention of green buildings, bike lane integration, reduced number of cars and increased buses downtown.
- Love the emphasis on walking, traffic noise is a real problem – get the province to ban modified mufflers on cars and motorcycles. Traffic noise drives people indoors and discourages walking.
- I'm concerned about truck traffic on Hollis Street. The increased investment in the Port of Halifax will only increase truck traffic, so how will this be addressed, as it seems to pose a challenge to one of the core values of the HRM by Design; "Walk ability".
- You should mention "cycling" trail more because it's dangerous to bike downtown now.
- Idealistic but inspiring omission of transportation.

Open Space:

- Leave a broad esplanade between most buildings and the waters edge.
- Put in a big fountain downtown in one of the new public spaces.
- Pictures were often shown of other cities but examples could have been taken from here (eg. isn't the sidewalk along Spring Garden Road and the Gardens a sort of esplanade?) We have public monuments, public plazas, and a pedestrian precinct. We like them and it would make sense to see how these can be enhanced and improved.

Development:

- New development projects need to be evaluated from a holistic approach.
- Jobs are not here now for graduates, since there is no new office space. We need to attract long-term financial sustainability by bringing the industry here.
- Buildings may need to be taller than 6 stories to attract new business.
- There are already vacant lands available for development.
- The Class A office space needs to be near the existing financial district.
- All of the proposed development sites for height are provincially or federally owned.
- Streamline the approvals process.
- Questions have been raised about the continuing ability of developers to contravene regulations and to get by-laws rewritten or reinterpreted in their favour. Therefore, all major development must face public review.
- Main concern is about the actual implementation of the laudable ideas of the project. Development is done by "as-of-right" at present – the results of which have produced our current urban malaise.
- Do not amend any present legislation, the municipal plan was fought for and it is good.
- It is important that this plan clears up the "rules" so that both developers and various groups like heritage don't waste time and money going to court, and so that extensive delays will be avoided.
- I am very concerned that wind gusting may become worse due to new development.

- I am concerned that new developments will not present a diverse and dynamic ground level presence.
- There is space to develop approximately 100,000 sq.ft now in the vacant areas of downtown. The extra need for space has not been demonstrated.

Missing elements:

- Need to better communicate the different layers involved in built form, including height, streetscapes, etc.
- Trails are needed, storm water treatment, water management.
- What about the possibility of a new Metro Centre?
- No mention of bikes, for example, access to the MacDonald Bridge. Bike lanes, parking, ferry to Bedford, and the new ferry terminal are very good ideas.
- Loss of traditional lot size.

Other:

- We should learn from the many examples of good design that exist in Europe, which don't necessarily include height.
- Forum 4 did not allow enough time to consider the options presented before a vote was called on the height scenario.
- There are areas outside of the regional centre that could use a plan like this.
- Focus should be on how this plan will affect the homeowner, the taxpayers.
- Significant public investment is needed, HRM must understand this and accept it.
- There is no political will to influence building design on current development projects.
- What has hurt the downtown core is the "giving away" of land for retail to try and save the downtown following the success of local industrial business parks.
- Working waterfront – keep or bring in some marine related small businesses, tugboats, pilot boats, sail makers, ship chandlers, etc.
- Sustainable development, daylight freshwater brooks, it is very important to have a healthy heart for a body and a city. Downtown Halifax is the heart of HRM, let's protect it and our local culture.
- It is a challenge to families to think differently about what is "home." It can be a great way to live downtown instead of in the "burbs." It exposes kids to theatres and restaurants etc.
- I am favorably impressed. I lived for three years in Istanbul, which has very walk able downtown areas, with vibrant streetscapes and some great access to water. HRM by Design appears to be headed in a positive direction. I like the concepts of a walkable city, an attractive city, infilling for sustainability and other features.
- Concerns for handicap access, financing renewal cost and recreational opportunities/facilities for those living in the downtown core.
- As a 43 year resident living on the edge of the peninsula, my taxes are increasing faster than my income.
- The Shubenacadie Waterway is a corridor from the entire Capital District to the center of the province and on to the Bay of Fundy. It is important to consider this highly significant feature when determining the approach for the remainder of the HRM.

PREFERRED SCENARIO – COMMENTS

- Support the Preferred Scenario as a very exciting future for historic Halifax that blends heritage concerns with the absolutely necessary economic activity for people activity to occur. Bravo.
- The approach to embrace the future but still frame and highlight our special heritage is excellent. Bravo!
- Overall the plan is exciting and thoughtful. It all depends on the political will of this Council.
- Excited about the vision and the plan, it has all the elements of a great plan for the city, include more ways to make it cycle friendly.
- This plan looks like the type of city that youth will want to live in, work in and play in. Vibrant downtowns will keep young people here.
- The priorities should be connectivity, pedestrian priority, bookending the downtown height, open spaces, and traffic management. There are practical, logistical and financial hurdles to each of these scenarios.
- Fantastic presentation. Extremely impressed with the vision. It is refreshing to hear a “have” versus “have not” vision.
- Particularly liked the focus on walking and public transportation.
- Love the vision, it is an ideal scenario.
- Love the concepts; I want to be Jack!
- The Preferred Scenario violates the principles I was looking for in HRM by Design despite the consultants’ clear enunciation of those principles.
- Let’s get started. Great plan. Well thought.
- I like the proposal. The areas of interest – sustainability, vibrancy, encourage walking, cycling and density of people living downtown.
- Amazing work! As a member of Forum 4 participant I feel my comments were listened to. Thanks for your respect of public consultation.
- Liked the presentation of design principles.
- Wonderful presentation. Don’t mind the seniors. “Don’t like change”.
- Excellent job! 80% great, 20% ok.
- Good work.
- Excellent!
- This is the second HRM by Design presentation I have attended and I went to the Carmichael Lecture this year. I am very interested in the future growth of the city centre. I very much liked the preferred scenario presented. The presentation was clear. Clearly, a lot of time and effort has been put in by staff, consultants and volunteers. Thank you.

QUESTIONS

Topic: Economics

1. Why do we need 14 million square feet of office space?

Topic: Affordability:

2. How can affordability be implemented?

Topic: Development

3. With the fast tracked approval process, will there still be an opportunity for public input when developers present a plan to Council for permission to build?
4. Will everything be decided "by right" in the new plan?
5. Why are we losing current planning controls?

Topic: Traffic/Transit/Parking

6. Is there a transportation plan for the urban core?
7. What are you doing to alleviate traffic on the corridors into downtown?
8. What are the implications for transport to and from downtown? Bus and cycling lanes?
9. How can we balance the economic importance of, and the disruption that comes from big noisy trucks in the downtown?

Topic: Sustainability

10. How will you ensure that new buildings (or potential renovations) are as sustainable as possible?
11. As new technologies become available (i.e. solar technology, or other renewable heating/electricity sources), how will the design rules be changed so that developers are encouraged/pushed to use those new technologies?
12. What happens to the waterfront buildings when the sea level rises by several meters in the next 20-40 years? Why not develop areas off the peninsula?

Topic: Impacts - Noise/Wind

13. Halifax is windy: are there creative ways to mitigate or at least not aggravate?

Topic: Architecture

14. The building design guidelines in favour of the pedestrian streetscape are fantastic. How will they be enforced?

Topic: Heritage

15. What is the approvals process for becoming a Heritage Conservation District?

Topic: Area-Specific Concerns

16. With the Twisted Sisters in place (violating all HRM by Design guidelines), how will HRM prevent other developers from demanding equal latitude or altitude exceptions from HRM 's development guidelines (assuming HRM accepts HRM by Design's recommendations)?

Topic: Implementation

17. How quickly will functional plans come into place based on the HRM by Design Vision?

18. What legal mechanisms are possible and necessary in order to make the ideals of HRM by Design a reality?

19. How do you plan to address areas outside of the regional centre?

Topic: Open Space

20. How will you guarantee that there is the political will to actually implement the public space investments?

Topic: Cogswell

21. What are the plans for redesigning Cogswell, there have already been plans brought forward on how to redevelop this area.

Topic: People

22. What is the plan to retain students in the city? The financial district is looking for office space now, what message are you sending students in university and college?

23. What are you doing for seniors?

24. How can we ensure that people can live in downtown Halifax especially single people?

Other:

25. Now that the harbour is on its way to being cleaned, when are you going to restore the harbour?

Appendices: Public Feedback via emails and letters

My congratulations to your team who put together a very well thought out presentation for the future of downtown Halifax. This new approach to the development of the downtown is long overdue. The development approval process will obviously be far better defined with clarity thus avoiding far less delays in frivolous appeals.

Your scenario will in my opinion bring forth the changes your team is proposing. The scenario will protect our heritage buildings, which are vital to the character of old Halifax. Your proposed approach will bring people to the downtown areas to live and work by creating attractive pedestrian venues combined with attractive new design criteria for both commercial and residential buildings. To have areas like Barrington Street begin to revive its grander of days gone by we need residents living in the downtown to support the infrastructure of shops and small business.

I look forward to your next presentation and support the direction your team has taken in this vital process. Thank you.

It was clear to me that your team worked hard to develop and present the preferred development option for downtown Halifax and it appears to me as if you are making good progress. At the Basilica, however, we have two specific concerns, namely:

- 1) Restoration costs of our heritage buildings; and
- 2) Rising rents and affordability of downtown residences.

As you know from our discussion, we are interested in restoring the rectory that sits on the corner of Barrington and Spring Garden. This 3 story building, which is over 100 years old, requires an investment of somewhere between \$2.5 and 3 million to bring it up to code and to make it an acceptable working building. With a declining parishioner base, partly due to rising downtown rents and gentrification, we do not have the capital required to carry out this work. We have been exploring development options with the rectory and our adjacent lands, particularly an open space between the rectory and Barrington Gate that could be developed to provide some income.

The HRM proposed development constraints, particularly those dealing with height, however, are going to prevent us from generating the income required to fully restore the rectory. With your preferred development option, it is apparent to us that we will need one or more of the following, to not only restore the rectory but the Basilica church, at some point in time:

- 1) flexibility on what we can do with the rectory building (perhaps allowing an increase in height, with a design that is compatible with the existing building),
- 2) flexibility on the height of a building on the adjacent open land,
- 3) tax benefits and/or
- 4) significant heritage grants.

Unfortunately, we will need some kind of decision in the next couple of months, as there is some urgency with respect to the rectory repairs.

Rising rents in the downtown are creating a number of development problems for the Basilica. They cause our families and the poor to move away. Many of these families are parishioners. Although the poor are driven out by the rising rents, they are attracted back on a daily basis by the opportunity to panhandle in an area with a high traffic flow of richer people. Our parishioner basis is shrinking, while the demands to serve the poor are rising. Although these are sociological trends that go beyond city planning, good urban design can play a significant role

in stemming the tide. Development measures that consciously avoid gentrification through the provision of a mix of low and high rent dwellings, coop housing, supported housing, drop-in centres, etc. will create a plan that meets the needs of a diverse population and ameliorate some of the trends we are now experiencing.

Although I bring these matters to your attention directly, our lands at the Basilica are owned by the Archdiocese of Halifax and, as such, it is the Archdiocese that will engage directly with the city on your proposed plan and the means to address the problems raised above.

We look forward to your thoughts and feedback on dealing with these issues.

To whom it may concern:

I attended the Wednesday presentation by the HRM by Design consultant team & while I enjoyed the overall effort I came away feeling that there was a great deal of impracticality exhibited. For example:

-The bookend concept seems to me illogical in that it is already difficult to access the south end of the city & the installation of millions of sq ft of office space there & hence thousands of additional commuters is unrealistic. It was suggested that many of the workers would be housed in nearby high-rise condos etc, but if other exploding cities are an example [& I have visited many] then those living in the hub are the well heeled & not the average office worker. The Cogswell interchange part of the concept appears to have more merit, nonetheless I feel a distributed solution makes far more sense. With today's communication technology there is no need at all for one or two clusters of facilities, & it makes far more sense to locate office towers where the people live, that is spread them over the total HRM system [not just the south end] thereby minimizing commuting needs & developing stronger & more sustainable communities throughout the HRM region.

-Its not really sound to consider such massive futuristic designs in isolation from practical people moving assessments, hence realistic mass transit options need to be tabled in concert with the accommodation / office scenarios. I recently had the privilege of visiting both Amsterdam & Copenhagen & was awestruck by the transportation efficiency & prioritization [i.e., pedestrians first /then bicycles / then trams & busses/& lastly private cars]. This is essentially the opposite of our situation so perhaps Northern Europe is where we should be getting our advice.

-Also it will be imperative to get the large trucks out of the downtown core hence efforts need to be focussed on bypassing the city via the existing rail cut to the south end shipping terminal. Actually a better solution maybe that all containers have to be moved by rail out of the city, which is by far the most environmentally friendly means of transportation overland.

Yet again this seems like another example of assuming that because the consultant "is from away" that they must have better ideas than the locals - I have my doubts in this Toronto sourced case.

Good luck.

I just got back from the session and was compelled to send you a message to congratulate you on demonstrating extreme patience, despite hearing many of the same comments from the same people at session 4A. I would never claim to be an expert on city planning, but it seems to me that there is a very vocal community of older folks that aren't interested in seeing any progress in Halifax. Just to set some context I'm 28, so I tend to ignore most of the comments from the grey hairs. I know I'm supposed to respect my elders, but they are not going to be in this city for as long as I plan to be. I would love to see the primary areas of focus in the proposed plan come to fruition. I like tall buildings, trees, interesting streetscapes, density, and a vibrant city. So please keep up the good work, and know that you have inspired a habitually uninterested man to get informed on the process.

Best wishes with a "go forward" with the policy process to implement the plan. Overall I would give the concept a very high rating in our "less than perfect" world.

I was a bit surprised at "faces" I did not see, from the development community. Subsequently it dawned on me that the last evening meeting overlapped with the Property Forum, in Toronto, which is the major annual gathering for the real estate development industry. My guess is the room would have had many more faces and speakers from the industry except for this "overlap".

In any event, keep up the good work and keep it moving.

I attended the presentation on November 28th at the WTCC. I wanted to tell you I think you and your team did an excellent job. I have been a resident of Halifax now since 1993 when I came to University here. I now run a project management company specializing in Office Relocation Management. I am an entrepreneur with a young family who wants to stay and grow old in Halifax. In running my own business I have become acutely aware of what is going on in our fine city. I want to ensure that Halifax continues to grow and my business with it.

The whole event on Wednesday night was a real eye opener. It is the first time I have come out to a public consultative event and I quickly realized that a large representation of the minority of the cities opinions turn out to these event to express negative opinions. From my own observation the majority of the people against this plan were seniors. They have lived their life, made their money and all they choose to think of now is themselves and what kind of view they have for their retirement. For those who might want to say "Your not the one who is having a building put up in front of you"; actually I was in that precise position. I lived on Glebe Street in the North End for 8 years with a beautiful view of the Bedford Basin and the Harbour. While I lived there Petro-Canada sold the land to a developer and the Mount Blanc was built. This consisted of two 5-story buildings right in front of my house. Yes I lost my view, so I do know what it is like.

Do you know what happened after it moved in? The neighbourhood began to change. It no longer consisted of retired people and neighbours who barely new each other it became filled with young vibrant professionals and families. The other big thing I observed was not only was the neighbourhood being revived but hundreds of people gained a fabulous view of the Bedford Basin and the Harbour.

I was amazed at how we had three people from Morris street stand up and to blast the committee about the view from 3 houses, with no regard for the other 350,000 citizens who have

to work and support their families in this great city. We cannot allow the opinion of a very small minority to affect the full potential of this great city and the ability for young entrepreneurs and families like mine to grow and prosper. If these people are so concerned about their view sell their house and by a condo right on the Harbour!

Keep up the good work.

Just wanted to say how much I enjoyed your presentation last evening. The concepts and vision your team has developed are just what Halifax desperately needs at this time. I would also like to apologize on behalf of the 20 or so who stood up to complain. Either they were asleep during your talk or in another room because they could not have heard the same presentation that I heard. It appears that they came with prepared complaints and despite the fact that your team addressed most of the issues thoroughly they decided to complain anyway. Remember the other 480 that didn't get up agreed with you completely. The demographic that spoke is a tell tail sign of what is happening here and reminds me of a conversation I had with a friend's daughter recently. This well educated, very employable young woman told me she has decided to move to Vancouver to live and work because of its vibrancy, entrepreneurship, and its attitude. She said, "living in Halifax is like living in a seniors complex". I will ask, is Council fully on board with this at this time?

I was at last night's presentation and thought it was great. I had to leave shortly after the comments began because I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I think your team has done a great job (you would never know that Jenn doesn't live here) and there is something in the plan for everyone. How could the Heritage people even complain?

All I saw last night were the same old cranks that attend every HRM function, that don't listen to what is presented and just hear what they want to hear. Frankly I hope they are no longer around when your plan comes to fruition.

We live downtown, in the "Citadel North" neighbourhood, walk to work and fully intend to have our kids walk to school (providing HRSB doesn't build the super schools). We love living here and think the preferred downtown scenario will only make it better.

I moved here 5 years ago from Toronto and was thrilled I could buy downtown for many of the reasons presented. What I hate to see are the old cronies following the "traditional parade route" and insisting that any change, unless it is a Disneyland replica of what was there 100 years ago is bad for the city. It is these people that have driven many of the committees that are currently responsible for much of the abysmal design we currently have.

Keep up the good work, I am sure the 30 something generation feels differently than those that spoke last night.

Just wanted to thank you for the hard work you and the task force have put into the strategy, and congratulate you on a fantastic-looking proposal. It strikes a great balance between heritage and future growth, and presents an exciting vision for a vibrant future in the city. I just hope city council views it the same way.

While I'm a fan of good modern design, I'm also a lover of good heritage design and get excited when the two work in harmony and highlight the features of each other. So I was especially happy to see that part of the plan is to draft and enforce strict rules to prevent the rampant demolition of heritage properties, such has been going on here for years.

I was surprised and extremely frustrated that a number of people (the usual suspects) didn't share the enthusiasm for the proposal, and, in fact, seemed not to have been listening or watching to the presentation at all (or, at least, not the same presentation that I saw last night). People will hear and see what they want to hear and see, and it's going to take a lot of effort to convince them that this is a good plan to work towards.

I was in Boston a few weeks ago and my wife and I took the T from Brookline to Newbury St., walked from the Back Bay to Beacon Hill and back through the Government Centre and downtown, exploring every block along the way. I want the same experience in Halifax, and I know the city has that potential. But first we have to break down peoples' deeply ingrained and misconceived notions of the Cogswell Interchange and Gottingen St. being too far removed from the traditional downtown for anyone to spend time in all three areas in the same day, that downtown will never be a family-friendly place to live, and that we should be moving taller buildings outside the city centre. I also got the feeling last night that, among a certain group of residents, there is a real fear of growth and of bringing more people into the city and onto the Peninsula. Their desire to maintain the homogenous status quo and to "keep it all for themselves" actually left me feeling quite angry and upset. It's no wonder we have such little immigration.

Anyway, thanks again for the fantastic work. I know it's very much appreciated by a lot of people in this city.

Do you know when the final draft will be presented to city council in the spring? I hope it becomes a large part of the municipal election campaigns.

Just wanted to congratulate you on the great presentations you and your colleagues gave last night. It was pretty disheartening to see the vocal minority get up again and try to derail the entire process, despite the inclusive and transparent way HRM has gone about gathering input.

Thanks, again.

First, congratulations on persevering so well and with such determination and patience. It was an excellent presentation last night although I thought the debate was a little less heated than expected.

Second, I found it interesting that the first question mentioned green buildings and LEED and the subject came up a little later on in the evening a little more forcefully. My sense is that the whole debate will soon shift towards addressing the role of buildings and the transportation policies that serve their occupants in terms of Climate Change mitigation and adaptation.

There was plenty of reference to sustainability in the presentation but the specifics were very light. In case anyone didn't get the memo the latest IPCC Report on Climate Change published earlier this month made it very clear the news is bad. Moreover, the data suggests its getting worse at a much faster rate than expected. With buildings responsible for roughly 30% of GHG emissions, a similar percentage of energy consumption its time to connect the dots in a hurry.

Where most of our electricity comes from burning coal this is particularly bad. With the almost inevitable flight to coal as oil continues to increase in price it gets worse again. Everywhere.

So there may be a new paradigm on the way that shifts the discussion away from tall and short and considers density and height in terms of solar rights, daylighting and views, green roofs, high performance building envelopes, public space, water conservancy and all those other triple bottom line aspects of environmental, social and economic sustainability that are tied up in LEED. Now LEED itself is changing to embrace a much wider swath of building types, including the enormous challenge of existing buildings the vast majority of which are anything but sustainable. In this town and elsewhere. Many jurisdictions across Canada and the US are establishing LEED as a base standard for public buildings.

Seems like the event on Wednesday was well attended and the presentations went well (although a little long, perhaps). I like the mock-ups of the streetscape changes - pretty fun. I saw lots of people shaking heads when they were presented, though. There seems to be a real can't-do attitude out there, a constant problem in this province, it seems. I wonder if in the final HRM by DESIGN presentations (I forget, do we have any more?) it might be useful to present some steps to how to achieve something like, say, the redevelopment of the Barrington Superstore parking lot. I don't think people are putting the policy suggestions together with the streetscape change possibilities. Maybe if there was one blatant example of how it could happen, step by step, people would be on board and pressuring the powers that be to make it happen. You could demonstrate how it would play out in reality and get people believing. I like the examples from other cities where they've made changes. Maybe if we could get some from Moncton or something people would get riled up enough to believe in it.

Hope these ideas are helpful. Good luck with it all.

Hello Councillor Uteck, I am a new homeowner in your constituency. My wife and I would be classified as young urban professionals and we are expecting our first child in the spring.

Earlier this week I attended the HRM by Design presentation and I wanted to say how excited I was after the meeting. I feel that the presenters did a wonderful job, particularly in educating people on the use of smart design and pedestrian focused development. There are opponents to the changes presented who are few but very vocal. I wanted to add my voice to the conversation and say, as someone who walks to work through the downtown core, I would be ecstatic if the Halifax envisioned were to come to fruition.

I support the use of public funds to make the investments needed to begin the renewal process. Furthermore I would support council proceeding with the necessary guidelines that will give developers the option to make the changes to Cornwallis Park/Square, Lower Water Street and the "Grand Promenade" that were shown.

On a suggestive note I would add that in addition to pedestrian focus, I would like to stress the importance of both bike lanes and public bike racks in the plan. These would help reduce vehicle traffic in the downtown and improve the quality of life of its residents.

Thank you for your continued service to the city.

As usual, you folks are doing a terrific job in developing a vision for the Capital district and in particular the downtown. I support your work and encourage you to continue with your bold vision. I listened to a lot of the feedback at the Wednesday evening forum and much of it could easily be refuted. However, there was one point or criticism that came up a few times which I believe was valid and I think you likely have a response to it but we may not have heard it yet. It is the point about how the urban design guidelines that you are developing link back to an urban plan for the region. HRM has completed a regional plan, very recently, and I suspect you took that as a starting place for your work. Perhaps it needs to be brought out, dusted off and linked to your work in direct ways so that we can see how your design moves are actions based on the broader plan for the region. The regional plan was like the work you are doing in that it was developed with full citizen participation. The regional plan can speak specifically to transportation, for example; an issue that came up a few times on Wednesday evening.

Good luck with that.
Carry on with your good work.

Thank you. Thank you for putting forward a vision for the betterment of Halifax. More forward thinking is needed in this city, and your vision fits to what I see as the new Halifax. What you proposed last night is progressive, fresh, professional and will raise our city to an international level. I look forward to living in this new city and visiting my daughter who at that point will be living beside Jack.

On a side note, I would like to be involved if possible. Let me know if I can help better this wonderful place.

Hi there,

I am a former resident of Halifax, and would be a future one if my profession was better represented there. In fact I would make a strong case to my employer to open an office in Halifax. I love the Urban re-design effort, as I always believed that the natural, historical and architectural beauty of Halifax could really be enhanced to attract major international business interests. However, while reviewing the HRM by Design material and presentations, I felt that there was one big, pink elephant that was ignored. That is the container terminal that borders on Point Pleasant Park. It is a legacy structure that really uglies up the waterfront and the residential neighbourhoods. If a concerted effort by Halterm, CN Rail and the port authority could be made to relocate the facility, a number of issues would be resolved.

First, you would eliminate transport truck traffic from the downtown. Second, you could connect the city's downtown waterfront by seawall to the park, connecting the city to its largest and most impressive natural resource. Third, you would free up what is an enormous development space to add to the commercial, retail, residential and community service density of the city. The Cornwallis Park design is only a fraction of what it could be, and by not eliminating the freight traffic, you reduce the appeal of the area and face the risk of limiting the interest of residents, businesses and investors. Fourth, the land that is committed to rail lines could be used to install commuter rails that would connect residents from all areas of the mainland to the edge of the downtown core. I think you would find that south-end residents would welcome the increase to their property values that would accompany the removal of such a large industrial facility. My suggestion on relocation of Halterm is to redistribute the faculty to the Dartmouth side.

I'm taking the opportunity to weigh in on the issue from Vancouver, where I have the benefit of witnessing many of the redesign strategies that you highlight in your presentations. Frankly, I think that Halifax can do a better job than Vancouver has done.

Thank you

Hello:

I am writing to endorse the Halifax by Design concept and the great work that has been done. I believe that [it achieves] the desired outcomes:

- 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.

Again please continue the good work.

My personal thoughts on your presentation last night: The preferred designs are cute and the streetscapes are pleasant but you need a Transportation plan. I'll bet Jack's author didn't walk from her home in Toronto to her office in Halifax.

I really don't understand why the committee seems so determined to pit motorist against pedestrians - at some point we are both. It must be recognized that for the downtown DBD to be vibrant and sustainable it will need everyone in the greater HRM to be welcome and encouraged to come downtown. Not frustrated by the current traffic congestion. HRM is not a BIG city and will need to attract everyone not just the 5000 more people Halifax by Design wishes to relocate to the peninsula.

Couple of technical notes:

Firstly the picture you showed looking down Lower Water St from Terminal RD is over 1.5 years old and the Streetscape has been nicely improved with fence treatments since that picture. Secondly the condo that "Jack" is living in would reside in a sub station not a power plant and as long as there is a requirement for electrical power to down town you will need sub stations. Best Regards.

Hello design team,

1. I attended the public forum last night and I wish to congratulate you on the ongoing hard work of the team, and the excellent results you presented. I am excited by the vision presented and the potential for dynamic change in Halifax. I am a small business owner - a store located on Barrington Street - and I am also one of the newest members of the Board of the DHBC.

I worry that poor media coverage and ill-informed comments from members of the public may have a negative effect on the chances of this work being accepted by council, so I will be contacting relevant councillors urging them to support the initiative.

2. I also wish to express my frustration at the number of attendees last night who made comments that appeared to indicate they had paid no attention at all to your presentation. I am guessing that you share that frustration. As some of the panel members indicated last night, people are getting involved in the process without having a full awareness of the history and process that has brought things to this point. Vocal people making uninformed comments make great TV, apparently (see below) which unfortunately means that is what the rest of the world learns about HRMBD.

You should also know that there is at least one neighbourhood association out there whining amongst themselves about this "top-down" process. Not my neighbourhood - I learned about it through a friend who lives there and is disgusted by these uninformed opinions. The problem is they may have influence on other people who are even less well informed.

I work as a consultant to the federal government on an initiative that has strong parallels to HRM By Design, though it deals with the management of activities in offshore marine areas. The process, however, is very similar to yours - an extensive series of goals and objectives were derived from open sessions with stakeholders. Now working groups work to refine the products and action plans, and we have periodic public forums which both present and influence the work of stakeholder working groups. This iterative process will be ongoing for years. We face similar challenges that include convincing stakeholders that the work is necessary, and getting stakeholders to give up their valuable time to help develop the integrated management initiative.

I have one simple suggestion that I hope might forestall some of the incorrect perceptions about the history of HRMBD. Next time you hold a public forum, can you include one slide and a one-page handout showing a timeline since the beginning, the types of meetings and working sessions that have occurred, and their outputs? It should work, in tabular form. In the handout package last night there was a page that was the poster for the event I was sitting in - that was a waste of paper because I was already there! I know that the wilfully blind will remain so [funny moment last night when one commenter at the microphone was complaining that he has no avenue to express his concerns, while the giant screen at the front of the room blazed with all of the contact info for the project!]. But I think that by making this info more obvious, it might help some people understand that this has NOT been a top-down process, and what they are seeing is the results of the work and thought of many people over a period of time.

3. Last night I saw coverage of the forum on the local CTV news affiliate and I was deeply disappointed by their one-sided coverage of only the negative comments from the floor of the meeting. I realize I am biased because I support this initiative, but I felt that the majority of people in the room were also supportive, based on comments at the microphone and reactions among the audience to many of those comments. I am planning to contact CTV/ATV news with my opinion.

Hello:

I told you yesterday about the problems with winds. I did not tell you that my house is very sturdy. We don't know what the weather is like outside unless we look out the windows. When

Juan and Noel hit we knew it was storming. The whole house shook. We have been too busy cleaning up after the storms and then bad contractors to have followed the developments in Halifax. When you develop these areas remember that Halifax has some wind-protection from Point Pleasant Park. When you start developing Downtown Dartmouth, there is no wind buffer. I don't know if you have anything to do with the proposed eight buildings on the waterfront at the Marine Slips, but remember most people love their views. I don't understand why you would build hi-rises on the waterfront. You can build hi-rises further inland and because of their height they will still have a great view. The attraction of our waterfront seems to be the historic parts of the city, not hi-rises. That is TO, New York and other large crime-infested cities. (I know we claim there is a lot of crime in Halifax. My guess is that there is a lot of federal monies to fight it, as Halifax is not the only city claiming to have the highest crime rates in the country.) You mentioned Gastown in Vancouver. I don't know what it is like there now, but when they restored that area originally (late 60s-early 70s), it was full of drug addicts and panhandlers. The upper levels of the restored buildings were converted to low rent housing for these people. At that time Gastown was beautiful, but not very safe. I hope that has changed, as the original scenario was not very inspiring for a walk through Gastown in the evening.

I believe in heritage, but I also believe in progress. I come from a town that got its legal town status in 1546. The oldest section of this town dates back to the 18th century. It is protected. One cannot tear down an old building and build a new one in its place. The only time that it can be torn down is if it burns. Then one can build another house on the property, but it must be a near copy of the original. My hometown has a thriving tourist trade due to this part of the city. The newer parts of the city has higher buildings, but I don't recall any 20 stories, which may be a necessity in Halifax. As Halifax is on a peninsula, could these buildings be built in the middle of the peninsula instead of the waterfront?

Another thing, which at first glance may appear a little over the top, but instead of tearing down historic homes could they be moved to a new area set aside as a historic community? Every house in this community would have to be a registered heritage property. This scenario would give Halifax a green solution to a dumping nightmare, which it has now. This community could have alleyways for garbage pick up, parking garages (must look like a couch house). The foundations could be made to modern standards; however, they would have to look authentic. Instead of building hi-rises in the Cogswell area, think about setting it aside as a historic community, where houses from other parts of Halifax are brought in. How long do you think it will take the South-enders to want to move into this area? However, make sure that you leave a decent strip of land on the waterfront for the public. If you design this area to look like a 19th century community, would that not put us on the map as innovative? You would demand that oil tanks, most of the local traffic and other modern items would have to be in the alleyway, making the front of the buildings look more authentic. Don't forget wiring must be underground and it must come to the property from the alleyway. If you develop the Cogswell area to be the new historic community, you would add another tourist attraction to the near downtown. In this area it would be close enough for passengers on ships to walk to or take FRED.

Anyway these are my thought of the day. Regards.

I was at the public meeting last night and just wanted to say I support the plan virtually in its entirety.

I was the third resident in Waterfront Place when it opened in 1987 so I have been waiting a long time for a plan like this. I left there for the west end when I got married in 1996.

I have a couple of concerns:

1. "As of right" scares me. Look at the "as of right" stuff out Bedford Highway past Kearney Lake Rd. and along Bicentennial Highway. Short and squat doesn't resonate with me.
2. Faux heritage scares me too. Some of our new buildings, which are supposed to look like old ones, are just plain awful. The Europeans are much better at this than us.
3. New urbanism. I'd like to see more "new urbanism" reflected in the design for areas outside downtown. The Gladstone Ridge development tries to incorporate elements of this but the east facing part of the development walls off the neighbourhood.
4. I've been to Vancouver 6 times in the last two years. Why can't we have just one building like they have in False Creek or Coal Harbour. Tall does not have to be ugly, but in Halifax it seems to be. The design ethic there in Vancouver is very ingrained, right down to the way streets and walkways are built.
5. What's your plan for truck traffic downtown?

Attention: Dale Godsoe et al

I attended the public meeting at the WTCC on November 28 and was most impressed by the plan submitted by the design team to revitalize the downtown core. I support the Preferred Downtown Scenario.

I have a huge concern that the micromanaging of the entire plan, block by block and house by house, that is now in full swing by the Heritage Trust, has the potential to sabotage the intent of the plan to increase population and density in the downtown core.

I worry that the development community may walk away from any involvement in revitalizing the downtown (and thus realizing the goals of the plan) if you tie their hands too tightly in a myriad of unnecessary constrictions.

I urge the committee to strike a fair balance between protecting our built heritage and opening up the possibilities for downtown renewal that have been so well conceived thus far.

As one of the five campaigns for an urban centre by design is listed as: A City of livable and complete neighbourhoods, and as one of the identified and integral parts of this strategy is to make schools part of the neighbourhood plan ensuring they are within walking distance, I am surprised that so little input is coming from HRM regarding the imminent closure of LeMarchant-St Thomas, Inglis Street, and St Mary's schools and the subsequent planned closure of Cornwallis and Sir Charles Tupper Schools. The long-term plan includes the construction of a Big Box school on Inglis Street. I guess we'll all be driving, as putting your 5 year old on a city bus, or making them walk 4 km seems unrealistic. I pay municipal taxes so you can have a study about how to keep my community alive and then I pay provincial taxes so they can trash my neighbourhood. This seems fragmented to me how about you people tell the province to but out, you have it covered?