

Halifax Regional Municipality  
**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE (ad hoc)**  
Terms of Reference  
1 May, 2006

Purpose:

The **Urban Design Task Force** is established to advise Regional Council on the development and implementation of the Regional Centre Urban Design Study.

Background:

In March, 2006, Regional Council awarded the Regional Centre Urban Design Study contract to a consultant team led by the Office for Urbanism. The Study will be conducted by the project team working closely with Capital District staff and the **Urban Design Task Force**.

In keeping with the form-based direction of the draft Regional Plan, the Regional Centre Urban Design Study will articulate a design strategy to foster quality development and vibrant public spaces through the creation of new policies and tools such as design guidelines, revamped review processes, and incentives for good design. The approach will reinforce current community plans and values related to heritage preservation, viewplane protection, open space, and neighbourhood stability.

Focused on the Capital District and its major corridors, the project will be carried out over an eighteen month period, and will deliver the following elements:

- *Urban Design Principles:* The values and aspirations of HRM citizens as they relate to our physical surroundings, as defined through extensive community consultation.
- *Urban Design Analysis:* Identification of significant assets and elements such as public space, movement, significant views, gateways, landmarks, and historic districts and the need to interconnect them, building design and its relationship to open space, identification of a hierarchy of street types in the study area, and what makes them successful or not.
- *Design Tools:* A number of tools will be developed to ensure that the plan is not shelved, but rather is implemented and used mindfully. These will include recommended incentives to encourage good design including: design handbooks, design guidelines, and practical examples of implementation (infill case studies and design of opportunity sites).
- *Implementation Strategy:* An approach to implementation that outlines a phasing-in of the implementation tools that will address prioritization, budget, organizational changes such as planning and design review processes, and a capacity building strategy to build required skills and understanding of urban design. It will also recommend any necessary changes to existing policies and bylaws, and future steps.
- *Public Participation Program:* The Study process is intended to be inclusive and transparent with numerous formal and informal opportunities for public participation.

The approach is to be community-based, working with citizens, interest groups, and the development community to build awareness and understanding of urban design opportunities.

### Committee Role:

The UDTF is a body with a two-part mandate. It reports Study progress to Regional Council at key milestones, and it makes ongoing recommendations to the Project Team regarding areas of strategic importance to the development and implementation of the Regional Centre Urban Design Study. The UDTF will also provide a key communication and working link between Council and the community, and advise on the delivery of a public participation program.

1. *Reporting to Council:*

The Urban Design Task Force will make regular reports to Regional Council on the progress of the Study to ensure that Council remains apprised of the status of the study. This reporting relationship will also encourage Council's ongoing support of the Study. The UDTF will make its reports to Council at the conclusion of major Study milestones.

2. *Advising the Project Team:*

The Urban Design Task Force will advise the project team on:

- a. Public consultation strategies, venues, timing, etc.
- b. Communications strategies, newsletters, website, media.
- c. Articulation of the Urban Design Principles.
- d. Development of an Implementation Strategy.
- e. Other matters as they arise.

### Responsibilities:

1. To provide regular reports to Regional Council on overall progress of the Study, including additional issues (as needed) to effectively keep Council informed.
2. To provide regular feedback and advice to the project team.
3. To meet with Capital District staff and the consultant team at a frequency that is sufficient to achieve project goals and meet the time-line that has been established for completion of the Study. Meetings shall be no less than once monthly except where circumstances warrant a meeting cancellation or rescheduling.
4. Abide by HRM's rules and procedures affecting the business of Boards and Committees.
5. Entertain and encourage participation from stakeholders through the consultation events outlined in the consultant team's work plan, as well as additional events as required.
6. Assist in the planning and implementation of public participation meetings and communication initiatives as required to raise the profile of the Regional Centre Urban Design Study and to effectively represent the views and concerns HRM citizens and stakeholders.
7. Recognize that some information shared in the course of the project may be sensitive, and its dissemination outside the Study team may have the potential to jeopardize the integrity of the Study's ultimate findings.

### Membership:

The Committee will be comprised of:

- Five (5) members that are Regional Centre residents
  - Two (2) members from the design professions (architecture, landscape architecture, and planning)
  - Two (2) members from the Regional Centre business community
  - Two (2) members that residents-at-large from outside the Regional Centre
  - One (1) member from Halifax Regional Council
  - One (1) member from the Heritage Advisory Committee
  - One (1) member from the development community
  - One (1) member from the Cultural Advisory Committee (arts perspective preferred)
- (15 total)

### Selection Criteria:

Applicants will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- individuals will contribute to an Urban Design Task Force that is equitably represented across geographic communities, as well as across communities of interest.
- individuals representing a sector broadly will be encouraged, such as an agency, organization, etc.
- individuals demonstrating a willingness and ability to commit to the two-year term of the project, including some evening meetings.
- individuals bringing specific skills and experience related to the responsibilities outlined in this terms of reference.

*HRM Regional Council reserves the right to make final decisions regarding membership selection in an attempt to seek an appropriate and diverse balance of committee members based on the sound application of the evaluation criteria.*

### Membership:

The term of the membership will be for a period of two (2) years

All membership appointments shall be made by Regional Council.

### Chair and Vice-Chair:

The Urban Design Task Force shall elect from its non-council member(s) a chair and vice-chair position.

The role of the chair, in whole or part, can be shared with or delegated to the vice-chair in order to carry-out the role and responsibilities of the Committee.

The Chair (Vice-Chair) will have the following responsibilities:

1. guide the discussion and facilitate meetings.
2. encourage participation by Committee members.
3. work with staff and the consultant team in preparing meeting agendas and supporting materials.
4. act as spokesperson for the Committee as required.

Decisions:

The quorum for regular meetings shall be eight (8). Decisions will be made by majority vote.

Meetings:

Meetings will be held monthly (or at a frequency that is necessary to conduct the business of the Committee). A regular meeting schedule will be determined at the start-up meeting for the Committee. In addition to regular Committee meetings, additional means of communication will be necessary to conduct the business of the group.

Resources:

The Halifax Regional Municipality shall provide staff resources to the Committee and will provide assistance as follows:

- coordination and arrangement of meeting time, and venue.
- circulation of meeting agendas and minutes.
- preparation & distribution of materials.
- reporting ongoing project information and status updates.
- presentation of planning material as required.
- coordination and communication between the UDTF and other related Staff and Council Committees as required.

*These Terms of Reference for the Urban Design Task Force were approved by the Regional Centre Urban Design Study Steering Committee on: May 9, 2006.*