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Item No. 02
Halifax Regional Council
February 21, 2017

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY:

Bob Bjerke, Director, Planning & Development

Original Signed by Director

Bruce Zvaniga, P.Eng. Director, Transportation & Public Works

DATE: February 3rd, 2017

SUBJECT: Guidelines for Streetscape Elements

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 14, 2014 motion of Regional Council requesting: "...a staff report to establish guidelines and standards for sidewalk construction, lighting and pole, street furniture and finishing in the HRM right-of-way on streets in the Downtown Planning (DH1) zone and the Downtown Dartmouth BID area with the following considerations:

1. To determine where as a matter of policy the Red Book Capital District standard will be applied outside of major streetscape areas;
2. To develop a standard for inclusion in the Red Book for the DH1 Precinct 3 – Spring Garden area that reflects but is less extensive than the elements and colour scheme introduced in the Spring Garden streetscaping;
3. Recommend a mechanism to allow partnership with and investment by private and other stakeholders to implement these standards and to draft an Administrative Order that will outline this procedure.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (“HRM Charter”), Street related powers, subsection 322 (1) “The Council may design, lay out, open, expand, construct, maintain, improve, alter, repair, light, water, clean, and clear streets in the Municipality”.

HRM Charter, Work on a street, subsection 327 (2) “The Council may, by policy, prescribe the terms upon which a permit to break the surface of a street may be granted, including setting a fee for the permit and requiring security to be posted to ensure that the street is restored.”

HRM Charter, subsection, 281 (3) “A subdivision by-law may include.... (f) requirements for the design and construction of streets, private roads, wastewater facilities, stormwater systems, water systems and other services;”

Regional Subdivision By-law, clause 3(la) “In this By-law,... (la) “Engineering Regulations” means the latest edition of the Municipal Design Guidelines as approved by Council and/or the Halifax Regional Water Commission Design and Construction Specifications.”

HRM Charter, 226 (1) “The Council may, by policy, adopt amendments to... (a) the engineering specifications in a subdivision by-law;”

BACKGROUND

On May 25th, 2004 Halifax Regional Council endorsed the Capital District Urban Design Project. This consultant’s report suggested guidelines for the design, selection and placement of sidewalks, trees, decorative lighting, and street furnishings in Downtown Dartmouth, Downtown Halifax, and the Spring Garden, Gottingen Street, and Quinpool Road Areas (Attachment A). The report aimed to create attractive and functional public spaces with a focus on pedestrians on some of the busiest sidewalks in these areas of economic, cultural, and historic importance.

In 2009, a list of items more or less based on these guidelines, was incorporated as Chapter Seven of HRM’s Municipal Design Guidelines (aka “the Red Book”). In 2014, Regional Council repealed and replaced the Regional Subdivision By-law which included adopting the latest Municipal Design Guidelines (2013). The Municipal Design Guidelines (2013) provide guidance in the design and construction of elements in the street right-of-way (ROW).

While there has been some success implementing Chapter Seven, (e.g. work on South Park Street associated with the Trillium development), there have also been some issues, for example:

- Urban tree vaults have had mixed success;
- *Landscape Forms* bicycle racks were considered too costly for the Active Transportation Program; and
- It was not clear where a unit paver edge treatment was required on sidewalks within the large area identified as the Capital District in Figure HRM 128 of Part B of the Municipal Design Guidelines (Attachment A).

For these reasons, it is difficult for the Municipality to follow these Guidelines in its own capital projects.

In addition, staff has had difficulty advising developers what to reinstate when sidewalk, lighting, or trees are damaged during a development project. This is in part because Chapter Seven contains a ‘shopping list’ of products to be used in the Capital District, but there is limited supporting text to describe where and how each element should be applied.

DISCUSSION

HRM Municipal Design Guidelines Capital District Standard

This Council request has provided an opportunity to revisit the Capital District chapter (chapter seven) of the Municipal Design Guidelines, and consider how best to update it with the learnings obtained through its implementation over the years.

While the original Council motion refers specifically to two areas (the DH1 zone and the Downtown Dartmouth BID area), they only represent a portion of the originally designated Capital District. Furthermore, while Chapter Seven only applies to the Capital District, some of the streetscape elements it describes (e.g. bicycle racks, street furniture, decorative streetlighting) are in use beyond those boundaries. Finally, other streetscape elements are used in various parts of the municipality, but they are not included in the Municipal Design Guidelines at all (e.g. bollards, fixed planters, interpretive boards, etc.). As such, there is little clarity about their future desirability and uncertainty when considering any new installations

For these reasons, staff have determined that clarity of guidance would be beneficial for streetscape elements beyond those currently included in Chapter Seven. The best way to do this may be to replace this chapter focused on the Capital District with a section dealing with streetscape elements in general. This work would include descriptions of the elements, as well as guidance and supporting maps identifying where and how they should be used. The items that may be included are:

- Decorative Unit Paver Band (at edge of sidewalk)
- Benches
- Waste Receptacles
- Bicycle Racks
- Bollards
- Fixed Concrete Planters
- Notice Boards and Columns
- Interpretive Panels
- Moveable Planters and Hanging Baskets
- Banners
- Planting Beds
- Cultural District Sign Blades
- Curb Extensions
- Decorative Streetlights and Poles
- Black Traffic Poles
- Street Trees
- Other items as determined through review of Chapter Seven of the Municipal Design Guidelines.

This work would aim to first consolidate the guidance contained in previously approved plans (e.g. Capital District Project and various Regional Streetscape Plans); and secondly, to synthesize this information with current practices by various internal departments and programs (e.g. Street Lighting, Active Transportation, Civic Addressing, Horticulture, etc.).

As such, the work would not constitute a new streetscape plan itself, but would serve as a foundation for future work that is based on past practice. It would clarify what the expectations are for internal capital projects as well as improve HRM's ability to direct developers when re-instatement of municipal infrastructure is required. A solid foundation will also support future streetscaping projects as it would serve as a template that could be amended as new plans and projects are approved by Council.

To carry out this work, an interdepartmental committee has been begun to draft the new guidelines. It is expected that the work will take 6 -12 months to complete, and the following tasks remain:

- Finalization of draft guidelines;
- Preparation of accompanying design details;
- Consultation with the development community;
- Final interdepartmental review/ approval;
- Council approval.

Concurrent Efforts

Urban Trees

Members of staff responsible for implementing the Urban Forest Masterplan, are concurrently undertaking a project to develop standards and guidelines related to urban trees. The new streetscape guidelines proposed above will either embed this work, or make reference to it, with respect to requirements for the establishment of urban street trees.

Comprehensive Municipal Design Guideline Review

Staff is presently scoping the tasks required to undertake a more comprehensive review of other sections of the Municipal Design Guidelines. This work is needed to update the Guidelines with lessons learned since the last revision in 2013, as well as develop new standards to allow the Guidelines to serve as a better guide for retrofitting older urban streets (it has served well as the template for greenfield development, but there are challenges making it apply in older parts of the city). A comprehensive review will also support implementation of the Integrated Mobility Plan as well as the Centre Plan. Through the scoping of this larger project, it has been identified that the streetscape 'chapter' would aim to be an early deliverable, recognizing the outstanding Council request to address deficiencies, and the advanced work done on this section to-date.

Modified Standards for Spring Garden Area

In response to the second part of the Council motion¹, a modified standard for Spring Garden Road is not needed. The new guidelines will apply to all of the Spring Garden Road area (DH 1 Zone, District 3) except Spring Garden Road itself between Queen and South Park Streets. This section is slated for major streetscaping work to a much higher standard. Council approved the business case and reserve funds for this project on April 26, 2016 (<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/160426ca1413.pdf>).

Mechanism to Allow Partnership and Investment by Others

The third part of the Council motion that initiated this report, asked staff to: "recommend a mechanism to allow partnership with and investment by private and other stakeholders to implement these standards, and to draft an Administrative Order that will outline this procedure".

In response to 'investment by others', the mechanism that will allow investment by others will be the Guidelines themselves. The Municipal Design Guidelines govern what standards must be met following construction or re-instatement of municipal infrastructure. The work to clarify the guidelines will facilitate investment by others through reinstatement of municipal infrastructure.

In response to 'partnerships' however, if this means cost-sharing, Council has limited ability to enter into partnerships for streetscaping work due to requirements that HRM procure for good and services. One way this could be done presently under HRM's procurement policies would be for HRM to procure the service itself and with contribution from another source such as the developer. Another approach could be to provide some form of grant or contribution agreement, possibly through a non-profit or charity. A specific, preferred mechanism has not yet been identified.

¹ ...develop a standard for the Red Book for the DH1 Precinct 3 – Spring Garden area that reflects but is less extensive than the elements and colour scheme introduced in the Spring Garden streetscaping;

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of this report. .

With respect to potential future partnerships, specific costs for this have not been identified, so have not been budgeted. However, the intent of any partnership would be to reduce future costs to implement approved standards.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The public was engaged in the past for various streetscape plans, (e.g. Capital District, Regional Streetscapes). Before finalizing any Red Book updates, consultation with the development community is needed due to potential new requirements for re-instatement of the ROW following development.

ATTACHMENTS

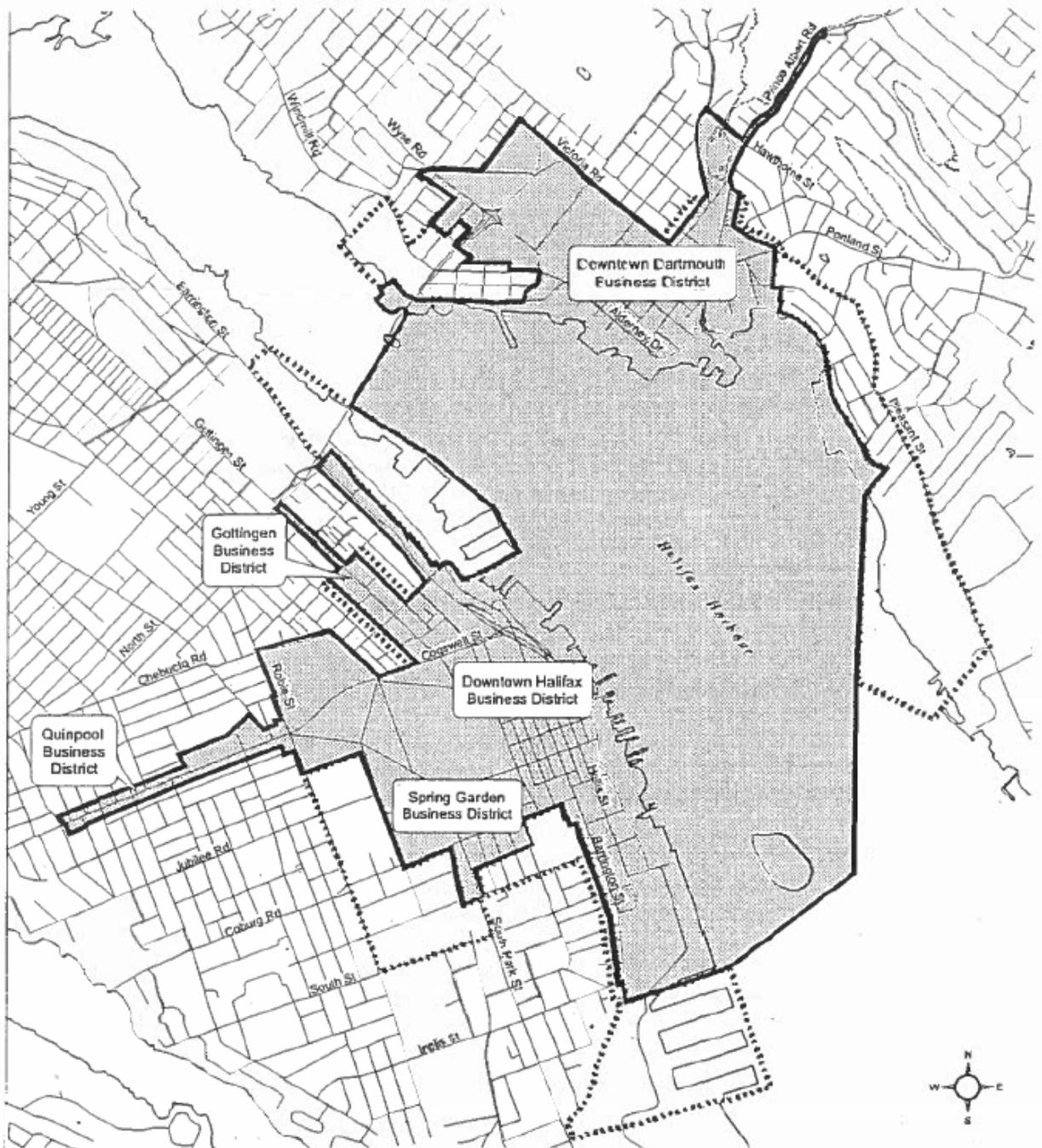
Attachment A – Map of Capital District (2004)

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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Attachment A



Map 1
Attachment A

HRM Capital District

Primary Area
Secondary Area (influence/impact)

HALIFAX
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

500 0 500 m

5 June 2002

file: /data3/work/planning/hlary/capital_distnc/rptbase.mxd (HEC)