

HALIFAX

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Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
May 12, 2020

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Kelly Denty, Director, Planning & Development

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 9, 2020

SUBJECT: Municipal Design Guidelines (Red Book) Update – Progress Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On August 13, 2019 Halifax Regional Council approved the recommendations of the August 6, 2019 report: Municipal Design Guidelines (Red Book) Update – Project Initiation: that Halifax Regional Council:

- Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to initiate a process to consider amendments to the Regional Subdivision By-law, and approve the public participation program provided in Attachment A of the August 6, 2019 report; and,
- Draft amendments to the *Regional Subdivision By-law* to replace the Municipal Design Guidelines as described in the August 6, 2019 report, and to return directly to Regional Council for consideration of the resulting amendments.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, (HRM Charter), Part IX “Subdivision”, clauses 226(1)(a), and 281(3)(f), as follows:

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

BACKGROUND

The Municipal Design Guidelines (Guidelines), commonly referred to as the “Red Book”, were developed to provide a uniform approach for the construction of infrastructure within the Halifax Regional Municipality. After amalgamation in 1996, four sets of municipal standards were combined to produce the first edition of the Guidelines in 2000. The Guidelines are currently referenced in the *Regional Subdivision By-law* (the By-law) and were last updated in 2013. On December 5, 2017, Regional Council unanimously approved The *Integrated Mobility Plan* (IMP), and as part of this, directed staff to update the Guidelines to incorporate best practices for all transportation design elements.

The objective of this update is to create a uniform design approach that can be easily applied to all municipal infrastructure, whether associated with development or capital projects, in greenfield subdivisions, or construction in mature urban areas.

In August 2019, Council approved the recommendations of a project initiation report¹ for updates to the Guidelines.

This report describes the progress to date, and the next steps.

DISCUSSION

There are two objectives to this project:

- Amending the *Regional Subdivision By-law* to adopt new Guidelines that are in line with current best practices; and,
- Establishing a process for regular updates to the Guidelines.

Since the last formal update of the Guidelines in 2013, staff have continued to review and identify sections of the Guidelines that require updates. A project charter has been adopted to oversee changes to the format of the document, and the following sections are nearing completion and ready to be incorporated into the document:

- Complete streets design approach;
- Stormwater management guidelines;
- Tree guidelines;
- Streetscaping guidelines in the Regional Centre; and,
- Details for traffic calming measures, multi-use paths, pedestrian ramps, tactile walking surface indicators, protected bike lanes, and new traffic signal bases.

It is also important to note that guidelines developed pursuant to the *Integrated Mobility Plan* such as the Complete Streets design philosophy, and multi-modal level of service guidelines are actively being applied to municipal projects.

Progress as of February 2020

To date, the following tasks have been completed:

- Jurisdictional review of best practices for Municipal Guidelines documents in North America;
- Reformatting of current Guidelines;
- Staff review of the Regional Subdivision By-law;
- Completion of the “Trees” chapter;
- Completion of the “Streetscaping” chapter;

¹ Report available online at <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/190813rc1513.pdf>

- Completion of a standard protocol for considering design exceptions.

A steering committee has been established, comprised of staff from various business units, to guide the project. It was determined by the Steering Committee that the Complete Streets design philosophy must be incorporated throughout the Guidelines, rather than simply be a stand-alone chapter. This will involve complete updates to the geometric design standards contained in the Guidelines to incorporate Complete Streets elements throughout. At the time of the August 6, 2019 Project Initiation report, it was anticipated that “Complete Streets” would be a quick-hits item, however incorporating this theme throughout the Guidelines has taken more time than expected.

As previously mentioned, the Complete Streets approach is currently being applied ad-hoc to municipal projects, and the delay in developing the formal guidelines will not impact the current application of this approach.

Next Steps for 2020:

- Continue with public consultation in accordance with Regional Council approved Public Participation Program;
- Engage stakeholders such as Halifax Water, Urban Development Institute, NS Homebuilders Association, Consulting Engineers of NS, NS Power, members of the Active Transportation Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, etc.;
- Completion of Stormwater Management Chapter;
- Inclusion of Complete Streets design philosophy throughout; and,
- Continue the formal process to adopt amendments to the Subdivision By-law.

While the provincial state of emergency to help contain the spread of COVID-19 has impacted the Council schedule, work continues on this project, and a further update is planned for fall 2020. Following this, a predictable and collaborative process for an annual review can be developed. The next phase of updates can begin during this process. Through the current review process, staff have been keeping track of items to be revisited during the next phase of updates.

Next Steps following the fall 2020 update:

The following items will be the focus of the next phase of updates:

- Full review of Street Classifications;
- Graphic formatting to match the IMP;
- Traffic Signal guidelines;
- Retaining walls, signs, bridges and bus stops;
- Review of existing standard details (Part B of the Guidelines);
- Streetlighting guidelines; and
- Utilities and trench reinstatement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is continuing as per the public participation program provided in the August 2019 staff report. The result of this consultation process and staff's review will be a staff report and recommendation to Council. If Council wishes to consider adopting amendments to the Regional Subdivision By-law and other documents, it will need to hold a public hearing.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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