

Economic Scorecard 2009: A Sneak Preview

Improving Decision Times for Construction Projects

Given the unpredictable state of the economy, this year's annual **Report on the Economic Strategy Scorecard**, is the most anticipated Scorecard report to date. The Chamber's annual Scorecard measures 28 targets stemming from HRM's Economic Strategy.

This year, one of the most talked about targets has been "**improving decision times for construction projects**". Related to this is HRMbyDesign, the urban design study mandated by Halifax's Regional Plan, which outlines a vision for the downtown for the next 25 years. By passing Bill 181 this fall, the province gave Council the right to implement HRMbyDesign. The Chamber has been a strong and vocal supporter of this vision for downtown and looks forward to Council's vote on the issue in early 2009.

Last year, the Scorecard measure "**decision times for construction projects**" received the lowest possible score – two red lights. This was due to the fact that benchmarks, which allow processing times in HRM to be compared to other cities, were not yet established. This year however, we are pleased to report that clear processing time targets have been determined.

So how does HRM measure up? The good news is that development applications that have been submitted since August 31st, 2007 have been processed within the targeted time frames. However, according to HRM, a backlog of applications still exists in the system, causing this year's targets to be missed.

Despite this, progress is being made. HRM has reported to us that steps have been taken towards meeting their application processing goals, including:

- Hiring five new planners
- Establishing a pre-application process to educate applicants
- Requiring that all new applications be complete prior to submission
- Installation of Case Management Software in 2009
- And finally, the pending and much anticipated Council decision in early 2009 concerning adoption of HRMbyDesign.