

**CAPITAL DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY**  
**HRM BY DESIGN**  
**SUMMER/FALL 2007**



**BACKGROUND**

- The Regional Plan was approved by Council June 26, 2006.
- City staff members are undertaking community visioning – a process that will eventually support the task of aligning the 18 Municipal Planning Strategies and 15 Secondary Plans with the Regional Plan. Three pilot sites have been selected for community visioning – Musquodoboit Harbour, Fall River and Bedford-Mill Cove.
- In addition to the community visioning described above a separate, comprehensive and aggressive community visioning project is being undertaken for the capital district.<sup>1</sup> This project is called HRM by Design.
- The objective of HRM by Design is “ ...to articulate an urban design strategy that:
  - Establishes a clear and compelling vision for our city’s future.
  - Fosters high quality, sustainable development and vibrant public spaces.
  - Brings clarity and predictability to development review processes.
  - Introduces new design guidelines.
  - Establishes incentives for good design and development.”
- The HRM by Design project is being led on the volunteer side by Dale Godsoe and Paul MacKinnon of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, and on the staff side by project manager, Andy Fillmore.

The Chamber has been involved in development issues through its advocacy on the regional plan, participation in the HRM by Design project and some recent work on the development appeals process. The work we have done is supported by our city’s economic strategy that calls for us to ensure a vibrant, healthy and attractive downtown to make HRM a world-class urban centre.

The September HRM by Design session is specifically about Halifax’s downtown core and will be pivotal to the direction of future policies and development rules in the downtown. The expected outcome of this project is a much clearer and unambiguous set of guidelines for development for the capital district.

**CONSULTATION**

The HRM by Design sessions will take place September 10-12th. The full schedule & related information is posted at <http://www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict/RegionalCentreUrbanDesignStudy.html>

The schedule is as follows:

HRM by Design 101:

Monday, September 10 – 6pm -- for those who are not familiar with the process or who would like a refresher on work done to date.

Urban design symposium:

Monday, September 10 – 7-9pm -- interactive session and discussion – participation in this session is required to participate in a workshop

Workshops:

Workshops are identical, participants are asked to choose one and RSVP

Tuesday, September 11 - 1-4 pm

Tuesday, September 11 - 6-9 pm

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<sup>1</sup> The Capital District comprises downtown Halifax including the Gottingen street area, Quinpool Road, Spring Garden Road and Dartmouth inside the circumferential highway.

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Wednesday, September 12 - 9 am -12 pm

Closing Presentations:

Wednesday, September 12 - 6-9 pm

All events are being held at Pier 21 – Heritage Hall, 1055 Marginal Road, Halifax. Please RSVP directly to leed@halifax.ca or 490-1679 if you are interested in attending.

The Chamber – through staff and the municipal affairs committee - is committed to advocate on your behalf but we will also need to get as many members and volunteers as possible to participate in the September consultation. In addition to the consultations we encourage volunteers and members to call their local Councillors to communicate their views on Halifax's future development – it is only by hearing from the public, especially constituents, that Councillors will be aware of differing views on development in Halifax.

**DEVELOPMENT DOWNTOWN - KEY CHALLENGES AND KEY POINTS**

- Costs, risk & uncertainty for developers due to:
  - Timeliness of development approvals
  - Ambiguity of Regional Plan and Municipal Planning Strategy
- Economic & financial impacts of specific policies:
  - E.g. Density, height, heritage protection
- Other urban design issues:
  - Complementarity, health, active transportation, public access, industrial protection, etc.
  - E.g. Does the principle of complementarity (i.e. that new development must complement existing neighbourhood character) mean that it must mimic it?
  - Is there a place for modern buildings, new architecture in Halifax?
- **Importance of streamlined development approval processes:**
  - Competitiveness – we need to keep capital here, attract development \$
  - Costs to developers are passed on to consumer
  - High costs exclude all but largest developers from market
  - Challenges in downtown in particular pushes development to outer areas, discourages density
- **Importance of striking the right balance between policies that promote growth and new development and those that protect heritage, the environment, etc.:**
  - Recognize that there is an economic and financial cost to restrictive policies,
  - Recognize that many interests can and should be served

**LINKS**

HRM by Design:

<http://www.halifax.ca/capitaldistrict/RegionalCentreUrbanDesignStudy.html>

Regional Plan:

<http://www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning/Index.html>

Chamber municipal affairs committee policy work:

<http://www.halifaxchamber.com/businessissues.asp?cmPageID=242&action=list&sdv=0&c=Municipal%20Affairs>