

Hi r/Halifax! HRM Planners here. AMA about the Regional Plan and Upcoming Suburban Plan!

Hello [r/Halifax](#)! We are municipal planners from the Planning & Development Department here to answer your questions about the Regional Plan and upcoming Suburban Plan. The Regional Plan sets out a common vision and long-range, region-wide planning policies outlining where, when, and how future growth and development should take place across the entire municipality. The upcoming Suburban Plan will guide change and development in suburban communities (areas with piped water and sewer outside the Regional Centre). You can watch [this video](#) for a quick overview. If you want to take a deeper dive, check out our fact sheets, presentations, draft policies and regulations at <https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/regional-plan>.

We will be answering as many questions as we can, so please be patient as we try to keep up. For any questions that are beyond our work, we will do our best to reach out to other staff and do a bit of research so those answers may take more time. We will be here until about 8pm and will also check up on your questions tomorrow. Make sure to respect the [r/halifax](#) rules in the sidebar.

Proof: <https://imgur.com/a/Q9MwDIT>

As a reminder, Hurricane Lee is headed our way. If you haven't done so already, please [prepare for the storm](#) and monitor [official weather sources](#) for information.

Edit: Thanks everyone for the great questions - we're off for the night. We enjoyed spending the afternoon and evening with you. We will check in tomorrow and next week to follow up on some of the questions. Please stay safe this weekend! Stay tuned to the Regional Plan Review and Suburban Plan process, your feedback here today and in our other upcoming events will help shape the future of our region.

Edit2: We have followed up with a few questions today and think we've gotten to most of them. If you still have questions please attend one of our open houses which start in Sackville next week or send us an email to regionalplan@halifax.ca or suburbanplan@halifax.ca.

For the latest municipal information on this weekend's storm please go to our [severe weather events page](#).

123 Comments Share ...



About Community



r/halifax

A subreddit for the Halifax Regional Municipality and anything related to Halifax and HRM in Nova Scotia, Canada.

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HFX_Planning
Verified

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tyuran · 1 mo. ago

I prepped a lot of questions (you can pick your poison):

Public engagement has obvious value, but it's also very clear that a lot of feedback comes out directly against the public good, as in the case of the planned development at the Mumford Mall. **How do you balance the desires of the public with the needs of the city in the planning process? Is there anything we as participants can do to try and pull against the more regressive elements in these forums besides just speaking up?**

• With vacancy rates so persistently low, it would seem we have a massive supply deficit in housing. **What adjustments could be made to the Regional Plan to help accelerate the addition of new housing?**

• **Is there anything that could be done at the planning level to make our market or regulatory and development environment more resilient and/or flexible in the event of unexpected surges in population growth?**

• **What factors influence the "depth" of a walkshed for zoning purposes?** I noticed in the Centre Plan that some transit corridor walksheds are extremely shallow, only a single block deep in some cases.

• You can probably tell from the slant of my questions that I'm not very fond of the ER zone designation as it manifests in the Centre and Regional Plans. **Can you speak to the reasoning behind restrictive zoning for Established Residential areas?**

32

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HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thanks, these are great questions. We've tried to hit some of the major points below:

1. An important part of the planning profession is considering many factors when determining the public interest. This includes feedback from residents, but it's not just based on the quantity of comments we receive. We need to consider the interests of people not yet at the table, like future generations, especially when it comes to topics with big timelines like growth, transportation, and climate. Studies and assessments, research on best practices, and public feedback all play a part in staff recommendations. The best way to make sure your voice is heard is exactly what you've said - speak up, and show up. Participate in engagement activities (like this AMA!) and write in or speak at Council hearings on topics you're interested in.
2. As part of this review of the Regional Plan we've completely re-written the Plan. There's a new chapter focused on housing, and we've included several policies aimed at removing barriers to housing. For example, we're proposing to allow a minimum of 3 units on every residential lot - enabling more townhouses in residential areas. There are also policies on adaptive reuse (allowing buildings like offices to change and have residential uses), and allowing cluster housing in serviced areas. You can read more about the housing policies here: https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/regional-plan/news_feed/the-draft-plan. There are also policies to set up the Suburban Plan, which will see higher density residential developments in the areas serviced by bus rapid transit (BRT).
3. We have been working to move to an as-of-right system that allows projects to meet a land use by-law and proceed, instead of discretionary planning approvals where projects need to go before Council in order to build. As-of-right zoning allows projects to move faster so development can better respond to real-world conditions.
4. The Centre Plan Corridor Zones, and the proposed suburban Rapid Transit Walksheds are different things. The Corridor Zones as well as the ER-3 Zones are the result of previous "walkshed" analysis for the Regional Centre, while the walksheds in the Suburban Areas are our initial areas of analysis (areas within a walking distance from proposed rapid transit lines). The idea will still be to support most housing as close to transit as possible, but to also look at more options for housing within the walkshed, including lower density areas.
5. One of the guiding principles of the Centre Plan is to support additional density and infill close to transit, while balancing the needs of established residential areas, including historic areas. Centre Plan provides additional options for housing in established residential areas by being the first community plan to broadly allow for...:
 - a. Secondary suites and backyard suites in all ER zones, including converting existing accessory structures such as garages; ;
 - b. Shared housing;
 - c. Internal conversions up to 6 units in ER-3 zones;
 - d. Allowing for greater lot coverage which can support small additions;
 - e. Eliminating parking requirements and restrictive gross floor area (GFAR) requirements; and

- f. Including ER properties in the heritage development agreement policy which can provide additional flexibility.

What barriers do you see in the established residential areas?

18 Reply Share



tyuran · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

My main beef with the ER areas is that... well... many of them are some of the most walkable and transit-accessible parts of the city (especially Dartmouth but on much of the peninsula as well), and could sustain much higher densities.

I'm very much in favour of removing parking minimums and lot-coverage restrictions, but when it comes to zoning, even ER-3 isn't nearly enough. We are just so desperate for housing supply and so limited in financial capacity for infrastructure development.

To touch on your point about historic areas... there is already a very effective means to protect specific historic buildings, outside the framework of zoning. My stance is that *if* zoning has a place in the preservation of a neighbourhood's aesthetic character, it should do so via aesthetic/material considerations applied to the streetscape level only, not blanket restrictions on density.

edit because actually I'm not done

If I can get controversial for a second, the way we discuss "neighbourhood character" really bothers me. There's a lot of talk of wanting to preserve it, but it *always* means aesthetic character in this context and ignores the other factors that define a neighbourhood, i.e. who lives there.

I've been in the south end since I was a student 10+ years ago, and I've watched it go from a place that students, recent immigrants and single-income healthcare workers could afford to live and stay to well... a place where all those people are just scraping by at best. Why aren't demographics and affordability a part of neighbourhood character worth preserving? That's my REAL beef with ER areas.

26 Reply Share



HarbingerDe · 1 mo. ago

Amen to your rebuke of all this talk about "*Neighborhood character*." Has anyone who isn't a middle to upper-middle class white land-owning boomer ever once complained that multi-unit residences and tall*(ish)* buildings were harming their "neighborhood character"?

I like the neighborhood character where vulnerable people aren't going homeless, and hard-working individuals aren't spending 80% of their take-home income on rent, sacrificing any chance of future financial stability.

5 Reply Share



TealSwinglineStapler · 1 mo. ago

Yeah the limited to 3 stories thing is weird

10 Reply Share



LKX19 · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

I'm going to second your beef with ER zoning. There are vast swaths of the peninsula covered by ER zoning that are some of the most walkable and most well-served-by-transit neighbourhoods in the entire city. They are areas where people can get by with minimal reliance on cars, because they are close to a variety of workplaces, amenities, and entertainment. These should be some of the main areas of population growth for the city, but they are also increasingly unaffordable to the vast majority of Halifaxians because of low density and a lack of variety in housing options.

I don't think an increase to 3 units per lot will fix this. Better might be to allow low-rise apartments up to 4 stories / 12 units throughout ER zoning. Some of these already exist (example: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/6191+Allan+St,+Halifax,+NS+B3L+1G7/>) that as far as I can tell would not be permitted by the new regional plan. I'm also confused as to why the ER1 and 2 zones disallow townhouses. These seem like an ideal form of slightly higher-density housing for urban areas for larger families.

If preserving the existing character of the neighbourhood is a concern, perhaps you could limit low-rise apartment buildings to no more than 2 for every 10 lots or something like that. But along main streets like Novalea/Gottingen, Agricola, Almon, Oxford, etc. I don't think there should be any limit.

This might seem drastic to some people, but without drastic action the core of our city is going to turn into nothing but a reserve for the rich, with anyone who doesn't make \$300k or more finding it impossible to afford.

*Quick edit with some math: if we assume 2/10 lots in a given neighbourhood is a 12-unit building on a double lot (like the example building I shared above, which is 8 units on a 5400sqft double lot, but could be built as 12 with an extra storey) and everything else is single-detached, you get 20 units on 10 lots. This would be the same density as half the lots being rebuilt as triplexes, but only requires a builder to purchase and rebuild two lots rather than 5.

In neighbourhoods with larger lots you might be able to fit a 12-unit building on a single lot. With the 2/10 rule this gets you 32 units on 10 lots, two more than demolishing all 10 detached houses and replacing them with triplexes.

On a main street, if we assume we can replace every two single-detached lots with one 12-unit building, we get 60 units over 10 lots, compared to 30 if all were built as triplexes.

10 Reply Share



casual_jwalker · 1 mo. ago

There is one simple answer to why the ER zones exist, NIMBY. Groups like the "Friends" of the Commons are very good at flooding municipalities with emails, phone calls, survey response, and most importantly showing up to meetings (not saying it's because most of them have retired and are now living off our taxes and eating up the entire Canadian pension fund but...). Therefore when staff puts together the feedback it looks like no one wants density and more importantly it makes it any for Councilors to ignore the push from staff to increase density by putting to all the negative feedback. Until people get better at actually showing up to meetings and screaming at Councilors as much as the NIMBYs do nothing is going to get better 🙄

8 Reply Share



tyuran · 1 mo. ago

I'm sure you are familiar with the phenomenon of suburban areas struggling to generate enough municipal income to pay for their own service and infrastructure costs in the long term. **Is this issue a factor impacting the planning landscape in Halifax/the Suburban Development plan in particular? If so, what impacts does it have?**

27 Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Absolutely! This is part of the rationale for directing more density to our suburban communities. Service upgrades will be required throughout our municipality to support our growing population. The cost of these upgrades make more sense when they impact more people.

As part of this, the Regional Plan is also proposing a Regional Infrastructure Strategy that will help us plan for how we upgrade infrastructure in an equitable way across the municipality as our population grows. We're hoping to kick this study off as soon as the new Regional Plan is adopted.

12 Reply Share



alumpybiscuit · 1 mo. ago

Fairview

Thanks for doing this. You have hard jobs and I imagine the whole 15 minute cities conspiracy thing has made that even harder.

First question: Can we expect to see some upzoning in the "established residential" areas? 1-3 units and a secondary suite just isn't going to cut it anymore. The rooming houses changes are good, but I think we need 3-4 storey apartments or something allowed across all areas.

Second question: is Cogswell going to be used for affordable housing? It seems like if the city owns the land, they should use it to help out with the housing crisis.

thank you

17 Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thank you for commenting alumpybiscuit! What's this "15 minute city" thing you speak of? /s

1. The proposed Regional Plan has housing policies that encourage upzoning low-density residential zones. Now, the current proposal says a minimum of three units permitted in all residential zones because the policy applies to all across the municipality. The policies also provide broad direction to support consideration of small multi-unit buildings in our residential areas.
2. Since the municipality owns the land, it's a little easier to plan! No final decisions have been made yet but we do have tools that will allow us to require affordable housing in this area. We will be engaging with the public and making our recommendations to Council to help determine the final plan and zoning for the development sites as the project continues to move forward!

13

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Milican · 1 mo. ago
Halifax

We need more housing, just so much more housing than is currently being built.

We all know that one single government department is not going to be the full solution to this problem. But what elements of the housing problem do you believe that you can impact and what are you going to do to effect change to those parts?

15

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HFX_Planning [OP](#) · 1 mo. ago
Verified

As the municipality, one of our most important powers is to guide development through zoning regulations. We may not have the explicit power to build public housing ourselves, but we have equal responsibility in working towards solutions to the housing crisis.

Our current efforts include streamlining the permit process, removing land use barriers to housing (e.g. density limits vs. built form), supporting the everyday needs of unhoused residents.

One of the biggest improvements we made in the past few years through the Centre Plan has been to move to an as-of-right zoning system where places identified for growth have clear regulations to go to a permit process. This provides certainty and shorter approval timelines, and frees up Council to focus on strategic decisions.

By doing comprehensive planning and community consultations at the front end for a larger geographic area vs for each specific site, permits can be turned around in much less time.

Our data indicates that permits have ramped up considerably since the approval of Centre Plan and we plan to continue that uptick with the Regional Plan Review, Suburban Plan and Rural Plan processes.

10

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Quizzington · 1 mo. ago

If you could blow up Halifax and start over from scratch, what Top 5 things would you prioritize when re-building the city?

12

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TheWarturtleOnDrugs · 1 mo. ago

Too soon

32

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HFX_Planning [OP](#) · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Well we wouldn't blow it up, but some of the biggest challenges we're facing are:

- Having an integrated approach to transportation and land use
- Protecting integrity and connection of wilderness areas
- Adapting to climate change
- Ensuring a variety of housing options in all communities, along with amenities, jobs, retail, food and services nearby
- Thinking about Halifax as a regional municipality, how to support, connect and allow for unique visions for historical communities or villages throughout the municipality

What would your top 5 be?

20

Reply Share



Schmidtvegas · 1 mo. ago
Historic Schmidville

1. More ferry, water taxi, aquatic transportation. Work with our geography.
2. Density, density, density. (And affordability.)
3. Contiguous, protected bike lanes. Integrated with a robust well-planned transit network.
4. Green spaces, green belts, urban wildlife corridors.
5. Daylighted rivers, and attention to watershed protection and management.

11

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Comment deleted by user · 1 mo. ago



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Aye Matey!

1. Our land use by-laws can provide policy for the minimum or maximum number of parking spots required, where they are located and how they are designed/buffered.

In the Centre Plan we moved away from parking minimums (we even included parking maximums for low density residential areas), and focused on making sure that parking, where it exists, is still designed to be attractive and safe. In the suburban area this is still something to analyze and engage communities on.

You can check out policies H-1 and H-12. H-12 in the draft Regional Plan which direct us to give consideration of availability of transit when looking at adjusting parking minimums.

2. This question goes a little beyond the Regional Plan into Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (<https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/hrva>)

as well as HalifACT (https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/about-the-city/energy-environment/HRM_HalifACT_vNew%20Logo_.pdf)

HalifACT is one of the most ambitious climate action movements in Canada; it's the municipality's community response to the climate crisis that will build a more resilient and healthy future in Atlantic Canada while preparing for current and future climate impacts. It takes a lens of a changing climate and how we can be more adaptable to that. The Regional Plan points to the Priority Plans (including HalifACT) when updating community plans.

The Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan would look to minimize reliance on carbon-based energy and transportation and assess resilience in light of potential future changes in climate (RP-20). Studies for Future Serviced Communities include watershed analysis land suitability analysis.

3. One of the main goals of the draft Regional Plan is to encourage the development of complete communities that provide a range of housing options, services and amenities to meet residents' needs..

Our approach to complete communities is definitely taking into account open space and recreation - CI-7 in the draft Regional Plan sets up the development of Level of Service standards for parklands and outdoor assets.

One consideration for affordable lifestyles is to think about costs of transportation alongside housing - if land use patterns and transit/active transportation lessen the need for auto dependency, this can contribute to affordability.

11

Reply Share



wtfobl · 1 mo. ago

No question, just wanted to say thanks for doing this. :)

16

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago
Verified



12

Reply Share



Atlantifa · 1 mo. ago

Why is it still practically impossible to access Dartmouth via public transit after 10 pm? To expand on this, what are we doing to improve the dependability and reliability of public transit across the city; specifically out in Bayers Lake.

6

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

The Rapid Transit Strategy is proposing a number of new frequent transit lines in Dartmouth and Halifax, and work is continuing to implement the Moving Forward Together Plan. The draft Regional Plan identifies that we will need to continue to work closely with Halifax Transit to ensure that we are creating communities that do not rely on access to a car to get around! The Regional Plan is also focused on encouraging most of our new development where transit already exists or is planned, so that we can provide the efficient transit service where most people live and work.

As the city continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, we will need unprecedented investment in transit and we hope that other levels of government will pitch-in!

8

Reply Share



Competitive-Wave-558 · 1 mo. ago

Thanks for doing this! I have a few questions, feel free to take your pick (great answers so far by the way). 😊

1. Given the high cost of housing do you think it is a good time to increase taxes on new housing as suggested in RP 15 and 16 and H 18-23?
2. Do you think it is realistic to expect that 90% of growth will take place in the Urban Area given that the Regional Plan is planning for a population of \$1M people (RP 13)? Consider that since mid-2020 building investment has increased over 100% outside of Halifax while only increasing about 30% in Halifax. The vast majority of this investment is in single dwellings, which suggests that the city is potentially miscalculating people's housing preferences.
3. The Mode Share Target is for 65% of commuting trips to be by car for 2031. Considering we are currently at 82% and Toronto pre-pandemic had not even achieved 65%, its safe to say this goal is ambitious to the point of being impossible. Should we set a more realistic target (M-3)?

To be clear I love density and buses/biking but this plan is pretty important and I think we should be clearheaded about the situation we're facing.

7

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thanks, happy to hear you are enjoying it!

1. RP-15 and 16 would allow us to apply charges to pay for new development, but we have not yet determined if these will be applied. Having this policy will allow us to keep our options open, based on the findings of future studies. Impacts on affordability will be one of our big considerations when we evaluate the impact of any of these changes.

H-18 is on incentive or bonus zoning, which has been used in Centre Plan and recently expanded outside the Regional Centre. In the Regional Centre it applies to development over 2000 sq m in floor area, so smaller developments do not get charged.

The goal of this work is to try to determine how new development will contribute to the cost of new infrastructure.

2. By Urban Area, the Regional Plan is referring to both the Regional Centre and the suburban communities. Essentially, directing growth to the places where services already exist to support it. By having more residents living in this "urban area" we can also support higher levels of transit and other amenities. Right now, we are only seeing about 16% of our growth happening in the rural area so we think it is an ambitious but fair goal!

Understanding housing preferences has been an important part of our work to estimate our population growth and associated housing needs. We know that historically there is high demand for "ground oriented" housing types (like single unit dwellings) but these housing types require much more land. With affordability concerns and changing family types, housing preferences may change over time.

3. We will be working with our Transportation Planning team over the coming months to model our settlement and transportation pattern and further understand our current and projected mode share, so these numbers might change as a result of that work. As we prioritize transit and AT

infrastructure, and focus more development in urban area close to transit, people's travel options and choices will change over time.

7 **Reply** **Share**



Competitive-Wave-558 · 1 mo. ago

Thanks for the response! I know I'm asking things you can't acknowledge but I think it's worth being really clear about a couple of things:

1. What you are describing are taxes on new developments (charges) and density (density bonusing). This will at the margin cause a. less development and less density and b. increase housing prices and rents. Maybe the benefits (more affordable housing and lower property taxes for existing residents) outweighs the costs but you have to be clear on both.
2. Touche one the growth split! I still think the point stands in regards to an additional 500K people. There is a real risk that people who want to live in a 'ground based unit' (incredible euphemism) will just move to Truro/the Valley/Bridgewater if the city doesn't permit the types of housing people are demanding (indeed this is already happening). There is a whole town being built in Enfield and it would have been much better from a climate and environmental perspective if those houses were being built closer to the city. The RP would be a much better document if it acknowledged and dealt with policy trade offs instead of mostly pretending they don't exist.
3. When you meet with them you should encourage them to be a bit more realistic! Plans are great but delivery is what matters. Right now we can't get fare management done, a single ferry line will take at least four years and the AAA bike network is still only part done despite lots of federal funding and years of work. None of this confidence that the city can transform commuting patterns in only 8 years.

Thanks again for all your work! Keep on pushing for more housing!

2 **Reply** **Share**

Brendo94 · 1 mo. ago

Halifax

Has there been any thought of or plan on taxing or penalizing demolished lots that have stayed so over a specific timeframe?

5 **Reply** **Share**



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi Brendo94! At Regional Council on August 22, 2023, Council passed a motion requesting a staff report on not allowing demolition under normal circumstances until a building permit has been issued, and the establishment of an empty lot tax. You can read that motion on the council agenda [here](#). We also included proposed policy in the Housing Chapter of draft Regional Plan to incentivize development on vacant property to help tackle this issue going forward.

10 **Reply** **Share**



nieuwenudh · 1 mo. ago

Will this take into account empty lots that are unable to be built on due to (for example) minimum road frontage requirements?

4 **Reply** **Share**



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

The Suburban Plan will continue the process of updating planning regulations, including reducing frontage and parking requirements where density is encouraged. The Centre Plan introduced a cluster housing policy and zone which provides an opportunity for unique lots, sometimes with limited frontage, to develop where they couldn't in the past.

The draft Regional Plan includes proposed policies to allow opportunities to cluster several residential buildings on a single property - see [Chapter 5](#) for more info on this and feel free to provide your feedback to us!

6 **Reply** **Share**



tyuran · 1 mo. ago

Last question from me: Do you guys spend as much time fantasizing about light and regional rail as the rest of us?

19

Reply **Share**HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Let's just say...we like trains 🚆🚆🚆 (ferries too!)

24

Reply **Share**OogalaBoogala · 1 mo. ago
Halifax

Hi planners! Hope your day is going well!

With recent staffing issues with Halifax Transit, it's gotten harder for those who rely on it to get around. Does the new plan have policies to increase the number of transit drivers, or have any contingencies if the required staffing levels can't be met?

Signed, someone who is still waiting for BRT!

Ps: the wyse road bike lanes have been great! thanks for your work 😊

11

Reply **Share**HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi OogalaBoogala! Hope yours is as well - just trying to keep up with the great questions!

Our transit team has policies in place and are working hard to retain the drivers they have now and attract new operators. As well, we are working closely with that department to ensure adequate resources will be in place as the BRT network is built. Scoping out the number of drivers we will need for the system to be reliable will be part of setting up our BRT Network!

Glad to hear you're enjoying the bike lanes! We are too.

8

Reply **Share**

Analyzed_Intel_ · 1 mo. ago



oreo3387 · 1 mo. ago

Does this plan only consider future growth? I don't see it really addressing the reality of the current crisis, where Halifax has the lowest or second lowest vacancy rate in the country. It's like the ship has already sailed on managing growth, we're in a disaster recovery scenario now.

5

Reply **Share**HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Thanks for the question oreo3387!

We think of our future growth in terms of both the current housing crisis and future need. This is why we have been continually amending our plans and by-laws over the last few years to eliminate barriers to housing development: this includes allowing secondary and backyard suites, as well as shared housing, tiny homes, mobile homes and shipping containers as dwellings more broadly.

In our federal Housing Accelerator Fund we are proposing pre-approved building plans, permit fee reductions for secondary suites and backyard suites. The Regional Plan also has policy to explore the adaptive reuse of non-residential buildings.

7

Reply **Share**

Comment deleted by user · 1 mo. ago

HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

The municipality is currently undertaking a transportation study to prepare for the proposed development around Bedford West and Sandy Lake. That study will help us understand the options and potential solutions for transportation in the Hammonds Plains Rd corridor and connections to surrounding areas.

Highway 113 is a Provincial project. The Joint Regional Transportation Agency is leading the development of a Regional Transportation Plan that could influence the Province's decision-making around the Highway 113 project.

6

Reply Share



casual_jwalker · 1 mo. ago

I think that's a provincial question since it's a 100 series highway. Since we know the province doesn't actually like or bother to talk with the city I suspect they can't answer this.

5

Reply Share



turkey45 · 1 mo. ago

Dartmouth

Halifax's overall office vacancy saw a slight increase in Q1 2023, which is now at 14.1%

Given the high vacancy rate in office space what is the city doing to encourage office-to-housing conversions?

I know there are challenges with office-to-housing conversion but has something been considered for using some of this vacant space for sheltering the homeless population? I'm sure cubical sleeping situations with limited privacy is not great but better than a tent in a park.

5

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Hey turkey45!

This is a very good question. Centre Plan actually has some of the most permissive regulations in the country (see [The Case For Conversions by the Canadian Urban Institute](#)) because of our mixed-use zoning and we do see some projects converting office or hotel spaces into housing. The Regional Plan has draft policy directing us to look at the viability of office-to-residential conversions (Policy EP-8). Institutional buildings such as churches designated as "landmark buildings" can also be converted to housing.

This July, Council supported a motion at the Regional Centre Community Council to make office conversions in the Centre Plan area even easier by relaxing some regulations. Staff are also working on implementing the recommendations of the CUI report, and are working on more detailed analysis.

Converting offices into places that are suitable for people to live can be very complicated and we can't force private offices to shelter people, but there is certainly potential here with the right kinds of partnerships and supports.

5

Reply Share



-prism · 1 mo. ago

Hey! Awesome to see Halifax planning reaching out.

Given the current housing crunch will there be any moves to change residential zones that are current single family housing only to townhouses?

What is the purpose of height limits on major corridors that don't fall within the sightline restrictions? Could someone build a 50 story building on Robie in the north end for instance?

Finally, is there a plan for the bloomfield and Alexandra schools?

Thanks!

5

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Hi prism! Awesome to see you here!

1. The draft Regional Plan includes a policy to permit at least three units on all residential lots. This would apply to all lots across the municipality. Secondary and backyard suites are also already permitted on all properties.
2. The current Centre Plan distributes growth in strategic locations and across the Regional Centre to provide more housing options and development opportunities to both large and smaller developers. The height and density provisions also considered the local context and the Robie Street Centre is one of the most dense designated areas. While the current maximum height is 90 metres, future Centre Plan reviews could revisit these limits.
3. Both Bloomfield and St. Pat's A sites have been sold to private developers and both have as-of-right zoning provisions that could allow for as-of-right developments. Both properties are

also under purchase and sale agreements with the municipality that set out some development requirements, but no proposals have been received to date.

4 **Reply** **Share**



cptstabling16 · 1 mo. ago
Halifax

If no proposals have been received to date, will the city amend the development requirements to incentivize the developer to just get something built?

1 **Reply** **Share**



Legitimate_Piper88 · 1 mo. ago · *edited 1 mo. ago*

Hey, thanks for doing this. I know in the past the Regional Plan document is kind of a set-it-and-forget-it document.

With the way things move now, and given the dramatic changes the city is going through, how will this one be received?

Will it be responsive to the changes happening or will it just be reviewed again in 5+ years and not really acknowledged until then?

How is it going to address the current housing issue or accelerate the housing?

What can be done today to actually get more affordable housing or development built?

It's clear that the previous Regional Plan was not responsive and not really seen as a usable document, how are you going to fix that now?

edited for clarity and spacing

6 **Reply** **Share**



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

The first Regional Plan came out in 2006 and was looking forward to 2031 and it was to be reviewed every 5 years - that first review was completed and approved in 2014. We are currently in our second review. In response to how much change we have been experiencing, rather than being a refinement, this review is a rewrite because we have already hit our previous 2031 population projection.

The role of the Regional Plan is to set up future and more detailed work, and it has done that! For example, the Integrated Mobility Plan, the Green Network Plan, the Centre Plan (and more!) all came out of the last Regional Plan. We wouldn't necessarily think of it as set-and-forget, but rather set-and-implement.

To answer your questions...

1 . Our new planning documents such as Centre Plan and the draft Regional Plan are intended to be living documents. For example, we have come back to adjust Centre Plan each year since it was adopted and will continue to as we find barriers and further adjustments to make. We have already completed work on some of the Future Growth Nodes and Future Serviced Communities which will provide thousands of new units. Our region is growing quickly and we believe that our planning framework is more nimble now than it was in the past and we are continually updating to accommodate growth and change.

2 . The Regional Plan as the overarching document definitely changes less often but it does get updated in the interim - for example we recently amended it to expand shared housing and allow secondary and backyard suites. The local plans and land use by-laws are updated more regularly. The key question for the current update is what needs to change to become a region of a million people? One big piece of the draft Regional Plan is setting up a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan to guide planning and investment by identifying potential locations for long term growth, so as to ensure the efficient delivery of services and use of existing infrastructure assets (see Policy RP-19). This will likely result in changes to the Regional Plan, and may identify new areas for growth.

3 . Our Chapter on Housing has some new policy ideas such as moving to three units on all residential lots, densifying along transit corridors, and providing direction for the Suburban Plan. In phase 4, policies were approved to enable a development agreement on a number of opportunity sites.

4 . Here are some of our current projects that aim to increase affordable housing: In the fall the Regional Plan was amended to introduce interim bonus zoning in the Suburban areas which requires plan amendment applications to contribute to the bonus zoning reserve, which in turn funds non-profit affordable housing. The draft Regional Plan includes policies on inclusionary

zoning, and this fall we will be doing additional work on how this can work. The municipality has also participated in three rounds of the [Rapid Housing Initiative](#) which has built over 100 units of deeply affordable housing. We have also submitted an application as part of the [Housing Accelerator Fund](#) and are hoping those funds are approved soon, which will accelerate the supply of housing approvals and construction in all levels of affordability.

The draft Regional Plan has policies to explore additional units in our low-density residential zones, a vacant property program, and a no-net-loss or rental replacement program which can ensure displaced units and tenants are considered in new development. Please read more on this chapter [here](#).

5. We can agree to disagree...we think it's a hard working document and will only increase in importance as our growth rates have recently quadrupled.

6 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



Competitive-Wave-558 · 1 mo. ago

This sounds glib but it's a serious question. Does it ever feel like too many plans (yes, I know about the bylaw simplification project)? From the outside it just seems like plans all the way down.

Given all the work that's gone into this plan and given the ongoing housing crisis, it's just seen a bit much that we need to do another planning process to identify areas for long term growth.

1 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



Longjumping_Waltz378 · 1 mo. ago

Increase height restrictions in downtown core. The table top theme has got to go. We need 40+ floors

6 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



HFX_Planning [OP](#) · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Planning documents are living documents, but planning is also about balancing growth with valuing our historic character, maintaining existing housing, and considering the impact of buildings on the quality of our pedestrian realm (such as increased wind and shadows). Increased height alone will not solve all of our housing issues (see Toronto, Vancouver), but when the Centre Plan is reviewed, we can consider if higher heights should be permitted.

8 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



WindowlessBasement · 1 mo. ago

In your summary video, it starts off about building well connected communities with existing services.

If well connected is a goal, why are so many of the new developments largely disconnected or in communities without ability to service the larger population?

5 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



HFX_Planning [OP](#) · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thanks for the question! Our draft Regional Plan and the upcoming Suburban Plan are both focusing on building better connected communities.

There are some developments that have legacy (formerly called 'grandfathered') development rights. We're seeing fewer of these as time goes on, but there are still some older projects legally moving forward having received approval when different rules applied.

In the draft Regional Plan we've included policies to not expand the urban service boundary (the areas that are serviced with municipal water and sewer) any further until we complete a Strategic Infrastructure Study. This study is going to give us important information that will shape where we grow in the future. The idea is to focus 90% of our growth in the serviced areas of the municipality.

We are also trying to create communities where shops, services and employment opportunities are mixed with residential areas. Enabling small-scale commercial uses and more home-based businesses in residential zones is specifically stated in policy EP-6 (Economic Prosperity chapter 8). It directs the Suburban and Rural Plans to consider policies that will allow small-scale commercial uses and home-based businesses in residential and mixed-use zones.

Part of the challenge right now is that our suburban plan areas all have different land use by-laws and regulations - they're not connected into one big picture. Suburban Plan is going to address that by bringing all the suburban areas under a single land use by-law and planning strategy, with a focus on developing communities that have a good mix of uses. So instead of segregating

residential uses from helpful services like commercial, we're going to plan for more mixed use communities. There's also going to be a focus on higher density housing in the suburbs near the bus rapid transit stops - you can [click here](#) to see a map of those areas.

7

Reply Share



SaltyTrifle2771 · 1 mo. ago · *edited 1 mo. ago*

Hello HRM Planners!

I live in the North end of Halifax and my community is a virtual food desert. There are no grocery stores that offer required fresh produce or everyday food necessities. My neighborhood is seeing a radical growth in population (There are four-to-five multi unit condos being built as we speak). I'm genuinely concerned with how me, my current neighbors and my future new neighbors will access food in a timely and labour-conscious manner.

- Could you please offer insight to help me understand the pathway to facilitate a grocery/fresh produce store in this neighborhood?

4

Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hello SaltyTrifle! Thanks for raising this very important issue. While we can't require private business to open grocery stores we are working on policies that would increase opportunities for food retail and food production and make these uses accessible in more neighbourhoods.

The municipality and the Ecology Action Centre co-chair the Halifax Food Policy Alliance, which created the [JustFood Action Plan \(Part A\)](#) recently approved by Council. This Plan brings together the municipality, NS Health Authority, United Way, and others to address food security and access. This Plan has helped inform some of the policies in the draft Regional Plan. You can review the food security policies in Chapter 4 [here](#) - we'd love to hear your thoughts.

In the Regional Centre, policies already allow urban farm use in almost all zones - so policies allow the sale of urban agricultural products grown or produced on-site, including processed urban agricultural products. Urban Farm Use means the keeping of bees, hens, and harvesting plants like vegetables, fruits, herbs, sprouts, and flowers.

We are also proposing policy in the draft Regional Plan to allow market gardens in the majority of zones across the municipality (Market Garden is a term that is used to describe food that is grown or prepared to be sold or shared with neighbours and community members).

5

Reply Share



Longjumping_Waltz378 · 1 mo. ago

Because superstore is located on young. No one wants to compete with a massive grocery chain

3

Reply Share



Key-Particular-767 · 1 mo. ago

Why are we still allowing sub-divisions that do not have at least two egress routes?

2

Reply Share



mattyboi4216 · 1 mo. ago

I haven't reviewed in a while so this might be covered now but when I looked into center plan and how it impacted me in my area I saw lots pertaining to growth and zoning but didn't see much in regards to broader infrastructure like roads and traffic management. How is that being factored in? I'm somewhat spoiled in that I work from home most of the time but from start of this year to now my commute has gotten probably 15-20% longer. Can you please speak to those impacts and improvements that are being made

4

Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi! As you've noticed, our community plans tend to be focused on land use. That said, we have transportation plans - like the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) and the Rapid Transit Strategy - which set up the vision for our mobility network. We also have detailed Engineering Standards which

mandate standards for new infrastructure, including that being built by developers. Our teams work hard to make sure that all of our plans work together to achieve our common goals!

A few examples on how community plans and transportation plans work together...

- In Centre Plan, we established "transportation reserves" where new streets were needed or where the proposed BRT line on Robie Street was proposed.
- Also in the Centre Plan, on larger sites called Future Growth Nodes, we set out key street connections which will be planned in more detail in subdivision plans and development agreements.
- In the upcoming Suburban Plan, we're proposing to encourage more transit oriented development on these routes to have more residents living where they can walk, roll, bike or take transit to move around
- Detailed provisions for things like building setbacks from a street can ensure that there is enough space for pedestrian infrastructure and landscaping.

The Regional Plan also brings together all of these different plans to set out the overall vision for our region!

5 Reply Share



nieuwenudh · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

Is there any consideration given to creating pedestrian infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks) in older neighborhoods that don't currently have them but do have the space for it?

Specifically, why is Bridgeview getting sidewalks on both sides of Flamingo Drive as a traffic calming measure while in Fairview, Willet just gets more speedbumps added and Sunnybrae doesn't have sidewalks at all yet is apparently also having more speedbumps added? Both of these streets have schools on them.

1 Reply Share



magiklady · 1 mo. ago

I'd love to know why sidewalks were necessary along both sides of Flamingo, and how making the street narrower is supposed to help traffic? It seems to do the opposite - slows traffic down, because folks park down Flamingo and block the lane and now you can't squeeze by them until the opposite lane is clear.

0 Reply Share



nieuwenudh · 1 mo. ago

I think that's the point - slowing down traffic. Some neighbourhoods get more sidewalks, some get speed bumps

2 Reply Share



WholePiano8 · 1 mo. ago

1. The West Bedford community is one of the best land developments I have ever seen. The mix of housing, where apartments, townhouses, single garage and double garage homes are all together with the kids going to the same school is so perfect. Sidewalks everywhere that makes it safe for kids. AND you managed to keep trails and access to Kearney Lake! What an amazing community. I feel this should be the standard for all neighbourhood development going forward. **Are there any other communities like this planned?**

2. **Does Halifax also have the multiple staircase requirement for apartment buildings?** Allowing a single staircase allows for building larger apartments and avoids wasted space. <https://slate.com/business/2021/12/staircases-floor-plan-twitter-housing-apartments.html>

2 Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thanks for this WholePiano8!

Happy to hear that you love living in Bedford West which was planned comprehensively as a new, complete community.

In the Centre Plan area, we have similar "complete community" policies for larger sites called Future Growth Nodes such as Shannon Park and Penhorn Mall. We also hope to identify further areas suitable for this kind of planning in the Suburban areas.

New policies were also recently approved for Port Wallace in Dartmouth, and we are currently studying a number of "new communities" including

- Lands to the west of Sandy Lake in Bedford;
- Highway 102 West Corridor lands in Halifax;
- Lands southeast of Morris Lake in Dartmouth and Cole Harbour; and
- Lands including and immediately surrounding the former Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (now owned by Akoma Holdings) in Westphal.

Future Service Communities | Shape Your City Halifax

Our understanding of a second staircase is a Building Code issue which applies nationally and is determined by the type of occupancy and number of occupants. This requirement ensures a minimum level of fire and life safety.

4 **Reply** **Share**



HarbingerDe · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

Why are we still applying height and viewplane restrictions? How do the aesthetic concerns of comfortably housed NIMBYs trump the urgent need to make up a deficit of TENS OF THOUSANDS of housing units?

3 **Reply** **Share**



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

We appreciate that there are varied opinions about the ramparts and viewplanes, but we don't feel that private sector development alone will solve our housing crisis and neither will unlimited height. For example, cities like Toronto and Vancouver build much taller yet still face similar housing pressures as we do. The density potential enabled in Centre Plan has yet to be fully developed (and Cogswell is coming!) and so we still have room to grow.

Our focus is to set the foundation for good development. During the Centre Plan process, the ramparts and viewplanes were discussed but weren't a large theme in our engagement. If through the Regional Plan engagement process we hear a strong sentiment that the public would like to revisit these policies then we will respond to that.

7 **Reply** **Share**



tyuran · 1 mo. ago

Toronto and Vancouver build much taller than us in their urban cores, but what they have in common with us is restrictive zoning across the majority of the city that prevents medium density residential development. It's not fair to make that comparison without highlighting that point.

3 **Reply** **Share**



HarbingerDe · 1 mo. ago

Thank you for the response, and I appreciate the work you're doing.

I agree that the private sector alone will not solve the housing crisis. They have no incentive to; it's much more of an opportunity than a crisis for them.

With regard to building heights. It's starting to become more apparent that even with the most well-thought-out zoning strategy, we simply don't have enough contractors, construction workers, and resources to build the housing required. With housing so desperately needed, shouldn't we maximize the output of every development?

If you look across the Halifax skyline and see 10 cranes each building a 20-story building, that's a lot of housing. But if each were building a 40-story building, you would get double the units without taking up any additional floor area, without requiring 2x the building permits, without requiring 2x the construction crews. It just seems like a no-brainer if we really care about solving the crisis.

New 1 bedroom apartments are going for \$1900-\$2200/mo.

1 **Reply** **Share**



Unlucky_Ferret · 1 mo. ago

I live near the main st area of Dartmouth, kudos on current planning strategy I know of, it seems the wind is in HRMs sails currently. Exciting times.

Do you know if there is any follow up on the developers application to put a couple towers on the old ford site at the corner of main and Caledonia? Or across the st at 247 main?

Also I know main st has big plans like extending Hartlen st to make a 4 way across from Tacoma, is there plans to have business entrances removed from main st and moved to Tacoma/lakecrest dr to make Main Street more of a thru road? Or what are the other plans to make the street better, it has improved immensely since Ralph's place shut down

2 Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Happy to hear that you are as excited about the plan as we are! Through the Suburban Plan we will be looking at policy and zoning for all properties in the suburban area and we certainly acknowledge the potential for Main Street and the sites you have mentioned (though no updates at this time). We will definitely be looking at how buildings there can be better designed and welcome your ideas! Keep 'em coming!

6 Reply Share



meetc · 1 mo. ago
Halifax

I have two questions:

1. What suburban areas that are currently undeveloped, are planning to be developed?
2. What is being done about the fragmented cycling network within the city? Specifically, what are the options for routes on and off the peninsula?

1 Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago · *edited 1 mo. ago*
Verified

Thanks for the questions meetc.

In the Suburban Plan, we will have a greater emphasis on providing for more development along transit corridors and in areas where services currently exist.

There are a number of areas that were previously identified by the Regional Plan as "future serviced communities" which are currently being studied, or are being planned for.

The four locations being studied are:

Lands to the west of Sandy Lake in Bedford;

Highway 102 West Corridor lands in Halifax;

Lands southeast of Morris Lake in Dartmouth and Cole Harbour; and

Lands including and immediately surrounding the former Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (now owned by Akoma Holdings) in Westphal.

Please see: <https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/futureservicecommunities>

You may also wish to take a look at map 3 of the draft Regional Plan: [Map 3 - Urban Growth Areas](#)

2. Our colleagues in Public Works are actively working to connect the network and build out our All Ages and Abilities (AAA) bike network. The network will make it easier to get on to the BLT trail and through the Windsor Street Exchange. If you have any specific questions about that work we can try to get some more info for you. You can also keep up to date with the progress of the build out here: <https://www.halifax.ca/transportation/cycling-walking/expanding-network/regional-centre-bikeway-update>

6 Reply Share



meetc · 1 mo. ago · *edited 1 mo. ago*
Halifax

The Highway 102 West corridor, commonly known as the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove lands, is also under consideration to be named as park land. There seems to be some conflict in this with your response. Can you clarify this?

There is recently added bike paths and designations on Bayers Rd and side streets around Vaughn Ave to get to Chain of Lakes trail, but there is no bridge across the rail cut to link the two except for a very narrow "sidewalk" on Bayers. Is a footbridge being considered here?

1 Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thanks for following up on this! The Highway 102 West Corridor consists of privately owned lands that were first identified in the Regional Plan in 2006 as a potential area for future growth. The municipality is currently studying these lands to determine if development should take place here.

In 2021, the Municipality signed a statement of collaboration with Parks Canada to consider part of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes area as a candidate National Urban Park, under a new federal program. The subject area considered for park planning consists of land owned or under the control of a partnership group and any additional private lands that might be acquired for the purpose of connection or park integration. The Partnership Group which has been formed to guide future park planning consists of HRM; the Province; Nova Scotia Nature Trust; Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, as represented by Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMK); Sipekne'katik First Nation; and Parks Canada. More information on that process is posted here.

We're not sure about the answer to your second question - we will check with our colleagues in Active Transportation and get back to you soon!

3

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Following up on your second question about a connection across the rail cut - our Active Transportation colleagues have told us that this connection is a priority and they have studied options but haven't identified the best solution yet. There are a number of complicating factors that make the solution challenging, including that HRM doesn't own the existing bridge. That team will be revisiting options for that connection in 2024 so stay tuned!

2

Reply Share



TealSwinglineStapler · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

Normally when the city passes these large planning strategies they are heralded with much fanfare but then the implementation is lacking. For example the IMP has been passed and "AAA" corridors have been built. But what does get built is not in line with IMP priorities. For example the bike lane on Devonshire was painted in a door zone as it was "in line with best practices" of road design, but was not in line with IMP priorities which would have had the bike lanes and parked cars reversed. (I do know theres permanent infrastructure planned/coming/already built?). The green network plan was passed without required bylaws. What (if anything) is being done in this plan to ensure that it will actually come to fruition unlike many other HRM strategic plans?

1

Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Thanks for the question!

The Regional Plan is a strategic plan that directs both land use planning and the creation of "priority plans" (like the IMP and the Green Network Plan). The priority plans recommend changes to policies, identify new projects and partnerships, and help guide decision making. Each year, Council approves a budget that includes some of the actions in the priority plans and we hope we can move the needle on as many of these projects as possible.

For implementation of the Regional Plan, the final package going to Council will include land use regulations which will immediately have an impact on development rules. Other policies will have a direct impact on the work that we're doing over the next few years.

3

Reply Share



Schmidtvegas · 1 mo. ago · edited 1 mo. ago

Historic Schmidville

What kind of timeline can be expected for the two proposals for Cowie Hill? When and how can residents get involved in the feedback process, to support this project?

How can the city promote more densification, especially along transit corridors, in under-utilized urban spaces?

Are you familiar with the student paper New Directions for Growth in Spryfield?

<https://discoverspryfield.ca/news/dal-study/>

I see so much potential for building density in Spryfield. (Especially with the addition of rapid transit corridors— what's the timeline on that, and how do we speed it up?)

ETA screen grab of where we could build an entire neighbourhood in the footprint of the South Centre Mall:



1 Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi Schmidtvegas!

1. We will be scheduling public information meetings for the applications in Cowie Hill in the near future! Residents will be notified by direct mail and through updates to the project websites. You can always send us an email or give us a call, we collect public feedback at any time! Contact information for the planner leading those applications is available on the project websites. For 41 Cowie Hill Road the website is [here](#) and for 30 Ridge Valley Road the website is [here](#).
2. Creating more dense, transit oriented development along transit corridors is one of our guiding policies in the draft Regional Plan. Our goal is to enable as-of-right development in these areas at higher densities with a range of services to support residents. As-of-right means that the developer would simply come in and apply for a permit if they meet the requirements of the by-law and could start building quite quickly. We plan to do this along transit corridors in the Suburban area as well. We have a recent motion from Regional Council, direction in our draft Regional Plan as well as direction in our Housing Accelerator Fund application to explore incentivizing development on vacant properties.
3. Thanks for the link! We will read this with our morning coffee tomorrow. Our Suburban Planning Team is quite familiar with that paper ;)
4. We have direction from Council to prioritize the future rapid transit corridors as part of the Suburban Plan and so this is an area you'll see move forward more quickly. Our transportation team is working on design for the project but the build out is dependent on funding from all levels of government and so we appreciate your feedback and would encourage sharing it with all of your elected officials.

6 Reply Share



Callipygian · 1 mo. ago

Do you have any plan to address how embarrassingly unwalkable this city is?

The number of major roadways with no walkway is ridiculous.

Want to walk from Bedford to Dartmouth? Walk the entire Bedford hwy and cross the MacDonald, or hike it over Magazine Hill, which has signs telling you not to walk it.

1 Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi Callipygian! We are looking to improve the region's walkability through the Active Transportation Priorities Plan. That Plan proposes an enhanced sidewalk network as well as trails and bikeways. You can see a map of the sidewalk network [here](#). It includes a greenway from North Dartmouth to Bedford to enhance connections between those communities. The Regional Plan, Suburban Plan and Centre Plan also prioritize safe, walkable communities.

We also expect the Active Transportation Planning team will be updating their Priorities Plan in the future - stay tuned!

5

Reply Share



Schmidtvegas · 1 mo. ago
Historic Schmidville

We need pedestrian access over (under?) the 102 at Dunbrack.

I once got frustrated about how long it was going to take to bus from Clayton Park to Cowie Hill. I figured it would be quicker to walk as the crow flies. And it was! But the highway crossing really made it stupid and dangerous.

There's supposedly a long-term vision to connect the Mainland Linear trail to the Chain of Lakes & Long Lake network. The improvements to trail access at the top of Crown Drive are great for bike and pedestrian safety in that area. Hopefully progress will continue to be made.

1

Reply Share



jlmacdonald · 1 mo. ago

Why do you allow development on Beaver Bank road when it is an entire community... on one road in and out?

0

Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Beaver Bank and Kinsac have been under the Mixed Use Designation for a few decades. The zone is generally permissive because the intention for the area was to stay primarily rural and suburban residential.

That being said, the growth rate when the plan was written in 1999 was different from what is currently happening in the community. When we were at the farmer's market last weekend, a lot of residents in Beaver Bank made it clear about the concern of only having one way in and out - not to mention daily traffic congestion. This has been identified in other communities like Upper Hammonds Plains on Pockwock Road.

The topic around emergency access is becoming critical to community safety, and we feel like this would be one of the main topics that the Council will focus on this and next year.

6

Reply Share



COIMustard · 1 mo. ago

1- When planning housing for the city it seems like they are constantly working against themselves. Height restrictions forcing housing outside the core while limiting projects outside the core. Or adding a bunch of housing while taking away roads and not improving public transit, why is it we can't seem to get out of our own way?

2- It seems too that the city doesn't believe that housing is an evolution, i.e. as a city grows, rural becomes suburban, and suburban becomes Urban and instead we want to pause everything except Urban growth and essentially tear down existing and build it higher. Am I wrong? And why?

3- everyone wants to bury power lines, I get its expensive so untenable, why is it we can't do our own solutions to these issues and instead have to defer to other jurisdictions. Things like cable trenches under sidewalks etc...

0

Reply Share



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi, thanks for joining the conversation.

1. Although the Centre Plan does have limits on height, we're seeing strong development activity in the Regional Centre. We're continually monitoring our population growth and housing capacity and will adjust policy and regulations to respond.
2. We know that it's more efficient - less costly - if we provide opportunities for new development where there are existing services. The more we expand outwards, the more costly it is to provide infrastructure and services. It's also important to our climate change goals to focus development where it can be efficiently serviced with public transit, and to ensure sufficient open space is protected to protect our environment. Through the Suburban Plan, we will be looking at how we can add more opportunities for housing and create complete communities. One way of looking at the Regional Plan is in the establishment of complete communities in existing suburbs - i.e. urbanizing the suburbs so they are more walkable and destination-rich. So it is about urbanizing the suburbs.

3. The Regional Subdivision By-law requires new streets to underground lines from the power pole to individual homes, but the power lines between houses are privately owned and we typically don't bury lines except in downtown streetscaping projects. That being said, we do understand that this is an important consideration as climate change events increase. We work with the utility company, as well as property developers to coordinate as part of larger developments.

5 **Reply** **Share**



C0lMustard · 1 mo. ago

Thanks for the response,

We know that it's more efficient - less costly - if we provide opportunities for new development where there are existing services.

I question this, in a perfect world sure, but we just had another tax increase in the county (ditches) to pay for crumbling urban infrastructure. I would think that suburban Infrastructure built in the last 50 years would cost much less to add to than upgrading/replacing 100+ year service on busy urban streets.

1 **Reply** **Share**



Ironpleb30 · 1 mo. ago

Public housing program akin to Austria using 2-5% of our income tax we pay. Should cost us less, since our natural resources and industry are exponentially larger.

Ban corporate ownership of houses. Ban corporate ownership of individual condos.

Austria best livable place for over a decade. <https://youtu.be/41VJudBdYXY?si=m5VJAN2-az4hQyEU>

-1 **Reply** **Share**



Cptnfeathersowrd · 1 mo. ago

When are you gonna fix transit ?

0 **Reply** **Share**



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago

Verified

Hi Cptnfeathersowrd, our colleagues in Transit are constantly working on improvements to transit service, and the Regional Plan can help set direction for future improvements. Is there anything specific you have in mind to be addressed?

3 **Reply** **Share**



Cptnfeathersowrd · 1 mo. ago

E payment . Paying with tap, or card. Can you get them some square or any other systems to start accepting electronic pay? If casino taxi can figure it out in 2002 then transit should be able by now

1 **Reply** **Share**



warrior8988 · 1 mo. ago

Would land reclamation be possibly considered to build more land for more homes?

0 **Reply** **Share**



HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago

Verified

We are already challenged by sea level rise and so this is an issue that requires very careful consideration.

There is policy (EP-22) in the draft Regional Plan, which generally discourages infilling of pre-Confederation water lots. There are also a number of marine industrial uses that require harbourfront land so policy is proposed to protect harbour lands for those uses. There is some large scale in-filling happening at the Halifax Port Authority.

4 **Reply** **Share**



SquiddyLaFemme · 1 mo. ago

Dartmouth

As it has become more and more readily apparent that developers idea of actual low income housing isn't very low OR they will do everything in their means to retroactively negate any agreements with the city to provide it, why does HRM still continually keep their head in the sand and participate in the buck passing game between government levels on providing housing for low income? How should the public trust a body governance that can actively seek out higher population while committing such clear sociopathic acts of ignoring direct needs/human rights?

0 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



Comment removed by moderator · 1 mo. ago



WindowlessBasement · 1 mo. ago

That's not cool. Don't attack individuals for the choices of a department or government.

6 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



halifax-ModTeam MODS · 1 mo. ago

Rule I. Rude or abusive behaviour Be excellent to each other. Abuse, trolling, bigotry, racism, homophobia, and sexism will be removed. **Personal attacks** - Back and forth personal attack comments will be removed.

2 [Share](#)



GYNHOPP · 1 mo. ago

This city has a plan?

-4 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



Prize_Rooster420 · 1 mo. ago

It's a touchy subject...

-4 [Reply](#) [Share](#)



StinkeyeNoodle · 1 mo. ago



Bwoaaaaaah · 1 mo. ago



Analyzed_Intel_ · 1 mo. ago · *edited 1 mo. ago*



Comment deleted by user · 1 mo. ago



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Thanks for your question. There is a lot of as-of-right development happening along the Hammonds Plains Road corridor. Much of the development happening in this area, and the area around the fires, was approved before the Regional Plan was originally adopted in 2006.

When building permit applications are made, our Development Engineering group reviews traffic impacts and may require future development to make upgrades to the road.

We agree that emergency access is a really critical issue. In August, Regional Council asked staff to explore how we can better plan for the "wildland urban interface" - including emergency access routes.

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HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago
Verified

No thank you necessary, we've been enjoying answering tough questions while eating Yeah Yeahs pizza.

In Centre Plan we introduced a cluster housing policy which considers this exact housing form on unique lots that may have irregular shapes or less street frontage. Specifically, the new Cluster Housing 1 (CH-1) zone provides opportunities to cluster a variety of low-rise residential buildings on

a single property where the development of a new public street is not practical or needed to support pedestrian connectivity. The CH-1 Zone permits the clustering of dwellings containing up to four units per building on the same lot as of right, and may be applied to additional areas through a Land Use By-law amendment process. The draft Regional Plan directs us to transfer this use to the remaining areas of the municipality and introduce a discretionary process to allow 5 or more units per lot (Policy H-6).

We have also removed prohibitions on mobile dwellings and minimum building sizes, like you mentioned, to allow more flexibility for small and/or mobile dwellings across the municipality.

5 Reply Share



oreo3387 · 1 mo. ago

Some other provinces and cities are requiring mixed use zoning commercial projects to be mixed use units with a minimum of 2 floors. ie: a commercial plaza with floors of housing units on top. For example here is a project for a [Home Hardware store with 2 floors of units on top](#).

Is HRM considering any thing like this? I see a lot of new 1 story commercial places still being built that seem to be inefficient sprawl and a missed opportunity (the NSLC/Robin's in Stewiacke off the top of my head). If you are planning to grow the city to 1 million people, then in the future we're just going to run into those problems down the road.

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HFX_Planning **OP** · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Hi oreo3387!

Thanks for this comment! We have zoning in the Centre Plan that requires ground floor commercial in residential buildings on pedestrian-oriented streets, but we don't yet have zoning that would require a certain percentage of residential above commercial uses in mixed-use zones. In many of the Centre Plan zones (such as Corridor), the focus is more on the form-based requirements - development could be commercial or residential, but it is the streetwall, height, setbacks and stepbacks that are the focus of the zoning.

This will be an interesting idea to explore for the Suburban Plan.

4 Reply Share



EntertainingTuesday · 1 mo. ago

Thank you for doing this.

I have a few questions for you, I just read the draft of the plan yesterday and it was a lot to take in:

1. As someone else mentioned, I wonder about the ER changes. They seem like a step in the right direction but how much impact will they realistically have? I can't see why the average family in the South End for example would feel the need to convert their residence to have more than their primary living unit. Wouldn't it be better to allow townhouses, allow houses to be built closer together (there was a development close to a family member where they built a bunch of skinny, honestly ugly houses to conform to the distance requirements between houses), and allow for smaller style apartments to be built?
2. The urban reserve zones. What is the deal with these? I know the plan is for long term but if we are talking about 1 million people in HRM by 2050 doesn't the long term mean looking at all urban reserve zones now so that they are ready for potential development? We are seeing plans for other developments come out now and are seeing 10 year timelines. With the urban reserve zones I wonder about objectivity, obviously in a major one, Blue Mountain Birch Cove, the City wants a park where as the area would be great for new development while still retaining a lot of already owned park land. I wonder when doing the studies into the urban reserve areas we have how any study could come back in this modern time and actually lead to a development happening or the urban reserve changing to urban settlement.
3. The plan seems to put a big focus on developing/re developing and infilling around already serviced areas. This is concerning because it can mean taking down older developments that are inherently less expensive than modern developments and replacing it with more expensive new developments. So my question here is it seems there is still a lot of restrictive zoning for building size. Why do we still have a height limit on buildings here? I look at the newer buildings DT and the view is gone, they could be 100 floor buildings, or the 22 floors they currently are, and I still wouldn't be able to see a view of the water. If the goal is to re develop/infill already serviced areas shouldn't a priority be to allow developers to maximize the land the best way possible? Isn't it easier to service 1 50 floor building with 1 bus stop vs 3 13 floor buildings with 2 bus stops? There'd be a benefit here for the City too as they could sell land they own with higher building limits for more money.

I have more questions but with all my explanation I add in my questions I will stop at those main ones!

Thank you.

1 Reply Share



HFX_Planning OP · 1 mo. ago
Verified

Thanks for the great questions!

1. Since the secondary and backyard suite amendment was approved in 2020 we've seen the development of about 500 units. We know that this isn't enough and so we're doing a few things to expand this housing form as we see it as one of the quickest ways to densify and grow our housing supply. The draft Regional Plan proposes to allow at least 3 units on low-density residential lots and expand opportunities for small multi-unit buildings in low-density residential areas. Through Centre Plan we have increased the potential for the development of the other housing forms you mentioned, such as townhouses, which are possible in more areas now. The same will happen through the Suburban Plan. We agree that not everyone will want to develop a secondary or backyard suite but through our Housing Accelerator Fund work we hope to explore further ways we can incentivize these housing choices: some examples include reduced permit fees and pre-approved building plans.
2. The Urban Reserve areas were identified when the Regional Plan was first adopted in 2006 as places that development could potentially be considered beyond the original 25 year horizon of the plan (i.e. after 2031). We need to review these areas to determine if these are still the right places for growth, or if there are other areas that should be considered. We know that we need to start looking at future growth areas soon given our rate of growth - and in fact we will be starting that work right away after the adoption of this current plan - in our project timeline this is "Phase 5" (we're in Phase 4 right now).
3. Losing older affordable units to redevelopment is definitely a concern. The Draft Regional Plan includes intent to study "No Net Loss/Rental Replacement" policies that look at ways to require redevelopments to incorporate existing units. The benefit of developing in urban areas is that services are already in place, so there isn't a significant difference between servicing one taller building versus three shorter buildings. We need to balance density and height with our historic character and the impact of buildings on the quality of our pedestrian realm (such as increased wind and shadows). The density potential enabled in Centre Plan has yet to be fully developed so we still have room to grow. However we're continually monitoring our population growth and housing capacity and will adjust policy and regulations to respond, so height regulations could come up for review in the future!

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EntertainingTuesday · 1 mo. ago

Thank you for the responses and for making yourselves available on this sometimes unforgiving platform 😊.

Although I do not always agree with our City's Planning and Development Department, I do appreciate the work you planners do so thank you for your service!

3 Reply Share



littlecabbage69 · 1 mo. ago

Have many of your planners had the opportunity to travel to cities/communities outside of Canada? Inspiration and experience can be an incredible asset when looking at older, functioning city plans.

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Bluenoser_NS · 1 mo. ago

Ah yes, I read this a few weeks back.

1. Discouraging ribbon development in rural Halifax: what is the ideal outcome?
2. Is there anything planners can do to help expand or pave the way for expansion of rural transit or are the dice entirely in the hands of the municipality/metro transit?

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cptstubby16 · 1 mo. ago
Halifax

It's a bit late but I'll just say it even though I know it's a pipe dream to secure land from CN:

Multi-use sea level path from Shearwater to Point Pleasant Park.

1

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Gas_Grouchy · 24 days ago

Given the older apparatus for a lot of the rural fire departments, combined with all the disasters (flood, fire, hurricane) how do you see the huge surge in insurance premiums affecting how and where things are built? I know in Moncton there was certainly some poor planning around commercial properties and their fire departments, causing developers to lose out hugely and delay developments. Given Halifax's need for housing, how would you suggest mitigating this for our developments?

1

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