What is comprehensive neighbourhood planning?

A planning process which comprehensively considers all aspects of planning a new neighbourhood or area.

1 Initiation of Planning Process

On May 16, 2025, the Provincial Minister of Growth and Development initiated secondary planning for the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area and Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area.

2 Concept plans and further technical study

Property owners within the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area have been engaged through the Future Serviced Communities study and through consultation with municipal planning employees. Concept plans are submitted and a review by internal and external agencies begins.

3 Public engagement phase 1

During phase 1 community engagement, residents will have a chance to share feedback on the future development of the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area. Feedback from the public will be collected through notifications to the community, a project webpage, a public open house and an online survey. This feedback will help identify the priorities and concerns of residents.

4 Review and refinement

Proposals from landowners will continue to be reviewed and refined by various internal and external key partners. Feedback collected during phase 1 public engagement will be considered through these revisions.

5 Planning documents and phase 2 public engagement

Land use policies and regulations are drafted to guide the development of a new neighbourhood. There will be an opportunity for members of the public to provide feedback on the draft neighbourhood plans and policies. Final policies and a development agreement will be based on site context and constraints, comments from technical review agencies, existing municipal plans and policies and public feedback. Strategic public investments in infrastructure, parks and facilities may also be identified.

6 Decision

Municipal employees will send a report to the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality that includes proposed policies and a development agreement for the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area. The Executive Panel will then make a recommendation to the Minister of Housing for a decision.

Why is planning happening at Sandy Lake?



1. Supporting housing objectives

The Sandy Lake Special Planning Area has been identified in the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy as a potential growth area since 2006. When planning for the development of lands outside of the urban service boundary, the Regional Plan requires consideration of fiscal implications to both the municipality and Halifax Water, implications for achieving growth targets, protection of environmental and cultural features, integrity of regional parks and the prioritization of active transportation and green infrastructure.

The provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Minister of Growth and Development have, on the recommendation of the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality, designated Sandy Lake as one of sixteen (16) Special Planning Areas to address housing challenges in the capital region. The Special Planning Area designation delegates development approval authority to the Minister of Housing, as outlined in the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act. Halifax Regional Council does not participate in planning approvals in Special Planning Areas. However, Halifax Regional Council may consider Capital Cost Contribution (CCC) programs.

2. Provincial direction

On May 16, 2025 the provincial Minister of Growth and Development directed the municipality to begin comprehensive neighbourhood planning, also known as secondary planning, for the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area. A comprehensive neighbourhood planning process considers all aspects of planning a new neighbourhood. Strategic investments in infrastructure, parks and facilities may also be identified. The outcome is new municipal policies and regulations to guide and support new development in the area informed by municipal priority plans, public consultation, collaboration with internal and external review agencies, proposals from landowners and supporting studies.

3. Policy context

These plans and policies will inform the planning process:

- Regional Municipal Planning Strategy
- Green Network Plan
- Integrated Mobility Plan
- Rapid Transit Strategy



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Sandy Lake Special Planning Area

Sandy Lake Special Planning Area

Other Special Planning Areas

Lucasville

Marsh Lake

Sandy Lake Regional Park

Sandy Lake

Agropur

Hammonds Plains Road

Bedford West Subareas 12 & 1

Bedford West

Highway 102

Papermill Lake

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Future Serviced Communities Study

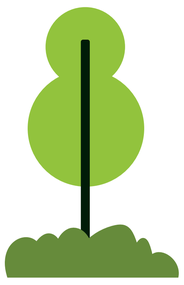
Greenfield development of this scale involves extensive analysis to understand the implications of significant serviced growth.

The recently completed Future Serviced Communities Study (FSC) for the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area provides baseline information on the feasibility of extending water and wastewater services, upgrading existing municipal infrastructure and environmental impacts in this community.



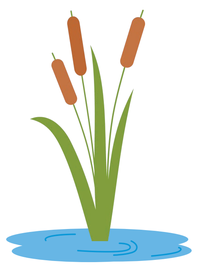
Sandy Lake FSC study components

Mobility study: This study models the estimated impact of potential development scenarios on local and regional transportation systems and identifies any infrastructure upgrades that may be required.



Land suitability analysis: This analysis delineates, assesses and inventories sensitive ecological features and determines their relationship to environmental systems at a local and regional scale.

Water and wastewater analysis: This analysis develops a servicing strategy based on water, wastewater and stormwater servicing requirements for potential development scenarios.



Watershed study: This study models the estimated impacts of potential development scenarios on water quality and flooding hazards within a watershed.

More information and the complete FSC Study can be found here

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Future Serviced Communities Study

Water and wastewater study findings

- Identifies that there are servicing interdependencies with surrounding areas that will need to be further investigated.
- Identifies that there are opportunities to address existing servicing issues that will be beneficial to the broader community, especially in regards to flooding.
- Recommends further coordination with Halifax Water.
- Identifies that the main waterline from the Pockwock water supply runs through these lands. Site and infrastructure planning around this major regional piece of infrastructure will need to be coordinated with Halifax Water.

Mobility study findings



- Recommends that Sandy Lake will need to include a mix of land uses to decrease the need for vehicle trips outside of the community.
- Identifies that significant improvements are needed to the transportation system to ensure Sandy Lake is functional from a traffic perspective.
- Identifies that transit and internal and regional active transportation options will be key components in addressing traffic issues.
- Recommends that highway infrastructure improvements occur before development. Further work is necessary to understand the amount of development that can occur prior to significant transportation infrastructure upgrades.

Land suitability analysis findings

- Highlights the importance of protecting riparian zones and maintaining buffer zones around watercourses to preserve aquatic habitats and water quality.
- Recommends engaging with partners, such as Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change, to discuss potential wetland impacts, the permitting process and compensation requirements.
- Recommends dedicated fish habitat assessments.
- Recommends careful planning to balance proposed development with conservation. Further analysis and evaluation is recommended to inform community design.
- Recommends implementing a wildlife corridor system that balances the protection of sensitive habitats with connectivity needs.
- Recommends no new development within the limits of the 100-year floodplain.

Watershed study findings

- Recommends strategies to mitigate impacts of increased contaminants flowing into the water system including land-use management practices, infrastructure improvements, public education initiatives and ongoing water quality monitoring.
- Recommends low-impact development practices to manage stormwater runoff and reduce pollutant loadings.
- Recommends no new development be permitted within the limits of the 100-year regulatory floodplain and development should be restricted near the Hammonds Plains Road and Bluewater Road intersection.
- Recommends completion of a detailed hydraulic modeling of the watercourses to better understand flooding risks at certain locations.

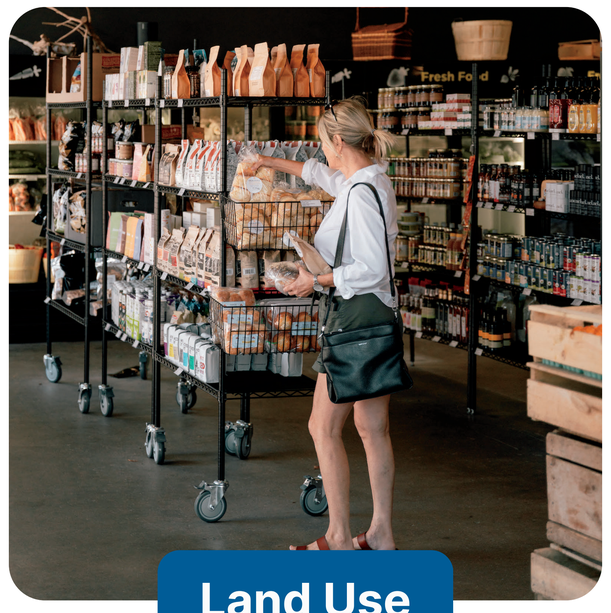
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Public feedback

What feedback can be incorporated into planning policy?

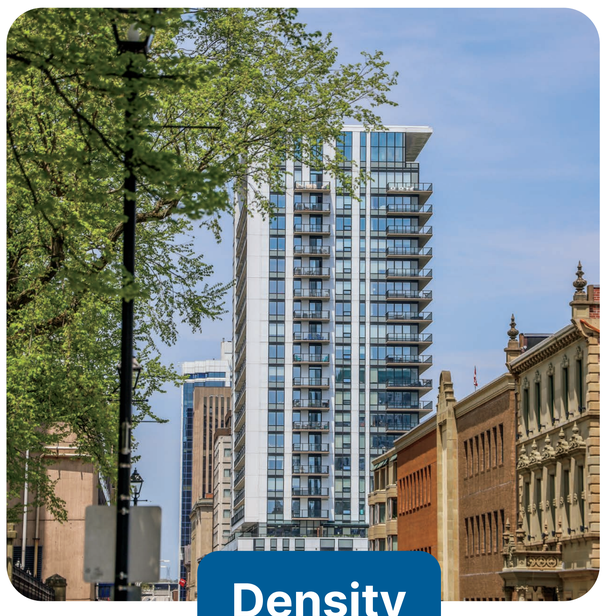
Planning policy can address the following matters:



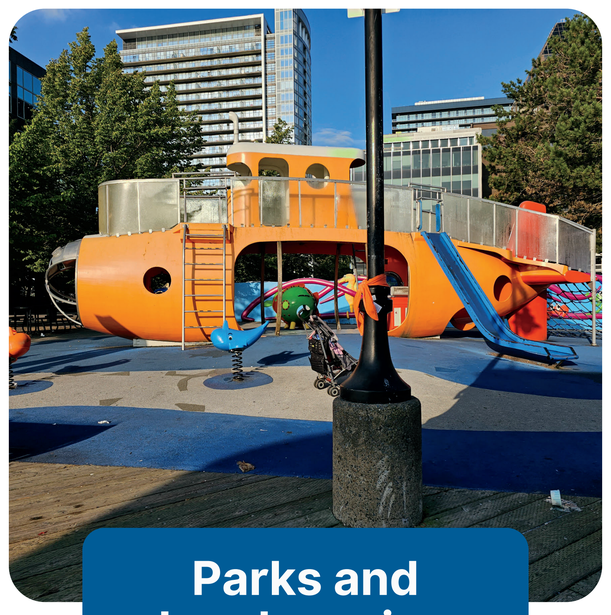
Land Use



Transportation



Density



Parks and Landscaping



Building design



Heritage and Culture



Community Facilities

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