

CHAPTER 3: BUILDING HEALTHY AND COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 outlined the ways that the Municipality can be strategic in directing new housing and jobs to places across the region. This Chapter provides a more detailed vision for how development can be directed at the community level.

To fully implement the planning and land use direction contained in this Plan, the Municipality relies on Community Plans and Land Use By-laws and the Subdivision By-law. Community plans and land use by-laws apply to a specific geographic area within the region.

The Municipality is currently undertaking a major update to its community planning program, which will reorganize secondary planning documents into three major geographies (Regional Centre, Suburban Area and Rural Area), as shown on Map 1. In the interim, this Plan also provides direction to current planning documents and for discretionary planning approvals to implement strategic policy directions. This chapter provides guidance for planning at the local level and sets the vision for ongoing community planning to achieve complete, healthy, and inclusive communities. This Plan affirms the Municipality's commitment to working with all communities, and in particular the Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities to ensure that policies at the regional and community level support the goals of those communities.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

- 1. Use a lens of complete and inclusive community planning to create positive and equitable health outcomes for all communities;**
- 2. Integrate climate mitigation and adaptation strategies at the local level to create safe and resilient communities;**
- 3. Ensure the protection of a generous network of parks, open spaces, cultural and working landscapes to support ecological, social, and economic community outcomes;**
- 4. Direct new development around frequent transit networks in the Regional Centre and in Suburban communities, with design prioritizing compact, transit-supportive communities that are safe and welcoming to pedestrians;**
- 5. Direct growth to rural centres where compact development patterns can support village main streets and a range of mobility options, including active transportation;**
- 6. Create a welcoming and accessible environment for community input and participation; and**

7. **Develop clear and easy to understand planning documents that can adapt to changing community needs and conditions.**

3.2 COMMUNITY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Many of the Municipality's current Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies (also called community plans) were developed before amalgamation in 1996. Each is accompanied by a Land Use By-law, which are the accompanying regulations. The plans are in a variety of formats, and use different definitions, policies, and processes to regulate land use and development.

Recognizing the age of the existing community plans and the need to provide a comprehensive update for the entire region, the Community Planning Program has been established to modernize planning policy and improve administration. The goal of this program is to reorganize the community plans around major geographies as shown on Map 1:

- **Regional Centre:** Halifax Peninsula and Dartmouth within the Circumferential Highway;
- **Suburban Area:** Lands outside of the Regional Centre in the Urban Settlement Designation; and
- **Rural Area:** Lands within rural designations that use on-site services (on-site septic systems and wells).

The Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy ("Centre Plan"), adopted in 2021, was the first phase of this work, and it replaced four community plans and land use by-laws with one plan and by-law. As the Centre Plan continues to evolve and be updated, it must continue to conform to the guiding principles and policies of the Regional Plan.

Likewise, plans for the Suburban and Rural Areas must be guided by the overall objectives of the Regional Plan and Priority Plans, as well as best practice research, information regarding demographic and economic trends, and community engagement. In the interim, the Regional Plan provides certain policies directed at the existing community plans and land use by-laws where a region-wide approach is important to achieving key strategic objectives.

The Community Planning program will use the lens of complete and inclusive communities to help create positive health outcomes for communities, support sustainable and equitable change, and in some cases transformation. Some of the building blocks of complete, healthy, communities include equitable access to:

- **Places to live**, in a range of housing types for all ages, incomes and abilities, including shared housing options;
- **Places to learn, work and shop**, including schools and institutions, business districts and industrial areas;
- **Places to play and access nature**, including parks, community centres, recreation facilities and libraries;
- **Places to celebrate culture, heritage and arts**, including gathering spaces, cultural landscapes, museums, heritage buildings, arts and performance spaces, and place of worship;
- **Places that are protected**, including important environmental areas, wilderness areas, coastal areas, wetlands, flood plains and wildlife habitats;
- **Places that produce and provide access to healthy and affordable food**, including space for food production, and support for local food systems;
- **Places that are well-connected**, with affordable and accessible transportation, including transit, active transportation routes and trails, and roads; and

- **Places that provide basic services and safety** including emergency services, waste collection, water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, as well as healthcare and childcare facilities.

3.2.1 URBAN AREA LAND USE

While each Community Plan will address local context and community vision through a variety of tools, in the Urban Area, which includes the Regional Centre and the Suburban Communities, land use should be organized within broad categories or designations to enable a range of well-connected functions at a regional and local scale. While a mix of compatible land uses supported by built form provisions is supported in most designations, some lands will require protection and more limited land use permissions to ensure long-term sustainability. The designations within the Urban Area will include:

- **Open Space, Parks and Community Facilities:** areas that include places to play and access nature, including protected or sensitive open space lands that help shape communities, parks, and community facilities such as recreation centres, libraries, and places of worship;
- **Downtowns:** areas that support central business districts, entertainment areas, high mix of land uses, low-rise to high-rise buildings compatible with heritage resources and heritage conservation districts;
- **Centres:** areas intended to support significant population growth and a mix of land uses along frequent transit terminals and corridors, and can include commercial main streets. Centres can be major or minor hubs depending on the local context and transit service;
- **Corridors:** areas intended to support pedestrian oriented development along transit corridors with a mix of land uses but a lesser intensity than Centres;
- **Higher Order Residential:** areas that support a concentration of existing and potential new multi-unit dwelling communities with compatible commercial uses;
- **Established Residential:** areas intended to retain the scale of existing low-density residential neighbourhoods while providing opportunities for additional gentle infill and missing middle housing options;
- **Future Growth Nodes:** areas that include large sites that can accommodate significant population growth and that require more detailed comprehensive planning to determine future land uses, mobility networks, and other supporting services and amenities;
- **Employment Lands:** areas that include both large and small institutional lands, and industrial lands needed to support growing population and thriving economy; and
- **Special Areas and Overlays:** can include waterfront areas, Harbour Lands, heritage districts, and any other areas that require special land use, built form or urban design considerations.

3.3 REGIONAL CENTRE PLAN

The Regional Centre area is the most urban and densely populated area of the municipality and is comprised of distinct communities and neighbourhoods that have been shaped by a wide range of economic, cultural, environmental, and social factors. The Regional Centre is located on the Halifax Harbour, and includes a wide mix of land uses including two downtowns, many institutional and industrial employment areas, mixed-use and residential areas, parks and public spaces, services, as well as regional and national attractions.

Most concentrated commercial districts are located within walking distance of established neighbourhoods, and within easy reach of parks and open spaces. The Halifax Harbour remains an important asset that

facilitates the growth of commercial, industrial, and institutional activities in the region. The Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (Centre Plan) establishes clear and predictable rules for development and intensification, while protecting heritage resources and providing guidance for comprehensive planning for new larger neighbourhoods. The Centre Plan provides policy directions for Downtown Halifax, Downtown Dartmouth, several Centres, and Future Growth Nodes. The Centre Plan also provides policy direction to maintain established residential areas while providing for additional housing options and gentle infill, and mandates future planning for several Heritage Conservation Districts.

3.3.1 VISION FOR THE REGIONAL CENTRE

A vision for the Regional Centre was established during the Centre Plan planning process:

The Regional Centre is the civic, cultural and economic heart of the Halifax Regional Municipality. It is a prosperous and resilient community that supports the needs, health, and well-being of a diverse and growing population. New growth is located strategically to support the creation of complete communities, human-scale design, and pedestrian comfort. The Regional Centre is the core of the best mid-sized city in Canada that welcomes all who want to live, work, play and learn here.

3.3.2 CORE CONCEPTS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE REGIONAL CENTRE

In support of the Vision, the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (Centre Plan) is based on the following four Core Concepts:

Complete Communities

- Support people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to live, work, shop, learn, and play within a short journey.
- Promote mixed use neighbourhoods with safe and convenient access to goods and services needed in daily life.

Pedestrians First

- Prioritize the needs and comfort of people in all seasons to make walking more convenient and viable, reduce emissions and improve public health.
- Encourage land use, transportation and design policies that prioritize walking, cycling and transit over private vehicles.

Strategic Growth

- Encourage increased density and a diversity of people and services in the Regional Centre to support socially, economically and environmentally responsible growth.
- Distribute growth throughout the Regional Centre in context-sensitive forms.
- Direct growth to established mixed-use commercial nodes, and under-utilized, vacant, and infill sites.

Human Scale Design

- Foster high-quality architecture and urban design that is designed to a human scale.

- Adopt land use policies that result in designs that are interesting and comfortable for people at street level.

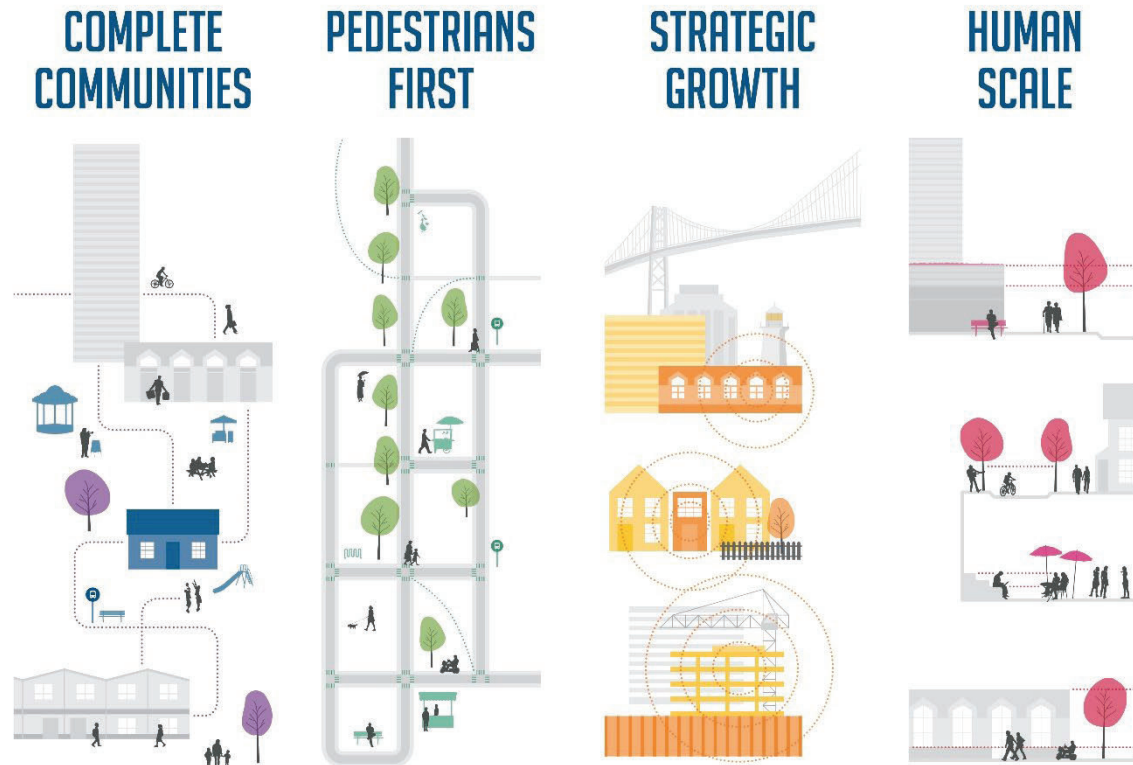


Fig. 3-1: Centre Plan Core Concepts

The Core Concepts were also supported by a set of Guiding Principles developed during the HRMbyDesign visioning process:

I Sustainable

- Design, plan and build with respect for economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability.
- Create resilient communities that adapt to evolving opportunities and needs.

II High Quality

- New development should be of high quality and compatible with other high quality developments.
- Promote high quality architecture and urban design that respects great heritage resources, including neighbourhoods.

III Heritage and Culture

- Heritage resources, including heritage districts, buildings, and cultural landscapes, should be recognized, used, protected and enhanced.

- Ensure lasting legacies (buildings, open spaces and streets) are maintained, and new ones are created.

IV Movement

- Integrate land use planning with transportation planning in such a way that alternatives to driving become an easy choice. Transportation options should be efficient, pleasant and readily available.
- All streets should present an inviting barrier-free environment that considers the comfort, convenience, safety and visual interest of pedestrians.
- The Regional Centre, in all ways, should be conducive to, and supportive of, active transportation movement. It should provide people with choices that are viable alternatives to driving.

V Complete Neighbourhoods

- Support safe, mixed-use, and diverse neighbourhoods, including:
 - affordable housing and a variety of tenures;
 - residential, commercial, employment uses; and
 - visually and physically accessible amenity space, including schools and parks within walking distance.
- Encourage the public services and amenities necessary to support quality of life, cohesive communities and creative places.

VI Growth and Change

- Encourage new developments to respond to the natural, cultural, historical, and urban character of their context.
- Direct change and intensification to areas that will benefit from growth.
- Every new building should contribute to the betterment of the public realm.
- Design should support accessibility, active transportation and transit (i.e. streets, land uses, neighbourhoods, open spaces, circulation systems).

VII Process

- Foster a culture of support for the building/ construction of quality urban design.
- Recognize and reward design excellence.
- Involve neighbourhood communities in local planning matters.
- Maintain opportunities for public participation in the implementation of the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy.
- Foster predictable outcomes that have been tested to be achievable and fair.

VIII Connected

- Prominent views to prominent natural and built features should be recognized, protected and enhanced.
- Enhance safe and appealing connections within the Regional Centre including to and from the waterfront, open spaces and neighbourhoods.

HC-1 The Vision and Core Concepts of the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy shall guide any proposed amendments or updates to the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law, and applicable objectives and policies of this plan.

While Centre Plan is already largely aligned with this Plan and HRM's Priority Plans, regular reviews of the Centre Plan must be undertaken to ensure alignment with any changes to this Plan, new or updated Priority Plans, or any other strategic plans or policies approved by Regional Council. One example is the Rapid Transit Strategy, which identifies key corridors and proposed locations for bus rapid transit stations and ferry terminals.

HC-2 The Municipality shall periodically review the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law to support healthy and complete communities and ensure consistency with this Plan, Priority Plans, and any other strategic plan or policy adopted by Regional Council.

3.3.2 REGIONAL CENTRE GROWTH AREAS

The Centre Plan directs growth to a number of strategic growth areas aligned with the existing and planned mobility network, including the Rapid Transit Network. They are important at a regional scale because of their potential to provide a significant number of new housing units and jobs, and the required supporting infrastructure and services. These key areas are identified in Table 3-1 and on Map 3.

Table 3-1: RCSMPS Strategic Growth Areas

RCSMPS Designation	Growth Area
Downtown	Downtown Halifax Downtown Dartmouth
Centre	Gottingen Street Highfield Park Quinpool Road Robie/Young Street Spring Garden Road Wyse Road
Future Growth Node	Dartmouth Cove Lands Halifax Shopping Centre Lands Joseph Howe Rail Lands Kempt Road Lands M District Lands Penhorn Lands Shannon Park Lands Southdale Lands Strawberry Hill Lands West End Mall Lands Young Street Lands

HC-3 To help support growth management and the provision of services at a regional scale, any change in the designation of lands in the Downtown, Centre or Future Growth Node Designations in the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy shall require an amendment to this Plan and shall consider impacts on housing and population projections.

3.4 SUBURBAN COMMUNITY PLANNING

Suburban communities have many distinct characteristics, and their individual history is often tied to the towns and communities that preceded them. While some suburban communities at the edge of the Regional Centre are very urban, others are dominated by low-density and single-use development. Suburban communities were often planned around the separation of land uses and the car as the dominant mode of transportation, which resulted in significant travel distances for residents' daily needs.

Land use and development in the Suburban Area is governed by several community plans and land use by-laws which have not been comprehensively updated. This Plan recognizes the importance of updating and modernizing community plan policies to remove barriers to more compact and transit-supportive development, while also recognizing the unique assets and characteristics of suburban communities.

The Suburban Plan will create policies and regulations to achieve the desired form and scale of development at the property level. This Plan sets out policies to guide decision-making for these applications while the Suburban Plan is being completed.

3.4.1 SUBURBAN PLAN VISION

A vision for suburban communities will be created and refined as part of the Suburban planning process.

3.4.2 SUBURBAN PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In addition to objectives of this Plan for community planning, the Suburban planning process and planning for future serviced communities will be guided by the following principles:

Open Space and Culture

- Identify, preserve, enhance, and showcase important natural and cultural heritage features, that contribute to sustainability and sense of place.
- Integrate natural processes and energy conservation in site design including preserving, rehabilitating and restoring natural system functions.
- Provide for generous active and passive parks and open spaces.

Complete Communities

- Support people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to live, work, shop, learn, and play within a short journey.
- Promote mixed use neighbourhoods with safe and convenient access to goods and services needed in daily life to create positive health outcomes.
- Use an equity lens when developing land use policies.

Transit Supportive Growth

- Direct growth to transit corridors, nodes, and under-utilized commercial nodes to support inclusive and connected communities;
- Locate the highest density and mix of uses within a short walk of frequent transit terminals, and mid-rise and missing middle housing within a short walk of transit station or corridor;
- Create short blocks, grid or modified grid mobility networks, and complete streets within transit walksheds.

Pedestrians First and Human Based Design

- Prioritize the needs and comfort of people in all seasons to make walking more convenient and viable, reduce emissions and improve public health.
- Encourage land use, transportation and design policies that prioritize walking, cycling and transit over private vehicles.
- Foster high-quality architecture and urban design that is interesting and comfortable for people at street level.

HC-4 The Municipality shall develop a Suburban Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law for the Suburban Area identified on Map 1, which shall be guided by the policies of this Plan.

3.4.3 SUBURBAN GROWTH AREAS

In the Suburban Area, the key opportunities for significant mixed-use development will be on underutilized sites which are located close to existing or planned transit terminals and proposed rapid transit stations. These centres or hubs can be further supported by mixed-use development along other transit corridors, and infill in existing multi-unit neighborhoods.

Established residential areas characterized by low-density housing can provide additional housing options through gentle infill on smaller lots, internal conversions, secondary suites, backyard suites, cluster housing, and missing middle housing, as outlined in Chapter 5. The Suburban Plan will direct population and employment density to encourage transit-supportive growth, using form-based approach to land use planning which prioritizes high quality urban design.

This Plan recognizes the importance of preserving and providing for the expansion of Employment Lands, including institutional and industrial areas, and the ongoing work to study and plan for Future Serviced Communities, and Urban Reserves which may result in future changes to the boundary of the Suburban Plan.

Map 3 illustrates potential growth centres and mixed-use intensification corridors where growth may be directed to align with the transit corridors proposed in the Rapid Transit Strategy, as outlined in Chapter 7. Minimum densities of people or jobs along proposed rapid transit corridors are required to support a viable rapid transit service.

In addition to increased density, transit use must be supported by land use and urban design that provides walkable access to transit, and a safe, convenient and pleasant pedestrian experience. To support transit-oriented land use and development, the Suburban Design Guidelines (Appendix C) shall be considered in developing new plans and amending existing community plans and land use by-laws. Additional growth areas may be considered based on local analysis through future phases of the Suburban Planning process.

Table 3-2: Suburban Plan Growth Areas

Suburban Growth Area Type	Location
Rapid Transit-Oriented Development <i>Mid to high-density, mixed-use development with ground-oriented units and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, with transit supportive density of a minimum of 160 people and jobs per hectare to support high frequency or rapid transit</i>	Dunbrack & Lacewood Herring Cove Road Portland Street / Woodlawn Dartmouth Crossing*

* indicates a Provincial Special Planning Area

HC-5 To support mixed-use, transit-oriented development and healthy, complete communities in the Urban Settlement Designation, the Municipality shall establish a suburban structure to direct intensification of land use to future Rapid Transit Corridors shown on Map 3 and in Table 3-2. The areas identified as Proposed Transit Walksheds and Rapid Transit Oriented-Development on Map 3 and in Table 3-2 may be amended in response to future urban design studies and community engagement.

HC-6 When considering amendments to secondary municipal planning strategies and development agreements in Proposed Transit Walksheds identified on Map 3 and in Table 3-2, Council shall consider the applicable policies of this Plan and the Suburban Design Guidelines contained in Appendix C of this Plan.

3.4.5 FUTURE SERVICED COMMUNITIES

Within the Urban Settlement designation, several areas are shown on Map 3 as Future Serviced Communities, where new residential, commercial or industrial development is expected to be serviced with municipal water, wastewater and conventional transit services. Some of these areas have also been identified as provincial Special Planning Areas under the 2021 *Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act*.

Comprehensive planning supported by a series of background studies is required to identify the appropriate land uses, street layout, density, open space and other community amenities before these lands may be developed. Community engagement and participation is a critically important part of the process. Comprehensive planning processes can take several years to complete before construction of a new community can begin.

Careful consideration must be given to designing these new neighbourhoods in a way that protects the health of the valuable natural features of these areas and maximizes the protection of these natural assets. The planning process can define the edge between development and the natural area. The relationship between these areas must be reviewed carefully and should align with the objectives and actions in the Halifax Green Network Plan related to preserving natural corridors and connections.

Table 3-3 – Future Serviced Communities

Future Serviced Communities	Growth Centre
<i>Low-rise to High-rise mixed-use development with a minimum density of 50-80 residents or jobs per hectare to support basic to high frequency transit</i>	Port Wallace* Sandy Lake* Highway 102 West Corridor Morris Lake Expansion Lands* Bedford West 12* Bedford West 10 and 1*

* indicates a Provincial Special Planning Area

HC-7 Where requests are received to initiate a planning process for any of the areas identified in Table 3-3 as future serviced communities, consideration shall be given to:

- a) the need for additional lands to support expected population or employment growth, with regard to achieving the target set out in Policy RP-13;
- b) the results of comprehensive studies completed for the area providing background information needed to inform decisions about the potential development of the lands, including:
 - (i) **Land Suitability Analysis** – This study shall include the mapping and analysis of the area's ecological features to identify lands that are constrained, partially constrained or not constrained for development. Required considerations include:
 - i. Watercourse and Wetland Habitat
 - ii. Forest Habitat
 - iii. Species at Risk Habitat
 - iv. Landscape Connectivity
 - v. Surficial and Bedrock Geology
 - vi. Steep Slopes
 - vii. Contaminated Sites
 - viii. Areas of Cultural Significance;
 - (ii) **Watershed Study** – This study shall identify potential impacts of development on any watersheds located in the area. The study shall comply with Policy EC-19;
 - (iii) **Transportation Study** – This study shall identify how the area can connect to the rest of the municipality and how internal mobility will be handled. The study shall include:
 - i. Reviewing existing transportation infrastructure, demand and policy to establish an understanding of existing mobility conditions;
 - ii. Applying the Municipality's regional travel demand forecasting model to determine potential impacts to regional mobility as a result of development;
 - iii. Recommending land use and network scenarios that support the mobility goals outlined in Chapter 7 of this Plan; and
 - iv. **Water and Wastewater Services Study** – This study shall establish existing water and wastewater infrastructure conditions and develop a macro-level

servicing strategy that will establish water, wastewater and stormwater servicing infrastructure requirements for development, including cost estimates and allocation assessment; and

c) Any applicable direction contained within this Plan and Council approved Priority Plans.

HC-8 Where a planning process for any of the areas identified in Table 3-3 as a Future Serviced Community has been initiated pursuant to HC-7, the Municipality shall adopt site-specific policies in the applicable secondary municipal planning strategy to guide future site design, land use, density and form of development. In developing site-specific policies, Council shall consider the following:

- a) all applicable policies of this Plan;
- b) the subdivision of land;
- c) the phasing of development;
- d) protection and/or restoration of significant environmental and cultural features, including wildlife corridors, the urban forest, wet areas, wetlands and watercourses;
- e) directing development away from sensitive environmental and cultural features, and areas that may be hazardous to the health and safety of residents, including measures to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire through site and building design and infrastructure;
- f) the integrity of regional parks or federal and provincial wilderness areas adjacent to the lands are maintained and buffered, including the functioning of shared environmental, recreational or cultural features;
- g) the movements of pedestrians and transit service are prioritized over car-oriented design, including short blocks, grid or modified grid mobility networks, pedestrian streetscapes, active transportation, and connections to surrounding community;
- h) the adequacy of public parks, open spaces and community facilities that meet the objectives of this Plan and the requirements of the Regional Subdivision By-law;
- i) impacts to municipal infrastructure and the need, if any, to concurrently approve by-laws to pay for growth related municipal infrastructure;
- j) the distribution of overall densities intended for the community, and between different development blocks, phases and land owners;
- k) the Suburban Design Guidelines contained in Appendix C of this Plan;
- l) community-scale or site-level green infrastructure, renewable energy options and other climate mitigation design elements are integrated in development;
- m) the provision of a mix of uses, community amenities, public parks and gathering areas; and

- n) provisions for incentive or bonus zoning and off-site improvements necessary to integrate the development in the neighbourhood.

3.5 RURAL COMMUNITY PLANNING

The municipality's rural area is the largest sub-region by land area and consists of many diverse rural communities that are critical to the region's success. Rural communities across the municipality have been shaped by their access to natural resources, such as fishing, forestry and agriculture as well as a network of open space. Rural communities also include distinct Mi'kmaq, African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities.

Maintaining the integrity of rural land and communities is important to rural residents and a fundamental aspect of the Regional Plan. The distinctive character of rural places is best protected where the economic climate supports and values working lands, and the development climate values the natural landscape and seeks to conserve it. This means avoiding fragmentation of the land that affects the character of the community, the functionality of its resource-based economy, and emerging industries such as tourism. As outlined in Chapter 2, this Plan manages growth in rural areas through its designations, including the Open Space Designation, Rural Resource Designation, Agricultural Designation and Rural Commuter Designation.

The challenges and opportunities in the municipality's rural areas are distinct from urban parts of the region. This includes a culture of close connection to the land, and history of settlement. Many of the existing community plans were completed by Halifax County, before amalgamation. These plans and their land use by-laws were developed with significant public input and continue to provide a solid foundation for planning in municipality's rural areas.

Some communities have seen change since the time the plans were written, especially those on the edge of the urban area. As a result, some of the policy guidance and land use regulations no longer reflect the communities' visions. The existing plans and land use by-laws may allow uses that the community feels are no longer appropriate or restrict uses that the community would like to support.

The Regional Plan and the Halifax Green Network Plan have also focused on stronger protections for the natural environment, and updated regulations are needed to ensure these policies are implemented. As part of the Rural Community Planning program, the Municipality will be developing a Rural Planning Framework that will build on existing community plans and provide updated policy and land use by-law regulations for the rural areas.

3.5.1 VISION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY PLANNING

A vision to help guide community planning in rural areas was developed during the 2021-2023 Regional Plan review, and was informed by previous planning in rural areas. This vision may be further refined as part of the Rural planning process:

Rural communities are defined by wilderness areas supporting ecological integrity, traditional rural economies, ecotourism and rural lifestyles. They also include well-defined and walkable centres offering a range of housing options, places to shop, learn, play and gather. Significant rural centres are thriving, compact, complete communities with multimodal connections to the rest of the region.

- HC-9 The Municipality shall implement a Rural Community Planning program to develop an updated rural land use planning framework for the Rural Area identified on Map 1, that supports the overall growth management of the Municipality and the sustainable development of rural communities. In developing and implementing the program, the Municipality shall be guided by the vision for rural communities and shall:**
- a) Prioritize protecting natural and cultural landscapes as identified in the Halifax Green Network Plan and Sharing Our Stories;**
 - b) Support working landscapes, including those supporting agriculture, forestry, fishing and other rural industries;**
 - c) Recognize the range of types and scales of rural communities and develop policies that support differing community contexts, including planning with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities;**
 - d) Identify rural infrastructure needs, such as groundwater capacity and wastewater management, to help better direct where growth can be accommodated;**
 - e) Explore options for rural mobility, including partnerships and micro-mobility options;**
 - f) Direct growth to rural centres where compact development patterns can support village main streets and a range of mobility options, including active transportation;**
 - g) Use Conservation Design Development as a tool to preserve open space and encourage clustered development;**
 - h) Foster rural community character and invest in unique community assets through land use and economic development policies; and**
 - i) Ensure land use regulations permit a diversity of housing types.**

3.5.2 RURAL SERVICES AND MOBILITY

With lower population densities and distance to serviced developments, providing central water, wastewater and frequent transit service is often very expensive and inefficient. Intensification and housing options can, however, be supported through alternatives such as Wastewater Management Districts and private wastewater utilities for conservation design developments. While not all rural growth centres will be able to intensify, this Plan supports the vitality of existing service centres or villages which provide important community services to large areas of the Municipality.

Connecting rural communities is important for rural economic viability and social equity. Rural mobility can be improved by clustering rural development in established centres, investing in strategic active transportation infrastructure, and expanding the Rural Transit Funding Program to improve rural mobility options. A range of rural mobility options is needed to serve the different types of rural communities, as described in Chapter 7 and the Integrated Mobility Plan.

HC-10 As part of the Rural Community Planning program, the Municipality shall continue to study options for servicing rural centres, including wastewater management districts and rural mobility, and consider the potential for semi-rural development in areas serviced by central water and/or sewer that abut un-serviced areas.

3.5.3 COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING

Rural communities are looking for ways to strengthen their economies, provide better quality of life, and build on local assets. Some communities are experiencing slow growth or even population decline and shrinking rural areas might find that their policies are not bringing the prosperity they seek, while fast-growing rural areas at the edge of the city face urban-style development pressures and loss of working landscapes. Given the large geographical area and diversity of local issues, it is important that rural community plans are developed by community for community, or are co-created to use local knowledge and address important issues while being aligned with other rural areas and the region. A robust community engagement program will develop local visions, action plans and land use policies for rural communities.

HC-11 As part of the Rural Community Planning program, the Municipality shall seek to use a participatory community engagement model to co-create and support the implementation of community visions, action plans and land use policies that use local knowledge to develop strong and resilient communities.

3.5.4 PLANNING FOR RURAL CENTRES

The municipality has the largest proportion of rural residents among census metropolitan areas in Canada and the largest rural population of any county in Nova Scotia. Rural challenges and opportunities regarding development are different from those in urban and suburban areas, and warrant policy consideration to address them effectively.

Detailed studies undertaken since the adoption of the 2006 Regional Plan have determined that the municipal costs and risks associated with piped services in rural centres are cost prohibitive. Similarly, conventional urban-style public transit with frequent service is not always feasible in rural communities due to low population and employment densities. These challenges can be mitigated by using clustered development as a more cost-effective approach for HRM to provide municipal services. The policies of this Plan direct new development to rural centres while protecting open spaces and resource lands for economic and environmental purposes.

The 2006 and 2014 Regional Plan identified a range of rural centres at different scales that would serve as hubs for surrounding areas. While some of those centres were envisioned as town or village-like places that would expect modest growth, while other centres were seen as places that would expect a more significant level of change while acting as service hubs.

While some centres are located on the edges of the suburban area and are influenced by that settlement pattern, other communities see strength in their rural character and are closely tied to the rural economy and lifestyle.

This Plan envisions a range of rural communities of different types and scales, that will require detailed planning based on their own context. As part of the Rural Community Planning program, the rural centres

set out in this Plan may be further revised based on identified service and infrastructure needs and capacities, as well as community input.

HC-12 To protect the character of rural communities and working landscapes, conserve open space and support clustered rural development, the Municipality shall establish a framework to direct growth in Rural Communities to Rural Growth Centres and Rural Local Centres as shown on Map 4 and in Table 3-5.

HC-13 To further protect the character of rural communities and working landscapes, the Municipality shall establish conservation design policies, as outlined in Chapter 10, to encourage growth within the Rural Growth Centres and to manage growth in between centres.

HC-14 The Municipality shall use the general categories of Rural Centres as set out on Map 4 and Table 3-5 to guide community planning and service provision. The communities, boundaries and characteristics of the Rural Centres identified in Table 3.5 may be further refined through the Rural Community Planning process and updated through amendments to this Plan.

Table 3-5: Rural Growth Centres and Rural Local Centres

Type of Centre	Name
Rural Growth Centres <i>Mix of housing types, including ground-oriented and small apartments</i> <i>Mix of commercial retail, institutional and recreational uses</i> <i>Opportunity for rural express transit and park & rides</i>	Hubbards Upper Tantallon Tantallon Crossroads River-Lakes/Fall River Enfield Lake Echo Porters Lake Musquodoboit Harbour
Rural Local Centres <i>Mix of housing types, primarily ground-oriented</i> <i>Mix of commercial retail, institutional and recreational uses</i>	Cherry Brook North Preston East Preston Head of Jeddore Oyster Pond Tangier Sheet Harbour Moser River Middle Musquodoboit Upper Musquodoboit Hatchet Lake Indian Harbour Lucasville Waverley Sambro Hubley Whites Lake

The centres identified in this Plan will be further refined through the Rural Community Planning process. There are concerns, however, that important sites within some centres could be inappropriately developed before further community planning is completed. Therefore, as an interim land use management tool, controls will be applied to certain lands within some of the rural growth centres. Under Policy IP-23 in Chapter 10 of this Plan, land uses may be approved by development agreement provided they are conducive to the creation of a focal point for the centre. This mechanism will remain in place until future community plans are completed and adopted by HRM.

3.5.5 DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE RURAL CENTRES

Ribbon development along highways is a concern for both local and regional landscape connectivity. Ribbon development is a linear settlement pattern that concentrates development along the road frontage, leaving interior landscapes undeveloped and inaccessible. As development extends further outward, the cost of servicing increases and traffic becomes heavier. Such development also obstructs natural landscapes and views, making scenic features less visible.

HC-15 As part of the Rural Community Planning program, the Municipality shall review secondary municipal planning strategies to discourage ribbon development along highways and scenic routes and to preserve views and access to natural landscape features. Reviews may include amendments to lot sizes and lot coverage, frontage, density, and natural landscape features.