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Item No. 15.1.2
Halifax Regional Council
December 9, 2025

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM: Brad Anguish, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 17, 2025

SUBJECT: **2023-00680: Suburban Plan Workplan and Community Engagement Strategy**

ORIGIN

Please see Attachment A for a summary of all motions leading to this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Municipality is responsible for land use planning as provided for and required by the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* (HRM Charter). The Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) is the overarching, strategic document directing how settlement occurs in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). On July 11, 2023 Regional Council directed the Chief Administrative Officer to initiate a process to develop a new comprehensive Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law for suburban areas (the Suburban Plan) and to return to Council with a Suburban Plan What We Heard Report, Revised Suburban Plan Public Participation Program and work plan following the completion of Regional Plan Review Phase 4 engagement program.

In August 2024, the Province passed amendments to the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations requiring HRM's provide for the adoption of a suburban plan in its municipal planning strategy no later than January 31, 2025. HRM determined that this deadline was not achievable and instead worked with the Province to develop an Interim Suburban Development Agreement Policy and an approach for potential Suburban Growth Areas. These policies were included in the proposed 2025 Regional Plan that was approved by Regional Council in June 2025 but ultimately refused by the Province. On October 3, 2025, the Province issued an Interim Planning Area Order designating HRM as an interim planning area. Amongst other things, the Interim Planning Area Order gives effect to the Minimum Planning Requirements and amends the Regional Plan by adding the interim suburban area policies for both Transit-Oriented Suburban Opportunity Sites and Suburban Growth Areas subject to policy criteria. Regional Council is now considering formal amendments to bring HRM into full compliance with the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations so that the Interim Planning Area Order can be lifted.

The proposed changes include guidance for the suburban planning process, including the core concepts of complete communities; safe, diverse, sustainable and affordable housing; open space and culture; human-scale design; accessible and inclusive design; and transit-supportive growth. Working in smaller geographic areas allows for the planning framework to be tailored to the needs of individual communities and for zoning to be changed on each individual property, while still reflecting the larger vision. This report provides an updated workplan and community engagement for the suburban planning process.

About Our Suburban Communities

In accordance with the Interim Suburban Area Policies, the suburban area encompasses lands outside of the Regional Centre, where municipal water and wastewater services and conventional transit are available or planned to be considered, and generally aligned with the Urban Settlement Designation.

Communities in the suburban area generally feature urban and suburban styles of development, with some retaining characteristics of the rural areas from which they have developed. They have grown independently over the years and were governed by different community plans, and even different local governments prior to amalgamation. While some areas have been relatively stable, others have experienced rapid growth. The goal of the suburban planning process is to update and simplify the current planning framework, which includes spending time in communities and learning and understanding the current opportunities and challenges of our growing and changing region including:

- **Building on Community Values and Assets:** Suburban communities provide valuable lifestyle options and have many assets, including generous parks and open spaces, lakes and waterfront areas, landscapes of cultural significance, community facilities, residential neighbourhoods, heritage properties, local businesses, regional employment centres, and institutional and industrial areas. While the goal of the suburban planning process is to create one plan for the area, it is also important that each community's history, character, culture, and sense of place is recognized and reflected in the plan. It will include policies to recognize similarities as well as differences and unique assets.
- **Identifying Opportunities and Challenges:** The suburban planning process will require a balanced approach to address the goal of accommodating housing growth while supporting the elements that make our suburban communities desirable places to live, work, and play. The Suburban Plan is a chance to address challenges communities face with affordable housing, climate change, infrastructure, and development pressure. By ensuring HRM's communities are growth ready, the land use framework can reflect Regional Council's goal to expedite housing supply and support the development of complete communities with a mix of housing options and access to goods, services and facilities.
- **Updating the Technical Framework:** There are currently eleven community plans and land use by-laws governing land use for over 66,000 properties in the Suburban Area. Most of the current Suburban Area community plans predate amalgamation in 1996 and while they have been amended on an ongoing basis, they have not been fully updated to reflect changing conditions and communities' current needs and goals. Staff have reviewed the existing plans and by-laws in detail as the current planning framework will need to be carefully considered as part of the new planning process.

Work Completed to Date

In 2023 Regional Council initiated the suburban planning process, with a focus on enabling strategic growth along proposed Rapid Transit Corridors. Since that time, the following work has occurred in the Suburban Area, enabling significant redevelopment opportunities:

- **Community Engagement:** In July 2023, Regional Council initiated the Suburban Plan and directed that initial engagement be conducted as part of Regional Plan Phase 4 engagement in the summer and fall of 2023.
- **Housing Accelerator Fund:** In October 2023, Regional Council further directed staff to implement actions under the Housing Accelerator Fund Agreement (HAF) between the Municipality and Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC). This resulted in the *Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing* process. Two rounds of site-specific amendments for housing in the Suburban Area were considered by Regional Council, the first in May 2024, and the second in

March 2025. Through this process, Regional Council enabled housing on approximately 50 sites in the Suburban Area that met the project criteria, enabling approximately 5000 units of housing. Also in May 2024, Regional Council approved amendments that enabled at least 4 units per lot in residential zones within the Suburban Area.

Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations: In August 2024, the Province of Nova Scotia issued amendments to the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations, which required the Municipality to undertake amendments to ensure compliance with the new regulations by December 31, 2024 and to deliver a Suburban Plan no later than January 31, 2025. The deadline to deliver a Suburban Plan by January 31, 2025 was not achievable, however HRM worked with the province to identify alternative approaches to enabling housing supply in the Suburban Area. The alternative approaches include an Interim Suburban Development Agreement Policy and Interim Suburban Growth Areas Policy. These are reflected in the Interim Planning Area Order issued by the Province in October 2025 and thereby incorporated into HRM's current Regional Plan.

- **Background Research, Analysis and Studies:** Since mid-2025, staff have conducted technical work, reviewing and analyzing the policies and regulations of the current eleven plans and land use by-laws including zones, and lands under development agreement. Ongoing technical studies include Suburban Area Culture & Heritage Research and Feature Identification; Commercial Real Estate Market Analysis; Suburban Area Main Streets: Research and Engagement; and Bonus Zoning Methodology for Large Sites.

Workplan and Community Engagement Update

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on the Suburban Plan Workplan and establish the Community Engagement Framework. The Suburban Plan will be completed in three phases with a community engagement program and interim updates to Council as described in the staff report:

- **Phase 1 – Listen, Learn, Confirm Key Directions:** Engage with the community to understand their needs and local context, explore local challenges and opportunities, and confirm key directions and approaches for the Suburban Plan.
- **Phase 2 – Share the Draft Plan:** Present a detailed draft plan and land use by-law and gather community input to refine and improve it before final approval.
- **Phase 3 – Adopt the Plan:** Finalize the plan, incorporate all feedback and technical insights, and prepare for official approval and implementation.

Community engagement will be a key component of the planning process. The goal of Suburban Plan Community Engagement Strategy (Attachment B) is to be transparent and inclusive at each phase of the project, inviting residents and interested parties, including development, design and construction industry, into a conversation about their interests, what they value about their communities, how their communities are unique (but also connected to the rest of the region), and how they would like to shape and direct change. A new vision for land use includes not only what goes where, but also how we can practically build complete communities for all that include beautiful public spaces, sustainable buildings, a well functioning transit system and other community services.

Based on initial community engagement through the Regional Plan Review process in the Summer and Fall of 2023, and subsequent Housing Accelerator Fund Urgent Changes for Housing, residents are concerned about increasing volumes of traffic, uneven levels of transit service, housing affordability, adequate access to schools and recreation, major weather events, flooding and development pressures. While some areas are pedestrian-friendly, other areas require significant travel by vehicle to access employment, services, and amenities. With more urban style infill development happening in the Suburban Area, communities are becoming more connected.

In response to this, the Suburban Planning process will be informed by the Regional Plan, HRM's Priorities Plans, as well as ongoing studies on infrastructure, as land use has direct impact on both local and regional infrastructure and "growth-readiness" is becoming increasingly important. The process will be grounded in the experience and feedback provided by residents and key partners in the various suburban communities. It will also be informed by recent feedback and decisions related to the Urgent Changes for Housing / Housing Accelerator Fund amendments, and the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council adopt the Suburban Plan Engagement Strategy for the suburban planning process initiated by Council on July 11, 2023 as generally outlined in Attachment B of his staff report.

BACKGROUND

Halifax Regional Municipality is responsible for land use planning for the region under the *HRM Charter*. Land use planning is concerned with the social, economic and sustainable development of communities.

One of the key strategic initiatives for HRM's Planning and Development department is developing a new Community Planning framework to replace the existing community plans and by-laws. The new planning documents will reflect the strategic direction of the Regional Plan, including modern development and design standards. This includes a comprehensive review of the municipality's current community planning documents and a reorganization into three major geographies, the Regional Centre, Suburban Area and Rural Area. The Regional Centre Plan has been adopted and continues to be updated. This report outlines the approach to developing a new Suburban Plan.

The Suburban Plan is intended to largely or completely replace eleven existing community plans with one plan that contains updated planning policies that reflect and address current opportunities and challenges experienced by suburban communities. The process will include key technical studies and significant community engagement to help generate support for how communities change and develop. It will help better align future land use with existing and planned infrastructure investments.

Provincial Role in Planning

The *HRM Charter* assigns primary responsibility to the Municipality for land use and specifies the purpose of a Municipal Planning Strategy. The *HRM Charter* outlines the key planning tools available to the Municipality and the process for adopting planning documents, including public engagement and consultation with adjacent municipalities. A planning strategy must also consider Provincial Statements of Interest, which address housing, drinking water, flood risk areas, agricultural land and infrastructure. Over the past number of years, the Provincial role in planning has increased. In August 2024, the Province of Nova Scotia issued amendments to the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations, which required the Municipality to undertake amendments to ensure compliance with the new regulations by December 31, 2024 and to deliver a Suburban Plan no later than January 31, 2025. The deadline to deliver a Suburban Plan by January 31, 2025 was not achievable, however HRM worked with the province to identify alternative approaches to enabling housing supply in the Suburban Area. The alternative approaches include an Interim Suburban Development Agreement Policy and Interim Suburban Growth Areas Policy. These are reflected in the Interim Planning Area Order issued by the Province on October 3, 2025.

Regional Plan

The Municipality has experienced rapid population growth between 2020 and 2024, on average 2.8% since 2020. The Regional Plan currently in effect directs 75% of growth to the Regional Centre and urban communities where municipal water, wastewater and transit services exist or are planned. The intent of this

policy is to encourage more financially and environmentally sustainable development by focusing growth in areas where municipal services already exist. This reduces the need for development to extend further away from the urban core into undeveloped areas where new infrastructure would be required to accommodate growth.

The Regional Plan also includes policies directing action through community planning such as consideration of environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas, heritage and cultural assets, economic development, diverse housing options, transit supportive land use, urban design, consideration of infrastructure and financial implications of growth, and supporting healthy and complete communities.

Priorities Plans

In addition to the Regional Plan, the Suburban Plan will consider the objectives, policies and actions of the municipality's various Priorities Plans, including:

- The Integrated Mobility Plan (2017)
- Rapid Transit Strategy (2020)
- Halifax Green Network Plan (2018)
- HalifACT 2050: Acting on Climate Together (2020)
- Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-27
- Sharing Our Stories: HRM's Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan (2024)
- African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity (2021)
- Urban Forest Management Plan (2025)

The Public Safety Strategy, the Affordable Housing Work Plan, the Industrial Employment Lands Strategy, as well as other strategic documents under development, will also be considered once completed. Functional Plans related to the Integrated Mobility Plan for key corridors such as Portland Street, Windmill Road and Bedford Highway and the overall implementation of the rapid transit network will also be considered as part of the planning process as they become available.

Additionally, the accelerated growth in the region is raising concerns from residents and service providers about the ability of the current infrastructure to accommodate the current and anticipated growth, even if the immediate growth may be slowing. There are key strategic plans and studies currently under development that will provide critical technical inputs into the suburban planning process including:

- A Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA): Initiated by the Municipality in 2023, this process is intended to support government and communities in making risk-based choices to address vulnerabilities, mitigate hazards and prepare for response to, and recovery from emergencies and disasters. The HRVA can also help assess relative risks of various land use choices.
- Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan: Required to consider broader infrastructure needs for a population of a million. This plan will be developed in parallel and help inform work on the Suburban Plan.
- Halifax Water Integrated Resource Plan Update: An integrated capital plan that will consider expected growth over the next 50 years, compliance, asset renewal and growth, to ensure the desired service delivery goals, as well as identify any additional gaps and programs required in the long-term plan.
- Link NS (formerly Joint Regional Transportation Agency) Regional Transportation Plan: A plan that makes sustainable growth and development possible and improves the safe and efficient movement of people and goods into, out of, and throughout Halifax and surrounding communities.

Community Plans

Most of the current Suburban Area Community Plans predate amalgamation in 1996 and have not been

comprehensively updated to keep up with current needs of communities. Each Community Plan has different definitions, policies, and processes. This results in a disjointed community planning framework. The goal of community planning in the Suburban Area is to join the multiple Community Plan Areas into one plan, while updating the policies and regulations.

In the Suburban Area, it is intended that eleven existing Community Plan Areas will be largely or completely replaced:

- Beaver Bank, Hammonds Plains and Upper Sackville
- Bedford
- Planning District 5 (Chebucto Peninsula)
- Cole Harbour/Westphal
- Dartmouth
- Eastern Passage/Cow Bay
- Halifax Mainland
- Sackville
- Sackville Drive
- Suburban Housing Accelerator
- Timberlea/Lakeside/Beechville

There are approximately 2,500 land use policies and 280 zones across the eleven existing Community Plan Areas in the Suburban Area, including the new Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan. The current community plans and land use by-laws in the Suburban Area provide insight into the vision for each community at the time that they were developed. They also often include site or topic specific policies that demonstrate a key interest for each community that may need to be carried forward.

For example, many neighbourhoods in the Suburban Area are regulated by development agreements (site or area specific legal agreements outlining development permissions in addition to zoning). While many have been completed, others continue to guide development and are subject to regional infrastructure charges for services such as water and wastewater.

DISCUSSION

The Municipality has experienced significant population growth and, while this trend is dynamic and subject to change, some growth is expected to continue. To support the region's projected growth, and respond to the cumulative impacts of density, the municipality will monitor growth and aim to share the results annually with service providers. To prepare for population growth to one million people, a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan will help forecast needs for renewing or building new infrastructure and services to accommodate growth. The suburban planning process will need to explore different growth assumptions to ensure that future development can be sustained and supported. Significant benefits can also be realized by simplifying the current planning framework.

Communities in the proposed Suburban Area generally feature urban and suburban styles of development, with some retaining characteristics of the rural areas from which they have developed. They have grown independently over the years and were governed by different community plans, and even different local governments prior to amalgamation. While some areas have been relatively stable, others have experienced rapid growth without accompanying investments in infrastructure and services. Staff reviewed the existing plans and by-laws in detail as the current planning framework will need to be carefully considered as part of the new planning process.

Suburban communities provide valuable lifestyle options and have many assets, including generous parks and open spaces, lakes and waterfront areas, landscapes of cultural significance, community facilities, residential neighbourhoods, heritage properties, local businesses, regional employment centres, and

institutional and industrial areas. However, based on initial community engagement through the Regional Plan Review process in the Summer and Fall of 2023, and subsequent Housing Accelerator Fund Urgent Changes for Housing, residents are also concerned about increasing volumes of traffic, uneven levels of transit service, housing affordability, adequate access to schools and recreation, major weather events, flooding and development pressures. While some areas are pedestrian-friendly, other areas require significant travel by vehicle to access employment, services, and amenities. With more urban style infill development happening in the Suburban Area, communities are becoming more connected.

While the goal of the suburban planning process is to create one plan for the area, it is also important that each community's history, character, culture, and sense of place is recognized and reflected in the plan. The suburban planning process will require a balanced approach to address the variety of challenges while supporting the elements that make our suburban communities desirable places to live, work, and play. The Suburban Plan is a chance to holistically address challenges communities face with housing, climate change, infrastructure, and development pressures. It will include policies to recognize similarities as well as differences and unique assets.

Suburban Area

The proposed Suburban Area includes many neighbourhoods and communities, including Armdale, Bedford, Clayton Park, Cole Harbour, Dartmouth, Eastern Passage, Fairview, Halifax Mainland, Sackville, Spryfield and other areas. It is a large area with a variety of built forms, heritage assets, environmental sensitivities, and levels of service. This general boundary is also included in the provincial *Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations* and Interim Planning Area Order indicating a provincial priority.

The Suburban Area encompasses lands outside of the Regional Centre, where municipal water and wastewater services and conventional transit are available or planned to be considered, and generally aligned with the Urban Settlement Designation. This definition may evolve over the course of the project.

Some of the general characteristics of the main proposed area include:

- Approximately 184 km² in area, 77 km of coastline and approximately 66,000 properties in 2025;
- Population of 222,940 and 93,494 dwelling units in 2021;
- 59% of households owned their housing, and 41% rented in 2021;
- 81% of workers in the Suburban Area commuted to work by private vehicle, 8% used transit, and 6% either walked or biked in 2021;
- 15% of the population was 14 years old or younger, 18% of the population was over 65 years old, 3.6% identified as Indigenous, 19.2% identified as Visible Minority, 13.9% as Immigrant, and 11.3% spoke both English and French at home in 2021; and
- Construction value in the Suburban Area was approximately \$914M and represented 37% of issued housing units in 2024 (2,218 units).

The Municipality's 2014 Regional Plan directs 75% of new households to the Regional Centre and urban communities. The intent of this policy is to encourage more financially and environmentally sustainable development by focusing growth in areas where municipal services already exist. This reduces the need for development and services to be extended further away from the urban core into undeveloped areas to accommodate growth, often resulting in the costly extensions and maintenance of services and infrastructure, as well as impacting open spaces and habitats.

The intent of the Suburban Plan is to focus on serviced areas closest to the Regional Centre, but an assessment of the boundary will be conducted as part of the planning process. Future Serviced Communities and Provincial Special Planning Area planning processes will continue to be considered separately. Any expansion to the Urban Settlement designation will continue to be considered as part of the Phase 5 Regional Plan Review process. The final boundary may also be adjusted based on analysis, community engagement, direction from other studies, administrative needs and other planning initiatives.

Workplan

Recognizing the complexity of the project, as well as the urgency of bringing forward a new plan for the Suburban Area, the workplan is organized around three key phases, which is targeting completion within this Council cycle. The workplan can be refined and revised as needed should new issues arise or as staff receive direction from Council at key milestones in the project. The workplan includes a detailed Engagement Strategy for the overall project discussed in more detail below and presented in Attachment B.

The workplan for the suburban planning process, presented in July 2023, included deliverables in two packages, one focused on growth areas, parks and open spaces and a second focused on established residential areas and employment lands. However, first the adoption of the two HAF packages in May 2024 and March 2025 addressed some overall changes to established residential neighbourhoods. This means that while these approved policies and regulations can be refined, the fundamental change to enable missing middle density is in effect in residential areas. Secondly, the *Halifax Regional Municipality Interim Planning Area Order* and *Interim Suburban Growth Policies* enabled consideration of key growth areas in the Suburban Area. Therefore, the updated workplan is organized around a single package for the whole Suburban Area with a streamlined process. The planning process will focus on consolidating, simplifying and modernizing planning policies. Potential growth scenarios will focus on alignment with infrastructure and other strategic directions.

Amendments of strategic importance may be brought forward sooner if the opportunity is identified or if unexpected issues arise. The timely delivery of the Suburban Plan relies on policy changes and site-specific policy amendments continuing to be considered through the suburban planning process, but there will be opportunity for requests to be advanced sooner if directed by Council. New paths to development in the suburban area are also enabled through the Ministerial Order as discussed above. The Risks section of the report identifies important considerations.

The updated process organized around three key phases, outlined in Figure 2: Suburban Planning Process and described further in Table 1: Workplan for Suburban Planning. Some of the work has been completed or advanced, including Housing Accelerator Urgent Changes for Housing, and work to advance provincial Minimum Planning Requirements.

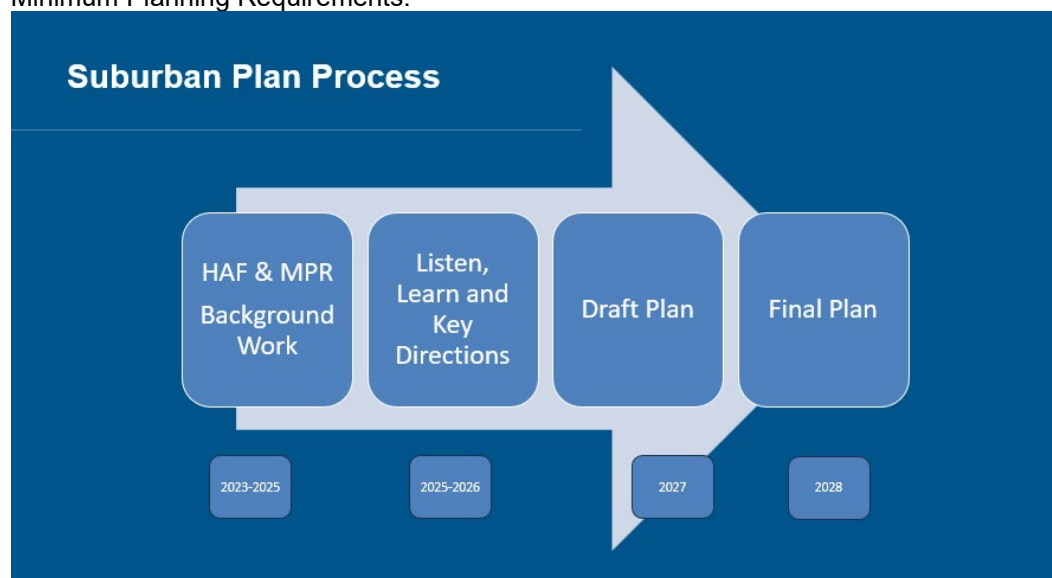


Fig.2 Suburban Planning Process

Table 1: Workplan for Suburban Planning

Phase	Timeline & Key Deliverables
Phase 1: Listen, Learn & Confirm Key Directions Engaging with the community to understand their needs and local context, explore local challenges and opportunities, and confirm key directions for the Suburban Plan.	2025-2026 - Review, initiate or participate in background technical studies and existing planning documents - Background research and best practice review - Review current plans, policies, and trends in the Suburban Area - Assemble key data sets for land use analysis - Work with Halifax Water and other service providers on a common set of growth assumptions and scenarios - Present a revised Workplan, and Engagement Strategy to Regional Council - Launch the first engagement phase in early 2026 to connect with community members and interested parties (including development, design and construction industry) on the broad vision, goals, local assets, opportunities, challenges, risks, key planning concepts, options for growth, initial directions, findings from studies, and current planning context. Confirm key directions with community members. - Continue to complete background studies, models, detailed land use, & issue analysis to support growth options. - Incorporate findings of infrastructure studies into the growth models and land use planning. - Provide <i>Key Themes, Ideas and Directions</i> report including the <i>What We Heard</i> report, findings from studies, updates on site specific requests, and next steps.
Phase 2: Share the Draft Plan Present a detailed draft plan and land use by-law and gather community input to refine and improve it before final approval.	2027 - Share a detailed draft plan and land use by-law informed by earlier engagement, technical studies, and other inputs with Council, community members and interested parties (including development, design and construction industry). - Complete a second round of engagement to gather feedback on the draft plan from community members and other interested parties. This phase will focus on detailed technical feedback. - Release a final <i>What We Heard</i> report summarizing feedback on the draft plan.
Phase 3: Adopt the Plan Finalize the plan, incorporate all feedback and technical insights, and prepare for official approval and implementation.	2028 - Finalize the plan, including key implementation tools incorporating community input and technical insights. - Present the Plan for formal approval process with Regional Council - Submit the Plan for provincial review.

Suburban Engagement Strategy

The Suburban Plan Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) is included in Attachment B of the staff report. It was developed to support the key phases of the Suburban Planning process, with several opportunities for community feedback planned between 2025 and 2028. The Strategy is guided by the municipal Community Engagement Strategy and Planning and Development's Community Engagement Guidebook. The goal is

to provide for clear, inclusive, and evolving engagement opportunities that meet the needs of residents and interested parties that we serve. The Strategy is organized around principles of transparency, accessibility and inclusion, trust and respect, timely and clear communication, and continuous learning. It is based on best practices and includes a broad range of engagement tools. The process will also need to include ample opportunity for sharing progress and direction with the provincial government, key interested parties and the development industry. It will include a range of formal and informal engagement and communication tools. A *What We Heard* report will be created after each phase and Staff will seek to identify how feedback has shaped the Suburban Plan and helped balance various community interests.



Provincial Legislative Requirements

Since 2021 there has been a greater provincial focus on land use planning in the municipality, including changes to the *HRM Charter*, the designation of provincial Special Planning Areas, which are approved by the Minister, direction for more streamlined processes, and a pause on some fees. There is a strong provincial interest in the Suburban Planning process as it relates to housing and related provincial initiatives, as reflected in the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations and Interim Planning Area Order. Staff continue to collaborate with the province on all of these matters.

Work Completed

On July 11, 2023, Regional Council initiated the suburban planning process, with priority given to the proposed rapid transit corridors identified in the municipal Rapid Transit Strategy. Council directed that initial engagement on the Suburban Planning process proceed through the Regional Plan Phase 4 and asked staff to return to Council with a workplan and an updated community engagement strategy for the planning process following the completion of Regional Plan Review Phase 4. This work, along with two phases of the Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing (Housing Accelerator Fund) process has been completed, along with the ongoing Regional Plan review.

The following work has been completed since initiation in July 2023:

- *Early Community Engagement:* Staff participated in the Regional Plan Phase 4 engagement process in the summer/fall of 2023. Results of the engagement were presented to Council in the December 2023 *What We Heard Report*. Key feedback included desire for pedestrian-friendly and accessible communities, support for enhanced transit and active transportation infrastructure and

interest in mixed use development with a range of shops, employment and housing. Concerns included impact of new growth on existing neighbourhoods, and the need for investment in mobility infrastructure and other services that are already heavily used.

- *Housing Accelerator Fund:* In October, 2023, Regional Council directed staff to implement actions under the Housing Accelerator Fund Agreement (HAF) between the Municipality and Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC). This resulted in the *Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing* process in 2023/2024. The original amendment package was approved by Council in May 2024, with a second package of amendments approved in March 2025. The process included community engagement, amendments to all planning documents and the creation of the new Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan and Land Use By-law for more than 50 sites in the Suburban Area that met the project criteria. This package also enabled at least 4 units per lot in residential zones within the Urban Service Area and overall increased regulatory capacity for housing from 170,000 units to 370,000 units across HRM.
- *Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations:* In August 2024, the Province of Nova Scotia issued amendments to the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations (MPR), which required the Municipality to undertake amendments to ensure compliance with the new regulations by December 31, 2024 and to deliver a Suburban Plan no later than January 31, 2025. The deadline to deliver a Suburban Plan by January 31, 2025 was not achievable, however HRM worked with the province to identify alternative approaches to enabling housing supply in the Suburban Area. The alternative approaches include an Interim Suburban Development Agreement Policy and Interim Suburban Growth Areas Policy. These are reflected in the Interim Planning Area Order issued by the Province on October 3, 2025 and are thereby incorporated into HRM's current Regional Plan. The Interim Growth Policies for nine Suburban Growth Nodes were added by the Province as part of the latest round of changes. These directives are largely consistent with the 2025 Regional Plan approved by Council, except for the addition of Melville Heights.
- *Background Research, Analysis and Studies:* Staff have been reviewing and analyzing the policies and regulations of the current eleven plans and land use by-laws including zones, lands under development agreement, and have initiated several background technical studies, including: Suburban Area Culture & Heritage Research and Feature Identification; Commercial Real Estate Market Analysis; Suburban Area Main Streets: Research and Engagement; and Bonus Zoning Methodology for Large Sites.

As part of the initiation of the suburban planning process, Council also directed that site specific requests for Municipal Planning Strategy Amendments in the Suburban Area be considered comprehensively through the suburban planning process. These are discussed in more detail below, including additional paths forward. Applications enabled by current Regional and Community Plan policies have continued to be considered and approved through development permits, development agreements or Land Use By-law amendments.

Review Issues

The suburban planning process will consider a new planning framework for the Suburban Area and zoning and regulations on every property. However, the Suburban Area is not a “blank slate” and land use decisions will need to consider the existing context, developments “in flight”, as well as future vision. This will require important conversations in the context of holistic planning, including natural and cultural features, mobility networks, existing neighbourhoods and employment areas. It will also identify areas for more detailed planning and may identify key potential strategic investments. Based on directions in the Regional Plan and Priorities Plans some of the key questions for the planning process will include:

- **Urban Structure:** What does the overall vision for land use look like in the Suburban Area, including parks and natural spaces, residential areas and employment areas? How can existing

policies and zones be simplified and updated to reflect a cohesive planning framework for suburban communities?

- **Complete Communities:** How can we build on existing assets and amenities to create complete communities for people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and incomes?
- **Diverse and Affordable Housing:** How can we remove barriers to housing and accelerate initiatives for a range of safe, sustainable, and more affordable housing options? How can we incentivize innovative, energy efficient and affordable housing in suburban communities?
- **Community Design:** How can we consider the relationship between buildings, streets, landscaped areas and public spaces to create safe and enjoyable spaces for people? How can we create or retrofit existing buildings, streets and public spaces that are attractive to residents and businesses? How can design embrace human scale, accessibility and inclusion?
- **Celebrating Culture, Arts and Heritage:** What are the cultural and heritage stories and assets that connect people to suburban communities? How can culture and heritage, including that of Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities be represented and celebrated?
- **Community Infrastructure:** How can we better provide parks, community facilities, emergency services, food security, solid waste management, and utilities in suburban communities? How can we ensure growth readiness in our communities? Where are there inequities in the provision of community infrastructure?
- **Environment and Climate:** What are the parks, natural and other open spaces that communities cherish in suburban communities? What areas are vulnerable to flooding or other natural hazards? How can we act on climate, create resilient communities and protect natural areas?
- **Options for Mobility:** How can we create connected mobility networks, complete streets, and coordinated mobility in suburban communities? How can we balance the needs of motorized vehicles with those of walking or rolling through better and safer connections? How can we direct growth to areas easily accessible by transit?
- **Economic Prosperity:** How can we work with institutional partners to provide additional opportunities for employment uses? How can we support small businesses, retail and emerging sectors, industrial uses, tourism, inclusive economic prosperity, and the green economy?
- **Implementation:** What tools do we have or need to implement the new plan? How will land use decisions be made in the Suburban Area after the plan is adopted?
- **Council directions:** Through various motions since initiation, Council has also directed other work and considerations to the Suburban Planning process, as indicated in Attachment A of this report.

The suburban planning process will be informed by several studies currently being undertaken at the regional level, the regional population and employment model as periodically updated, and other provincial and municipal studies, such as a Housing Needs Assessment, Inclusionary Zoning Study, and Industrial Lands Employment Study. Other specific studies related to the project will be completed and key findings and directions will be brought forward to Council at project milestones for confirmation or refined direction.

Site-Specific Requests

Requests for policy changes on individual sites will continue to be accepted for consideration through the Suburban Planning process and have been reviewed and presented to Regional Council on an ongoing basis. Many of these requests have been able to be advanced through concurrent policy work or may be

able to proceed through the recently enabled interim growth policies and Minimum Planning Requirements incorporated into the Regional Plan pursuant to the Interim Planning Area Order. There have been several paths for site-specific requests, and the options include:

- **Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing (HAF):** Through these amendments, the municipality was able to enable approximately 50 site-specific development requests to proceed as the result of amendments to existing plans and by-laws, as well as the creation of the Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan and By-law. Many of these original site-specific requests were approved by Regional Council in May 2024 and a second tranche of sites was approved March 2025. The policy applying to these sites will continue to be refined through the Suburban Planning process when these sites brought into the larger Suburban Planning framework.
- **Existing Enabling Policies:** Before being added for consideration through the Suburban Planning process, all applicants submitting site-specific development requests are encouraged to have their requests reviewed by staff in order to identify any existing policies that may allow for development to be considered by rezoning or development agreement. Applications enabled under current policy have been and will continue to be accepted and processed while the Suburban Planning process is underway. Many changes have been made to existing policies through the Regional Plan process to enable projects under the existing framework.
- **Interim Transit-Oriented Suburban Area Opportunity Site Policy:** First proposed as part of the June 19 2025 Regional Plan, before being adopted as part of the [Provincial Interim Planning Area Order](#) (N.S. Reg. 195/2025) on October 3, 2025, this policy enables property owners to apply for a development agreement for sites within an 800 metre walkshed of a planned Bus Rapid Transit route and the Mill Cove Ferry Terminal, as identified by the Rapid Transit Strategy, as well as the Downsview, Cobequid and Sackville Transit Terminals. The policy includes several other criteria and considerations that developments would be required to meet in order to be considered. It is estimated that approximately 100 of the requests received to date for consideration through the Suburban Planning process would be located within the walksheds described by this policy, though staff have not completed reviews of the requests for eligibility. Potential applicants are encouraged to contact staff to determine if their proposed developments would qualify for consideration under this policy and to understand the application process and submission requirements.
- **Interim Suburban Growth Area Opportunity Site Policy:** The [Provincial Interim Planning Area Order](#) (N.S. Reg. 195/2025) also identified nine “Growth Area Opportunity Sites”, based on sites first proposed as part of the 2025 Regional Plan. Applications for these sites are now able to be made, in order to seek Council consideration of significant mixed-use development through comprehensive community planning. Approximately 6 requests submitted for consideration through the Suburban Planning process are located within areas identified by this policy. Comprehensive neighbourhood planning for these sites would be brought to Regional Council for initiation, as well as any potential development agreements for early phases of development. Potential applicants can contact staff to determine if their proposed developments would qualify for consideration under this policy and to understand the application process and submission requirements.
- **Suburban Planning Process:** Remaining requests will continue to be considered through the suburban planning process and brought forward to Regional Council for consideration. Some may be initiated by Council sooner or brought forward by staff as site-specific amendments as the Suburban Plan proceeds.

Parallel Community Planning Processes

There are several community and neighbourhood planning processes in the Suburban Area that will be advanced separately but may be coordinated with the Suburban Planning process. They include:

- Mi'kmaq First Nations: The Halifax Regional Municipality is located in the Sipekni'katik and

Eskikewa'kik districts of Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaq First Nations. Halifax is commonly known to the Mi'kmaq as K'jipuktuk, meaning Great Harbour. While First Nation lands are outside municipal jurisdiction, the suburban planning process can be an opportunity for community engagement, exchange of information, and work that can support environmental sustainability, economic prosperity, and greater commemoration and representation of Mi'kmaq culture. This can also be an opportunity to work with organizations that serve the needs of Urban Indigenous residents. The municipality is committed to understanding community needs and fostering a relationship that is built on respectful communication and trust.

- African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP): The *Road to Economic Prosperity for African Nova Scotian Communities* contains actions to support African Nova Scotian (ANS) communities through Community Action Planning. The Municipality has created an African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP) program, which will allow ANS communities to develop their own action plans with municipal support. This work will enable ANS communities to identify community needs and priorities, establish a vision, and create action plans. The Municipality will then support these community actions by considering amendments to applicable community plans and land use by-laws consistent with the HRM Charter, or through other actions under the Municipality's jurisdiction. The Municipality can develop new planning policies and land use regulations for ANS communities that are responsive to community needs and priorities. Planning strategy reviews can be iterative, particularly if a community has identified a need to address and prioritize an urgent planning issue before comprehensive community-wide policy can be developed. In the Suburban Area, this work has been ongoing in the Beechville community. Community Planning staff will work to coordinate with ANSCAP staff to ensure the two processes are aligned.
- Special Planning Areas: There are currently 16 Provincial Special Planning Areas (SPAs) in HRM designated under the *Housing in HRM Act*. Ten SPAs are in or adjacent to the Suburban Plan Area. While the Minister has approved amendments to Community Plans within some SPAs, others are being actively considered. These will continue to be considered separately.

Governance & Key Partner Relations

The process will include frequent updates and opportunities for feedback from internal partners and Regional Council. The process will also include technical advice from key departments and service providers, such as Halifax Water and staff will continue to share information and updates with provincial partners, including the Executive Panel on Housing.

In addition, as part of the Engagement Strategy, one or more working groups may be established with representation from various industry and community stakeholders.

Future Governance and Administrative Structure

Since the establishment of Halifax Regional Municipality in 1996, Regional Council has enabled the creation of Community Councils. The number of Community Councils and the geographical areas they cover have changed over time. New boundaries of planning documents may affect the structure of the municipality's Community Councils to ensure consistent decision-making body has jurisdiction over land use by-law amendments or appeals pertaining to one planning document.

Following the adoption of the Regional Centre Plan, Regional Council approved amendments to Administrative Order No. 48 to create a Regional Centre Community Council to advise Council on changes to planning documents and make decisions on land use by-law amendments and site plan and variance appeals in the Centre Plan Area. However, development agreements remained under the jurisdiction of the pre-existing Community Councils. With the approval of the Suburban Housing Accelerator Plan and By-law, Regional Council again approved amendments to AO 48 but this time providing full jurisdiction over

the plan to Regional Council, given the site specific and interim nature of that plan area. The creation of the Suburban Plan will need to explore options for the future of Community Councils, as most of the current Electoral Districts are fully or partially located in the proposed Suburban Area.

Conclusion

The Suburban Planning process is an opportunity of strategic importance to sustainable development and growth. Its goal is to engage communities in identifying key opportunities and challenges and a vision for the future that can be implemented through a planning framework that is easily accessible and understandable by all. It is also a key component of implementing the strategic directions of the Regional Plan and consideration of the Priorities Plans at the property level while also prioritizing diverse, safe, affordable and sustainable housing supported by complete communities.

The proposed Suburban Area includes many diverse communities and a complex geography that features lakes, parks, coastal areas, commercial nodes and employment lands. This dynamic area is constantly changing with new developments and entire new communities being planned and added. While some communities are well connected and well served, in other areas the infrastructure and complex geography need to be carefully considered to ensure that future planning policies support the creation of sustainable, complete and healthy communities.

The Suburban Planning process may therefore include more careful phasing and coordination of growth with infrastructure. While the goal is to bring the lands under one plan and to build on the Centre Plan framework, planning policies and tools are expected to be tailored to the character, opportunities and challenges of the different suburban communities. The process will include a community engagement, consideration of site-specific development requests and check-ins with Council at each phase of the project. The Suburban Planning process presents an exciting opportunity to learn about the key issues of suburban communities, develop relationships, and chart new planning policies that will help shape communities for years to come.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate budget implications resulting from the report recommendations. General administration of the proposed suburban planning process can be carried out during the 2025/26 fiscal year within existing resources and budget. Staff will return to Council for additional resources as may be required during the development of the planning process.

Should the Suburban Plan ultimately be approved by Council, it can be expected to have some of the following impacts:

- Streamlined development application processes are expected to result in internal efficiencies once transition to the new Plan is completed;
- Potential for increased permit and tax revenue related to growth;
- Policy directions that may result in additional costs such as additional neighbourhood planning processes; the creation of new heritage conservation districts; additional investments in transit and local infrastructure (including land acquisitions) and potential recommendations for amended engineering standards;
- Policy directions may result in incentive or bonus zoning and consideration of inclusionary zoning programs, and new infrastructure charges; and
- Establishment of new or realignment of existing Community Councils.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed suburban planning process is one of the key strategic municipal objectives under the current 2025/26 Business Plan. In addition to good planning principles, the process will use the recently adopted policy “lenses” adopted by the Municipality in 2024 enable the organization to consider a problem, decision, or action to be undertaken from different points of view. The Suburban Plan will include these lenses in the planning process as part of identifying and mitigating risks:

- Environment and Climate Action (ENV) Equity
- Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA)
- Risk Management / Continuous Improvement (RM/CI)

The following risks have been identified for the process:

- **Legislative Context:** Land use planning is currently subject to rapid and at times sweeping legislative changes which may require the suburban planning process to pivot and respond to new requirements. The current planning tools are in some respects limited and may not be adequate in coordinating growth or infill development with infrastructure needs. Land use planning decisions are also increasingly scrutinized in legal forums, and the impacts of the decision of the *Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) ruling in Annapolis Group Inc. v. Halifax Regional Municipality, 2022 SCC 36 (SCC)* present new risks related to managing and regulating development.
- **Technical Review:** The amount of growth and change anticipated in the Suburban Area is expected to be significant and a thorough technical review is critical. This review would include an assessment of risks, opportunities, and competing goals or interests. At its core, during this process, the land use rights for 66,000 properties will be affected. While some technical issues can be anticipated, others may arise during the planning process. Emerging issues may require additional technical analysis, and, in some cases, areas may need to be identified for future planning. To help mitigate this risk, staff are proposing a robust technical and issue identification phase at the start of the process and establishing a technical team composed of key internal staff and service providers.
- **Infrastructure Risks:** Recent increases to regulatory capacity, which included the Centre Plan, Housing Accelerator Fund amendments, master planning for Special Planning Areas, and ongoing enabled applications have increasingly highlighted growing risks to services and infrastructure. This includes water, sewer, power, transportation, transit, emergency and other services. The anticipated continued increase in population requires the completion of a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Plan. Link Nova Scotia's Regional Transportation Plan (released August 2025) and the Halifax Water Integrated Resource Plan (expected in 2026-2027) are key inputs into the Suburban Plan.
- **Climate Change and Emergency Risks:** Lands in the Suburban Area may be prone to flooding, wildfires and other limitations on emergency response. To mitigate this risk, staff will work with the Environment & Climate Change team and review the Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment initiative to proactively identify potential risks with respect to land use planning, and develop more detailed assessments where warranted.
- **Financial Risks:** Land use changes and their related need for services have real and long-term financial impacts on the municipality and need to be anticipated. Infrastructure deficits in relation to growth have tangible impacts on the safety and quality of life of residents, as well as the economic and business environment. The Suburban Plan will consider the servicing and transportation infrastructure costs required to support the growth.
- **Community Impact/Reputational Risk:** The suburban planning process will impact thousands of property owners, interested parties, business owners, diverse communities and service providers. A complex and technical process that can impact property rights at the local level can lead to excitement but also lack of understanding, misinformation, fear and even opposition. To help mitigate this risk, staff are proposing a robust community engagement plan with at least three phases of engagement, unique project branding and a communication plan that will seek to present information as clearly as possible and encourage feedback from as many voices as possible.

- **Loss of Cultural, Heritage and Natural Asset Risks:** Cultural, heritage and natural assets may be put at risk if not considered with future policies for land use. This can be mitigated by using the framework and relationships developed through CHPP and other Priority Plans.
- **Timeline, Staff and Project Resources:** Project timelines, technical analysis and community engagement can be affected by the availability of staff and financial resources. The timeframes proposed in this report are aggressive. To help mitigate this risk, staff have been building a strong Community Planning team that can prioritize this planning process, directing applications for amendments to Municipal Planning Strategies to the overall suburban planning process, and securing budget for consultation services to help support the project.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Suburban Plan will create a unified planning framework for communities in the Suburban Area. The project boundary encompasses numerous communities, including Armdale, Bedford, Clayton Park, Cole Harbour, Dartmouth, Eastern Passage, Fairview, Sackville, and Spryfield. The area is home to many residents, businesses, cultural communities, and interested parties. The Community Engagement Strategy provided for Council approval in Attachment B is informed by early engagement through the Regional Plan Review, the *2024 HRM Community Engagement Strategy*, and the *P&D Community Engagement Guidebook* referenced in HRM 2023-002-AO. A best practice review of comparable processes has also been completed.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications of this report identified at this time. The Suburban Plan will consider a range of policies that deal both directly and indirectly with the natural environment, climate adaptation and efficient and sustainable use of land. The implications of any proposed policy changes will be considered throughout the planning process and outlined in future reports to Council.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose to:

1. Direct changes to the proposed community engagement strategy based on the information and workplan presented in this report. This may require a supplementary report and could cause delays to starting engagement for the suburban planning process.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

Municipal planning strategy

227 (4) A municipal planning strategy must

- (a) be reasonably consistent with every statement of provincial interest; and
- (b) fulfill the minimum planning requirements.

Secondary planning strategy

- 231 (1)** A municipal planning strategy may provide for the preparation and adoption of a secondary planning strategy that applies, as part of the municipal planning strategy, to a specific area or areas of the Municipality.

Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations

- 4A (2)** In addition to the requirements prescribed in subsection 229(1) of the Charter and Section 4, a municipal planning strategy must do all of the following to address the issue of housing supply:

...

- (e) provide for the adoption of a secondary municipal planning strategy and the implementation of a land-use by-law for the area of the Municipality identified as the suburban area on the map attached as Appendix A, or a substantially similar area, no later than January 31, 2025;

....

An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Housing

- 13 (1)** Notwithstanding the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, an applicable municipal planning strategy or any by-law, policy or practice of the Halifax Regional Municipality, where the Halifax Regional Municipality Council is considering adopting or amending a planning document, the Council may not refer the matter to a community council for a recommendation prior to the council's decision on the matter.

- (2)** Subsection (1) ceases to have effect on and after November 25, 2026.

- 14 (1)** Notwithstanding the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, an applicable municipal planning strategy or any by-law, policy or practice of the Halifax Regional Municipality, where the Halifax Regional Municipality Council is considering any planning decision under Part VIII of the Act or a community council is considering any planning decision it is empowered to make under the policy establishing the community council, the Council or community council may not refer the matter to a planning advisory committee or any other advisory committee of the Council for a recommendation prior to the Council's or the community council's decision on the matter.

- (2)** Subsection (1) ceases to have on or after November 25, 2026.

Interim Planning Area Order made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs under subsection 229A(2) of Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

Now, therefore, I order the following:

1. The Halifax Regional Municipality is designated as an interim planning area.
2. This interim planning area may be referred to as the "Halifax Regional Municipality Interim Planning Area."
3. Development within the Halifax Regional Municipality Interim Planning Area is hereby regulated to give effect to clauses 4A(2)(c), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), (j), (k) and (l) of the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations.

4. In particular, within the Halifax Regional Municipality Interim Planning Area all of the following apply:
- (a) The Regional Municipal Planning Strategy is amended by adding the Interim Suburban Area Policies attached as Schedule A immediately after Section 6.3.2A.
 - (b) The Interim Suburban Area Policies contained in Schedule A apply to the Suburban Area indicated on the map attached as Schedule B.
- ...

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Origin Motions

Attachment B: Suburban Plan Engagement Strategy

Attachment C: Suburban Area Community Profile

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Attachment A Suburban Planning Origin Motions

July 11, 2023 Regional Council (Item No. 15.1.10):

MOVED by Councillor Cuttell, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Initiate a process to develop a new comprehensive Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law for suburban areas (the Suburban Plan) with a priority given to enabling transit-supportive, mixed-use development as outlined in the staff report dated June 23, 2023, including amending the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Regional Subdivision By-law and amending or repealing any applicable secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws to implement the new plan;
2. Use the Regional Plan Review engagement program, as presented to Regional Council on June 20, 2023, as the initial public participation program policy guiding the Suburban Plan;
3. Return to Council with a Suburban Plan What We Heard Report, Revised Suburban Plan Public Participation Program and Revised Suburban Plan Work Plan following the completion of Regional Plan Review Phase 4 engagement program;
4. Direct staff to bring forward requests for additional staff resources as outlined in this report as part of the 2024-2025 Budget and Business planning process;
5. Effective immediately, direct any new requests for site-specific amendments to Municipal Planning Strategies in the Suburban Area to the suburban planning process, and direct staff to address current requests as generally outlined in Attachment A.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

May 23, 2024 Regional Council (Item No. 12.1)

Approval of Case 2023-01065 Housing Accelerator Fund - Urgent Changes to Planning Documents for Housing & Suburban Housing Accelerator SMPS & LUB, and direction to consider additional sites.

September 10, 2024 Regional Council (Item No. 15.5.1)

MOVED by Councillor Morse, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report that makes recommendations for alternatives to angle controls as part of the Suburban Planning process.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

July 9, 2024

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Morse

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to prepare a staff report:

1. Outlining the process and costs to undertake a Wind Impact Study for Lake Micmac, and further outlining the process to amend the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law and the Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law to establish maximum height restrictions for development around Lake Micmac; and,
2. Request that public participation be undertaken in accordance with the Public Participation Resolution

adopted by Regional Council.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

June 12, 2024 Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council (Item No. 15.1)

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee

THAT Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide a staff report to consider amendments to the Dartmouth Land Use By-law to impose a maximum building height and minimum setbacks in the R-1, R-2, and TH zones.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

Feb. 25, 2025 Regional Council (Item No. 16.1)

MOVED by Councillor Cuttall, seconded by Councillor Gillis

That Halifax Regional Council:

2. Direct that the Chief Administrative Officer consider, as part of the Suburban Planning process, amendments to applicable community plans and land use by-laws to require buildings in commercial zones located within rapid transit walksheds or on corridors routes in the Suburban Area, to include opportunities for ground level commercial uses to support complete and walkable communities as permitted by the HRM Charter.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

August 23, 2022 Regional Council (Item No. 15.1.14 Case 24077)

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Morse

THAT Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to give consideration of potential policy changes for the Wentworth and Bedford South area along the Bedford highway included but not restricted to through Plan and By-law Simplification Program (Suburban Plan), for the following properties:

- 736 Bedford Highway; 740 Bedford Highway; 746 Bedford Highway; 14 Millview Avenue; PID 00430447; and PID 00360412.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

Regional Council June 29, 2021 (Item No. 11.8.7)

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Deagle Gammon

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to provide a staff report to:

1. Consider the historic area of Shore Drive and the Fort Sackville area of Bedford as a potential future Heritage Conservation District.
2. Consider the historic area of Prince's Lodge, with its historic homes, Rotunda and Hemlock Ravine Park and Prospect Village as a potential future cultural landscape.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

May 9, 2017 Regional Council (Item No. 14.1.5)

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Craig

1. Initiate a process to review and consider amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax and the Land Use By-law for Halifax Mainland for properties within Schedule "R". The review would consider issues such as appropriate land uses, planning tools, maximum height, density, built form requirements, and consider opportunities to expand Schedule "R" onto properties that abut the Bedford Highway and are located between the existing segments of Schedule "R".

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

June 10, 2025 Regional Council (Item No. 10.1)

MOVED by Councillor Kent, seconded by Councillor Hartling

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to consider the appropriate studies of the industrial and waterfront lands in Eastern Passage, known as the former Texaco Refinery/Valero Lands, as part of the Suburban Planning process.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

June 19, 2025 Regional Council (Item No. 4.1)

MOVED by Councillor Cuttell, seconded by Councillor Morse

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to consider options to require a mix of unit types and sizes in all communities as part of the Suburban Plan process.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

HALIFAX

Engagement Strategy



Suburban Plan

2025



Acknowledgement

Halifax Regional Municipality is located in the traditional, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, who have lived here since time immemorial. We recognize that we are all Treaty People and respect the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed here. Through this planning process, we seek to strengthen our commitment to a relationship of trust and collaboration with local First Nations and the Indigenous community.

Affirmation

We acknowledge that Nova Scotia is the birthplace of the African presence in Canada. African Nova Scotians are a distinct founding people in our community who have contributed to and have been a key part of Nova Scotian culture and history for over 400 years. We acknowledge that African teachings, strength, and perseverance continue to challenge and inspire our community.

HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS ORGANIZED

This Engagement Strategy guides various engagement phases and activities throughout the Suburban Plan. The document is organized in five sections:

1. **Introduction:** A summary of the strategy and its purpose.
 2. **Engagement approach:** A detailed explanation of the guiding principles and tools we will use to engage the community.
 3. **Engagement implementation:** A breakdown of how each engagement phase will be organized and executed.
 4. **Evaluation:** A framework for assessing the effectiveness of our engagement efforts.
 5. **Glossary:** A list of words and definitions frequently used in the Suburban Plan project.
-

Throughout the document, you will find information that highlights the goals driving our engagement approach and the tools we will use to achieve them. If you require access to this information in a language or format that is more accessible to you, please email suburbanplan@halifax.ca.

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Introduction

1



Land use planning

1.1

Municipalities have the primary responsibility for land use planning. Land use planning is concerned with the social, economic and sustainable development of communities. It seeks to organize land use to ensure an efficient and strategic use of land, safeguard natural resources, reduce land use conflicts and the impacts of development, and to support other community goals such as equitable access to housing, transit, recreational opportunities, and beautiful public spaces.

Guided by a vision for the future, professional planners work closely with residents, community groups, property owners and others to develop a plan and supporting regulations to guide growth and change in the community. Any new plan or changes to a plan must be approved by Council.

Planning framework

1.2

Land use and infrastructure in the Halifax Regional Municipality is guided by the Regional Plan. The Regional Plan is further implemented by a series of priority plans and community plans (or Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies) and their associated land use by-laws.

The **Suburban Plan** is intended to **replace all or portions of eleven existing community plans** with one plan and one land use by-law that contains updated planning policies and regulations that reflect and address current opportunities and challenges experienced by suburban communities. The Suburban Plan will not replace community planning work already underway in communities such as Beechville and Millbrook First Nation lands in the Suburban Area. The new plan and land use by-law will be developed with the understanding that both the documents and the communities they guide will evolve, ensuring they remain living documents that are updated as needed after adoption.

Purpose

1.3

The Halifax Regional Municipality is experiencing rapid growth, placing significant pressure on its suburban communities. Many of the planning documents guiding these areas were created prior to the municipality's amalgamation in 1996, leaving them outdated in addressing current challenges. To tackle these issues, Regional Council launched the suburban planning process, with a focus on complete and accessible communities and encouraging transit-supportive development along proposed rapid transit corridors.

The suburban planning process will be bolstered by ongoing initiatives within communities. The process will involve close collaboration with diverse cultural groups, including Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities, some of which are leading independent planning efforts. The municipality has created an African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP) program, which will allow



African Nova Scotian (ANS) communities to develop their own action plans with municipal support. This work will enable ANS communities to identify community needs and priorities, establish a vision, and create action plans. The municipality will then support these community actions through amendments to applicable community plans and land use by-laws or through other actions under the municipality's jurisdiction. The ANSCAP program will continue in tandem with the suburban planning process.

The Suburban Plan will **establish a unified planning framework** for growth that integrates critical infrastructure, housing affordability and environmental sustainability. Central goals include promoting higher-density, mixed-use development near rapid transit, fostering affordable housing options and aligning land use policies with the mobility objectives of the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) and the Rapid Transit Strategy.

Additionally, the Suburban Plan will coordinate with projects led by Halifax Water, Link Nova Scotia (Joint Regional Transportation Agency), the Regional Plan review and other key projects and municipal priority plans. Central to this project is a commitment to **robust engagement and inclusive outreach**, ensuring transformative and equitable community development.

Area

1.4

The Suburban Plan will create a unified planning framework for communities that are located **outside the Regional Centre** and generally **inside the Urban Settlement Designation**. The project boundary encompasses numerous communities, including Armdale, Bedford, Clayton Park, Cole Harbour, Eastern Passage, Fairview, Sackville and Spryfield, with potential refinements based on further analysis and public input. While the intent is that the Suburban Plan focus on serviced areas, minor changes to the boundary may be required to efficiently administer the plan based on additional analysis and community engagement.



Project phases

The project will be organized in three key phases, supported by two periods of engagement, generally between 2025 and 2028, subject to minor change based on various studies, reviews, and Regional Council directions.



PHASE 1

Listen, learn and confirm key directions

PHASE 2

Share the plan

PHASE 3

Adopt the plan

Project phases breakdown

1.5

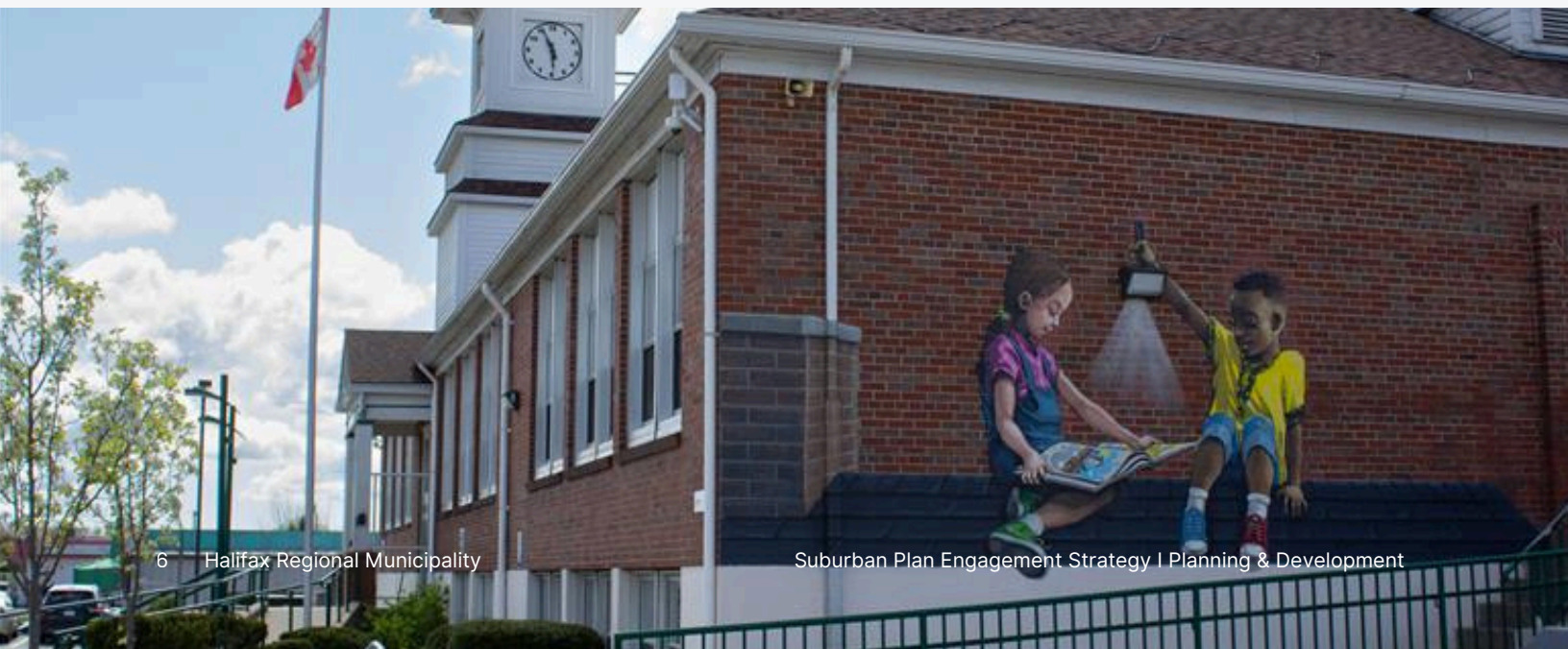
PHASE 1

2025-2026

Listen, learn and confirm key directions

Engaging with the community to understand their needs, explore local challenges and opportunities, and gather insights to shape key directions and the Suburban Plan.

- Review current plans, policies, and trends in the Suburban Area.
- Review, initiate or participate in background technical studies.
- Present a revised work plan, engagement strategy and initial directions to Regional Council for consideration.
- Launch the first engagement phase in 2025 to connect with community members, understand the unique character of each suburban community and identify local challenges and opportunities.
- Develop and share a vision for suburban communities, including key directions, major initiatives, growth options, and community design concepts.
- Publish the first What We Heard report summarizing feedback from Phase 1 and a document summarizing the key directions that will guide the development of the Suburban Plan.



PHASE 2

2027

Share the plan

Present a detailed draft plan and gather community input to refine and improve it before final approval.

- Draft and present a detailed draft plan and land use by-law informed by earlier engagement, technical studies and staff input.
- Conduct a third round of engagement to gather feedback on the draft plan from community members and other key partners.
- Release a final What We Heard report summarizing feedback on the draft plan.

PHASE 3

2028

Adopt the plan

Finalize the plan, incorporate all feedback and technical insights and prepare for official approval and implementation.

- Finalize the plan, incorporating community input and technical insights.
- Present the plan for formal approval process with Regional Council.
- Submit the plan for provincial review.



Engagement approach

2

The Suburban Plan's engagement approach is guided by the municipality's **Community Engagement Strategy**, which provides a framework for all municipal projects to enhance diversity, inclusion and consistency across our engagement efforts. In addition, the Community Planning team has developed project-specific commitments based on co-creation, experience, feedback and evaluation to ensure meaningful participation.

Together, the principles below will shape engagement that is clear, inclusive, community-driven and continuously evolving to meet the residents we serve.



Feedback welcomed

The engagement team actively invites feedback on how to improve engagement processes and strengthen adherence to these principles, reinforcing the municipality's commitment to meaningful and inclusive community participation.

Transparency

1

- Provide clear, accurate and timely information about engagement opportunities and decision-making processes.
- Clearly define the level of influence the community has in each stage of the project.
- Share relevant background information and decision-making criteria upfront.
- Ensure that community input is acknowledged, documented and reflected in outcomes.
- Prepare for engagement with relevant information and, when possible, include decision-makers in the process.
- Consider site-specific development requests in a transparent manner as part of the overall planning project.

Accessibility and inclusion

2

- Meet people where they are through a variety of platforms including online, in-person and print with accessible, equitable and diverse engagement methods.
- Remove barriers to participation by considering physical, cognitive, linguistic and other accessibility needs for each engagement event. Tools include, but are not limited to, accessible space planning, daycare services, translation/interpretation, plain language, etc.
- Plan well in advance to accommodate accessibility needs for engagement events, also offer flexible engagement opportunities that can adapt to accessibility needs on short notice.
- Design inclusive spaces where all voices are heard, valued and considered in decision-making.
- Select and support spaces for input that are accessible and equitable for all, ensuring all participants feel heard and valued at every engagement event.
- Ensure diverse forms of community feedback by providing varied timeframes, forums, formats and/or locations.

Trust and respect

3

- Collaborate with and learn from local community groups, leaders and initiatives, such as the African Nova Scotia Community Action Planning Program (ANSCAP).
- Build relationships with community members through consistent and meaningful engagement.
- Encourage open, honest feedback and provide opportunities for dialogue.
- Demonstrate respect by ensuring engagement efforts are culturally responsive and community-driven.

- Celebrate and highlight the unique identities, histories and character of suburban communities, neighbourhoods and places.
- Empower local leaders to share information, co-create and promote engagement documents and opportunities and connect planning staff with their communities and partner organizations.

Timely and clear communication

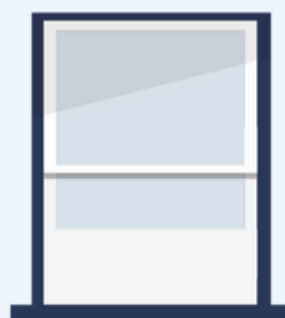
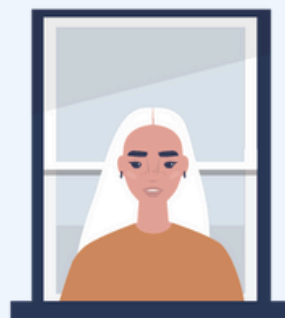
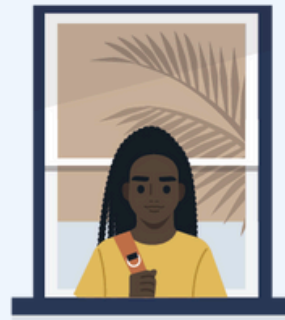
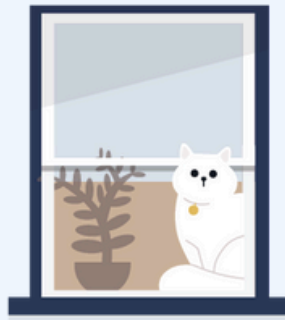
4

- Provide regular updates on engagement opportunities, outcomes and next steps (a minimum general quarterly project update will be shared with everyone on our mailing list).
- Use multiple communication channels (e.g., social media, printed materials, email, community networks) to ensure broad outreach.
- Ensure messaging is clear, concise and accessible to a diverse audience.
- Work with community leaders and organizations to select the most effective tools and methods for communication.
- Coordinate with existing community events and initiatives to encourage participation and minimize redundancy and over-engagement.

Continuous learning

5

- Approach all work with openness, humility, and a learning mindset.
- Offer opportunities for feedback with each engagement event to assess effectiveness, identify gaps and improve future engagement phases.
- Strengthen organizational understanding of community priorities by actively sharing engagement results from diverse perspectives.
- Foster long-term partnerships with community members, organizations and leaders.
- Be available outside of scheduled engagement activities to meet with community members and other key partners.



Best practices

The municipality contracted Upland Planning + Design to complete a scan of recent, similarly scaled planning projects in different Canadian jurisdictions (Kitchener, Calgary, Edmonton and Victoria). The best practices scan recommends creative solutions for virtual and in-person engagement, as well as general lessons learned from engagement related to these projects. These lessons and ideas have been considered and incorporated as part of this engagement strategy and will be used for the creation of the project's implementation plans.

Engagement toolbox

2.2

The Suburban Plan’s engagement strategy is developed for the overall planning process, to provide guiding principles and tools that can be tailored to each phase. The engagement methods for this project are listed below and drawn from the **Community Engagement Strategy 2024 Playbook** and informed by successful practices from the Centre Plan, Regional Plan, and other projects. Staff will collaborate with local leaders, community groups and internal business units to determine the most suitable tools for each phase of the project. While some tools will be applied throughout all phases, specific details will be outlined in the implementation plan for each stage.

Formal engagement opportunities	
Kick-off events	Open houses
Key partner meetings & workshops	Signature project tool
Suburban Planning Working Group	

Informal engagement opportunities	
Relationship building	Pop-ups
Mobile planner	Community tours
Site visits	Presentations
Newsletters	

Virtual Presence		
Website	Email	Social media

Getting the word out			
Advertising	Correspondence	Telephone	Councillor newsletters
Collaboration with other municipal departments & offices			

Formal engagement opportunities

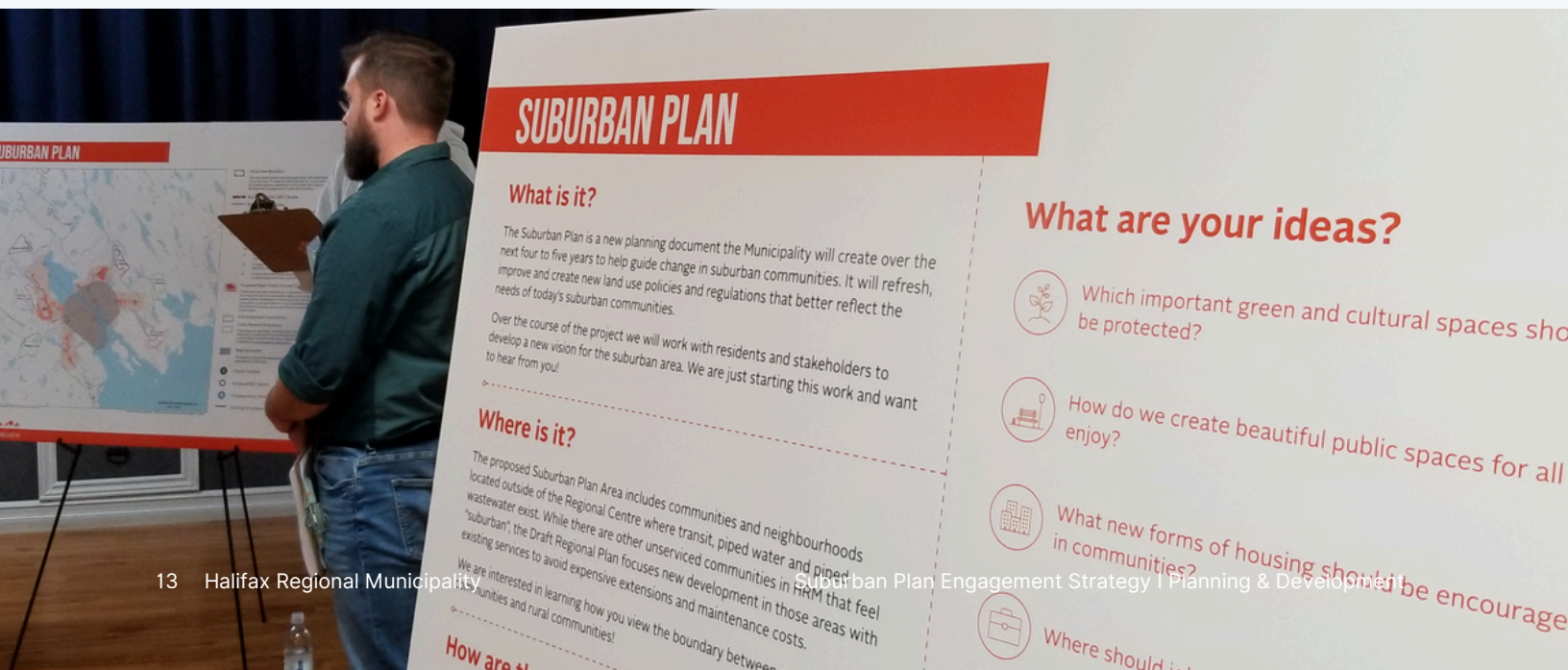
2.3

Kick-off events

These events are intended to kick off the planning process in various communities, generate enthusiasm and seek community champions. They can also be used to help celebrate or conclude the planning process and share information on the approved plan.

Open houses

Open houses are public information sharing sessions with displays or stations staffed by municipal employees, key partners, and experts. An open house is less formal than a public information meeting and offers opportunities for residents to come and go and engage on a one-on-one basis. The municipality will plan, advertise and facilitate open houses in various locations across the Suburban Area during the engagement process. Accessibility and childcare needs will be considered when determining locations and programming for these sessions to occur. Open houses will be planned to ensure that spaces are available to ensure the effective participation of all attendees, including adjustments for individuals with visual, hearing or other accessibility needs. In certain cases, open houses can include presentations or workshop components.



Key partner meetings & workshops

Key partner meetings and workshops are opportunities for industry or community members with similar interests to discuss complex issues and explore collaborative solutions. Examples of key partner groups include environmental groups, industrial property owners and Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities. Design charettes, community visioning activities and participatory mapping exercises are common tools used to guide formal planning workshops that can be used throughout the engagement process.

Signature project tool

A unique physical tool will be developed to provide an attraction at engagement events such as workshops, open houses, presentations, etc. This large physical element provides a touchpoint at events and signature project identifier. Examples of a potential unique physical tool include a large-scale map, fabric information panels or interactive displays. This method will provide participants with a memorable project experience and attraction for project events. Accessibility and accommodation will be a crucial factor in the design of this element.

Suburban Planning Working Group

A working group may be established with representation from various industry, key interest groups, and community representatives to provide advice to staff and help facilitate public participation.

Informal engagement opportunities

2.4

Relationship building

Relationship building is an informal meeting with community organizations and individuals to build trust between planners and residents, especially for equity-deserving groups that have been and continue to be negatively affected by municipal decisions and excluded from the planning process. This type of engagement encourages mutual respect between staff and community members and allows residents to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. It is important that staff engage in relationship building proactively before key decisions are made and continue to foster meaningful relationships with community members throughout the suburban planning engagement process.

Pop-ups

Pop-ups are public information sessions with displays or stations integrated temporarily into existing community spaces or events. Pop-ups are informal opportunities for residents to engage with planning staff about general suburban planning topics, or themes can be tailored to align with the location the pop-up is occurring (e.g. engaging with the public about mobility at a Halifax Transit terminal, discussing green space needs at a local park, talking to people about commercial uses at a shopping centre, etc.). Pop-ups can also be used to increase awareness about other ways to engage with the process and to meet the public at community organized events such as BBQs, festivals and events.

Mobile planner

The mobile planner will function as a pop-up experience featuring displays and interactive elements related to the Suburban Plan. Designed for mobility, it will travel between communities, serving as both an engagement tool and a platform to celebrate each community's unique identity. This element may remain on each site for multiple days, with designated hours for community/staff participation. Each location will incorporate interactive placemaking tools that highlight local characteristics while ensuring accessibility and adaptability to meet accommodation needs. This initiative should be supported by collaboration with community groups and business improvement districts. Additionally, accessibility experts will conduct a comprehensive review to identify and address potential barriers.

Community tours

Community tours will be organized in collaboration with planning staff, local community groups, and subject matter experts. Each tour will focus on a specific topic or Neighbourhood, aiming to foster a deeper connection between planning initiatives and the community. They can be useful in gathering early perspectives or seeking feedback on proposed policies and their potential impact on local communities.

Site visits

Site visits are opportunities for the municipality to visit a specific location or neighbourhood and explore the space. This allows us to build connections and learn about the unique characteristics of an area. Site visits can be used to gain a better understanding of how people interact with the site, identify potential issues, take photos, and build relationships with members of the public.

Presentations

Staff will offer presentations to community members and key partner groups as capacity allows and by request. These presentations will be offered in-person, virtually or hybrid and share information related to the project and offer opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback. Presentations are intended to reduce barriers to participation and engage more residents in the planning process.

Website

The Suburban Plan will feature a web page that serves as an engagement platform and a central space to learn about the project. This online hub will provide updates, resources, and opportunities for community input, ensuring residents stay informed and involved in shaping the future of their suburban communities. The website will provide engagement resources such as surveys, fact sheets, FAQs, videos, podcasts, as well as a library of project reports, studies, mapping and more. The website will be refreshed frequently with project updates and resources.

The website will prioritize accessibility and ease of use according to the municipality's Web Content Access Guidelines. Digital resources will be offered in traditional print formats upon request. Translation of website content will be provided as frequently as possible.

Email

Communication by email will connect residents and key partners with project staff through a central email address. Email will serve as a communication tool and a data collection method analyzed to determine themes and sentiments on various subjects. Staff will use email blasts to community organizations and individuals on our contact list to provide project updates and advertise engagement events.

When a request for input on a planning project is issued to the public, a designated email address or office address will be provided for residents to submit their feedback. If a resident poses a question about the project, staff will follow up with them through their preferred method of communication, ensuring ongoing engagement and clarity.

Social Media

In collaboration with the municipality's Corporate Communications team, social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Reddit, Instagram and other virtual platforms will be used to communicate engagement opportunities for the Suburban Plan. We will also explore opportunities to virtually engage residents on a more interactive level through online forums, polls, quizzes and livestreams. Although the municipality's social media accounts have significant reach, not all demographics interact with or have access to these platforms. It is important that these platforms are not relied upon exclusively to communicate engagement opportunities.

Newsletters

The municipality will send out regular email newsletter updates to anyone who requests to be added to the project mailing list. These newsletters will provide updates on the work completed, and information regarding key topics, project deliverables and upcoming public engagement events and activities."

Council, government organizations, key partner groups

2.6

The process will leverage the community connections and expertise of various committees and boards of Council, First Nations, African Nova Scotian and other key partner groups. Residents can also directly reach out to members of Regional Council and participate in the formal public hearing process.



Site-specific development requests

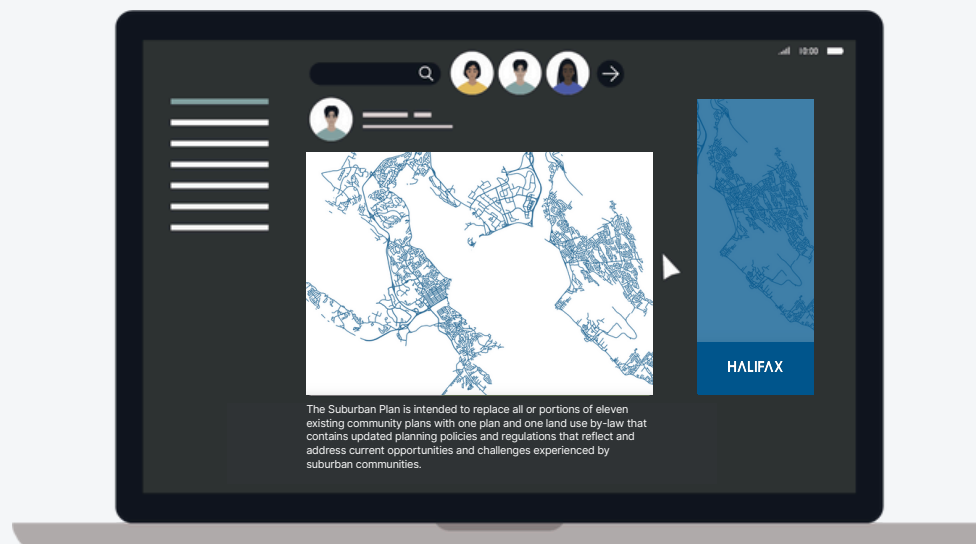
2.7

To help develop the vision for the Suburban Area, applications for site-specific amendments to Municipal Planning Strategies will be considered comprehensively through the suburban planning process. Requests will be reviewed against the guiding principles and objectives of the overall Suburban Plan, as well as their relationship to the vision for the local neighbourhood.

To ensure that these requests are received in an orderly manner and include a consistent level of information that will allow for their fulsome consideration, submissions must include the following:

- the civic address and/or PID of all properties included in the request;
- a map or survey of all properties and existing structures included in the request;
- a signed letter from the owners of all properties included in the request, confirming their knowledge of and support for the request;
- a description of what is being requested, including requested number of units, building heights, etc; and
- a description of how the request meets the overall goals and objectives of the suburban planning process and the vision for the local area.

Site specific development requests must be submitted to suburbanplan@halifax.ca for consideration. Staff will review all requests and may reach out if additional information is required.



Getting the word out

2.8

Community engagement will be supported by a detailed communication plan. Some of the tools may include the following:

Advertising

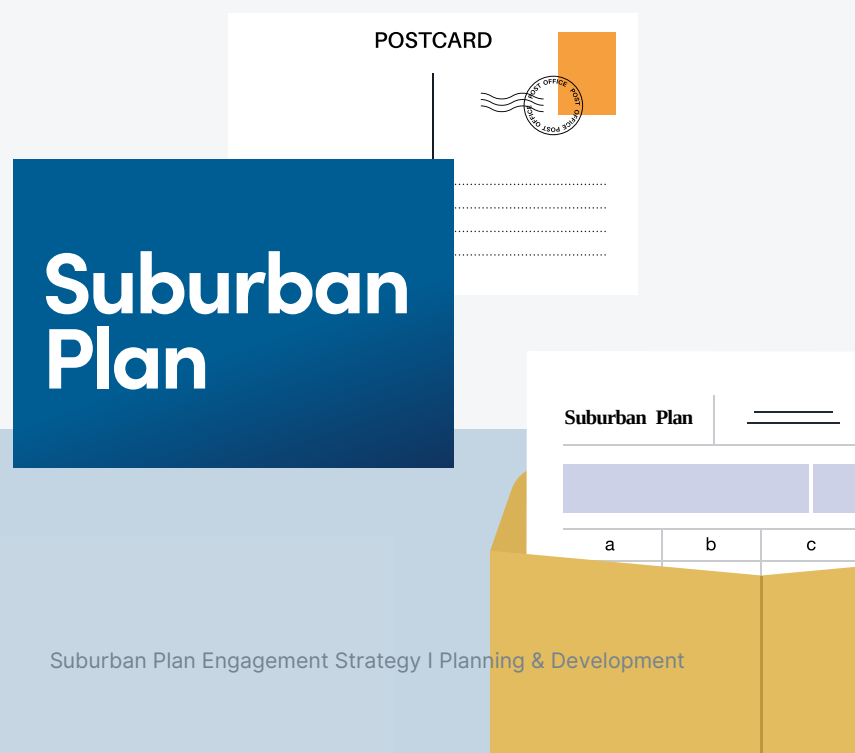
In addition to social media posts, we will collaborate with the municipality's Corporate Communications team to create advertisements that promote awareness around Suburban Plan engagement opportunities. This campaign may consist of print, radio and digital advertisements, which can be tailored to geo-target Suburban Area residents.

Correspondence

Correspondence includes newsletters, postcards and business cards that are given to community members to inform them of proposed changes to their neighbourhood or to share information about a planning project. Correspondence typically provides a high-level overview of the initiative, links to a webpage where residents can find more information, a call to action and a staff contact or other channel to contact the municipality.

Correspondence may be used at key stages of the project to offer opportunities to connect residents and key partners with project staff. Staff will log pieces of correspondence to analyze general themes and sentiments related to specific topics.

When a request for input on a planning project is issued to the public, a designated email address or office address will be provided for residents to submit their feedback. If a resident poses a question about the project, staff will follow up with them through their preferred method of communication, ensuring ongoing engagement and clarity.



Telephone

Telephone calls can be used to inform people of proposed changes to their community or to share information about a planning project. Typically, a staff phone number will be provided to residents that wish to discuss the project with a planner one-on-one.

Councillor newsletters

Staff will provide frequent updates to members of Council, both formally and informally. Communication at key milestones will be provided to allow Councillors to consider including updates in their newsletters.

Collaboration with other municipal departments & offices

We will explore opportunities to work with other municipal departments and offices to promote Suburban Plan engagement opportunities. Some examples include:

- creating posters and digital screens that can be displayed in municipal recreation centres, libraries, and transit terminals;
- sharing information with 311 services; and
- informing the Councillor's Support Office of engagement opportunities.



Engagement implementation

3

The Suburban Plan project will feature three key periods of community engagement. The first, launching in 2025, is part of the listen & learn phase, aimed at gathering insights and understanding community perspectives. The second, occurring during the key ideas and directions phase, will focus on collecting feedback on proposed planning policies. The third, will occur during the sharing the plan and will focus on providing opportunities for understanding and feedback around the proposed policies and regulations.

For each phase, a detailed implementation plan will be shared to outline specific engagement activities, resources and timelines, ensuring transparency and clarity for the public. These plans will be developed using the municipality's [Community Engagement Playbook](#), a comprehensive guide that ensures engagement efforts are inclusive, accessible and aligned with municipal priorities. The specific elements of each Implementation Plan are outlined below.

Implementation plan

3.1

Each implementation plan will cover the following information for the overall engagement phase and individual engagement methods:

Assess the need and purpose

1

- The plan defines the "who, what, when, where, and why" of your engagement, ensuring alignment with initiative goals.
- Determine the level of community engagement required, considering factors like legislative mandates, council directives, and the initiative's community impact.
- Identify whether the initiative impacts high, medium or low levels of community interest and influence.

Understand the impacted communities

2

- Use data and reports to identify community demographics, cultural customs, languages spoken, socioeconomic factors and environmental or historical contexts.
- Account for translation needs, technology access and the role of local resources and organizations.

Address barriers

3

- Address accessibility, inclusivity and realistic timelines. Include the key phases, milestones and decision-making time frames.
- Proactively identify and mitigate barriers to participation, such as physical, informational or cultural obstacles.
- Use tools like the *Multilingual Policy* or *Accessibility Strategy* to promote inclusion.
- Coordinate accessibility accommodation support well in advance of engagement events.
- Create a process for communicating accessibility accommodations available at each engagement event.

Design activities

4

- Select appropriate engagement methods that consider community goals and needs, as well as project objectives (e.g., workshops, surveys, online platforms).
- Engagement methods will be designed with the identified needs of the community in mind, ensuring that the engagement process accommodates those needs and supports inclusive participation.
- Incorporate a mix of in-person and virtual methods to address the digital divide and expand reach.

Implement the plan

5

- Ensure that all engagement activities are welcoming, accessible, and inclusive. Accommodations available at each activity will be part of advertising and communication for each event.
- Communicate consistently and appropriately with key partners and adjust the plan based on real-time feedback, including event surveys to identify gaps.

Analyze feedback

6

- Collect and categorize participant input, using methods such as comment logs and What We Heard reports.
- Transparently document how feedback influenced decisions.

Evaluate the engagement

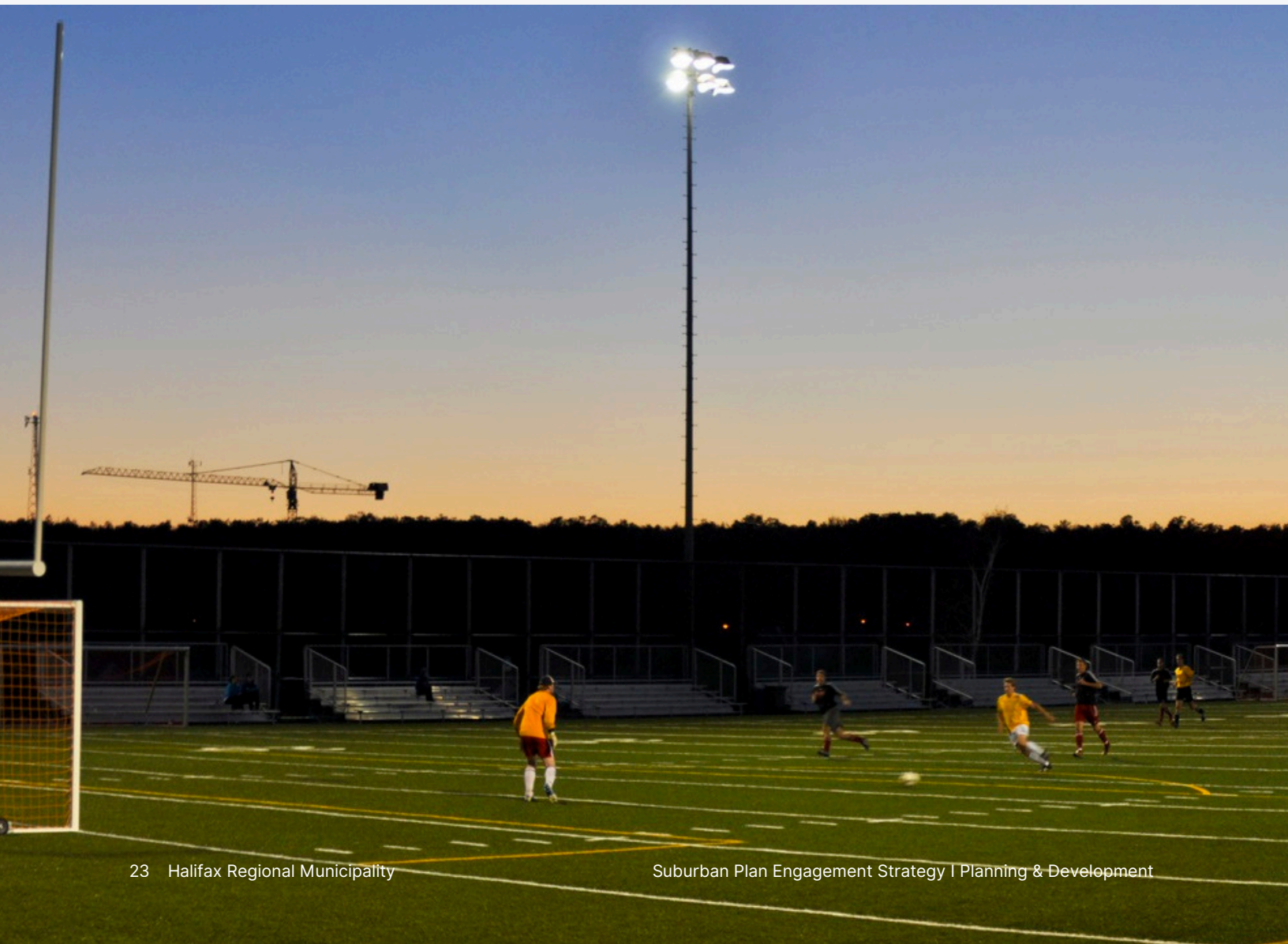
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- Assess the success of the engagement using both qualitative and quantitative indicators (e.g. participation numbers, diversity of input).
- Conduct team debriefs to refine future engagement plans.

Required sections in implementation plans

3.2

- **Project phase background:** Context for the engagement phase.
- **Engagement goals:** Objectives specific to the phase.
- **Engagement methods:** Tools and techniques to be used, level of influence anticipated, accessibility accommodations available.
- **Resources required:** Staff, materials, accessibility accommodations and facilities needed for each method.
- **Timeline:** Schedule for the engagement phase.
- **Impact and influence:** Assessment of community impact and participants' level of influence for each method with the following guide:



DETERMINING FACTORS						
		Regional Council Direction	Legislative Requirement	Technical Factors	Budget	Example
INFLUENCE	High	Council direction or desire to have community define policy or outcome	Strong legislative or Regional Council policy requiring engagement	Not many technical constraints/ strong abilities to affect technical constraints	Budget or programs available to implement change	Secondary Plan Amendment
	Medium	Regional Council policy or requirements cannot be changed, but there is some ability to affect the policy or outcome	Moderate legislative or Regional Council policy requirements for engagement	Some technical constraints that limit outcome options	Some ability to adjust budgets or programs to implement change	• Development Agreement • Bike Lanes • Recreation Centre
	Low	Regional Council direction does not allow for ability to influence the policy or outcomes	No legislative or policy direction to engage	Limited ability to affect outcome due to technical standards or constraints	Minimal or no ability to adjust budgets or programming to influence change	• Site Plan Approval • Driveway Location
What is the appropriate level of public participation for your engagement? The level of public participation also depends on the complexity of the project/initiative, timelines and resources and may change throughout an initiative. Use your results from the previous tables in the matrix below.						
IMPACT	High	Inform		Involve/Collaborate	Collaborate/Empower	
	Medium	Inform		Consult	Involve/Collaborate	
	Low	Inform		Inform/Consult	Inform/Consult	
		Low		Medium	High	
		INFLUENCE				



Evaluation

4

Evaluating the success of engagement efforts is critical to ensuring they meet the goals of inclusivity, accessibility and effectiveness. The evaluation process will employ various tools and indicators to measure the impact of engagement activities, assess participant satisfaction, and guide future improvements.

Evaluation tools and methods

4.1

Web analytics and trend analysis

1

- Track various website metrics to determine usage.
- Information collected will ensure participant confidentiality and adhere to privacy legislation requirements.
- Analyze the volume and patterns of engagement with web-based resources to identify high-interest areas and optimize content delivery.

Comment summaries

2

- Record and categorize input received from key partners.
- Summarize key themes, identify common concerns or suggestions, and provide clear responses where appropriate.

Attendance tracking

3

- Document attendance numbers at all engagement events, segmented by demographics and community groups where possible.
- Demographic data collection at in-person events will be limited to optional postal code identification. Virtual engagement may ask further demographic information that encourages privacy and trust for optional self-identification such as age, disability, gender, etc.
- Use attendance data to assess participation levels and identify gaps in participation and update subsequent phases of engagement to better reach underrepresented groups.

Engagement event evaluations

4

- Provide participants with opportunities to evaluate the engagement methods used during events (e.g., format, accessibility, clarity of communication).
- Offer multiple avenues for survey (e.g., in-person paper survey, virtual survey, conversation, etc.).
- Collect feedback on the effectiveness of the engagement approach, separate from input on the project content.
- Summarize and analyze these evaluations to inform improvements in future engagement efforts.

Qualitative and quantitative surveys

5

- Use pre- and post-engagement surveys to assess participant understanding, satisfaction, and the perceived value of their input.
- Provide accommodation support for survey participation by participants with accessibility needs.
- Include open-ended and structured questions to capture both detailed feedback and measurable data points.



Indicators of success

The success of engagement efforts will be measured using the following qualitative and quantitative indicators:

■ Inclusive participation:

Evidence that all affected groups, including underrepresented and historically marginalized communities, were engaged.

■ Balanced and complete information:

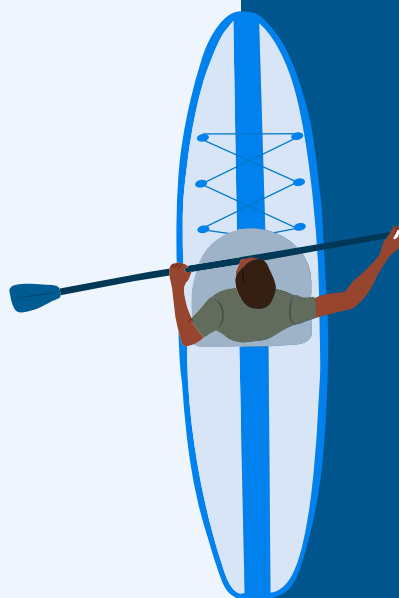
Participant understanding of the project and its goals, reflected through feedback and surveys.

■ Effective process:

Demonstrated alignment of engagement activities with established goals and participant needs.

■ Capacity building:

Increased participant knowledge and strengthened relationships between the community and project team.



Reporting and continuous improvement

4.3

A comprehensive *What We Heard* report will be prepared for each phase of the project, summarizing the results of the engagement activities. Key elements of the report will include:

- participant demographics and attendance data;
- thematic summaries of feedback and how it influenced project decisions;
- assessment of engagement tools and methods, with recommendations for future improvement;
- metrics from web analytics, surveys, and event evaluations; and
- gap analysis based on participant feedback and surveys to be considered and incorporated in future phases and projects.

The findings will be shared publicly to maintain transparency and ensure ongoing refinement of the engagement strategy. By continuously evaluating and adapting the approach, we aim to foster a community-driven process that supports equitable and impactful planning outcomes.



Glossary

Accessible and complete communities:

Include a range of uses and housing options to accommodate people in all stages of life, all abilities and at a variety of income levels. Complete communities provide a place for residents to live, work, shop, learn and play. Complete communities contain mixed uses and compact development that enables people to safely and conveniently access the goods and services they need in their daily lives, all within a short journey and without the need to depend on a personal motor vehicle.

Amalgamation:

Halifax Regional Municipality was created in 1996 upon the dissolving and combining (amalgamation) of four former municipalities (the City of Halifax, the City of Dartmouth, the Town of Bedford, and Halifax County).

Community plan:

Also known as a secondary municipal planning strategy, is a detailed land use policy document for a particular area of the municipality subject to the Regional Plan.

Municipal priority plans:

Provide detailed guidance, policies and actions on specific issues that are important to the municipality's growth. They set the long-term direction for municipal decisions and investments and may include regulations, programs, facilities or partnerships and associated budgetary requirements. The priority plans were created with significant public consultation and reflect the desires of residents, key partners and Regional Council. The priority plans include the *Integrated Mobility Plan*, *Halifax Green Network Plan*, *HalifACT*, *Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027*, *Sharing Our Stories: HRM's Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan*, and *African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity*.

Key partners:

Individuals or organizations who can affect or be affected by the outcomes of a project. Engaging a variety of key partners is essential for creating a Suburban Plan that reflects the diverse needs and wants of communities. Types of key partners can include:

- residents (property owners and renters);
- non-profit organizations;
- other levels of government;
- business owners;
- developers, builders and development industry representatives; or
- Nova Scotia Health, Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) and other public organizations

Land use by-law:

Regulatory tool to implement policies contained in the community plan through regulations that are legally enforceable.

Rapid transit corridors:

Where frequent transit service is separated partially or completely from general road traffic and therefore able to maintain higher levels of speed, reliability and vehicle productivity than can be achieved by transit vehicles operating in mixed traffic.

Regional Centre:

Peninsula Halifax and Dartmouth inside of the Circumferential Highway.

Regional Plan:

The Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) guides growth and development for the entire municipality. The Regional Plan sets out a common vision, principles and long-range, region-wide planning policies. The planning policies outline where, when and how future growth and development should take place.

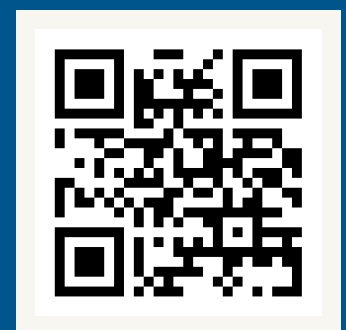
Suburban Area:

The area generally outside of the Regional Centre but within the Urban Service Boundary.

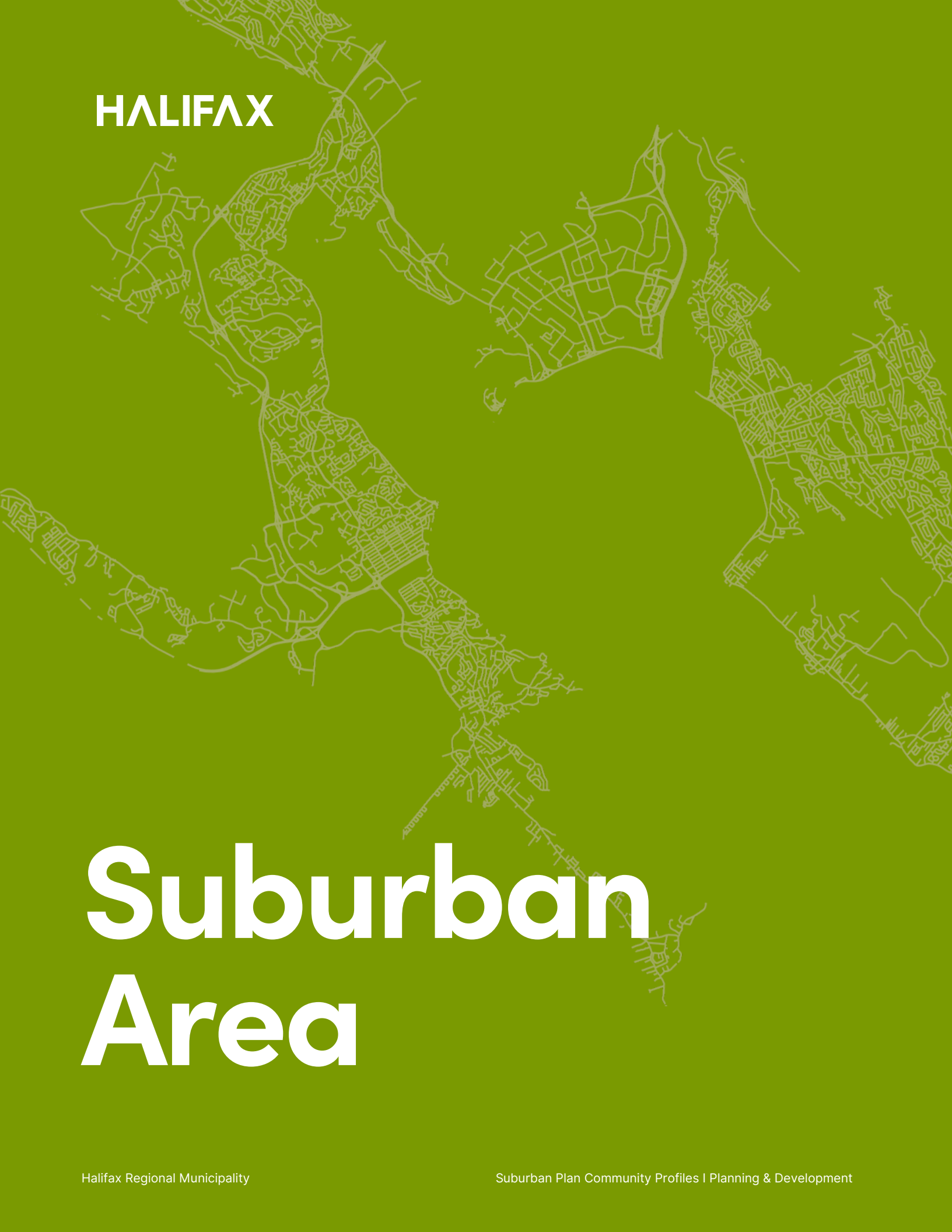
Urban Service Boundary:

Where developments have access to municipal water, wastewater and transit services.

HALIFAX



halifax.ca/SuburbanPlan



HALIFAX

Suburban Area

Suburban Area

The **Suburban Area** generally includes communities and neighbourhoods located outside of the Regional Centre where piped water and piped wastewater exist or are anticipated. Most areas also have access to transit.

The Suburban Area is made up of many distinct neighbourhoods and communities. Each community is defined by its history, landscape and unique heritage. Halifax Regional Municipality's Suburban Area is located in the traditional, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, who have lived here since time immemorial. Nova Scotia is the birthplace of the African presence in Canada, with some African Nova Scotian communities being in Halifax's Suburban Area.

Some communities have more of an urban feel, while others are more rural. The Suburban Area encompasses a blend of residential neighbourhoods, commercial centres, parks and natural landscapes. Together, each community creates the diverse character of our Suburban Area.

A note on data sources:

Data labelled **Census 2021** was sourced from the 2021 Statistics Canada census, while data labeled **2024 Estimate** was sourced from Environics population estimates.

Population

Census 2021



51%

The Suburban Area consists of **222,940** residents making up for 51% of the total municipal population (439,969) in 2021.

2024 estimate

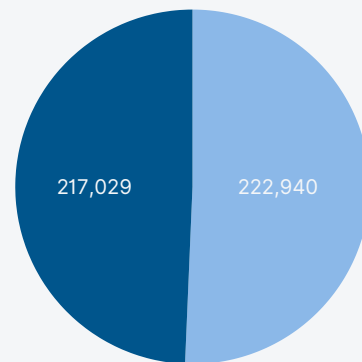
222,940

Total Suburban Area population in 2021

254,729

Estimated Suburban Area population in 2024

Approximately 14% growth between 2021 – 2024.



● Suburban Area
● All other HRM communities

Age

Census 2021

Average age
40.4 years



0-14

15%



15-64

67%



65+

18%

Identity

Census 2021

Indigenous

8,056 3.6%

3.6% of Suburban Area residents identify as Indigenous.

Visible minority

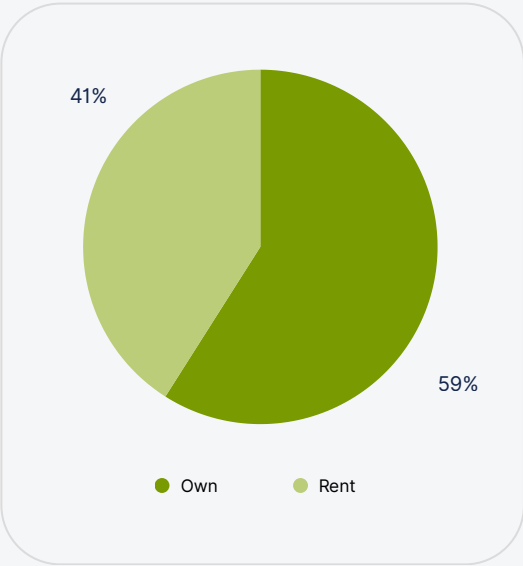
42,431 19.2%

19.2% of Suburban Area residents identify as a visible minority.

Immigrant to Canada

30,755 13.9%

13.9% of Suburban Area residents identify as an immigrant to Canada.



Household

Census 2021

\$102,153

Average household income



59%

own
their home

41%

rent
their home

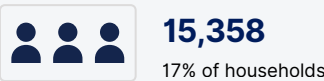
1 person
household



2 person
household



3 person
household



4 person
household



5+ person
household



Number of dwellings per building type



40,825 43.7%
single-detached
house



10,381 11.1%
Semi-detached
house



4,635 5.0%
Row
houses



2,387 2.6%
Apartment
in a duplex



20,818 22.3%
Apartment
(in building of < 5 storeys)



12,353 13.2%
Apartment
(in building of 5 or
more storeys)



2,095 2.2%
Moveable
dwelling

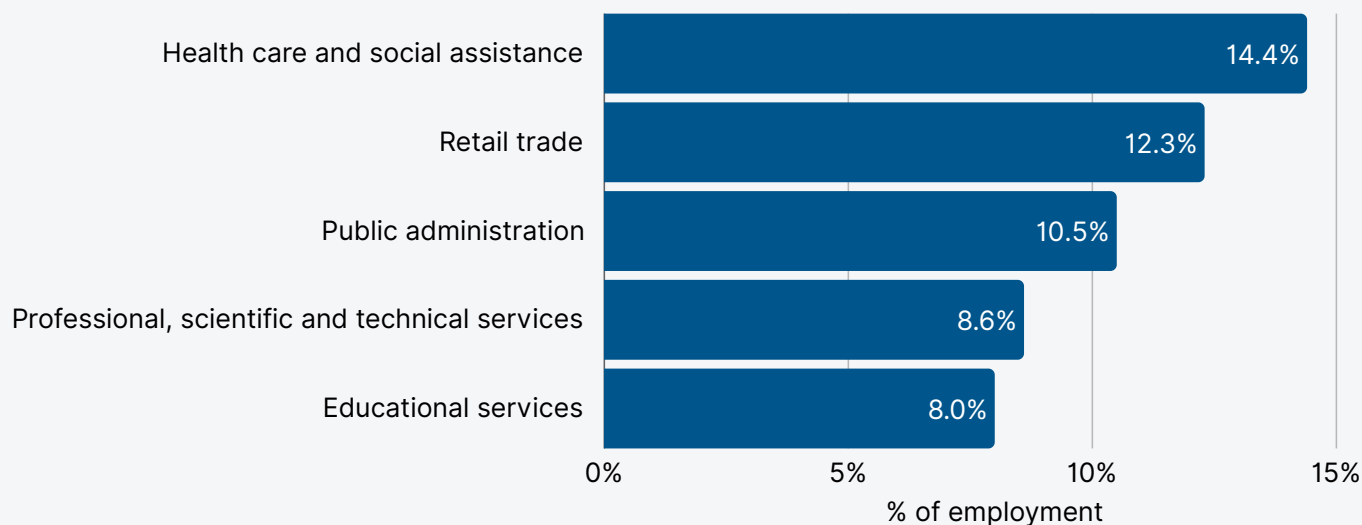


32 0.01%
Other
single-attached
house

Employment

Census 2021

Top 5 industries employing Suburban Area residents



Rate of employment

Census 2021

In the labour force



● Employed ● Unemployed

Not in the labour force



Transportation

Census 2021

Preferred mode of transportation to work



Personal vehicle

86%

77%
Driver

9%
Passenger



Public transit

8%



Active Transportation /Other

6%

New development

Halifax Regional Municipality, 2021-2025



Issued

5,675

Net new dwelling units

1,216

New building permits



Completed

2,304

Net new dwelling units

2,006

New building permits

Note: The data above was collected between January 2021 and April 2025 and was sourced from Halifax Regional Municipality's Planning & Development permit database.

Dwelling unit:

Often defined as living quarters that are reasonably fit for occupancy, contain kitchen and toilet facilities that are not shared with another unit and are accessible from a private entrance. This includes individual apartments, secondary suites, detached single unit homes, townhouse units, backyard suites, etc.

Net new dwelling units:

Any existing units that were (or will be) lost due to redevelopment have been subtracted from the number of new units that have been (or will be) created.

Completed permit/dwelling unit:

Generally means that construction on a development has finished, and the building/dwelling unit is ready for occupancy.

Issued permit/dwelling unit

Generally means that a development has been approved to start construction, or that construction is underway on the building.



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