

CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FOR OUR REGION

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2.0 ABOUT HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

The Halifax region is a beautiful place with a unique and valued blend of city and nature. Many of our neighborhoods are located near our striking Nova Scotian coastline. Other communities have grown around our abundant lakes and waterways. Our rural communities showcase our rich traditional and working landscapes. The city centre connects us to a visible history, and we continue to add new, more inclusive, public spaces.

We are known for being community-minded, and Halifax is recognized as one of the best places to live in Canada. Despite this, more needs to be done to help our community members who are most in need, especially when it comes to finding an affordable place to live. Equally important, we must ensure the needs of our changing population are met. Immigrants, newcomers, and people of all ages and abilities need to be reflected in our spaces and places. To achieve this, we must adopt a perspective that encompasses the diverse needs of the entire community, rather than just the majority.

We also need to re-envision our future and quickly consider how our communities will grow. Halifax is at a pivotal juncture in its journey, as we work towards addressing the legacies of colonialism and act against further climate change, while experiencing more population growth than we have seen in generations. The Regional Plan Review offers an opportunity to generate ideas and bring about transformative changes within our community.

2.1 ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Halifax Regional Municipality is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people. Halifax Regional Municipality is also the home to peoples of African descent who have lived here for over 400 years. This Plan acknowledges that the legacies of colonialism have shaped our current settlement pattern and that a commitment to act differently is required for reconciliation. We must work together to identify and change policies that have disproportionately impacted these communities and residents.

2.2 ABOUT THIS PLAN

To ensure planning policy can be responsive to a quickly growing population, Regional Plan (this Plan) envisions that HRM will grow to be a region supporting 1 million people. The policies of this Plan have been developed with a forward-looking view to supporting this growth in population over the long term, by strategically directing housing, jobs, and community infrastructure in a way that supports our goals for healthy, connected, inclusive and affordable communities.

Population growth and development cannot be considered without a view to greater socio-economic and environmental well-being. To achieve our vision for healthy communities, equitable and sustainable growth, this Plan encourages cooperation amongst municipal business units, residents, community groups, stakeholder groups and all levels of government.

As our community grows, most new development will be directed to established centres in urban, suburban and rural communities. The municipality's physical geographic constraints, existing and planned water and wastewater infrastructure, transit service boundary, and the location of employment and community infrastructure significantly impact where the most significant growth will occur.

2.3 REGIONAL PLANNING

This Plan provides a vision for supporting our growing population and employment base through a coordinated and managed approach to locating new development and critical services. Key principles for organizing this growth include infrastructure management, protecting our environment and cultural heritage, improving mobility, and planning cooperatively with our many partners.

Settlement should be organized in a manner that strives to protect and enhance the open space and environmental network to reduce our urban footprint. In situating housing and employment, we also must consider that where people live and how they move about for their daily activities affects their personal finances, influences their work-life balance, and helps determine their carbon footprint. Making sure that the region's communities are well-connected with each other is important for residents' access to physical activity, supports their mental health and well-being, social interactions, and access to nature.

Past studies undertaken for the Municipality have found that:

- More compact forms of development with higher densities save taxpayers money when located to make the best use of existing infrastructure and services.
- The provision of central municipal water and wastewater management services to communities with lower densities is cost prohibitive.
- Protecting and enhancing existing open spaces and green elements, including trees, forests, waterways, wetlands, and wilderness provides multiple benefits in maintaining air quality, water quality, mitigating flooding and managing carbon emissions.
- To generate the ridership needed to support high frequency transit, compact, high-density forms of development should be in close proximity to these services.
- Proactive measures are needed to combat climate change and reduce our carbon footprint by implementing sustainable transportation systems, promoting renewable energy adoption, and implementing green infrastructure projects.

When considering where intensification and new growth should occur, these four critical regional-scale services are analyzed.

Natural and Cultural Services

Protection of the open space network, valuable ecological lands, regional parks, natural corridors, culturally significant places and working landscapes will be prioritized and these assets will be protected and used to shape our region's communities.

Water and Wastewater Services

Most growth will be in the form of infill directed to the Urban Area (Regional Centre and Suburban Area) and rural centres where there is existing municipal water, wastewater services and infrastructure can be delivered in a cost-effective manner.

Mobility Services

Infill and land use intensification will be further organized to support mobility systems that improve movement of people and goods, not just vehicles, by walking, rolling, cycling, transit or in a vehicle.

Community Services

As infill and intensification occurs, this will increase the demands for community services like schools, libraries, parks, recreational facilities, solid waste, emergency services, and energy. Gaps in service should be analyzed and addressed as part of strategic growth planning.

Historically underserved communities and vulnerable populations will require special focus as part of regional and community planning, so that investments can be directed in an equitable way and support those with the greatest need, as opposed to simply responding to population growth. New partnership initiatives, like the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity and future Mi'kmaw Friendship Accord are needed to address historical inequities and injustices. These partnerships will be a part of how the municipality will reconsider how we invest in people and places. Learnings from this work will be incorporated into all levels of planning as they proceed.

Accordingly, this Plan envisions that most new growth will occur through urban infill, with focused intensification around rapid transit lines, to allow the Municipality and Province to plan delivery of future community services in these areas. As work proceeds with African Nova Scotia Communities and the Mi'kmaw it is recognized that shifts may be required in this vision to support outcomes.

- RP-1 The Municipality shall protect and conserve ecosystem health and natural open spaces by using the green network to shape where new development is located.**
- RP-2 The Municipality shall direct housing and employment growth to strategic locations where water and wastewater infrastructure services are already available.**
- RP-3 The Municipality shall organize infill and land use intensification to improve the movement of people by aligning infill and land use intensification areas with conventional transit services, including high frequency transit service.**
- RP-4 The Municipality shall organize the delivery of community services to support building healthy, well serviced, and connected communities.**
- RP-5 The Municipality shall partner with the African Nova Scotian Communities and Mi'kmaq communities to address historic inequities and injustices and the legacy of colonial approaches to settlement.**

2.4 COMMUNITY PLANNING

This Plan also provides guidance for the development of communities across the municipality. It sets policy direction at a regional scale by showing where and how to build communities in a way that makes the best use of municipal services and amenities, strengthens equity and our residents' quality of life. It guides community-level planning which outlines in more detail how communities should be organized and developed. Community plans, formally called secondary municipal planning strategies, govern land use on each property in any given planning area.

- RP-6 The Municipality shall align new secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws, and any amendments to existing secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws with the policies, goals, objectives, and growth targets of this Plan.**
- RP-7 The Municipality shall organize the community planning program using the following regional geographies as are generally shown on Map 1:**
- a) Urban Area, which includes the Regional Centre, (lands within the Halifax Peninsula and Dartmouth within the Circumferential Highway) and Suburban Area (within the Urban Area outside the Regional Centre); and**
 - b) Rural Areas, which includes all lands outside the Urban Area inside of the municipality's boundary.**
- RP-8 The Municipality shall refine regional geographies as community planning proceeds, while considering watershed boundaries, existing and future planned Municipal services, local context, community input, and any other relevant technical studies.**
- RP-9 The Municipality shall encourage most new housing and employment to locate in the Urban Area of the municipality (Regional Centre and Suburban Area).**
- RP-10 The Municipality shall identify large tracts of underutilized land within the Urban Area as future growth nodes to enable redevelopment.**
- RP-11 The Municipality shall study groundwater availability, site-level wastewater treatment technology, and regional mobility services, in support of community planning for Rural Centres.**

2.5 STRATEGIC GROWTH PLANNING

To guide the direction of new growth, this Plan sets targets for housing locations. Housing plays a crucial role in shaping the region's settlement patterns and land use. The policies and regulations in this Plan, along with the Regional Subdivision By-law, determine where housing is located throughout the region.

Strategic growth management enables coordinated investments in infrastructure by the Municipality and Province, ensuring the long-term fiscal, environmental, and social well-being of the Municipality, Nova Scotia, and the Atlantic Region. By planning strategically, communities can effectively provide the necessary services and infrastructure to support new growth.

The municipality employs various tools to understand and manage growth in our extensive region, including development scenarios, growth targets, service area establishment, and frequent monitoring. These tools help the Municipality make informed decisions regarding land development for the greater benefit of the public. This section provides an overview of these tools.

2.5.1 POPULATION SCENARIOS

Since the last review of the Regional Plan in 2014, the municipality has experienced higher than historical rates of population growth. Since 2015, the region has grown significantly faster than anticipated, and saw the region grow to more than 480,000 people by 2022. This means that in 2022, the region reached the population that the 2014 Regional Plan anticipated for 2031. The annual change in growth can be found in Figure RP-1:

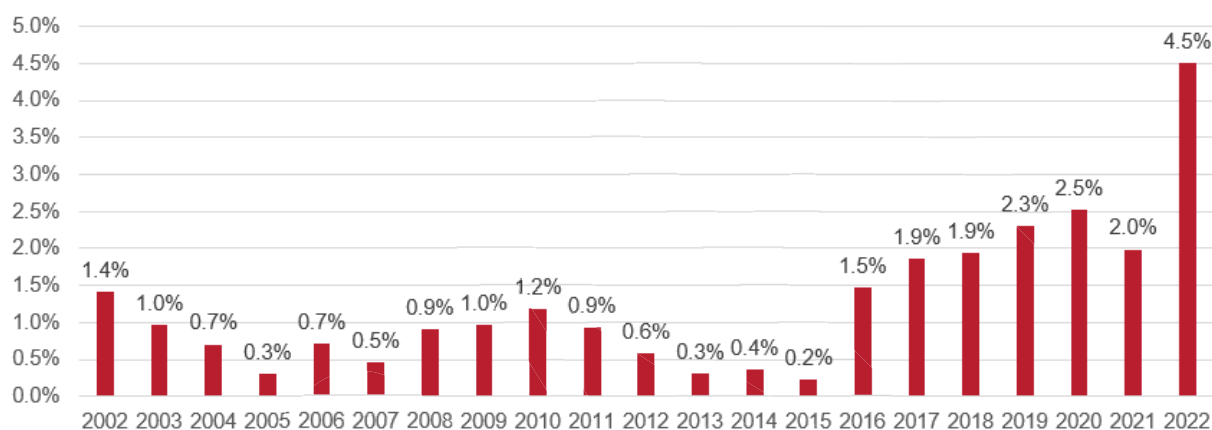


Figure RP-1 Annual Population Growth

To ensure planning policy can be responsive to changing conditions, rather than establishing a specific horizon year, policies of this Plan have been developed with a forward-looking view to supporting growth in population over the long term. The Municipality has developed a range of population scenarios to help consider how growth might occur. As of 2023, four projection scenarios have been developed as described below and shown in Figure RP-2:

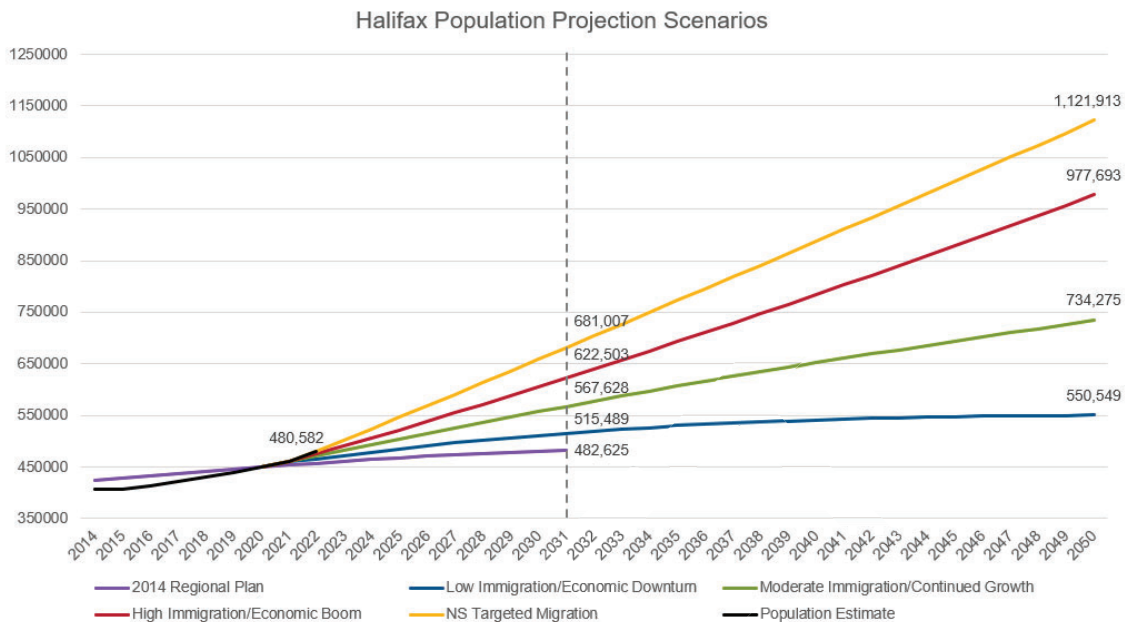


Figure RP-1 Population Projection Scenarios, 2023

RP-12 The Municipality shall organize strategic growth, infrastructure, and municipal service-delivery to support a future population of 1,000,000 people.

2.5.2 GROWTH TARGETS

While scenarios are designed to anticipate and plan for different rates of growth, the Municipality must identify how housing will be developed in places that support our overall policy goals. The 2014 Regional Plan established growth targets to direct at least 75% of new housing units to the Regional Centre and suburban communities, with at least 25% of new housing units within the Regional Centre.

Since 2014, Regional Council adopted the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (Centre Plan), which was designed to accommodate up to 40% of housing growth in the Regional Centre. The Integrated Mobility Plan identified that to support the Municipality's mobility goals, it will be important to locate as much as 90% of growth to the Regional Centre and Suburban Area. The Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT identified that focusing most new development in existing areas and minimizing greenfield development will allow the Municipality to make efficient use of resources, protect critical areas of open space and minimize carbon emissions by reducing vehicle use and improving sustainable mobility options.

RP-13 It is the intent of this Plan to direct approximately 90% of new housing units to the Urban Area.

2.5.3 SERVICE AREAS

The Urban Service Area Boundary and the Urban Transit Service Boundary are tools that help to direct where new development will be located and when supportive infrastructure investments will be made. The Urban Service Area Boundary establishes the location of existing piped water and wastewater services and establishes a growth boundary to ensure the Municipality makes the most effective use of existing infrastructure. The Urban Transit Service Area boundary establishes where conventional transit (bus and ferry) services will be provided.

Together, these tools identify where serviced development can be expected in the immediate term. It is the intent of this Plan to target 90% of new housing units to the Urban Area, which includes the Regional Centre and Suburban Area. Development that aligns with existing and proposed services will make efficient use of these services and ensures the success of future infrastructure investments.

Widespread residential development throughout the Rural Area is inconsistent with the Plan's goals and objectives of creating compact mixed-use communities and protecting rural character, natural environment and natural resources. New roads can fragment open space, affecting important environmental features and leaving islands of natural habitat that may not be large enough to sustain biodiversity. Further, extensive residential development strains existing community services and adds pressure for the development of costly infrastructure in unplanned areas.

This Plan establishes a careful, considered process before allowing any expansion of the Urban Service Area Boundary. This ensures that new serviced lands can be provided with infrastructure in a cost-effective manner when it is needed to support population growth.

RP-14 It is the intent of this Plan to direct housing and employment growth to the Urban Area, which is serviced with municipal water, wastewater and stormwater services and conventional transit services.

2.5.4 INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES

In planning for infrastructure investment, the Municipality will need to consider a range of revenue sources. To help facilitate growth without imposing excessive financial burden on existing taxpayers, the Municipality is permitted by the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* to recover infrastructure-related costs associated with new subdivisions using infrastructure charges. These charges allow the Municipality to pass the cost of new infrastructure to developers and subdividers whose lands receive the benefits of the new services. These charges fund the capital cost of providing infrastructure but do not fund operating or maintenance costs. Charges may also be imposed under a separate by-law, applied to the entire region or a defined area, to impose, fix and provide methods of enforcing payment of charges. This kind of charge could be applied when a building permit is sought for a new building or redevelopment on an existing property.

RP-15 The Municipality shall consider establishing by-laws to allow for the recovery of growth-related costs.

RP-16 The Municipality shall establish provisions under the Regional Subdivision By-law to allow for the imposition of infrastructure charges to recover all, or part, of the capital costs incurred, or anticipated to be incurred, by the Municipality.

2.6 LONG TERM GROWTH

This Plan envisions that over time, the municipality will grow to be a region supporting 1 million people. As the region grows, investing in infrastructure will be critically important for maintaining services and quality of life for our residents. To support the region's projected growth, and the cumulative impacts of density, the Municipality will monitor growth and meet annually to share the results with service providers. Further to prepare for long term growth, a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan will be undertaken to forecast our needs for renewing existing infrastructure and investing in new infrastructure to accommodate growth.

2.6.1 GROWTH MONITORING PROGRAM

The Municipality will continue to monitor population growth trends over time to ensure that the policies of this Plan and supporting planning documents are responsive to the municipality's population, housing and employment conditions. Demographic trends – such as residents' ages, income levels, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and immigration status – must also be regularly monitored and compared to the available supply of housing to understand whether residents' housing needs are being met. Employment forecasts will be monitored to ensure that services such as water, wastewater and transit can be provided to employment centres and to ensure there is a sufficient supply of industrial employment lands available.

RP- 17 The Municipality shall share population scenarios, growth scenarios and ongoing monitoring with other infrastructure and service providers on an annual basis.

RP-18 Regular updates of the Municipality's population, housing and employment conditions and growth scenarios shall guide reviews and amendments to this Plan, Community Plans, and any supporting planning documents or studies.

2.6.2 LONG TERM GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

A Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan will provide a framework for long term planning and fiscal management, allowing the Municipality to look ahead and ask: What infrastructure and services will we need? Where will we need this? Why do we need it? How are we going to pay for it? A Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan will improve the capital budget planning process, as the Municipality's Business Units will have longer term direction and Regional Council will have guidance and information upon which to base current and future capital expenditure decisions. This process would also benefit from an improved understanding of asset management and the lifecycle of assets as they relate to significant growth planning.

Growth projections are already shared and used by Halifax Water and Halifax Transit to inform infrastructure and capital planning. These growth projections can also be used to direct Municipal investments in community infrastructure, such as emergency services, parks, community facilities, and libraries. Furthering this, the Municipality will continue to share these projections as we collaborate with the provincial government on growth, transportation, schools, healthcare facilities and public housing.

As new growth can affect existing communities and their assets (such as parks, schools, and fire stations), the Municipality will need to assess the impact of this growth and determine how investments in new and existing assets should be directed. The Municipality must also consider how investments can be made equitably, as some communities that have been historically underrepresented may have experienced less

investment over time. The Municipality must consider that investments which support vulnerable populations can have an outsized impact on community health and wellness.

Past versions of the Regional Plan envisioned growth beyond the 2031 horizon occurring in areas adjacent to the service boundary. New studies have shown that these areas are important green and natural areas. We also need to understand how future growth will interact with water and wastewater services and where there is the greatest capacity to service this level of growth, which was unanticipated in earlier iterations of this Plan.

Finally, new projects being undertaken by the Province focused on transportation planning have the potential to shift where future growth may occur. There is potential for new growth areas to emerge outside of the municipality's boundaries, within the one hour commutershed of the Regional Centre. Therefore, this Plan recommends the Municipality begin to immediately analyze how a population of 1,000,000 might be accommodated, using new scenarios for growth, and the policy direction contained in this plan.

RP-19 The Municipality shall create a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan to guide planning and investment by identifying potential locations for long term growth, so as to ensure the efficient delivery of services and use of existing infrastructure assets.

RP-20 The Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan shall give consideration to:

- a) Identifying different scenarios for locating future housing and employment growth organized to meet the needs of a potential population of 1,000,000;**
- b) Assessing each of these different scenarios for growth based on:**
 - i. environmental impacts such as watershed health, flood mitigation, landscape connectivity, and restoration of important ecological features consistent with the objectives of the Halifax Green Network Plan;**
 - ii. climate impacts such as minimizing reliance on carbon-based energy and transportation, increasing naturalization and protection of biodiversity, increasing carbon sequestration, and assessing the resilience of scenarios against potential future changes in climate;**
 - iii. impacts to long-term provision of water, wastewater, stormwater and community infrastructure;**
 - iv. impacts to mobility and opportunities for active transportation, transit-oriented development, or other new and emerging forms of transit-related technology; and**
 - v. impacts to health, equity, and well-being using evidence-based parameters.**
- c) The relationship between different growth scenarios;**
- d) Financial tools such as infrastructure charges, capital budgeting, asset management and long-term infrastructure planning;**

- e) **The municipality's expected growth in relation to growth in the rest of Nova Scotia, particularly in communities that are within a one-hour travel time to the Regional Centre; and**
- f) **Investment models that emphasize co-location and planning for infrastructure, services, and other community benefits.**

2.7 REGIONAL LAND USE STRUCTURE

This Plan provides direction for what type of development should occur in different geographic areas of the region, using six general land use designations to manage growth. These are illustrated on Map 2: The Regional Land Use Structure Map with the intent and policy direction for each explained in this chapter, as summarized below:

- The **Open Space and Natural Resource** designation applies to the region's natural network of open spaces, typically on government-owned and private resource sector lands.
- The **Urban Settlement** and **Urban Reserve** designations are applied to areas where development serviced with municipal water, wastewater, stormwater and conventional transit service exists or is planned.
- The **Rural Commuter**, **Rural Resource**, and **Agricultural** designations apply to areas of rural settlement.

2.7.1 OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCE DESIGNATION

Growth and development throughout the municipality has been shaped by a natural network of open space, covering the interior of the Municipality, which is generally inaccessible by public road. It consists mainly of provincial Crown lands as well as lands owned by private companies for forest production and harvesting.

The open space network consists of parks, natural corridors and trail systems that have been developed by government agencies, non-governmental organizations and private land owners. The trail systems have become the backbone of a system of interconnected open space and provide opportunity for activities such as back country hiking, biking, portaging and nature appreciation. The natural corridors interconnect natural areas and provide opportunity for wildlife to migrate between habitat patches and maintain natural ecological functions.

The open space network serves many important functions for the region. Open spaces shape the settlement form and character of the Region's communities. Protecting open spaces helps to direct urban development to appropriate locations and creates clear neighbourhood edges. Residents can access nature for outdoor recreation and aesthetic enjoyment, which improves mental and physical health. As a system, these open spaces perform important environmental services such as connecting natural areas for critical wildlife migration, retaining stormwater, mitigating flooding, preventing erosion, uptake of nutrients, abatement of pollution and moderation of climate. Therefore, it is the intent of this Plan to recognize the importance of the open space network and direct development in a way that protects valuable natural and cultural places.

RP-21 The Open Space and Natural Resource Designation shall be established on the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2), as the area encompassing a natural network of open space in the interior of the Municipality. The Open Space and Natural Resource Designation shall apply to public and private lands identified for their role in the open space network, and shall generally include: parks (federal, provincial and municipal); trails and greenways; wilderness areas and nature reserves, including private conservation lands; areas of protected habitat; resource lands (including Crown lands, and commercial forestry, agriculture and fishery lands); coastal lands (including salt marshes, beaches and estuaries); areas of environmental sensitivity; natural and wildlife corridors; and cultural landscapes.

2.7.2 URBAN SETTLEMENT DESIGNATION

The Urban Settlement Designation encompasses those areas in the Regional Centre and Suburban Area where development has access to municipal water, wastewater and conventional transit services or where those services are proposed to be provided in the short and medium term. To support building healthy, well-connected communities and the growth targets of this Plan, it is the intent of this Plan to focus most new development to existing serviced areas within the Urban Settlement Designation, with some limited expansion on to additional greenfield areas. Housing and employment growth in the Urban Settlement area will be encouraged in complete communities shaped by their access to services and amenities, and well-connected with transit and active transportation routes, as detailed in Chapter 3.

RP-22 The Urban Settlement Designation shall be established on the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2). The Urban Settlement Designation shall apply to those areas where existing municipal services (including piped water, wastewater and stormwater, and conventional transit services) are located and to undeveloped lands that have been identified for future serviced development.

2.7.3 URBAN RESERVE DESIGNATION

The Urban Reserve Designation is applied to lands that may be suitable for serviced urban development in the longer-term horizon. These lands must be studied to determine if they are still appropriate places for serviced development. An assessment of these lands is required before they may be redesignated as Urban Settlement or any comprehensive planning process is undertaken.

In 2006, the Urban Reserve designation included several areas to be considered as potential future serviced communities to accommodate housing and employment growth beyond 2031. One area, the Purcell's Cove Backlands, was removed from the designation following the acquisition of the Shaw Wilderness Park. Two other areas, the interior lands bounded by Highway 7, Ross Road, Highway 207 and Broom Road in Cole Harbour/Westphal, and the Ragged Lake Lands, have been advanced by Regional Council for further study. The remaining land areas, known generally as Kidston Lake Lands, Andersen Lake Lands, Governor Lake Lands and Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lands, will be studied for the potential for future growth in alignment with the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan. This study will determine where and how the municipality should grow, to accommodate future population growth beyond the Urban Settlement Areas identified in this Plan, aligned with Regional Council's priorities.

- RP-23** The Urban Reserve Designation shall be established on the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2) to identify lands that may be required for future serviced development after lands in the Urban Settlement Designation have been developed.
- RP-24** The Municipality shall, through the applicable land use by-law, establish an Urban Reserve Zone to regulate development of lands within the Urban Reserve Designation. This Zone shall permit open space uses and limit residential development to existing lots.
- RP-25** Amendments to the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2) to change the Urban Reserve designation to Urban Settlement shall only be considered once the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan as identified under RP-19 and RP-20 is completed and shall be guided by long-term scenarios for future growth and the criteria set out by that process.
- RP-26** Notwithstanding Policy RP-25, the Municipality shall complete background studies for the interior lands bounded by Highway 7, Ross Road, Highway 207 and Broom Road in Cole Harbour/Westphal in support of the African Nova Scotia Road to Economic Prosperity objective to support the Akoma-led planning process for the restoration of the historic Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children. This process will determine the Regional Plan designation that would best support the future development of the site, in alignment with Policy HC-7 and the policies of this Plan.
- RP-27** Notwithstanding Policy RP-25, the Municipality shall complete background studies for the Ragged Lake lands to determine if these lands are appropriate for industrial use, in alignment with Policy HC-7 and the policies of this Plan.

2.7.4 RURAL COMMUTER DESIGNATION

The intent of the Rural Commuter Designation is to direct development and services to centres within commuting distance to the Regional Centre while protecting the natural resource base, preserving the open space network, and continuing to foster traditional rural community character. While residential development within this designation has historically been characterized by large lot residential developments, more development will be encouraged through clustered development.

- RP-28** The Rural Commuter Designation shall be established on the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2) to encompass those areas within commuting distance of the Regional Centre that are heavily influenced by low-density residential development. The intent of this designation is to:
- a) protect the character of rural communities and conserve open space and natural resources by focusing growth within a series of centres, as shown on the Rural Centres Map (Map 4);
 - b) support the delivery of convenience services to the surrounding settlement area;
 - c) control the amount and form of development between centres;
 - d) support compatible resource-based uses such as agriculture, forestry and renewable energy; and

- e) **protect the natural resource base and preserve the natural features that foster the traditional rural community character.**

2.7.5 RURAL RESOURCE DESIGNATION

Many of the municipality's rural communities were built around and continue to support traditional industries like farming, fishing and other natural resource activities. These working landscapes support rural economic activities, providing local resources for the region's food, construction and manufacturing sectors and contribute to natural landscape connectivity. Rural residential development should be directed away from working landscapes to protect these industries and minimize potential conflict with any new residential development.

The Rural Resource Designation encompasses rural communities along the Eastern Shore which are beyond the traditional commutershed of the Regional Centre and have not been heavily influenced by suburban development pressures. The intent of the Rural Resource Designation is to protect the rural resource base upon which communities depend. The designation is also intended to support the delivery of commercial and community services to the surrounding settlement areas and to protect the natural features and built heritage which define the rural character of the municipality and are important to the tourism industry.

RP-29 The Rural Resource Designation shall be established on the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2) to encompass lands and communities along the Eastern Shore. The intent of this designation is to:

- a) **protect the natural resource base and the ability to sustain these resources in the future;**
- b) **protect natural and heritage features which define the rural character and support tourism;**
- c) **establish a series of centres, as shown on the Rural Centres Map (Map 4) where growth is to be supported while controlling the amount and form of development between centres; and**
- d) **support the delivery of commercial and community services to the surrounding settlement areas.**

2.7.6 AGRICULTURAL DESIGNATION

The Agricultural Designation encompasses part of the Musquodoboit Valley. It contains the only remaining prime farmland within the municipality which is largely unaffected by non-agricultural uses. Although the number of farms within the area has declined over the last 50 years, the Musquodoboit Valley is still used for dairy and mixed farming, forestry and mining. A substantial portion of Valley residents are employed in the resource sector, which is a substantive economic base to support other employment sectors. Due to productive agricultural soils and climatic conditions within the Valley, these lands are highly suitable for agricultural production.

The Agricultural Designation is intended to preserve land for farming and other forms of resource production, prevent wide-spread residential uses in resource production areas where such development may conflict with the operations of a farm, forestry or extractive facility, and protect a traditional way of life.

RP-30 The Agricultural Designation shall be established on the Regional Land Use Structure Map (Map 2) to encompass a significant portion of the Musquodoboit Valley. The intent of this designation is to:

- a) encourage the use of this area for natural resource-based activities and industries such as farming, forestry, mining and renewable energy, and to protect these uses from the intrusion of incompatible non-resource related uses; and**
- b) support services for the surrounding agricultural communities by establishing a series of centres within which continuing development will be supported, as shown on the Rural Centres Map (Map 4), and by limiting the amount of residential development which may occur beyond these centres.**