

Halifax Regional Municipality
Urban Forest Management Plan

Phase 1 Engagement Acadian and Francophone Engagement Summary

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Submitted to:

Halifax Regional Municipality

5251 Duke St, 3rd Floor, Suite 300

Duke Tower

Halifax, Nova Scotia

B3J 3S1

Submitted by:



DIAMOND HEAD

3559 Commercial Street
Vancouver, BC 604.733.4886

Scope of the engagement

In spring 2024, as part of the process to update the Halifax Regional Municipality's Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP; the plan), targeted interviews were held with a few community organizations representing Acadian and Francophone communities.

Who we heard from

To reach the francophone and Acadian communities, HRM's French Services Advisor from the Diversity and Inclusion Office sent out requests for invitations to organizations across the region. The interviews were conducted in French and the results were translated into English for accessibility to the greater community. Five representatives from the following organizations were interviewed between March and May 2024:

- **L'Acadie de Chezzetcook**, a community organization that represents the Acadians and Francophones of the greater West-Chezzetcook and Grand-Désert region.
- **Alliance Française Halifax**, a not-for-profit association dedicated to the promotion of the French language and of French-speaking cultures
- **Conseil scolaire acadien provincial**, the only Francophone school board in Nova Scotia
- **Conseil communautaire du Grand Havre**, acts as a representative of the francophone community of the HRM and develops programs and services for the Francophone and Francophile community.

What we heard

This section summarizes the key points raised by Acadian and Francophone organizations during the interviews.

Urban Forest Vision

Many participants highlighted the importance of making the urban forest more accessible by means other than cars. They particularly noted the challenge of accessing large, forested areas from the urban core without driving. Some participants also highlighted the importance of protecting mature trees and suggested enhancing street trees and greenery along pedestrian and cycling corridors. They highlighted the connection with Halifax's 'City of Trees' history as a way to showcase the historical importance of trees to the urban core's community character and well-being. A participant raised interest in seeing the plan provide a clear explanation of the pillars of the UFMP and why they were prioritized.

Protecting the Urban Forest

Participants spoke about the importance of protecting mature trees and forested areas near schools. Many of the organizations interviewed spoke to various community events hosted in parks and natural areas highlighted the importance of protecting such areas to guarantee community access to the urban forest across the HRM, particularly in the urban core.

Maintaining the Urban Forest

Many participants mentioned that trees often cause power outages during storms. Some participants noted a concern that community members might pre-emptively remove trees to avoid power outages and highlighted the importance of providing adequate information, pruning trees, and perhaps undergrounding utilities to reduce conflicts. Participants were also interested in learning more about how HRM currently manages its urban forest and how other community organizations are involved in management.

Growing the Urban Forest

The Conseil scolaire acadien provincial mentioned that they partner with the province to offer seedlings at Earth Day events to encourage students to grow the urban forest. Other organizations also mentioned participating in tree-planting events on their or other organizations' properties.

Stewardship of the Urban Forest

All the Acadian and Francophone organizations interviewed mentioned that they interact with the urban forest through activities ranging from hiking groups and elder walks to community and pollinator gardens, outdoor classrooms, and day camps. Many participants were interested in receiving more educational information about the urban forest, including how to plant native species, maintain good wildlife habitat, and remove invasive species. Some organizations mentioned an interest in events like 'remarkable tree walks' to learn about the urban forest. They also suggested involving students, particularly through the schools' green committees.

Culture-Specific Considerations

While Acadians and Francophones now live throughout HRM, the urban core of Halifax was not an Acadian or Francophone area during the early days of European settlement. West Chezzetcook is the largest Acadian community within the HRM. L'Acadie de Chezzetcook highlighted the historical importance of the forest as a location where Acadians hid to avoid deportation during the "Grand Dérangement" (Great Upheaval) with the help of Mik'maq Peoples. As a result, l'Acadie de Chezzetcook highlighted the importance of the ties and friendship between Acadian and Mik'maq People. They emphasized importance of seeing the Mik'maq perspective and knowledge well represented in the UFMP.

The Conseil communautaire du Grand Havre (CCGH) also highlighted the importance of French language for accessibility to Acadian and Francophone communities. The CCGH noted that including French language on HRM signs in parks could improve access for unilingual French speakers and make the spaces more welcoming to Francophone community members.

When it comes to important urban forest locations, Porters Lake's downtown was mentioned as important for the Chezzetcook Acadian community. Concerns were raised about that area becoming increasingly paved as it develops. Participants also mentioned that one of the forested areas currently accessed by students of École Secondaire Mosaïque in Burnside is slated to be cleared and will limit the students' ability to access natural areas near their school. Some of the organizations mentioned that

Halifax Urban Forest Management Strategy – FRANCO Phase 1 Engagement Summary

Leighton Dillman Park in Dartmouth hosts a community garden that is used for many Francophone social gatherings and that Point Pleasant Park is an important destination for students of École Mer et Monde.