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Item No. 4

Committee of the Whole
June 20, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 16, 2023

SUBJECT: Case 22257: Regional Plan Review: Phase 4 Draft Plan Release

ORIGIN

On September 13, 2022, Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 15.1.6

- THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to: 1. Initiate a process to consider amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and all applicable community municipal planning strategies and land-use by-laws as necessary to simplify, consolidate and remove barriers to the development of market gardens, consistent with the proposed policy direction outlined within the Discussion section of the staff report dated August 22, 2022, and 2. Follow the public participation program as set out in the community engagement section of the staff report dated August 22, 2022.

On August 8, 2022 Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 10.1

- THAT Halifax Regional Council: 2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to follow the revised work plan schedule as generally outlined in Attachment E – Regional Plan Work Plan and Attachments F and G – Site-Specific Requests of the staff report dated July 5, 2022.

On June 28, 2022, Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 15.4.4

- THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report to return to Council with a new administrative process for HRM to follow with regards to the development and implementation of a new policy approach to support the co-creation of community plans with community including recommendations on resources needed for implementation of approved plans

On January 25, 2022 Regional Council passed the following motion: Item No 18.3

- THAT Halifax Regional Council:...direct the Chief Administrative Officer to follow the revised Public Participation Program for the Regional Plan Review as generally set out in Attachment A of the staff report dated December 7, 2021 and as outlined in the Community Engagement section of the staff report dated December 7, 2021 report

On January 25, 2022, Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 18.3

- THAT Halifax Regional Council recommend that the Chief Administrative Officer be directed to prepare a staff report outlining the process to initiate updated secondary plans for the areas identified as BRT Walkshed in Scenario C, Infill Areas map in the Regional Plan Review, which should consider:
 - Prioritizing BRT Corridors for rezoning that supports transit oriented complete communities,
 - Identifying boundaries for the secondary plan updates,
 - The process and timeline required for completing the secondary plans, and;
 - The financial resources and budget required to do the work.

On November 18, 2021, Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee passed the following motion: Item 13.1

- THAT Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report to define and provide rationale for urban, suburban, and rural settlement classifications; conduct an internal review of how these settlement classifications are used across HRM strategies and policies including planning, transit, sewer and water, and taxation; provide a national jurisdictional review of similar sized population and/or geography of how municipalities define and apply settlement classifications; and provide a recommendation for a standard use of these terms within HRM.

On August 31, 2021, Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 11.4.1

- THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to review the Municipality's policies and regulations regarding wetlands as part of the Regional Plan Review, with the goal of maintaining their ecological functions, particularly in urban areas. This review should include consultation with the Province regarding applicable wetland legislation and recommend appropriate municipal regulations.

On September 28, 2021, Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 15.4.1

- That Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to review and provide a staff report on the Municipality's policies and regulations regarding access to coastal shorelines as part of the Regional Plan Review, with the goal of protecting existing access points and increasing opportunities for new public access to the coast and include:
 - Access Inventory;
 - At-risk low-lying areas;
 - Areas where the HRM may need to work with the province to ensure public coastal lands are not transferred or sold to private interests;
 - Explore opportunities to work with private landowners to increase action to the shore;
 - Applicable legislation;
 - A jurisdictional scan of potential planning tools that could be used;
 - and recommend appropriate municipal regulations.

On June 8, 2021, Regional Council passed the following motion: Item 11.4.1

- THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to: 2. Consider amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Halifax Mainland Land Use By-law for lands currently designated and zoned Urban Reserve in the Purcell's Cove Backlands area (as shown on Map 1 of the staff report dated March 17, 2021), through the ongoing Regional Plan Review (Case 22257) in order to protect environmentally-significant features in the area, consistent with the policy directions outlined in the staff report dated March 17, 2021.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter), Part VIII, Planning & Development and Part IX, Subdivision

An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Housing, S.N.S. 2022, c. 13, ss. 13-14, as follows:

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 three years from the date it comes into force.*

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 effect three years from the date it comes into force.*

Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, Chapter 9, Policies G-13 and G-14

G-13 This Plan shall be reviewed every five years, from the date the most recent five year review has been completed by Council and any changes have come into force, to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs adopted pursuant to this Plan in achieving its vision and objectives and where appropriate, amendments may be considered.

G-14 Proposed amendments to this Plan shall be accompanied by any amendments to Secondary Planning Strategies, Land Use By-laws and the Regional Subdivision By-law or other planning documents required for implementation so that these documents are consistent with this Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee of the Whole recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Accept the Draft Regional Municipal Planning Strategy included in Attachment A to be used for public engagement purposes;

Recommendation continues on next page

2. Adopt the amendments to the Public Participation Program for the Regional Plan Review in Attachment F and direct the Chief Administrative Officer to follow the revised Public Participation Program for the Regional Plan Review as generally set out in Attachment B and as outlined in the Community Engagement section of this report; and
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to follow the revised work plan schedule as generally outlined in Attachment C – Regional Plan Work Plan and Attachment D – Site-Specific Requests.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Municipality has been undertaking a comprehensive review of the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) since 2020. A Draft Regional Plan is being released with this report. Pending Council's approval of the updated Public Participation Program, this release will begin a four-month public engagement period during which staff will seek feedback on the draft Plan.

While the growth management framework is largely the same, the Draft Regional Plan is a comprehensive update to the entire Plan. The Plan is responding to increased population growth and housing demand, the need to act on climate, and the actions in the Priority Plans (Integrated Mobility Plan, Halifax Green Network Plan, HalifACT, Sharing Our Stories¹, and People Planet Prosperity).

The Draft Regional Plan being released includes only the proposed policy document and does not include the supporting regulatory documents at this time. Engagement materials will be posted on the project website to provide further detail on proposed regulations. Staff will gather feedback from Council, the public and internal/external stakeholders on the policy concepts contained in the Draft before detailed implementation policies are finalized. Amendments to secondary plans, land use by-laws and the Regional Subdivision By-law will be developed over the coming months and finalized after the engagement period, then brought forward as part of the full amendment package.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Present the Draft Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Draft Regional Plan), to be used for public engagement purposes;
- Receive Council's approval for the updated Public Participation Program, which will guide the public engagement activities on the Draft Regional Plan;
- Provide an update on staff's progress on the overall Regional Plan Review work plan; and
- Identify new and outstanding site-specific requests for amendments to the Regional Plan and receive direction on how to proceed based on staff's initial analysis.

BACKGROUND

Regional Council initiated the second review of the Regional Plan on February 25, 2020.² Following release of the first deliverable, the Themes & Directions Report³ and the follow-up What We Heard Report⁴, Regional Council endorsed a phased work plan, generally summarized as follows:

¹ As of the writing of this report and the Draft Regional Plan, Regional Council has not yet adopted Sharing Our Stories. The plan is forthcoming, and the Draft Regional Plan policies, particularly in Chapter 9 (Celebrating Culture, Arts and Heritage), reflect the proposed policies within the draft Sharing Our Stories Plan. Significant community engagement has been undertaken to support the development of Sharing Our Stories, however, should Regional Council choose to not adopt Sharing Our Stories, or choose to adopt an alternative policy, the Regional Plan will be adjusted accordingly.

² <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/200225rc1511.pdf>

³ <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/standing-committees/210520cpedinfo2red.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.halifax.ca/city-hall/regional-council/january-25-2022-committee-whole>

- **Phase 3: Quick Adjustments** – consideration of amendments to the Regional Plan that align with Regional Council's goals, as a rapid response to current housing conditions;
- **Phase 4: Draft Regional Plan** – return to Regional Council with the remaining policy framework; and
- **Phase 5: Future Growth Planning** – create a work plan and begin analysis of additional lands to be considered for expansion in anticipation of continued growth.

Phase 3 was completed with Regional Council's approval of a set of amendments⁵ in October 2022 and work on Phase 4 began immediately following. This report marks the release of the Draft Regional Plan and the launch of the public engagement program for Phase 4 of the overall Regional Plan Review work program.

Phase 4 Regional Plan Review Work Plan Progress

The work undertaken as part of Phase 4 to date has been generally consistent with the Regional Plan Review Work Plan as endorsed by Regional Council on August 8, 2022⁶. Table 1 below summarizes the work completed during Phase 4 to date and provides an overview of the remaining work to be completed as part of Phase 4 and looking ahead to Phase 5. The Work Plan (Attachment B) has had minor adjustments to clarify where work is ongoing and advancing outside of the Regional Plan Review (for example, much of the work related to HalifACT actions is ongoing and the Draft Regional Plan policy reflects this status).

Table 1: Regional Plan Work Plan – Remaining Phasing

Phase	Name	Description	Target Date
Phase 4	Regional Plan Amendment Package	• Policy analysis to support the Draft Regional Plan as identified in the Work Plan (Attachment B) • The Regional Employment Study has been completed. • Population & Housing Projections have been updated and are included in Attachment E. • Work continues to update the Regional Transportation Model and further evaluate preferred population and housing growth scenarios. • Advance work on site-specific requests (see Attachment D)	December 2023 to begin Council approval process. This will depend on the outcome of the public engagement on the Draft Regional Plan.
Phase 5	Future Growth	• Complete a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, to guide future growth • Advance work on assessing remaining Urban Reserve areas • Host Regional workshops and engagement to identify growth nodes • Identify new areas for expansion and growth • Advance work on additional site-specific requests (see Attachment D)	2024 , dependent upon timing of Council approval in Phase 4.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement process for Phase 4 is consistent with the intent of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy, the *HRM Charter*, and the Regional Plan Review Engagement Plan approved by Regional Council on January 25, 2022. A Revised Engagement Plan which includes opportunities for in-

⁵ https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/220712rc15113_0.pdf

⁶ <https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/12651/widgets/131284/documents/86590>

person public engagement is included in Attachment B. Should Regional Council approve the Revised Engagement Plan as recommended by this report, public engagement on the Draft Regional Plan will take place from June 21 to October 27, 2023.

The Revised Engagement Plan for Phase 4 focuses on sharing the Draft Regional Plan, explaining how public input from previous engagement phases has been used to inform these recommendations, and providing opportunities to collect meaningful feedback. A variety of in-person and online engagement opportunities have been proposed to reach as many people as possible. In-person engagement activities will include 'pop-ups' where planners visit public locations across the region such as libraries, farmers' markets, and shopping malls; public open houses in several communities; and meetings with internal and external stakeholders. Online engagement will use the [Shape Your City Project Webpage](#) as a central hub where the public can access the Draft Regional Plan, read fact sheets summarizing key topics of interest, review site-specific requests, and watch recorded informational webinars at any time. Public feedback will be accepted through email, telephone, and in writing. In-person and online engagement opportunities will be publicized through HRM social media platforms in collaboration with Corporate Communications, and Regional Planning staff will publicize these events through the Regional Plan Review E-Mailing List and the Shape Your City Project Webpage.

Amendments to the Regional Plan, secondary municipal planning strategies and land use by-laws may potentially impact residents, business owners, other HRM Business Units, and stakeholders including other levels of government, community groups, and the development industry.

DISCUSSION

The Regional Plan is a strategic policy document that sets out the goals, objectives and direction for long term growth and development in HRM. The Draft Regional Plan, as set out in Attachment A, furthers a growth management framework similar to the existing 2014 Regional Plan, while responding to increased population growth and housing demand, the need to act on climate, and the actions set out in the Priority Plan (Integrated Mobility Plan, Halifax Green Network Plan, HalifACT, People Planet Prosperity, and Sharing Our Stories).

The Draft Regional Plan consists of ten chapters, as summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Draft Regional Plan Summary

Chapter	Summary
1. Introduction	• Introduces the plan and provides historical and planning context • Sets out the Plan's Vision, Guiding Principle and Principles
2. Planning for Our Region	• Sets out the Municipality's approach to Regional and Community Planning • Establishes a strategic growth target directing 90% of new housing growth to the Urban Area • Establishes a program to regularly monitor population, housing and employment to inform reviews and amendments to the Plan, Community Plans, and supporting planning documents or studies • Sets direction to develop a Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, to provide a framework for future long-range growth and investment • Establishes the Regional Land Use Structure
3. Building Healthy and Complete Communities	• Sets out the Community Planning Framework for the Regional Centre, Suburban Areas and Rural Areas • For the Regional Centre: - Provides the Vision, Core Concepts and Guiding Principles - Identifies Regional Centre Growth Areas

	• For Suburban Areas: - Provides a Vision and Guiding Principles for Suburban Communities to be used as part of the Suburban Community Planning program. - Identifies Growth Areas aligned with proposed rapid transit corridors - Sets out guidance for planning future serviced communities. • For Rural Areas: - Provides a Vision and Guiding Principles for Rural Communities to be used as part of the Rural Community Planning program. - Identifies Rural Centres, which will be further refined as part of the Rural Planning program. - Establishes intent to study rural services and mobility options as part of the Rural Community Planning program.
4. Strengthening Community Infrastructure	• Identifies Community Infrastructure as critical for building healthy and complete communities. • Includes policies related to: - Parks - Community facilities (indoor recreation) - Libraries - Schools - Public safety and emergency services - Food security - Solid waste - Energy and telecommunications
5. Fostering Diverse and Affordable Housing	• Includes policy to increase housing supply through: - Opportunities to build a diverse range of housing types - Encouraging gentle density and missing middle housing - Adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings - Reducing parking requirements • Includes policy to increase housing affordability through: - Exploring initiatives such as inclusionary zoning and no net loss/rental replacement - Incentive or bonus zoning - Regulating short term rentals - Partnering with other levels of government, non-profit and private sector housing providers
6. Protecting the Environment and Acting on Climate	• Updates environmental policy to reflect the Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT • Includes policy to protect open space and promote landscape connectivity, including: - Urban forests - Natural/ wildlife corridors - Naturalization • Includes policy to protect water resources through: - Establishing intent to develop a watershed management framework - Setting parameters for watershed studies and lake water quality monitoring - Increasing required buffer distances around watercourses and wetlands • Directs the Municipality to pursue resilient infrastructure, including stormwater management using green infrastructure and to address

	flooding and erosion control - Includes policy related to coastal protection with a focus on mitigating coastal risk, including: - Requirements for coastal setbacks - Limiting development on islands and undersized coastal lots - Includes policy supporting HalifACT actions related to renewable energy
7. Transforming How We Move in Our Region	- Updates policy to reflect the Integrated Mobility Plan - Identifies strategic mobility corridors - Establishes the Urban Transit Service Boundary - Updates mode share targets - Directs future updates to the Moving Forward Together Plan and Active Transportation Plan - Directs the Municipality to collaborate with the Joint Regional Transportation Agency on a future Regional Transportation Plan
8. Supporting Economic Prosperity	- Updates economic policy to reflect People Planet Prosperity, Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-27, and the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan - Includes policy to support African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning - Includes policy to support subdivision of lots in areas designated under the <i>Land Titles Clarification Act</i>, to ensure African Nova Scotians residents can establish legal title to their lands - Supports collaboration with institutional partners including post-secondary institutions, Department of National Defence, Halifax Stanfield International Airport, and the Halifax Port Authority - Establishes region-wide policy to protect industrial employment lands - Establishes the Halifax Harbour sub-designation and policy related to harbour-related land uses - Directs consideration for rural employment lands as part of the Community Planning program - Includes policy to support the Integrated Tourism Master Plan and rural tourism
9. Celebrating Culture and Heritage	- Updates culture and heritage policies to reflect the forthcoming Sharing Our Stories: Culture & Heritage Priority Plan. <i>Note that should Regional Council choose not to adopt this Priority Plan, this Chapter will be adjusted</i> - Includes policies in support of reconciliation with Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Communities - Includes policies to support African Nova Scotian community planning, as well as community-led approach to supporting planning efforts for other traditionally under-represented groups - Includes comprehensive policies regarding the protection of heritage resources, including but not limited to: - The Municipal Heritage Registry - Heritage Conservation Districts - Heritage Development Agreements - Cultural Landscapes
10. Implementation	- Includes a range of technical policies to support implementation of the Plan - Sets a standard for community engagement - Outlines the range of planning tools used - Includes policies related to the Regional Subdivision By-law, including

	growth management policies which limit subdivision outside the Urban Service Area; and parkland dedication • Includes policies related to water and wastewater services in both urban and rural areas, including establishing the Urban Service Area boundary • Sets requirements for monitoring of key performance indicators and reviews of the Plan
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Site Specific Requests

Staff have continued to receive requests from property owners or their representatives for amendments to the Regional Plan and/or community plans for specific properties or areas of land. Attachment D provides an outline of all requests that have been received and provides details including the type of request, relevant existing policy, considerations for the Regional Plan Review, and staff's recommended approach. An interactive map showing the location of all requests is available on the Regional Plan Review's Shape Your City page.⁷ Staff reviewed all requests against existing planning policy, including the Regional Plan, applicable secondary municipal plans, and priorities plans (including the Halifax Green Network Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, and HalifACT). Recommended approaches to the requests were developed based on their consistency with Regional Plan and priority plan objectives, the opportunities and constraints on each site, and the level of additional study and analysis that may be required for staff to develop amendments within the anticipated timeline of the Review.

Conclusion

This report marks the beginning of the public engagement for Phase 4 of the overall Regional Plan Review work program. Attachment A includes a Draft Regional Plan for consultation purposes. The public engagement program will begin on June 20, 2023, and continue through to October 27, 2023. Feedback received on the Draft Regional Plan will be incorporated into a full amendment package for Regional Council's consideration later this year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs associated with undertaking the Regional Plan review identified in the work plan for 2023-2024 can be accommodated within the approved 2023-2024 operating budget.

RISK CONSIDERATION

This report involves proposed amendments to the Regional Plan and secondary municipal planning strategies for engagement purposes only. No risks are identified at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The Regional Plan includes a range of policies that deal both directly and indirectly with the natural environment. Chapter 6 of the Draft Regional Plan includes comprehensive policies regarding the environment and climate issues, and the Plan supports the objectives of the Halifax Green Network Plan and HalifACT. Site-specific plan amendment requests have considered the environmental objectives of the Regional Plan and Priority Plans.

ALTERNATIVES

⁷ An [interactive map](#) is available on the [project webpage](#).

Regarding Recommendations #2 and #3 of this report, Regional Council may:

1. Initiate the consideration of a policy review process that would differ from that outlined in Attachments B, C and F of this report. This may require a supplementary report from staff.

Regarding Recommendation #1 of this report, Regional Council may:

2. Accept the Draft Regional Municipal Planning Strategy included in Attachment A to be used for public engagement purposes with modifications. This may require a supplementary report from staff.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Regional Municipal Planning Strategy
Attachment B: Engagement Plan (June 2023)
Attachment C: Regional Plan Review Work Plan
Attachment D: Site-Specific Amendment Requests
Attachment E: Population and Housing Issue Paper
Attachment F: Public Participation Program Amendments

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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