

Welcome to Today's Virtual Q&A!

Meeting will begin at 12:00 pm

June 11, 2021

HALIFAX

Slide 1



REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW

Themes and Directions

Social Policy Q & A
June 11, 2021

HALIFAX

Slide 2



WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

We are reviewing the Regional Plan.

We are here to provide an **overview of the proposed Themes and Directions**. This is the first major deliverable of the Regional Plan Review. We are kicking off a month-long engagement period on this work, including webinars on 6 key themes.

Today's Webinar is for Social Policy:

- **Social Policy**
- Housing
- Climate
- Environment
- Mobility
- Long-Range Planning

We are here today because we are reviewing the Regional Plan, which means we are evaluating our land use policies and making sure they represent the direction Council would like to set. We are contemplating how the municipality is physically organized and growing.

We kicked off this phase of public engagement on May 20th at Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee – which is the primary advisory body for this work. Today's session is focused on social policy.

The Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) is a strategic document built on a common vision and principles for the municipality to achieve balanced and sustainable growth.

Originally adopted in 2006, the Regional Plan provided the first comprehensive guide for future growth for the entire municipality following amalgamation. It outlines where, when, and how future growth and development should take place between now and 2031.

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Now, just to step back and make sure everyone understands the Regional Plan – it is a strategic document – the first planning document adopted after amalgamation that provided a region-wide vision for land use.

First adopted in 2006, it provided a comprehensive outline of how growth and development should take place until 2031.

REGIONAL PLAN TIMELINE



This presents the progression of the Regional Plan over the past 14 years. In 2006, we approved the original Regional Plan, and in 2014 we conducted our first review – you might recognize the name RP+5, which was the brand for that review. You can see we are aiming to complete this review in 2022.



WHAT ARE THE THEMES & DIRECTIONS?

Key Ideas, Issues and Potential Changes.

The Themes & Directions document **shares ideas about key planning issues and provides details of the work** that will be completed during the Review. The purpose of this document is to demonstrate the scope of the Regional Plan Review to the public, stakeholders, Council, and ultimately to seek feedback on the content.

The feedback will help provide focus and direction for our work during the Review.

HALIFAX

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The Themes and Directions document outlines the key ideas and planning issues we will address in the Review. It is chance to step back and ask everyone – do we have this right? Are we headed in the right direction? The feedback we receive will help to provide focus and direction for our work during the Review.

CENTRAL QUESTION

Regional-Scale

How do we locate housing and employment in smart (strategic) locations, so that growth can happen easily, and in a way that furthers the municipality's most important goals?

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There are also a few key questions we are trying to answer through the review. The first is: How do we locate housing and employment in smart (strategic) locations, so that growth can happen easily, and in a way that furthers the municipality's most important goals?



REGIONAL-SCALE QUESTIONS

How Are We Growing?

What is the projected demand for housing and employment will be over the horizon of the plan and into the future?

Where Should We Grow?

Where are the best places to locate residential and employment growth? Considerations include:

- The current land use framework and development pattern;
- The existing and future location of services and infrastructure;
- The areas we want to preserve, protect, or treat with special attention; and
- Our aspirations for a sustainable future.

We can break this down into two key questions –

First, how are we growing?

We need to evaluate the projected demand for housing and employment today and into the future. To do this, we are relying on two key pieces of information – our housing and population analysis, and our industrial and employment land analysis.

The second question we ask, is where should we grow?

Once we know how much we are going to grow, we begin to assess where new housing and jobs can be accommodated. It isn't only about where there are pieces of land that can be developed, but where that land is located, as it relates to the location of services and infrastructure. We think about how and where we can infill, or where we should expand the city into greenfield areas – this is done with careful consideration as to how development can be serviced with water, sewer, transit, recreation – and studying how we should be preserving or protecting important pieces of ecological or cultural land. And as Regional Council has identified aspirations for a sustainable future, such as the Integrated Mobility Plan's mode share targets and the emissions reduction targets in HalifACT, we can update our modelling and assess how different land use growth scenarios might interact with these long-term objectives.



The Themes and Directions document includes 11 Themes. They are all highlighted on the slide, and an overview of each theme is available to you on our website – shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/region-plan.

Today we are focusing on theme 5...

Theme 5 Social Planning for Community Well-Being

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....Which is called Social Planning for Community Well-Being.

In recent years, the Municipality has begun to clarify its role in directly and indirectly supporting initiatives related to affordable housing, and community health and well-being. The Municipality does not and should not work on social planning alone. HRM works with other levels of government, arms-length organizations, non-profit organizations, and community groups on initiatives that advance diversity and inclusion, equitable and meaningful representation, and meeting the basic needs of those who call HRM home. Examples of well-established partnerships that are working toward social initiatives are the Housing and Homelessness Partnership, and the Halifax Food Policy Alliance.



Social Policy

In April 2020, HRM adopted a Social Policy Administrative Order with goals to “strengthen community health and wellbeing, enhance equity and inclusion, and build on social assets and community capacity”.

The Regional Plan will:

- **Align with the work of the Social Policy Committee to define the Municipality’s role in social planning and inventory the Municipality’s existing initiatives to better use existing resources and identify gaps.**

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In April 2020, HRM adopted a Social Policy Administrative Order with goals to “strengthen community health and wellbeing, enhance equity and inclusion, and build on social assets and community capacity”. This administrative order also set up a Social Policy Committee – which is made of people across HRM. Social planning takes place across municipal departments in many ways - through recreation programming, community grants, community development, land use planning, diversity and inclusion training, youth services, climate change planning, parks planning, and public transit and active transportation planning. The Social Policy committee is analyzing how we work in the community, and how we use a social lens. As this work advances, we will include it in the Regional Plan.



Social Policy

The Regional Plan will:

- **Identify neighbourhoods facing inequities or communities that have been historically underserved and underrepresented and coordinate across departments to address vulnerabilities and build upon neighbourhood capacity.**
- **Study the possible use of tools that could support capacity building, such as community benefit action planning, community trusts or community-led planning or projects.**
- **Provide continued support for the development of partnerships to provide a range of community infrastructure and services for residents towards complete communities.**

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Currently, the Regional Plan identifies and prioritizes areas where we expect to see significant growth in new housing and jobs. Some existing neighbourhoods may not have been identified as growth areas or for new infrastructure like transit or central services. Or some neighbourhoods may be feeling the pressure of gentrification, resulting from lots of new infill development. These situations can exacerbate inequities and create heightened sensitivity to the impacts of development. This includes a lack of access to safe, adequate and affordable housing, good food, and services and amenities as well as the ability to respond to climate change and disasters. We work directly with vulnerable communities and need to continue to build on this work to identify better tools that will strengthen neighbourhoods, while the city is growing and changing. Examples include community benefit action planning and community land trusts. Finally community-based partnerships are so important for our work, and we will continue to provide support for these.



Housing

The Municipality's role in supporting and encouraging affordable housing has increased steadily over the past several years.

The Regional Plan Review will:

- Encourage a diversity of housing forms;
- Identify planning tools to ensure no loss of housing during redevelopment;
- Update the Housing Needs Assessment annually;
- Remove barriers to the development and retention of housing;
- Study possible tools to leverage surplus or available land; and
- Develop a region-wide density bonusing program.

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The Municipality's role in supporting and encouraging affordable housing has increased steadily over the past several years. We recognize that housing is a right.

Through involvement with the Housing and Homelessness Partnership and Anti-Poverty Solutions Strategy, HRM has developed relationships with non-profit housing organizations, for-profit developers and federal and provincial levels of government. Since the 2014 Regional Plan, HRM has worked on several initiatives including the 2015 Housing Needs Assessment, a forthcoming rental registration by-law, supporting municipal Housing First projects and directing the Federal Rapid Housing Initiative funding. This slide lists the actions we will be focused on during the Regional Plan review – and if you have an interest in this topic, we'd also encourage you to come to our Housing session on Monday evening at 6:30pm.



Food Security

The Regional Plan Review will advance the commitment to design communities that promote food security by requiring consideration of access to food and impact on the food system in planning policies.

The Regional Plan will support the creation of JustFOOD and ensure alignment with its goals and recommendations by:

- Directing the use of JustFOOD tools and resources to better understand community vulnerability to food insecurity and the local food landscape when updating or creating planning policies.
- Removing barriers and creating incentives for food uses such as urban agriculture, agricultural operations, food outlets, etc. and reducing the impact of non-agricultural uses on viable agricultural land.

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It is estimated that between 1 in 5 and 1 in 7 households in HRM experience food insecurity. HRM has consistently ranked in the top 3 Canadian Census Metropolitan Areas with the highest rates of household food insecurity. With the rising cost of food continuing to outpace income and the challenges posed by COVID-19, these rates could worsen. The Municipality has recognized that it has an important role to play in promoting community food security.

In 2020, the Municipality partnered with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance to develop the JustFOOD Action Plan. JustFOOD is centred on food justice and working together towards a region where no one is hungry, where food and people are celebrated, and our local food system is prosperous and sustainable.

The Regional Plan Review will advance our commitment to design communities that promote food security by requiring consideration of access to food and impact on the food system in new and updated planning policies.



Inclusivity and Public Participation

Creating equitable complete communities requires an understanding of the lived experiences of the diverse residents that call HRM home. The Municipality must continue to develop an understanding of the effects of existing policies that disproportionately affect historically underserved and underrepresented groups.

The Regional Plan Review will:

- **Engage the Diversity and Inclusion Office as a resource during planning projects; and**
- **Review engagement policies through the upcoming Public Engagement Guidebook.**

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Creating equitable complete communities requires an understanding of the lived experiences of the diverse residents that call HRM home. The Municipality must continue to develop an understanding of the effects of existing policies that disproportionately affect historically underserved and underrepresented groups.

Public participation during planning projects provides an important opportunity for the Municipality to hear from residents. However, traditional engagement tools often only reach those who are already engaged or have the loudest voices and have left many others out of the conversation. Alone, these tools produce narrow representation in terms of demographics, perspectives and experiences.

Through our work, we are looking at ways to improve our engagement practices, and the Regional Plan review will make sure that the Plan supports these efforts.



Community Partnerships

HRM has several initiatives and commitments to better partner with, serve, and represent underrepresented groups. This includes the work of the 'Task Force on the Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History'; and the approval of the 'African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan'.

The Regional Plan Review will:

- **Ensure the Regional Plan is aligned with the 94 Calls to Action, recommendations from the Task Force on the Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History, and the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity.**

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Council has recently created two initiatives to partner with the Mi'kmaw and the African Nova Scotian Communities, to begin to address some of the most important issues identified by these communities.

There are number of actions contained in these documents that Planning & Development will need to act on quickly.

The Cornwallis Task Force report resulted in a numbers actions – including, this week renaming the park to Peace and Friendship Park, and we also started the process to rename Cornwallis Street. More generally, the report gave us direction for recognizing and commemorating the indigenous history in the lands now known as Halifax Regional Municipality.

The African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan directed us to consider opportunities for Community Benefits Agreements, review policies and regulations that may have disproportionately negative impacts in African Nova Scotian communities, support for the Akoma master plan, review of community boundaries and commemorations, remediation of contaminated sites in African Nova Scotian communities, and infrastructure funding for those communities.

We are continuing to work with our partners in Diversity and Inclusion in responding to the calls for action contained in these documents.



Accessibility

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act explains the barriers residents face, including that: persons with disabilities disproportionately live-in conditions of poverty; there is diversity among persons with disabilities; persons with disabilities continue to face attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent them from achieving their full and equal participation in society; and persons with disabilities who are subject to multiple forms of discrimination face additional barriers. Achieving accessibility will improve the independence and well-being of persons with disabilities.

The Regional Plan Review will:

- **Review and update planning documents that bring HRM closer to the goal of being a city for people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds; and**
- **Include the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Diversity & Inclusion Office in the review of the upcoming engagement tool.**

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that persons with disabilities disproportionately live in conditions of poverty; there is diversity among persons with disabilities; persons with disabilities continue to face attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent them from achieving their full and equal participation in society; and persons with disabilities are subject to multiple forms of discrimination and face additional barriers. Achieving accessibility will improve the independence and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Through the Regional Plan Review we will be reviewing our planning documents to make sure that they are aligned with the goal of bringing HRM closer to being a city for people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds

To learn more, ask questions, join the project's mailing list and make your voice heard:

Visit: www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/regional-plan

Email: regionalplan@halifax.ca

Phone: 902.233.2501

Stay updated on other events and engagement opportunities by following the Halifax Regional Municipality on social media and Shape Your City.

The logo for the City of Halifax, featuring the word "HALIFAX" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The text is positioned on the right side of a horizontal bar that has a light blue section on the left and a dark blue section on the right.

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**Thank You
For Your
Participation!**

Regional Planning



regionalplan@halifax.ca



902-233-2501

Shape Your City: www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/regional-plan

Public feedback will be collected until July 16

Slide 19

Regional Plan Review

Transcript - Social Policy Virtual Q&A (June 11, 2021)

This transcript has been edited for content and clarity.

QUESTION: What work has the municipality been doing around access to food? Can you talk more about the food action plan?

Leticia Smillie, Planner III, Regional Planning

Earlier in 2019, Regional Council approved and formalized our relationship with the Halifax food Policy Alliance, a collaboration of local organizations and individual

working across the food system, working towards increasing food security and strengthening access to food. As part of that motion in 2019, we agreed to work together to co-lead the development of an action plan for the region, the birth of JustFood. At this point we're in the early stages of the work. We've been working and building on the Halifax Food Charter, which was designed through community engagement in 2018, and lays out a number of principles for JustFood. And we've been trying to advance that to identify some goals for our local food system, and then working towards action. The intention for JustFood is for it to be an action plan that has strategic actions and then dedicates the resources such as policies, funding, programs, partnerships, and performance measurement to make sure that those actions become reality and we see positive change in our local food system.

We've been having a series of workshops. We just had our first workshop in March with people who are working in support of food, to learn more about each other and the amazing work that's already happening, which Just Food will build on, and then starting to work collaboratively together towards the actions and the things that we want JustFOOD to achieve.

We're having another workshop, #2, which is open to anybody who is interested in participating, and that's happening next Thursday and Friday, June 17 and 18. There is information on this at

<https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/foodaction> . It is open to everybody, and we're identifying what people want JustFOOD to achieve and then providing a space for us to work collaboratively towards what's needed to actually make this a reality.

We'll continue doing engagement over the summer and into the fall, so there are lots of opportunities for people to participate, in the ways in which they would like to participate. . We're then looking at later this year or early

next year to have a draft plan, and more engagement as we figure out what is needed to make the actions a reality.

JustFOOD is about collective impact, recognizing that while the municipality certainly has lots of roles and things that we need to be committing to and carrying forward, we also need to bring together others to help us, and to take on commitments on their own, working together to make positive change in our local food system.

QUESTION: What is the role that the province plays in affordable versus the role that the municipality plays? How is the municipality is considering the recent Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission report in its work?

Jill MacLellan, Planner III, Regional Planning:

It was really exciting to see the Affordable Housing Commission report come out and suggest a lot of the initiatives that we've been exploring as well. That includes looking at community land trusts, supporting shared housing, which is a form of group housing or people living under different leases. The Commission report also spoke to a need to have a housing needs assessment and a housing strategy, which are all initiatives HRM has been exploring as well. It was exciting to see all of the work [put into the report] and also the acknowledgement that [affordable housing] is something that municipalities need to play a role in as the Commission spoke to expanding the tools municipalities have to support affordable housing.

QUESTION: How is the Municipality looking at public engagement practices to consider diversity including a diversity of perspectives?

Mapfumo Chidzonga, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor to Regional Planning:

As you may know, our traditional engagement practices especially for planning, include public information meetings, maybe on-site signage; some planning policy projects also have unique engagement strategies that they employ. The issue is that oftentimes our engagement isn't right size, so it can be quite rigid, and sometimes lacks the transparency regarding the purpose of the process, and the scope of the decision that's being made. Sometimes we have a traditional engagement approaches that are set up to be confrontational and ultimately the participation, as mentioned in the presentation, tends to have a bias towards folks who are already

engaged, or whoever has a louder voice. Most recently we've been grappling with the reality that we have under-utilized a lot of the new technology that's out there and given our current situation with the pandemic, we are almost being forced to use more of the technology that's out there for online engagement.

So what our holistic approach to engagement is a renewed approach, one that seeks to make engagement more modern, not only using the traditional practices, but combining them with newer best practices which will help us to identify and remove barriers to participation. We're looking at engagement in which folks are not going to be excluded from the process, on the basis of, say, race, gender, or class. The idea is that all groups have access to the resources and the opportunities necessary to be able to fully participate. And then on the back end of this we would like that differences in project outcomes won't be predicted on the basis of say, race, class, gender, or ability, or other dimensions of identity. The insights from these often underrepresented groups in our process and underserved in our services, these groups, their insights, can and should be reflected in the project outcomes. So we'd like for the systemic barriers that they face, the inequities that they face to be addressed proactively. And also, we continue to acknowledge them in our reports and our recommendations as well in the projects that we do. We are currently in the process of developing a public engagement guidebook, which we hope will provide us with a more coordinated HRM-wide approach to our engagement to allow us to be more effective, to create accessible, barrier free engagement practices as well. We continue to learn from the various groups that we serve, for better inclusion in our processes so we leverage their knowledge, their expertise and we recognize them as competent and capable agents who should be part of our process throughout and that's been made possible largely by the support of the Diversity and Inclusion Office / African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office, who have been helping us with their advice, their great in-depth knowledge of the community and on the most culturally appropriate approaches to engaging them fully.

QUESTION: Can you provide an update on the Social Policy Committee, and the work that they are doing right now?

Paul Johnston, Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs:

About a year ago, Council approved a social policy for HRM. There are three theme areas that were identified, and you can see them all reflected in the Regional Plan Review presentation today: housing and homelessness, food security, and connected communities.

As a result of that work, and the policy that Council passed, we put together a social policy team or committee within HRM. It's an internal committee, consisting of representatives from Business units throughout the municipality.

Social policy is an interesting area to work in because it's an area that the municipality doesn't necessarily have the "mandate", but we certainly play a part in that area every day. When you think of those theme areas that I mentioned, primarily, the housing area in terms of the regional Plan, and then a lot of the great work that Leticia has been doing on food security that she just mentioned in the earlier answer.

So that team has been together for slightly less than a year, and really the overall focus for the first while has been figuring out how to break down silos internally and figure out how collectively, as a municipality we can start to address and advance these areas. There's a lot of good work. The team has really gotten its legs underneath it. In the last few months, we're starting to embark now in a strategic planning process to figure out how we can push these theme areas forward at the municipal level over the next number of months and number of years.

Mary Chisholm, Senior Policy Advisor, Government Relations and External Affairs:

The social policy team has really helped to advance cross collaboration across municipality prior to having the social policy team. We didn't have an ability for people or for staff at HRM to get together to focus on issues that are cross cutting and really helped to problem-solve them. The social policy team was initiated shortly after the pandemic began so early on we focused on distributing funding we received through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and we were able to use the social policy team to help figure out what projects we should be focusing on that align with the three focus areas. We were able to pick some really neat projects and was

one of our first deliverables as a team.

We've also throughout the past year invited external stakeholders in to present to the team, and we found the team to be a really good space for these presenters to come and kind of let us know what they're working on and how we as an organization can best support

Them. We will continue to do that going forward.

We're also focusing now on how we can be strategic as a team and help to align the work of this social policy with other initiatives that are currently underway, like this Regional Plan Review and how we can best support that.

The social policy team has added value so far and we're looking forward to where it can go next.

QUESTION: How has the municipality been working on the issue of short-term rentals (STRs) / AirBnBs?

Jill MacLellan, Planner III, Regional Planning:

Prior to the pandemic, HRM had prepared a report looking at [Short Term Rentals(STRs)]. We had completed a region wide survey to gauge or understand how residents were impacted by [STRs] and whether they were something they welcomed in their neighborhoods.

And we did hear about some of the benefits of [STRs] making it more flexible to travel, having new people in their neighborhood, which can sometimes be fun.

But there were a lot of concerns about how this impacted established neighborhoods. If your neighbor is changing on a weekly basis, the stress that can involve. Also, the impact STRs were having on the housing market was something that really became apparent as an issue.

I think people are well aware that our vacancy rate is quite low. So even though approximately 1% of units in our housing market have been lost to air BNBs, and while that number appears to be low, that does have a significant impact on our vacancy rate.

Through the analysis of the survey and research that we have done, Council did direct us to draft a regulatory by law, which is something that we're working on right now. We're hoping to have a public survey out in the upcoming months to gauge how people feel about the direction we're looking to pursue with this regulatory by law. Part of that project will be

updating our land use bylaws to include terminology around short term rentals because most of our bylaws, were written prior to the existence of short term rentals or the prevalence of short term rentals. We're looking to update our bylaws so we can deal with them as a land use.

QUESTION: How is the municipality thinking about urban agriculture at a local scale?

Leticia Smillie, Planner III, Regional Planning

Because of our geography and the fact the majority of our prime agricultural land was unfortunately developed in the 60-70s when our communities were growing quickly, , we only have a few pockets of prime soil, which we need to protect. We also have a lot of opportunity space for agriculture embedded right in our urban landscape.

For our local food system, urban agriculture is one of the most important things that we should be focusing on and this is an example of how the Regional Plan and Just Food could be working hand in hand.

For the Regional Plan, where it's about land use and land use regulations, there's an opportunity for us to make sure that we're removing the barriers to having urban agriculture and food uses all around us in our urban landscape. We could remove some of the barriers and also create opportunities for urban agriculture. Things like requiring edible landscaping as part of new developments, or making sure that zoning permits food outlets like grocery stores or healthy corner stores. Make sure that we provide opportunities, and reduce barriers through the Regional Plan. Through JustFOOD we can consider how to create incentives for those opportunities. It's not really enough just for us to create ability for people have food uses, we really want to look at what can we do to make it more attractive for more urban agriculture right in our landscape and normalize urban agriculture as part of our cities. There are lots of things that could be done in terms of incentives through JustFOOD. Funding, tax incentives, etc. there are different opportunities that are open to us through JustFOOD.

QUESTION: What are the best ways to engage with communities that are traditionally underrepresented?

Mapfumo Chidzonga, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor to Regional Planning:

I think we need to begin by asking the question why are we missing out on these communities? How are they being excluded? Exclusion can be on the basis of linguistic, cultural, economic, or accessibility, or age, or gender. It's not enough to say someone is missing from the table. We need to start anticipating and addressing the barriers. Why they're missing from the table. We need to understand how and why these persons are excluded and how we can work to foster a more inclusive and accessible engagement.

For example, within our public engagement guidebook, we built in tools that will prompt folks who are planning engagement to consider factors such as language, so which languages are being spoken, is translation available written and oral? Are we thinking critically about meeting locations? What's an accessible meeting location? Is it safe? Is it in a neutral meeting place? Often we have a tendency to invite folks into our spaces. Are we going out to communities enough? Is there a central location that we can find? Should we be considering multiple meetings at varying locations? Will participants be given enough time, ample time to participate? Are we working within budget constraints? So maybe we could think of more flexible budgets to allow for us to have a more accessible engagement. When we think about communication, do the communication methods that we use accommodate everyone are we providing the same screen readers for people with visual impairments? Do we need Braille or sign language? These types of services are available. They often require that we put in a lot of time and effort on the front end to make it possible, but they are out there.

We often don't consider the fact that some folks have responsibilities. They have dependents to care for – to what degree do we consider childcare as a barrier for participation though the structure of our meetings?

Sometimes different meeting structures aren't appropriate, so we could consider opening ourselves up to "community circle" approaches. They tend to foster more of the trust based conversations, trust building conversations, as well as getting into some of the stories. The stories that we miss out on. Stories are a key aspect of culturally appropriate engagement. Understanding that maybe our open houses or informational meetings aren't the best way to get at some of the really detailed

experiences that we might be wishing to get from the feedback. Also, technical knowledge, that's one that's also becoming more prominent. A lot of folks have been in the past and continued to be excluded on the basis of their technical knowledge about, say, the planning process or how bureaucracies operate. So we could do our part do better to educate in the same way that we're providing information.

We're also building capacity, so we need to build that into our processes as well so that we are not only just taking the feedback, it's not a transactional process, but also as a reciprocal one. So it's a give and take, and in that way we build relationship with communities.

These are some of the steps we can take to include groups that have been traditionally excluded if we recognize these barriers and we start to address them proactively, we can start to get at these groups and definitely have a more representative participation.

And obviously more reflective public service provision.

QUESTION: What is the Rapid Housing Initiative and how is the Municipality considering it?

Jill MacLellan, Planner III, Regional Planning:

The Rapid Housing Initiative was a Federal relief program where the Municipality was given 8.7 million dollars to develop a minimum of 28 affordable housing units. These are units that are directed towards those in need of deep affordability, those who are on either income assistance or who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

The caveat of the funding is that the developments need to be completed within one year, which is a very tight timeline, and it could only be for developments that would bring new housing to the market. It had to be either constructing new housing, or converting non-market housing – for example converting a commercial building into a residential building - or rehabilitating uninhabitable buildings. If a building has been vacant for a certain amount of time and it would not meet minimum occupancy standards, the money could be used to rehabilitate that building as well. If it's new construction, it has to be modular - which speaks to the need for speed of the construction.

This funding was announced towards the end of October of 2020 and by the end of November, HRM was able to pull the team together to put out a call of submissions to nonprofits to see who could build this housing.

Because HRM isn't a provider of housing ourselves, we had to partner with

a non-profit who could actually build and monitor the housing. Within that month we were able to put out a call for submissions and select three successful candidates.

One of the reasons for the success of moving this project so quickly was due to our relationships through the Housing and Homelessness Partnership through the relationships that we have with working with other groups on the Anti-Poverty Solutions Strategy. We already have a lot of those contacts so we were able to move fairly quickly with that.

The three developments that we were able to provide funding for include the Adsum House for Women and Children, they're building 25 units directed towards women and women with children. The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre which is providing 10 bedrooms through shared housing and seven individual units directed towards the urban indigenous population and that will be part of a larger development that has a shelter component in programming.

As well, the North End Community Health Association is building 10 bedrooms as shared housing that will be directed towards the African Nova Scotian community and urban indigenous population.

We are currently working with those three groups to get the buildings developed. There's still

lots of work that needs to be done to get these buildings completed by the end of the year and occupied by March of 2022, but it has been a great experience so far and really looking forward to getting these 52 units on line.

QUESTION: Are there any examples of community land trusts or community benefit agreements?

Are there any successful examples?

Kate Greene, Regional Policy Program Manager:

Community Land Trusts are something new that the municipality has just started exploring. It's a different way that communities might be able to participate in land ownership, and then hold that land in common within community, build housing and hold that land in hands of community.

Over time, that that housing could be held for social purposes, then as it changes hands you can control the price of the housing so that people are able to continue to access that and continue live on that land.

It's a tool that we're exploring and seeing if it's a way of giving communities control of how they live in their community, especially to combat raising

prices around affordable housing.

The other thing we're looking at is how the municipality could play a role in being a resource to help NGOs trying to create that type of structure of housing. We're looking to examples across the country. There's examples in Vancouver where the municipality actually uses public land as an asset allows for NGOs or other groups to come and build housing on that land. You have multiple pieces of land and you can capitalize on that as an asset, and more quickly build housing at an affordable rate.

The other thing that is interesting that we've learned about is that municipalities in Vancouver other places actually retain expertise in housing that are able to help NGOs or community groups build housing, get involved in housing. One of the things that's been identified that NGOs are missing is expertise and how to go about building housing. Purchasing land is really challenging. Exploring ways the municipality can use in-house expertise and lend that out to NGOs as they need it and help people build social purpose housing. Those are some of the ways we're exploring new models or ownership. They can help with building more affordable housing in our communities.

Jill MacLellan, Planner III, Regional Planning:

One of the initiatives that HRM recently adopted was a new surplus category in our for our surplus lands. We have a category that's specific to affordable housing, so it's not a community land trust, but we are starting to get ourselves set up to be able to identify land that is appropriate for affordable housing, should we ever be in a position where we're able to establish a municipal community land trust, or be able to support a nonprofit community Land Trust. We're already starting to identify land that's appropriate for that use.

QUESTION: There's a bit of a complicated relationship between the Province and the Municipality and how both work on social housing. How has the Municipality been working with the Province to help us to the social policy work it's interested in?

Paul Johnston, Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs:

We can't advance a lot of our social policy priorities or initiatives alone. We need the Province to work in partnership with us. We need community partners working with us because these are broad issues, and so I guess in

terms of our work with the Province – to simplify it - it falls into two kinds of categories:

There's the area of partnership or relationship building, where there are a lot of initiatives that we can take as a municipality, but the Province has the mandate to do a lot of that work, so we need to work pretty closely with them. At the staff level we have built good relationships with Community Services, and Infrastructure and Housing staff and meet with them regularly. Sometimes it's just as simple as sharing information on a regular basis to understand what staff at the Province are up to, and trying to identify gaps or areas that we can work a little more closely together. That's the first piece.

Second piece is a bit more mechanical, and that's around legislative changes, infrastructure programming, that sort of thing. A lot of the tools or levers that the municipality wants to implement or enact, especially in the area of housing which is probably the best example – requires permission from the Province through legislation to do. We've had some pretty good success in the last couple of years in working with the Province to get a few of those legislative changes and there are several more that we're that we're still working on with them. It's a similar process where we work with staff in the provincial departments that are responsible, for example, for the municipal Charter is probably the best example which is governed by Municipal Affairs. We work with them to prioritize and identify what those legislative changes may be that we need in order to advance some of this work, and work with them to try to get those priority areas through the legislature and then hopefully have a successful outcome in terms of getting some of those specific areas we need to move, like the housing portfolio for instance.

QUESTION: Can you describe the Mobile Food Market and how it has been working?

Leticia Smillie, Planner III, Regional Planning

The Mobile Food Market has been in operation since 2016 and it brings healthy and affordable food to communities at a higher risk of food insecurity, with challenges to accessing food. From my perspective and I think I speak for the rest of the JustFOOD team on this - the Mobile Food Market is a great example of the kind of collaborative effort and the collective impact that's required to progress such a complicated issue as food security. The champions for the development of the Mobile Food

Market were the Ecology Action Center, Nova Scotia Health Authority and HRM, and we now have Metro Works acting as the host for the Mobile Food Market. We came together to support the service with in-kind contributions, like access to a Halifax Transit bus, facilities and expertise and leadership for the development of the Mobile Food Market. The Mobile Food Market is designed for communities to decide what type of market they need to serve their needs and their capacities such as the kinds of infrastructure they have on location. The Mobile Food Market works with these community teams, using local teams to help figure out what are the types of markets that they need and then matches the service like bulk delivery, on site markets, produce packs, etc. so they can have their own markets or do their own community food distribution. Or they come in and set up for market and have all the infrastructure there to have a mobile food market. There are all kinds of different relationships and different ways that the markets are rolling out in communities based on what communities are saying that they need.

It's about making sure that we recognize that communities are the experts in terms of what they need. When we're creating social policy it's really important to be working all together.

Another important partner in the Mobile Food Market, is the Province who's been a consistent funder and part of the decision making. It's an example of how we need to come together to progress these complex issues, and it's about figuring out what are the best pieces and the ways that your organization can progress things and then work with others in the ways in which they are best at moving things forward. It's about putting aside the bureaucracy and the barriers that are often in place, for us to work together. Recognize that we need to get out of our own way and help communities.

To learn more about the Regional Plan Review or contact the Team:

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