

CHAPTER 4: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

DRAFT

CHAPTER 4: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Community infrastructure is essential to building healthy and complete communities. Parks, recreational spaces and programs, and libraries provide communities with safe, inclusive and accessible spaces to gather, build strong and resilient networks, engage in positive social activities, and seek safety from harm. Shared public spaces are important to our physical and mental health, leisure, economic development, environmental sustainability, and even climate resiliency. Emergency services, solid waste and energy utilities are critical infrastructure that ensure safety and security for residents.

The region's parks and community facilities, including recreation centres, libraries, are mostly operated by the Municipality, with some administered by other organizations, including federal and provincial agencies, volunteer community boards, third party (for-profit) management companies, and not-for-profit organizations. Collectively, they provide a diverse range of programs, services, civic events and safety programs to the community. As the Municipality grows and our population becomes more diverse, it will be important that the public infrastructure within our communities be maintained and enhanced to meet the growing need.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

- 1. Support community wellness and active living by delivering an inclusive municipal park and community facility network that accommodates the needs of changing demographics and the region's settlement pattern.**
- 2. Direct investment in public space and infrastructure at the neighbourhood, community and regional level to meet the needs of diverse communities.**
- 3. Support the protection, acquisition, and management of the significant natural or cultural resources in regional parks.**
- 4. Strengthen collaboration with partners in planning and maintaining inclusive, resilient and sustainable parks and community facilities in alignment with future growth.**
- 5. Create opportunities for partnerships and multi-use hubs to increase equitable access and efficient service delivery.**
- 6. Support community safety by delivering an inclusive emergency prevention and response infrastructure network that accommodates the needs of changing populations and HRM's unique settlement patterns, in adherence to local and national levels of service standards.**

4.2 PARKS

Parks are an important component of the Green Network. An ecologically and economically sustainable park system contributes to the resilience and connectivity of ecological systems. It provides residents of all ages and abilities with access to nature, active and passive amenities and social cohesion. As part of the region's open space network, parks help to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather conditions such as heat waves and flooding.

The park system, along with the green network, helps shape the settlement form and character of the region's communities. A sustainable Green Network is envisioned as a system that protects important ecological functions, mitigates climate change impacts and provides recreational opportunities.

The region's park and community facilities provide accessible programs and services offering diverse recreation, leisure and cultural choices, and delivering inclusive civic events. Currently, there are over 900 municipal parks in the municipality that provide green spaces and outdoor assets, including trails, playgrounds, sport courts, sport fields and skateboard parks.

The municipality's park system needs to serve the recreation needs of a rapidly growing and changing population throughout the whole region. A connected trail system provides linkages between communities and outstanding natural and historical features, which shape the region's form and identity. An inclusive and sustainable park system is a key consideration while planning for healthy and complete communities.

There are increasing expectations concerning the quality and quantity of municipally-owned public spaces dedicated to open space, recreation and leisure pursuits. The municipality has been experiencing high levels of population growth which is expected to continue. Given the higher densities desired for growth centres and transit corridors within the municipality, there will be additional requirements for more parks to serve the needs of local residents. To plan strategically for increased demand for publicly-accessible green space for passive and active recreation, the Municipality will develop a Regional Parks Priority Plan.

- CI-1 The Municipality shall support community wellness, active living and the open space network by providing a full spectrum of public parks, as identified in the Green Network Plan, for the purposes of outdoor recreation and environmental protection.**
- CI-2 To ensure that the Municipality's park and open space infrastructure is sufficient to support growing and healthy communities, the Municipality shall develop a Regional Parks Priority Plan that supports the objectives of this Plan and the Halifax Green Network Plan and considers:**
 - a) Planning the park system from a region-wide perspective, recognizing the needs of ecosystems and communities, areas identified for intensification, and new planned communities, the various settlement patterns, and their respective unique character, configuration, and need;**
 - b) Coordinating and managing a program to research and identify potential public open space parks and corridors for the provision of quality open space for recreational and social development, restoration of natural corridor and urban ecosystem function, greenway networks to connect communities and provide mobility options and significant natural habitats to guide considerations of future development;**

- c) Establishing criteria for classifying and developing HRM parks including designating new park areas, and the upgrades to existing parks required to support existing and future population growth;
- d) Developing level of service standards, policies and equitable access to a variety of park types, amenities, facilities and experiences, and an associated park and public land acquisition strategy as outlined in Policy CI-7 and C1-8;
- e) Establishing investment and management guidelines for public open space lands, infrastructure and sustainable natural open space management strategies;
- f) Incorporating ecosystem and climate values, cultural and heritage values, naturalization and year-round recreation when planning across the park spectrum;
- g) Prioritizing the connections between parks and open spaces, freshwater bodies and the Atlantic Ocean for open space protection; and,
- h) Prioritizing protection of public access to significant wilderness and coastal areas.

4.2.1 NATURE PARKS

The municipality is home to municipally, provincially, federally and non-profit owned parks and open spaces that provide wilderness protection and recreation opportunities. The Municipality currently has direct involvement in land ownership and park management for three areas that are being developed as Nature Parks. The primary goal of park planning for these publicly held lands is to retain them in a natural state, offering passive access to nature. An overview of these areas is provided in Table CI-1 below. Lands that the Municipality currently owns, or provincially or federally owned lands will be subject to future park planning processes. As development proceeds in close proximity to park areas, attention should be placed on ensuring land use is of a suitable use and scale.

Table CI-1: Description of Nature Parks

<u>Sandy Lake</u> The Sandy Lake Regional Park consists of municipally owned land around Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake and Jack Lake containing a beach, formal trails, and undeveloped wilderness lands. Located near Hammonds Plains Road, it extends up to the Sackville River and encompasses the Sandy Lake watershed, including the watercourse from Sandy Lake, Marsh Lake, and into the Sackville River. The Park also includes Jack Lake, which is part of the Papermill Lake Watershed. The Municipality has an active program to include additional lands to support the further development of this nature park.
<u>Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes</u> Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) is an area located on the western edge of the Halifax urban core and comprises Acadian forest, wetlands, and a system of lakes and headwaters, offering wilderness opportunities to many residents and visitors. In 2021, the Municipality signed a statement of collaboration with Parks Canada to consider part of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) area as a candidate National Urban Park, under a new federal program. The subject area considered for park planning consists of land owned or under the control of a partnership group (as shown on Map 5A) and any additional private lands that might be acquired for the purpose of connection or park integration. The Partnership Group which has been formed to guide future park planning consists of HRM; the Province;

Nova Scotia Nature Trust; Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, as represented by Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMK); Sipekne'katik First Nation; and Parks Canada.

Shaw Wilderness & McIntosh Run

Portions of the Purcell's Cove Backlands, located on the Chebucto Peninsula, are nature parks that include lakes, hills with scenic views, and popular hiking and biking trails. This area is characterized by its glaciated landscape and unique ecology. In addition to being home to a variety of local plants and animal species, the Backlands have a Jack Pine/Broom Crowberry Barrens ecosystem that is naturally unique and globally rare. The Municipality is working in partnership with other provincial and not for profit agencies to establish programming for these lands and actively considers opportunities to acquire additional lands that could further support development of this Nature Park.

Once underway, park planning may recognize that additional lands could be beneficial to the park purpose and objectives, and should be considered for acquisition. Any lands that are held in private ownership are subject to other land uses, and unless they are zoned for park, are subject to existing development rights as enabled under a land use by-law, or subdivision approvals or development agreements currently in effect.

CI- 3 As park planning proceeds for the nature parks generally known as Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes, Sandy Lake and Shaw Wilderness and McIntosh Run, the Municipality shall give consideration to:

- a) the goals and objectives of this Plan, the Halifax Green Network Plan and any future Regional Parks and Open Spaces Strategy as outlined in Policy CI-2;**
- b) the relationship to adjacent lands and community;**
- c) applying best practices and an equity lens to acquisition models, park planning, and design processes;**
- d) determining safe and environmentally sensitive access points;**
- e) using the analysis and findings from ecological features assessments, watershed studies, or land suitability analyses; and,**
- f) the findings of the Regional Park Priority Plan as outlined in Policy CI-2.**

CI-4 The Municipality shall coordinate with Provincial and Federal governments and conservation groups to help establish a nature park network and use this network to pursue partnerships or changes to legislation or regulation that would help support these important projects.

CI-5 The Municipality shall study lands in close proximity to nature park areas and ensure land use is of a suitable use and scale to support the creation and ongoing use of the nature park.

- CI-6 To recognize the unique, fire-prone ecology of the Purcell's Cove Backlands and protect the majority of this area as open space, the Municipality shall establish provisions within the applicable secondary municipal planning strategy and land use by-law to limit development within the interior of the Backlands.**

4.2.1 LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

The concept of Level of Service (LOS) Standards pertain to whether a service is provided or not, how much a service is provided, measure the quality of that service, or the required levels of investment in that service. In Parks service, Level of Service (LOS) Standards can be used to identify the desired maximum distance to outdoor recreational amenities and parkland and the amount of parkland and amenities available per number of residents (parkland per capita). Defining a LOS standard is useful in setting appropriate expectations for residents for park services, and can be used to help plan and monitor the quantity and quality of parks and community facilities.

Halifax's natural and human influenced landscapes help to organize the municipality into different settlement areas, each one having distinct characteristics. Types of development and density of population differ greatly among the settlement patterns as do their natural resources, parkland and recreation facilities. Some have important natural features; others provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. No individual community has a complete spectrum of parks and outdoor recreation experiences. To ensure equitable, sustainable and high-quality provision of parks services and outdoor amenities are available for future generations, considering the nature of Halifax's various settlement patterns, different levels of parks and outdoor recreation service should be developed for each type of settlement pattern.

To accommodate the changing population's physical and social needs, the Municipality must continuously identify gaps and overlaps in park locations, sizes, outdoor amenities, and programming based on level of services. This can help make decisions about maintenance, investments, land acquisitions and divesting in underutilized spaces.

- CI-7 The Municipality shall seek to provide a balanced distribution and supply of inclusive and accessible high-quality parks and outdoor amenities according to defined level of services. The Municipality shall develop Level of Service Standards for parkland and outdoor assets with consideration given to the following:**

- g) the objectives and actions of this Plan and the Halifax Green Network Plan, including the park spectrum;**
- h) benchmark and best practices for level of services;**
- i) a diverse and inclusive public participation program;**
- j) the unique character and needs of the municipality's various settlement patterns;**
- k) spatial analysis of the existing parkland and outdoor recreation amenities inventory;**
and
- l) the projected future population's demand on parkland and amenities.**

- CI-8 The Municipality shall conduct a parkland and outdoor asset needs assessment to identify gaps and overlaps based on Level of Service Standards. This assessment shall inform decision-making on land parkland and outdoor asset acquisition, divestment and naturalization.**
- CI-9 Where a proposed development is considered by development agreement, the Municipality may consider the acquisition of riparian buffers, wetlands, and islands as public open space to protect public interest and facilitate public access.**

4.3 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities play an essential role in fulfilling the community's social, recreational, cultural and public safety needs. While the primary role of many community facilities is to provide opportunities for people to stay active and engaged, these shared physical spaces increasingly play a role in filling gaps in the social safety net, supporting public health and even emergency services. Libraries and recreation centres in particular are at the front lines of serving vulnerable populations be it through housing supports, food programs, welcoming seniors and youth, tutoring newcomers or providing a safe space for the unsheltered population. Community facilities are therefore part of the social infrastructure that can build strong interpersonal and social networks and can be easily mobilized when either a personal or a community emergency arises, such as a loss of housing or extreme weather events. They are the essential building blocks of healthy, inclusive and resilient communities.

The Municipality operates 30 indoor community facilities, ranging from small community centres to large complexes including community centres, recreation centres, arenas, pools, skate parks, playgrounds, sport fields and sport courts. It is crucial to also recognize the contribution of community facilities provided by other organizations in supporting the city's needs, including libraries, schools, childcare services, cultural venues, places of worship, sport clubs and emergency facilities.

There are currently gaps in the equitable access to such facilities across the region. As HRM continues to embrace strong population growth, community facilities and services will need to accommodate a fast growing and changing population's demands, while also addressing existing gaps in particular in areas with higher than average low-income and vulnerable populations.

It is important to take community facilities into consideration when planning for future development, as they play a vital role in the functioning and livability of the municipality's communities. This can be accomplished through strategic public land holdings, creating partnerships, and co-locating services in mixed-use facilities and developments.

- CI-10 The Municipality shall support the development of healthy and complete communities by:**
- a) maintaining public lands in areas that are identified for growth and intensification;**
 - b) identifying gaps in equitable distribution of community facilities and emergency services;**
 - c) exploring partnerships to co-locate community facilities in mixed-use developments or multi-use facilities; and**

d) **prioritizing location of community facilities in areas accessible by walking or transit.**

CI-11 When developing new or amending existing secondary municipal planning strategies, the Municipality shall consider the needs for community services and facilities by:

a) **consulting with service providers about the service needs of current and future residents;**

b) **considering lands for current or future institutional uses through land use planning and land banking;**

c) **maintaining lands in public ownership in strategic locations; and**

d) **permmittin the location of community facilities in mixed-use developments.**

4.3.1 INDOOR RECREATION

Halifax recognizes that fostering lifelong participation through a variety of accessible recreational opportunities contributes to healthy lifestyles, vibrant communities, and a sustainable environment.

The Municipality provides a variety of indoor and outdoor community facilities designed to meet local and regional recreation needs. HRM has adopted the “Hub and Spoke” model which identifies a large “hub” facility with other complementary recreation infrastructure located in the surrounding area serving as “spokes”. Clustering facilities in this way allows residents to access a wider variety of programming than can be delivered in a single facility. The location and distribution of community facilities is among the factors considered when reviewing centres for future growth. These facilities should also be located to allow for easy access using active transportation or transit where these services are available.

CI-12 The Municipality shall review and consider recreation trends, demographics, equity and community needs as part of planning for complete communities and striving to provide services in an equitable manner, particularly for historically underserved communities.

CI-13 Further to Policy RP-20, the Municipality shall consider the location and distribution of community facilities as part of the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan to ensure that services are available or planned to accommodate future growth.

In 2017, HRM endorsed The Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2), which gives direction for a clustered approach to community facilities management that will provide a more cohesive infrastructure and will encourage more integrated and universally accessible programming. It identifies aging facilities that may need investment or replacement in order to meet accessibility standards, safety requirements and changing user needs.

CI-14 The recommendations of the Community Facilities Master Plan 2, as updated from time to time, shall provide guidance for needs assessment, planning, management and financing of community facilities in the municipality.

4.3.2 WASHROOMS AND DRINKING FOUNTAINS

Providing access to safe, clean and accessible washroom and drinking fountains is essential as the city grows. Park washroom facilities play a critical role in bolstering HRM's overall network of public washrooms. This network comprises an essential part of the ongoing work of building a more inclusive public sphere, supporting more equitable access to all HRM's public and open spaces.

The *HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy*, endorsed by HRM in 2020, outlines policy and design recommendations and a proposed action plan for the municipality in considering the planning, recapitalization, and installation of facilities in municipal parks. This strategy mainly focused on the recreational user needs for washrooms and drinking fountains. It does also recognize other broader society needs for washrooms and drinking fountains that are not within its scope, and addressed the needs for additional subsequent work on the matter.

CI-15 The recommendations of the *HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy* shall provide guidance for decision-making in the planning, recapitalization and installation of washrooms and drinking fountains in the municipality's parks and open spaces.

4.4 LIBRARIES

Libraries play an important role in communities, in the vast range of free services provided, and in the communal space where everyone is welcome to gather. In addition to providing residents access to books and other forms of information, libraries provide free Wi-Fi, technology for public use, social and meeting spaces, cultural activities, programming and learning opportunities for all ages, including English language and literacy programming, and support and referral services for those at risk in the community. Libraries provide many virtual programs, including extensive digital collections, as well as home delivery services and community-based services in many locations outside of branches. Halifax Public Libraries has facilities located in urban, suburban and rural areas of HRM. Some libraries are co-located with other community or regional facilities.

Given the evolving role of libraries and the high level of community use, many existing older facilities do not have adequate space, or are not designed to meet modern demand. Halifax Public Libraries has a capital plan, which identifies branches that are priorities for investment, based on facility condition, population growth and social need in the community. The library has a combination of both larger facilities and smaller branches that are located in community and connected to transit and active transportation routes.

CI-16 Further to Policy RP-20, the Municipality shall consider the location and distribution of libraries as part of the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, and work with Halifax Public Libraries to ensure that services are available or planned to accommodate future growth.

4.5 SCHOOLS

Schools are public infrastructure, and their location, design and physical condition play a significant role in neighborhood quality, city growth and quality of life. Schools have heavy impacts on transportation and transit services, road service demand, residential development and housing choice. Convenient access to quality schools is an important consideration for community when deciding where to live. As a result, the

location of existing and planned schools is an important part of building health and complete communities and are important to HRM's long-term planning.

In HRM, the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) oversees English public schools and the Conseil Scholaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) oversees all French public schools. Eleven private schools are also located in HRM. Each Centre or Board is required to publish a Long-Range Outlook (LRO) annually. These documents provide information regarding the situation at each school, the delivery of education programs and services, historical and projected student enrollment. Based on the results of the LRO, a Centre or Board may identify a school for review to determine the viability of the facility. HRM has a Service Exchange Agreement with HRCE, which intends to provide a long-term solution regarding shared access to facilities, programs and services as well as ensuring gymnasium availability for the general community. Those are recreational assets that are maintained by the municipality on behalf of HRCE and is part of the overall recreation service level the municipality offers to the community.

Decisions about school locations are not made by HRM but the location of residential development and access using active transportation and transit should be considered while planning for complete communities.

CI-17 Further to Policy RP-20, the Municipality shall consider the capacity, location and distribution of schools as part of the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, and work with the Halifax Regional Centre for Education and Conseil Scholaire Acadien Provincial to ensure that services are available or planned to accommodate long-term population growth.

CI-18 The Municipality shall encourage the Province and the Halifax Regional Centre for Education to consider the Municipality's projected population and planned settlement pattern as outlined in this Plan and secondary municipal planning strategies when deciding where to locate schools and other public facilities.

4.6 PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Public Safety Strategy 2023-2026 provides a vision and mandate for the Municipality to advance holistic, upstream approaches to public safety and ensures public safety is a shared responsibility for the greatest collective impact. Public safety is about creating the conditions in which people feel safe from harms, and when harms do happen, that people trust that there are services available to provide necessary supports. In the municipal context, this includes programs and services to enhance protective factors that build resilient individuals and communities. Protective factors can be promoted through the equitable provision of services such as youth programming and literacy development; neighbourhood planning for social cohesion and supporting community-led safety and wellbeing initiatives. The Strategy is focused on three action areas:

- Community-Led Public Safety Leadership
- A Broader Spectrum of Responses to Social Issues and Harms
- A Centre of Responsibility for Collective Impact

Community-led public safety requires safe and inclusive public spaces where community members can gather, grow their networks and build resilience. These forms of 'social infrastructure' are essential aspects of preventative approaches to crime and violence prevention - for example by creating spaces where young people can gather and feel safe, where people experiencing homelessness can access needed supports,

programs, and services, and where community groups can organize and collaborate. When planning community facilities and infrastructure, it will be important for the Municipality to incorporate a social infrastructure perspective.

CI-19 The Municipality shall undertake the actions identified in the Public Safety Strategy 2023-2026.

An important consideration when locating growth in the municipality is providing adequate emergency services to ensure the safety of all residents. Planning and delivery of emergency management is coordinated between governments, public agencies, service providers and community organizations. Emergency services include hospitals, police stations, fire stations and critical infrastructure such as emergency shelters, community medical/wellness sites, comfort centers, community educational spaces and safe community spaces (refuges). These services must be dispersed throughout the community as distance and response time are key to ensuring their effectiveness. HRM relies on an interconnected network of fire stations and other emergency response facilities and are mandated to achieve Emergency Response Time Targets (ERTT). The Municipality must continue to work closely with emergency service providers when planning our communities.

CI-20 Further to Policy RP-20, the Municipality shall consider the location and distribution of emergency service infrastructure as part of the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan, and work with emergency service providers to ensure that services are available or planned to accommodate future growth.

CI-21 When adopting new or amending existing secondary planning strategies, or considering development agreements or amendments to land use by-laws, the Municipality shall consider the need for new or expanded emergency services within or to support proposed developments. In choosing a location for new or expanded emergency services, the Municipality must consider present and future population density, projected community uses and hazards and travel time to/from existing adjacent emergency service facilities.

4.7 FOOD SECURITY

Community food security exists when community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice. Climate change and natural disasters like droughts, floods, storms and hurricanes impact local farmers' food production abilities, and disasters elsewhere in the world can lead to supply-chain disruptions that result in empty grocery store shelves here in the municipality. Since climate-related disasters affect the ability of food producers to meet demand, these weather events can cause food availability to suffer and food prices to rise.

When people are unable to access safe and nutritious food to meet their needs, they are experiencing food insecurity. Food insecurity is a complex issue with many economic, social, geographic, and political factors. A 2018 study of Household Food Insecurity in Canada found that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of food insecurity of all ten provinces in Canada, and an estimated 16% of households in the municipality face marginal, moderate, or severe food insecurity.¹ The same study finds that at 16.7%, the municipality is more food insecure than the national average (12.7%) and is ranked as the 3rd highest Canadian census metropolitan area for rates of household food insecurity.

Given the prominence of food insecurity across Nova Scotia and the municipality, the Municipality has undertaken initiatives to develop sustainable food systems. Within HRM, the *JustFOOD Action Plan (Part A)* is an important functional plan to improve food security, reduce food inequalities, support inclusive economic growth, foster resilience in the face of climate change, and promote the health and well-being of all residents.² The *Action Plan* identifies several recommendations aimed at improving the geographic and physical accessibility of food, creating an enabling municipal environment for good food, and supporting and expanding community gardens and urban farms. These recommendations help to inform several of the policies in this section. Supporting equitable access to healthy foods and the development of sustainable food systems strengthens community self-reliance and improves food security.

CI-22 When preparing new secondary municipal planning strategies or amendments to existing secondary municipal planning strategies, means of furthering food security may be considered including:

- a) requiring development proposals to address access to food and impacts on local food systems as part of land suitability assessments;
- b) increasing opportunities for food production and food retail;
- c) exploring measures to preserve existing agricultural land used for food production;
- d) requiring building design features that promote environmental sustainability and food security, including green roofs and amenity garden space.

4.7.1 RURAL AGRICULTURE

Rural communities have a rich history of food production and continue to be home to a wide range of agricultural uses including crop and livestock production, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry products. Notably, the Musquodoboit Valley contains HRM's only remaining arable land largely unaffected by non-agricultural uses. Avoiding non-agricultural development on agricultural land and allowing farms opportunities for development or expansion helps to protect HRM's local farming industry. Supporting the maintenance of sufficient land for farming within the Municipality also keeps food supply chains local, reduces emissions, and promotes the local rural economy while providing healthy and nutritious food.

CI-23 The Municipality shall consider, as part of the Rural Community Planning program, measures to preserve existing agricultural land and expand agricultural land used for food production within HRM.

CI-24 Where Provincial programs are made in support of preserving agricultural land and promoting local agriculture, the Municipality may consider means to complement or further such programs through its policies or regulations.

4.7.2 URBAN AGRICULTURE

The *JustFOOD Action Plan* emphasizes an increased demand and interest in local food production and the need for HRM to reduce barriers and create opportunities for local food production. However, outside of certain rural zones, land use by-laws have historically restricted where residents are able to sell food they produce. Given the rising cost of food, high levels of food insecurity in the region, and desire to shorten

supply chains and increase access to healthy food, the Municipality has a responsibility to enable more residents to produce and sell their own food in their communities.

While residents have always been able to grow fruit and vegetable plants, also allowing backyard hens and urban beekeeping across the region can benefit food security. The detrimental impact of mass-produced and far-travelling food on the environment has spurred interest in raising chickens for personal use. Backyard hens can provide a source of enjoyment and personal food production with minimal impacts to a surrounding residential neighbourhood. A frequent sight in backyards and parks across HRM, bees play an important role in local ecosystems as pollinators and are essential to biodiversity. Urban beekeeping is a popular option for residents to produce their own honey and ensure plants in nearby gardens and the surrounding neighbourhood are well pollinated, which supports fruit and vegetable production.

As residents keep bees, egg-laying hens, and harvest plants (such as vegetables, fruits, herbs, sprouts, ornamental plants, and flowers), there is interest in being able to sell honey, eggs, and plant produce to neighbours and the surrounding community. **Market Garden** is a term that is used to describe food that is grown or prepared to be sold or shared with neighbours and community members. Already a common practice across rural parts of Nova Scotia and other Maritime provinces, market gardens allow residents to sell food at their own property or at farmers' markets. Through expanding urban agriculture opportunities HRM can support local food security by expanding residents' ability to produce and sell food in their communities.

CI-25 The Municipality shall, through the applicable land use bylaws, permit market gardens to facilitate the production, processing, and distribution of food at a scale appropriate to the surrounding context in all zones, except for zones created with the intent to limit development near environmentally sensitive watercourses, infilled water lots, and coastal shorelines. Permitted uses and structures shall include:

- a) Private gardens, community gardens, green roofs, and accessory food processing and distribution;
- b) Accessory keeping of bees and egg-laying chickens;
- c) Farmer's markets, except that farmer's market's shall not be permitted in low-density residential zones.

CI-26 Subject to the zone and use requirements of CI-24^{25*}, the Municipality may permit:

- a) The use of shipping containers for the growing of plants, vegetables, fruits, and worms; and
- b) The secondary processing and distribution of food in the form of preserved and pickled food products.

6.7.3 GREEN ROOFS

Green roofs can offer many environmental, economic, and social benefits. Besides adding to a building's aesthetic appeal, green roofs can support a variety of plant species and provide valuable space for community gardens and recreational uses. Green roofs are also home to plants that improve air quality by

*The Draft Regional Municipal Planning Strategy accepted by Halifax Regional Council to be used for public engagement purposes on June 20, 2023 included a clerical error that has been corrected as shown.

capturing airborne pollutants, reducing carbon emissions, absorbing light that would otherwise heat urban areas during hot summer months (contributing to cooler and more comfortable urban neighbourhoods), and can reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings.

CI-27 The Municipality shall, through the applicable land use by-laws, allow rooftop greenhouses and green roof features to protrude above the maximum permitted height for main buildings to provide additional opportunities for local food production.

4.7.4 INDOOR FARMING

Farming inside of a building presents unique opportunities and benefits for food security in HRM. Indoor farming—or Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)—encompasses a wide range of farming techniques where produce is grown indoors year-round and farmers control light, temperature, water, and carbon dioxide levels. Indoor farming is sometimes called ‘vertical farming,’ since crops are often grown indoors in vertically stacked layers instead of horizontally across the ground. While indoor farming can already be accommodated in agricultural zones, industrial zones can also be appropriate locations as former industrial buildings, such as warehouses, or refurbished shipping containers can provide good spaces for indoor agriculture. Different types of vertical farming include greenhouses, hydroponics, and aeroponics.

Common indoor farming production includes leafy greens; herbs; vegetables such as cucumbers and tomatoes; and fruits such as strawberries. Indoor farms can also provide an appropriate space for vertical insect farming. Edible insect species are growing in popularity as an alternative source of protein. Insects can also be used for gardening, fertilizer, for animal feed, pet food, and for use in cosmetics. Indoor agriculture allows sustainable reliable year-round food production in areas otherwise unsuitable for outdoor farming, helping to reduce the distance food needs to travel and lowering transportation emissions. The limited land usage required also means indoor farming can help preserve existing outdoor natural spaces.

CI-28 The Municipality shall, through the applicable land use by-laws, allow indoor agricultural food production of plants and insects as a permitted main use within appropriate industrial zones, provided adequate separation distance to residential and other sensitive uses are established.

CI-29 The Municipality shall permit the use of shipping containers for indoor agricultural food production of plants and insects as a main or accessory use in zones that permit agricultural and industrial uses.

CI-30 Where the products from indoor farming are sold on the same property as the indoor farm building, the Municipality may consider allowing the indoor agricultural food production of plants and insects as a main use in commercial and mixed-use zones, by development agreement. In considering approval of such developments, the Municipality shall consider the following:

- a) whether the proposal meets all provisions of the land use by-law;
- b) the adequacy of the size of the lot on which the proposed facility will be located;
- c) the adequacy of separation distances from residential and other sensitive uses, wells, watercourses and riparian areas, given the size and scale of the proposed facility;

- d) the adequacy of mitigation measures for noise, vibration, and odours from the proposed facility;
- e) the design of the proposed facility, including that its height, massing, and location on the lot adequately considers the visual impact on adjacent properties, public roads, community facilities and open spaces; and
- f) Policy I-9 of this Plan.

4.7.5 CANNABIS-RELATED LAND USES

The Government of Canada legalized access to cannabis for recreational use in 2018. This Plan provides a consistent regulatory framework to accommodate cannabis-related land uses within the region.

HRM recognizes the legitimacy of cannabis production and processing operations and the economic development opportunities offered by this industry. Cannabis production facilities can be accommodated in industrial zones. In rural mixed-use and resource zones where industrial or intensive agricultural uses are permitted, standards to adequately separate cannabis production facilities from residential and other sensitive uses are necessary, and some areas may require facilities to be limited in size.

- CI-31 The Municipality shall, through the applicable land use by-laws, permit cannabis production facilities within appropriate industrial zones, provided adequate separation distances to residential and other sensitive uses are established.**
- CI-32 The Municipality may, through the applicable land use by-laws, permit cannabis production facilities within mixed-use and resource zones which also permit industrial or intensive agricultural uses, provided appropriate controls are placed on the size and scale of such facilities and adequate separation distances to residential and other sensitive uses are established.**
- CI-33 Where cannabis production facilities are permitted by a land use by-law, but zone requirements limit the maximum gross floor area of such a facility, the Municipality may consider larger facilities by development agreement. In considering approval of such development agreements, the Municipality shall consider the following:**
 - a) Other than the maximum gross floor area of the facility, whether the proposal meets all provisions of the applicable land use by-law; and
 - b) In addition to the provisions of the applicable land use by-law,
 - i. the adequacy of the size of the lot on which the proposed facility will be located;
 - ii. the adequacy of separation distances from residential and other sensitive uses, wells, watercourses and riparian areas, given the size and scale of the proposed facility;
 - iii. the adequacy of mitigation measures for noise and odours from the proposed facility;

- iv. **the design of the proposed facility, including that its height, massing, and location on the lot adequately considers the visual impact on adjacent properties, public roads, community facilities and open spaces; and**
- v. **Policy I-9 of this Plan.**

The federal *Cannabis Act* has enabled provinces and territories to oversee the distribution and sale of cannabis. Under the provincial *Cannabis Control Act*, the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (NSLC) is the only authorized seller of cannabis and cannabis products. No provincial legislation regarding cannabis consumption lounges or venues has been proposed. Until such time that the provincial government brings forward legislation permitting private retail sales of cannabis or cannabis consumption within indoor lounges or venues, these uses will not be permitted within HRM. These restrictions are intended to ensure that HRM has the opportunity to undertake a thorough planning process, including public and stakeholder consultations, prior to any private cannabis retail sales or lounges opening in our communities.

CI-34 The Municipality shall seek to ensure that municipal land use regulations for cannabis-related land uses are consistent with federal and provincial legislation. Where federal and provincial regulations have been amended, the Municipality may also amend municipal land use by-law regulations to remain consistent with these changes.

CI-35 The Municipality shall, through the applicable land use by-laws, prohibit the private retail sale of cannabis and cannabis products and commercial venues for the consumption of cannabis and cannabis products, unless it is operated by the NSLC.

4.8 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Acknowledging the success of solid waste resource management in Halifax and Nova Scotia based on principles of source separation and landfill ban policies implemented in the 1990s, the Solid Waste Strategy was last reviewed in 2014. There is a need to improve waste diversion, align Halifax's Solid Waste Strategy with HalifACT, and promote the circular economy.

The 2014 Solid Waste Strategy Update included objectives to:

- Maximize reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste resources.
- Maximize environmental and fiscal sustainability of the waste program.
- Foster public stewardship and conservation.

An updated Solid Waste Strategy will reflect the goals of HalifACT and the Province of Nova Scotia's 2021 *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* to reduce community emissions, reduce waste generation and waste disposal, and increase waste diversion.

The circular economy concept supports waste reduction and disposal through the idea that products and systems should be designed in a way that they can be reused, repurposed, or remanufactured rather than discarded as waste. To further support waste reduction efforts, it is anticipated that the Province of Nova Scotia will enact new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation in 2023, which will require major changes to the Municipality's recycling program, shifting responsibility of program delivery to industry.

- CI-36 The Municipality shall update the Solid Waste Strategy to align, revise, and adopt policies and regulations consistent with HalifACT, the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*, and future Provincial legislation related to Extended Producer Responsibility. The Municipality shall consider amendments to community planning strategies, land use by-laws or any other HRM by-laws to implement any recommendations of a solid waste strategy system review.**

4.8.1 CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION

In 2023, the Province updated the Solid Waste Management Facilities Guidelines for Construction and Demolition Debris Storage, Transfer, Process and Disposal. As a result, the Municipality must update any regulatory and policy documents to align with the Provincial Guidelines.

- CI-37 The Municipality shall update any Administrative Orders, Licenses, Municipal Planning Strategies, Land Use Bylaws or other regulations to align with the Provincial guidelines for Construction and Demolition Debris Storage, Transfer, Process and Disposal Facilities.**

4.9 REGIONAL ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

As a privately owned, publicly regulated utility, Nova Scotia Power Incorporated (NSPI) is responsible for generating and distributing electricity throughout the province. The company aspires to 80% renewable energy generation by 2030, by connecting to clean energy sources in other provinces (notably hydro power in Newfoundland and Labrador), as well as wind and solar generation, battery storage and conversion of coal-fired plants. NSPI must also ensure that the electricity grid remains dependable and grows to meet new demands from an expanding population.

Most of the electrical grid is above ground for cost reasons, necessitating regular vegetation management, especially for trees which can fall onto wires and cause outages. The challenge is to balance the need for reliability with the many benefits offered by trees, especially in public rights of way. In strategic urban locations where the high costs are justifiable, both electrical and communication wiring can be placed underground. Some areas in Downtown Dartmouth and Halifax already have underground wiring. For new subdivisions, underground lines may be installed at the request of the developer, who pays a capital cost contribution to help offset future replacement costs, though this practice is not widespread.

The Municipality has commissioned studies³⁸ to examine the benefits and challenges of underground utilities in terms of reliability, aesthetics and cost, and has chosen a two-phased approach to implementation in new subdivision developments. Initially, undergrounding is required from the pole to the house and then, after further consultation with the development community, consideration may be given to total undergrounding within the street right-of-way.

³⁸ Kinetrics Inc. *HRM Underground Utilities Feasibility Study*. 2005. Halifax. Marbec; Economic Implications of Buried Electric Utililites.2007; Stantec. *Engineering Study of Joint Gas, Power, and Communication Trench*. 2007; Dillon. *Underground Utilities Funding/Management Best Practices Review*. 2010.

- CI-38** The Municipality will cooperate with Nova Scotia Power Incorporated (NSPI), its assignees or successors, in their efforts to conserve energy, anticipate and provide for future electricity needs, increase reliability, reserve space for transmission lines and equipment, and protect public health and safety, while considering the Green Network Plan, the Urban Forest Master Plan and other relevant Priorities Plans and Functional Plans.
- CI-39** When planning streetscape improvement projects for commercial areas or heritage districts within the municipality, consideration shall be given to the underground placement of electrical and communication lines. Highest priority shall be given to projects within the Regional Centre. The Municipality shall work with utilities that have overhead wiring to develop a design standard for underground retrofitting and a policy respecting ownership of underground wiring under municipal right of ways.
- CI-40** The Municipality shall, under the Regional Subdivision By-law, require the underground placement of electrical and communication distribution lines from the poles within the street right-of-way to the property line for subdivision applications in which new streets are proposed within the Urban Service Area. The Municipality may consider future amendments to the Regional Subdivision By-law to require the underground placement of all electrical and communication lines within street right-of-ways or rear lot servicing easements.

Communication facilities are regulated by Industry Canada which has recognized that municipalities may have an interest in the siting of these facilities, particularly with regard to aesthetic impacts on the built form and landscapes. A federal policy has been established that encourages consultation between proponents and local governments before a decision is made whether to grant a license. The means of consultation is not specified but left for the Municipality to decide upon. While Community Councils do not have ultimate decision making authority on telecommunications applications, the Municipal and its residents still have a vested interest in their outcome. In 2016, the Municipality formalized the process through Administrative Order 2015-005-GOV to provide a recommendation to Industry Canada that includes feedback from residents.

- CI-41** The Municipality shall follow the protocol as described in Administrative Order 2015-005-GOV as a consultation approach for the siting of telecommunication towers and antenna and provide recommendations to Industry Canada in accordance with the Administrative Order.