HALIFAX

What is comprehensive neighbourhood planning?

A planning process which comprehensively considers all aspects of planning a new neighbourhood or area.

1 Initiation of Planning Process

Comprehensive neighbourhood planning begins when the Minister of Housing designates a Special Planning Area.

2 Technical Studies

Next, technical studies take place to assess the impacts of development. Examples of these studies include a land suitability analysis, water and wastewater capacity assessment, and mobility study.

3 Public Engagement

Meanwhile, planning staff engage with the public to inform residents about the project and gather input on what the community desires. Feedback is welcomed throughout the process, but it is most influential at the beginning of the process and before a decision is made.

4 Detailed Review

The project is then assessed against existing HRM policies and infrastructure, service, and facility needs to identify constraints and opportunities.

5 Planning Documents

Based on this review, new planning policies are drafted including a conceptual neighbourhood plan. Strategic public investments in infrastructure, parks and facilities may also be identified.

6 Decision

Within Special Planning Areas, the Minister of Housing considers approval of new planning policies, before the project can proceed to development and construction.

Why is this project happening?



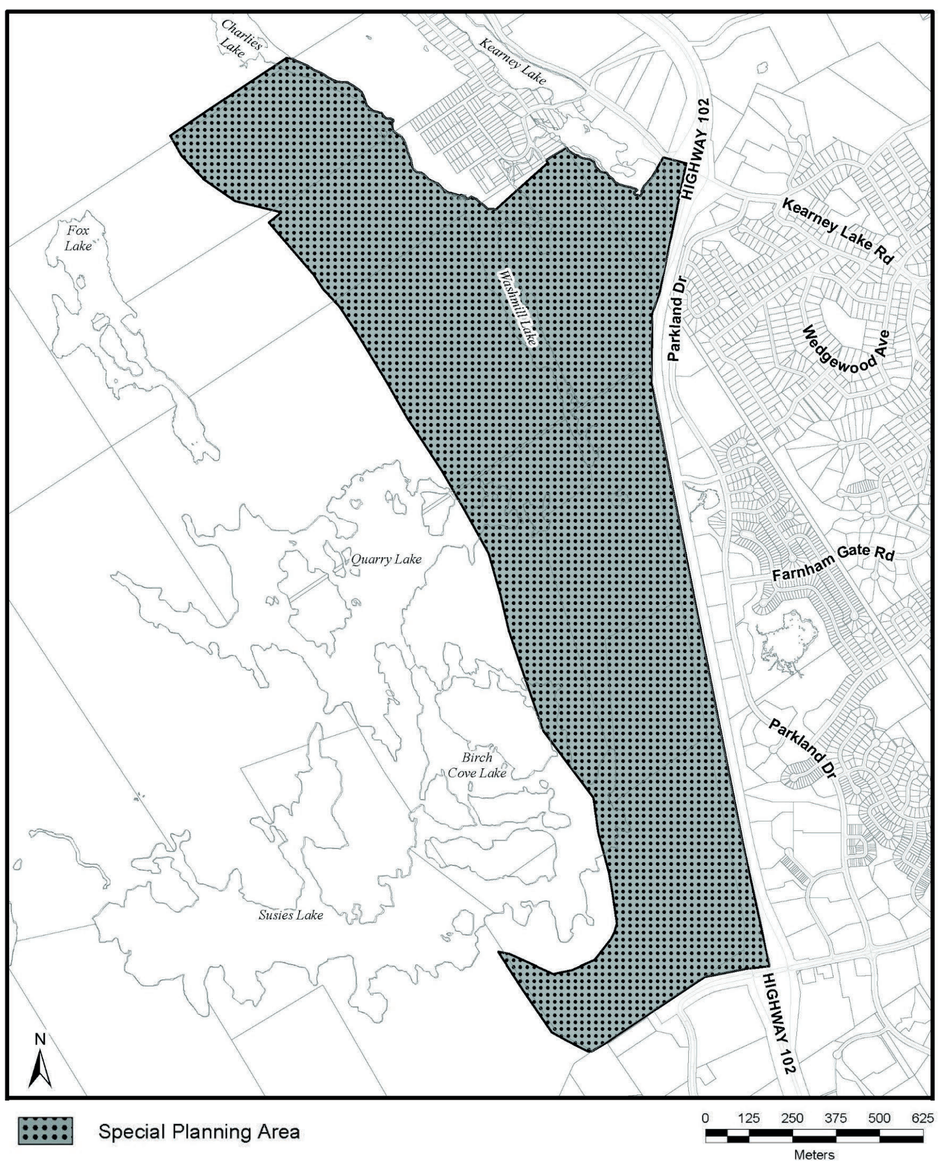
- The Highway 102 West Corridor Lands has been identified as a potential area for urban expansion since the 2006 Regional Plan.
- In recent years, unprecedented population growth has occurred in the region increasing demand for new housing. New areas for urban development are needed.
- In 2022, the municipality advanced the “Future Serviced Communities Studies (FSC)” to understand the environmental impacts, transportation infrastructure needs, and water and wastewater servicing options of development in the Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area and the Sandy Lake Special Planning Area.

Special planning area designation

- The Highway 102 West Corridor Special Planning Area and the Sandy Lake Special Planning Areas share current and future regional infrastructure needed to support development. Decision making on planning policies and infrastructure in both areas benefit from a coordinated approach. The Sandy Lake Special Planning Area was designated by the Province of Nova Scotia in 2022.
- In 2025, following completion of the FSC studies, the municipality recommended to the province that the Highway 102 West Corridor area be designated a special planning area. Having both areas under the same approval process supports coordinated decision-making.
- On May 16, 2025, the Highway 102 West Corridor Lands were designated a special planning area under housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act by the provincial Minister of Growth and Development. The minister requested that the municipality begin comprehensive neighbourhood planning for the area.

What is a special planning area?

The provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Minister of Growth and Development has on the recommendation of the executive panel on housing of the Province of Nova Scotia, designated sixteen (16) special planning areas in the Halifax Regional Municipality to address housing challenges in the capital region. The special planning area designation delegates development approval authority to the Minister of Housing as outlined in the housing the Halifax Regional Municipality Act. Regional Council does not participate in development approvals in special planning areas. However, Regional Council may consider Capital Cost Contribution (CCC) programs and municipal expenditures, such as new facilities, within these areas.



Policy Context

Halifax Regional Municipality’s existing plans and policies will inform new planning policy and be considered throughout the planning process.

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Future Serviced Communities Studies

The Halifax Regional Municipality Regional Plan requires background technical studies to be undertaken prior to undertaking comprehensive neighbourhood planning. These studies consider:

- the feasibility of extending water and wastewater services;
- upgrading existing municipal and provincial infrastructure; and
- the environmental and cultural impacts on the lands and surrounding communities.
- In 2025, the baseline technical studies to inform decisions about potential serviced development in the Highway 102 West Corridor Lands were completed.

A summary of findings is shared below.

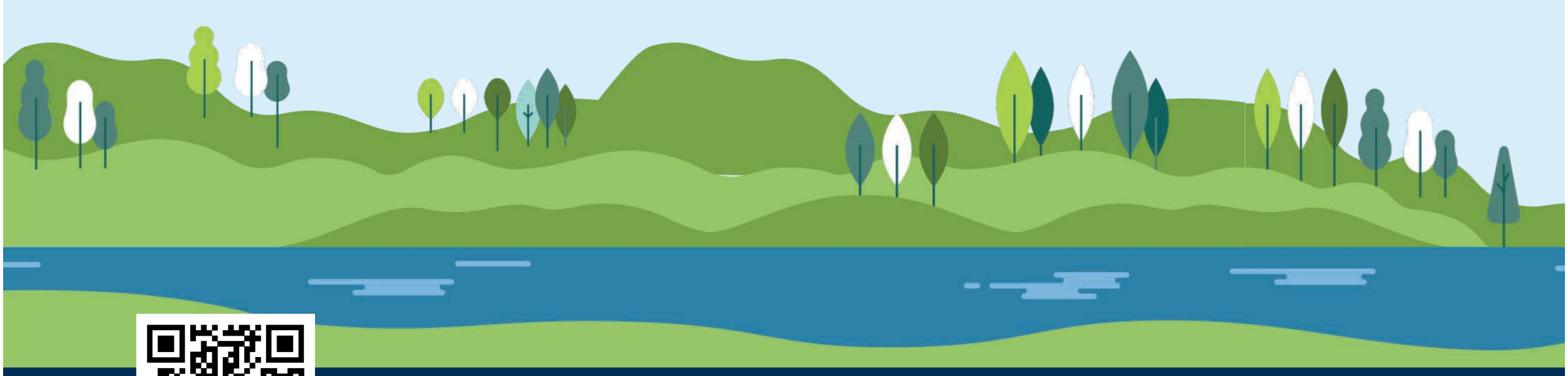
Land suitability analysis

- There are 44 wetlands, many of which scored high for ecological condition, highlighting importance for conservation.
- There are six watercourses and four waterbodies. Watercourse buffers are important to preserve aquatic habitats and water quality.
- Several forest types associated with habitats for species at risk are identified. Recommendations on appropriate landscape connectivity (corridors) are provided.
- Areas with less ecological importance are characterized as more suitable for development.

For full information on these studies please visit the project website.

Watershed study and conceptual stormwater management plan

- Changes to water quality from development can be managed and mitigated by increasing green spaces and permeable surfaces and water quality monitoring.
- Stormwater infrastructure that is external to the site but which handles flows from the site requires upgrades.
- Development within 100-year floodplains is not recommended and roads which must cross a floodplain should be raised above the floodplain.
- Stormwater can be managed through several potential strategies including dry ponds, storm sewers, rain gardens, and by reducing the footprint of development.
- Additional work is recommended including detailed flood plain mapping, stormwater management plan, and geotechnical investigation.



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Future Serviced Communities Studies

Development servicing scenario

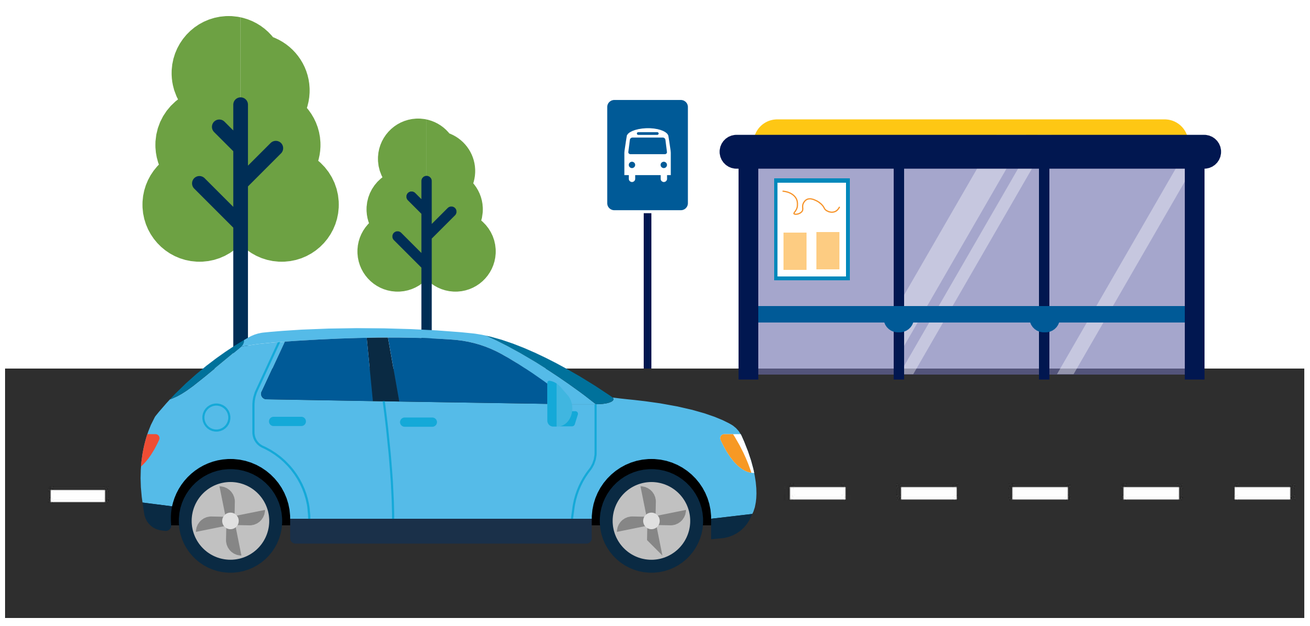
- Water modeling was carried out. Additional full system modeling is recommended as part of Halifax Water's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP).
- Early information indicates that sanitary sewers capacity is sufficient for expected growth in the area. This must be confirmed by an updated capacity study.
- Assessment of wastewater treatment and water treatment needs was not included, but the IRP will consider these and identify future capital needs.



Transportation study

Major transportation routes will see an increase in travel demand including:

- **Highway 102**
- **Kearney Lake Road**
- **Lacewood Drive**
- **Washmill Lake Drive**
- **Main Avenue**
- **Bedford Highway**



Many of these routes will experience significant traffic congestion in the future, regardless of development at the Highway 102 lands. Improvements to highway infrastructure can mitigate this and improve capacity including additional lanes and upgrades to interchanges.

- The development should prioritize mixed uses and a well-connected, multi-modal internal transportation system and connections to other areas.
- Residents should have access to a transit stop within 400 metres.
- Implementation of the Bedford Highway Functional Plan is recommended.
- Increased bus services, particularly along Kearny Lake Road, will be needed.
- Upgrades and enhancements to bus and active transportation lanes in the area around the development are needed, particularly along Kearny Lake Road and Lacewood Drive.
- A mobility hub in the new development is recommended. This should co-locate transit, commercial, a mix of transportation options and other amenities.

⊕ Additional analysis

Additional analysis will be undertaken as part of the planning process, including detailed infrastructure planning.

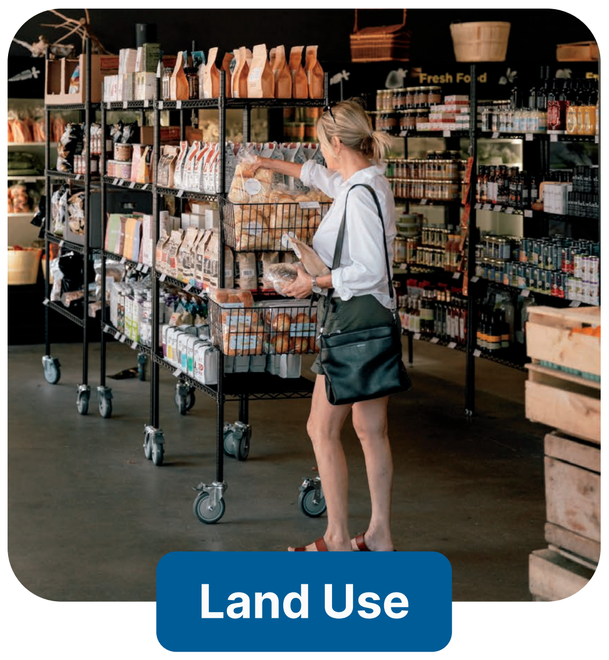
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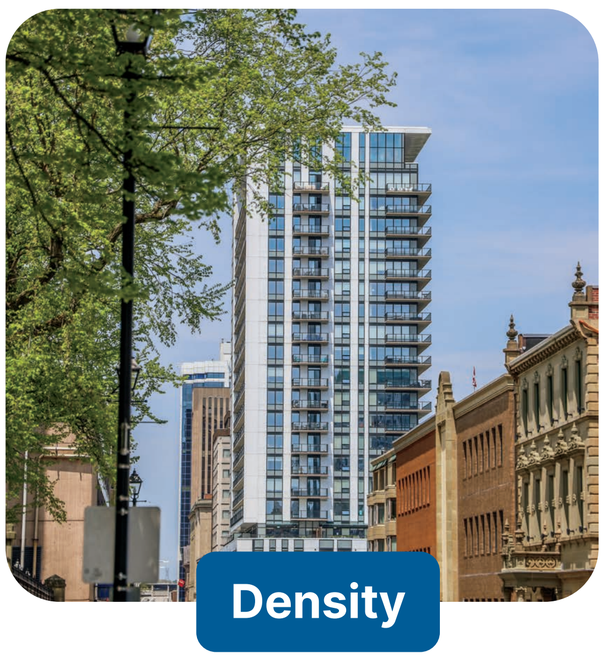
Public feedback

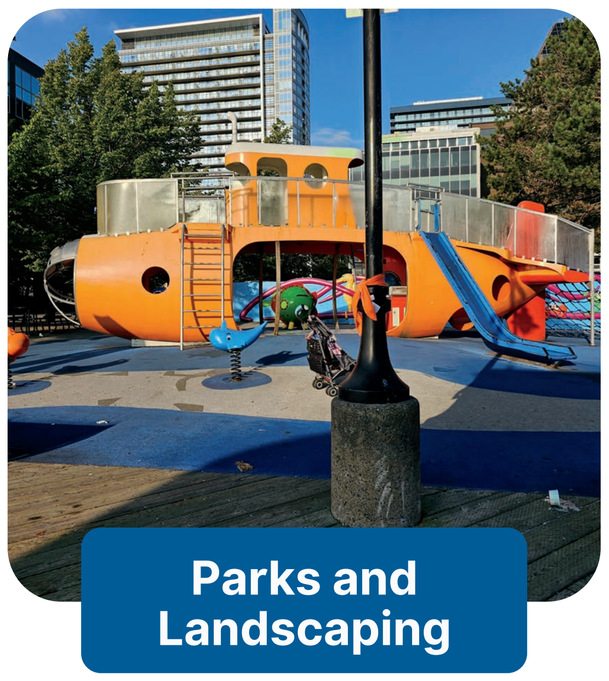
What feedback can be incorporated into planning policy?

Planning policy can address the following matters:















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