

A Brief History of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children



The former Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (NSHCC) has significant historical and cultural value, specifically within the African Nova Scotian community, which cannot be adequately described in this format. The following is a high-level description and timeline of key events intended to provide context and insight for those who may not be familiar with the site. Information was collected from Akoma Holdings, the NSHCC Restorative Inquiry, past Provincial and Municipal legislation and Council minutes. This document is by no means a comprehensive account. While staff have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this information, the history of the site is best told from the perspective of and by the community itself!

The NSHCC was incorporated in 1915. The NSHCC intended to provide care and refuge for neglected ANS children that became the responsibility of the Government. The Home filled a gap in the Provincial childcare system as children of African descent were not welcome in White institutions.

The grand opening of the Home on Preston Road (now Highway 7) in 1921 attracted the largest gathering of people of African descent in Nova Scotia since the arrival of Black Loyalists in 1783. Around 1948, the two-room Henry G. Bauld Elementary School was built on the property. This facility offered classes to residents of the home and neighbouring students. Within the first 50 years, thousands of children lived at the NSHCC. Over the years, the Home fell in disrepair and former residents suffered systemic and institutional racism, neglect and abuse at the NSHCC. Government aid was scarce. Children were physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually abused.

In the early 1960s, the NSHCC began accepting orphaned White children after segregation in institutions formally ended. Other orphanages also started accepting children of all racial backgrounds and by the late 1970s, dozens of NSHCC residents moved to foster homes and the NSHCC's population notably declined. The orphanage facility closed after two group homes were built on the property in 1978/79. The cottage where the superintendent of the home lived was rented for several years following closure of the orphanage, but the cottage was eventually vacated and has been used for storage since.

Former residents of the NSHCC launched a class action lawsuit revealing poor living standards and the abuse endured by residents of the facility. On October 10, 2014, Premier Stephen McNeil formally apologised, on behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, to former residents of the NSHCC. In 2015, the Nova Scotian Government introduced the NSHCC Restorative Inquiry (RI) process aimed at providing restorative justice by revealing the history of institutionalised racism in the Province, understanding the legacy of the NSHCC that continues to affect Nova Scotians today, building just relationships, and engaging in collaborative planning to ensure no further harm and meaningful change that supports a better future for the community. The final report of the Restorative Inquiry, "Journey to Light – A Different Way Forward" was released in 2019.

Zoning History

In 1972, the NSHCC lands as well as abutting properties south of Highway #7 were zoned G (General Building). Just before the Regional Plan was adopted in 2006, most of the NSHCC property was zoned R-1 (Single Unit Dwelling) and R-7 (Rural Estate) which permitted low density residential development. Smaller portions of the property along Highway #7, where the Henry Bauld Centre and Akoma Family Centre buildings are located, were zoned P-2 (Community Facility) and C-4 (Highway Commercial).

Most of the property owned by Akoma Holdings currently has zoning that limits development and protects the lands for future serviced development. This zoning was applied in 2006, when the Municipality adopted a 25-year Regional Plan and planning policies to manage growth and maintain the fiscal health of the Municipality. The NSHCC site as well as properties immediately surrounding the lands were mostly vacant around 2006 and there were no immediate plans to develop the site. Given the size of undeveloped land, the proximity of the lands to the Halifax-Dartmouth core and how close the properties are to public pipe infrastructure (Municipal water and sewer services), it was felt that the site should be protected for future serviced development, beyond the 25-year lifespan of the Regional Plan. Given the significant history of the property, Council and staff recognize there is merit in considering amending these policies for the former NSHCC site.

Timeline of Some Key Events

- 1915 An [Act to Incorporate the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children](#) was adopted (Chapter 107). The Board of Trustees included members of the community and the City of Halifax.
- 1917 The Board of Trustees secured an abandoned property in the north end of Halifax. However, in December that year, the Halifax Explosion destroyed the home building.
- 1921 The City of Halifax deeded a property of over 300 acres to the NSHCC located on Preston Road (now Highway #7). There was a need for a new, larger home to accommodate an increasing number of children. Care institutions were over capacity and lacking supplies after the Explosion, so the Board attempted to find a farm property that could provide food security for the residents.
- 1948 The two-room Henry G. Bauld Elementary School was built on the property.
- 1972 The NSHCC lands were zoned G (General Building).
- 1978/79 The NSHCC closed when two new group homes were built on the property.
- 1982 A portion of the NSHCC lands along Highway #7 were zoned R-1 (Single Unit Dwelling), P-2 (Community Facility) and C-4 (Highway Commercial). The interior lands were zoned R-7 (Rural Estate).
- 1983 The [County of Halifax](#) approved a request to rezone a portion of the lands containing the Henry Bauld School from R-1 (Single Unit Dwelling) to P-2 (Community Facility) to convert the school building to a recreation centre for the children (now known as the Henry Bauld Centre).
- 1994 The [County of Halifax](#) established water service districts in the Cole Harbour/Westphal, Eastern Passage/Cow Bay and North Preston, Lake Major, Lake Loon/Cherry Brook and East Preston areas. Areas within the water service districts included lands where problems existed with on-site water supplies, where pipes could be installed to improve the overall water distribution system, and where developers that had active subdivision proposals received a commitment that their lands would be serviced. The NSHCC lands were not included in the districts as they failed to meet the criteria for consideration.
- 1997 At [Harbour East Community Council](#) on February 6, Councillor Cooper requested that the Municipality facilitate a heritage registration process and allocate emergency funding to stabilise and preserve the Home building. Councillor Cooper mentioned that the Home had development plans and the NSHCC was important to protect as a significant part of African NS history and heritage. Staff began a process to register the old Home, but the site was not registered.
- 2005 On February 28 at [Marine Drive, Valley & Canal Community Council](#), Councillor Hendsbee put forward a motion requesting HRM and HW examine the extension of the Water Service Boundary to include the NSHCC property.
- 2006 On May 16 was the [Public Hearing](#) for the adoption of the Regional Plan. Council requested a supplementary report that responds to a request to re-designate lands in Cole Harbour/Westphal as Urban Settlement instead of Urban Reserve and extending the water service district. The [supplementary report](#) from June 13 noted that re-designating the lands to Rural Commuter and creating another Rural Growth Centre could be considered at the Regional Plan review.

On June 27, Regional Council adopted the Regional Plan. Most of the NSHCC lands were designated and zoned Urban Reserve (UR) to protect the lands for future serviced development. The portion of lands rezoned to UR were zoned R-1 (Single Unit Dwelling) and R-7 (Rural Estate) just before adopting the Regional Plan.

Continued on following page >

Timeline of Some Key Events Continued...

- 2009 An [information report](#) was presented to Marine Drive, Valley & Canal Community Council that responded to Councillor Hendsbee's 2005 motion. The report suggested that Council await the findings of the Wastewater Management Functional Plan (WWFP), that was initiated by Halifax Water, and the five-year review of the Regional Plan before extending water service to the subject property.
- 2014 [Public Hearing for RP+5 \(the first review of the Regional Plan\)](#). Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Board Member for the NSHCC; Veronica Marsman, Executive Director of the NSHCC; Dr. Wayne Adams, representative of the NSHCC; and, Joanne Light, Halifax requested that Council remove the UR Designation from the NSHCC lands and extend the service boundary as they limited development opportunities to provide affordable housing and employment. Staff advised that they are supportive of the aspirations of the Board and will assist the Board so their plans could be brought forward as an application.
- Premier Stephen McNeil formally apologised, on behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, to former residents of the NSHCC.
- Akoma Holdings Inc. was established. They acquired the assets from the NSHCC which included over 300 acres of property containing the former NSHCC, NSHCC superintendent's cottage, Henry Bauld Centre, two child care residential buildings, and the Watershed Association Development Enterprises (WADE) building. There is also an easement in favor of Nova Scotia Power across the property.
- 2015 The Province introduced the [NSHCC Restorative Inquiry \(RI\)](#) process aimed at providing restorative justice by revealing the history of institutionalised anti-black racism in the Province, understanding the legacy of the NSHCC that continues to affect Nova Scotians today, building just relationships, and engaging in collaborative planning to ensure no further harm and meaningful change that supports a better future for the community.
- 2018 In May, Regional Council endorsed the [2016-2021 Economic Growth Plan](#). Action #12 of the action plan states, "Develop and implement an African Nova Scotian (ANS) Action Plan to advance economic development and community priorities."
- Akoma Holdings submitted an application to amend the planning policies to enable development of the NSHCC lands. On October 2, Regional Council [initiated](#) a process to consider the appropriate adaptive re-use of the lands containing and surrounding the former NSHCC ([Case 21875](#)).
- 2019 Staff initiated the African Nova Scotian Economic Action Plan. An [information report](#) was [presented](#) to the Community Planning and Economic Development Committee on November 19. The Road to Economic Prosperity: An African Nova Scotian Economic Action Plan includes a series of actions and priorities aimed at building unity in the ANS community while advancing ANS economic and community development.
- The final report of the NSHCC Restorative Inquiry, "[Journey to Light – A Different Way Forward](#)" was released.
- 2020 Regional Council initiated [Case 22572](#) on February 25: [the second review of the Regional Plan](#). The Review will consider Akoma's long-term development objectives and provide direction for future plan amendments.
- Regional Council endorsed the [Road to Economic Prosperity: An African Nova Scotian Economic Action Plan](#). Objective 2.1 and Action 15 speaks to Akoma Holding's proposal.